



# WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC: KEY ISSUES

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## **Introduction: Women and gender mainstreaming**

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### **Overview**

As the papers in this volume indicate, attempts to improve the situation of women and to provide greater equality between women's and men's access to the benefits of development have gone through many phases and embraced a number of theories, strategies and policies. Over the last 10 years, gender mainstreaming has been the accepted strategy for improving the situation of women. It was based on the premise that the roles, responsibilities and situations of both women and men had to be taken into consideration and that consideration for women as well as men has to be integral to development policy and to political, economic and social structures, rather than the previous focus on improving the situation of women in isolation.

The papers here cover an in-depth review of the effectiveness of mainstreaming to date. They challenge the received wisdom, as well as the roles and commitment of the United Nations, government and non-government agencies. The more recent concept of 'intersectionality' and its possible value as a tool in gender mainstreaming forms part of the discussion. The last group of papers, based on extensive experience, provides some practical guidelines to developing gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and analysis.

Three consistent threads run through most of the paper: the need for clarity and better understanding of the concept of gender mainstreaming; the need for a human rights approach to achieving gender equality; and the need to make the language of gender mainstreaming and gender equality more accessible to lay people, as well as to those of different cultures and those with different roles in the development process.

### **Major points**

In the eleven years since the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995 and its adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, an unusually high level of consensus has emerged amongst many gender and development practitioners that gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving equality among men and women, and improving the lives of both, has largely failed. There is broad consensus among the contributors to this issue that the key reasons for this failure are:

- the enthusiastic adoption of gender mainstreaming by governments, UN agencies, non-government organisations and the private sector occurred without a clear understanding of the concept and strategies for its implementation;
- lack of commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming
- among United Nations, international, government and development agency leadership and a resulting lack of adequate funding;
- lack of understanding of how gender mainstreaming should affect the policies and daily practice of development practitioners;
- gender mainstreaming has rendered women invisible, effectively situating women at once 'every and nowhere'; and
- the inability of gender mainstreaming to transform power structures.

The most consistent critique of gender mainstreaming is that the mainstream remains masculine. As Lorraine Corner states, transforming the masculine mainstream will not be accomplished by the simple addition of women into decision-making bodies. There is a

need to transform the mainstream as a prerequisite for the achievement of women's human rights and gender equality.

However, not all our contributors see gender mainstreaming as intrinsically flawed. For some, it is now rather a matter of garnering adequate and considered responses to the challenges it poses. The goal of bringing gender into all aspects of organisational and project-level policy and practice, enunciated in the Beijing Platform for Action, is seen to be achievable, but will not occur without concerted and considered strategies.

Case studies from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Fiji provide first-hand experience of gender mainstreaming in practice and the role of civil society, NGOs, consultants and consulting companies. The experience has been varied, but some of the examples here show some success in improving the situation of women and the move toward greater equality between women and men. While these examples are of relatively small-scale projects and could not be claimed to be transforming the mainstream on a large scale, they are a positive beginning.

The major points that emerge from these positive examples are:

- activities or projects were relatively small scale;
- establishing well-developed partnerships was essential;
- gender equality objectives were jointly developed, widely discussed and understood;
- stakeholders from all levels of civil society and government were involved from the beginning;
- implementation was flexible and widely differing cultural values were respected; and
- projects or activities were long term.

A further point that emerged was the importance of commitment to gender mainstreaming throughout the whole structure of implementing and donor organisations. This proved to be unusual.

### **Taking stock of the gender mainstreaming experience**

Suzette Mitchell, in her discussion of the reasons for the disappointing impact of gender mainstreaming, puts this down to the lack of clarity around the term, the embedded political agenda in a transformative approach to gender mainstreaming, lack of measurable outcomes and the consistent lack of commitment and funding. 'Until we agree what gender mainstreaming is, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and how to implement it effectively and measure its outcomes across countries and agencies, we will continue a process of half-hearted and ad hoc measures which do not create real change for gender equality.'

Three papers consider the role of the United Nations organisations in gender mainstreaming. Lorraine Corner proposes a new paradigm for transforming the mainstream as part of UNIFEM's new business plan. The human rights approach is based on the acknowledgement that women's human rights can only be realised through the transformation of gender power relations at all levels. This requires gender responsive decision making, and using gender responsive tools within gender responsive institutions. Gender responsive conceptual frameworks are essential to enable women and men to negotiate transformed personal, social, economic and political arrangements. Women, Corner states, must take, and UNIFEM must facilitate, a proactive role in developing the mainstream agenda rather than merely reacting to it.

Elizabeth Reid reviews the value of women-specific programs and the practicalities and efficacy of implementing gender mainstreaming in organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She maintains that achieving positive changes for women requires a range of strategies, which include, but are not limited to, gender mainstreaming. 'The practice of development has shown that both women-specific and gender mainstreaming policies and practices can redistribute power in social relations.'

The World Bank's performance on gender issues is assessed by Deb Foskey. Unlike the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO), which maintain that gender issues are irrelevant to their work, the World Bank has attempted to have gender issues integrated into bank decisions and operations, but the economic imperative makes this difficult and gender remains at the margins. The bank's Articles of Agreement, which state that 'only economic considerations shall be relevant' to its decisions, is used as a reason for poor implementation of gender mainstreaming. Women are seen as a resource to be tapped to promote the efficiency of the market.

Since the mid 1990s, men's roles in progress towards gender equality has been the subject of growing international commitment. Michael Flood makes a strong case for including men more fully in promoting gender equality. He notes that progress is being made and that including men and boys in achieving gender equality is one of the themes adopted for the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2004.

The effectiveness of non-government organisations in Australia in achieving gender mainstreaming and gender equality is discussed by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) and Jeannie Rea. Consultations undertaken by ACFOA among Australian NGOs found that 'gender mainstreaming needs a whole-of-agency focus that endorses gender mainstreaming with a commitment instilled at a senior management level'. ACFOA members have also identified that adopting a Western/paternalistic approach inhibits their capacity to support and maintain positive change towards gender equity. They also recognise the need for good monitoring and evaluation.

Jeannie Rea gives a review of gender equality in the Australian trade union movement and while acknowledging there is a long way to go, points to considerable achievements. She calls for Australian development organisations to clean up their own backyards and provide the example as exemplary equal opportunity employers. This theme is echoed by Hurriyet Babacan, who notes the limited work published in Australia on the impact of gender mainstreaming, a situation which she says is an indication of the level of attention it receives. Kristen Timothy provides background on the contentious issues that surrounded the involvement of NGOs in the 1995 Beijing Conference and the difficulties of reaching consensus between the agenda of progressive feminists and a coalition of more moderate NGOs, most particularly on the issue of violence and women's rights.

The lack of an adequate definition for gender mainstreaming, the jargon that surrounds it and the need for cultural sensitivity are key issues for Tanya Lyons, Jayne Curnow and Glenda Mather. Using their considerable experience in Fiji, Indonesia and East Timor they argue that 'Third World women are silenced by Western feminist discourses ... Western women and men continue to maintain the monopoly or authoritative voice within the discourses of WID, WAD, GAD and not gender mainstreaming.' Gender can take on the role of a threatening import in many circumstances, which can result in resistance to the policy of gender mainstreaming. The development agency requirement of having a 'gender specialist' travel to a recipient

country is usually little more than a token — a box to be ticked off to satisfy compliance with donor agreements.

Patti O'Neill and Susan Hawthorne (discussed further below) also take issue with the language surrounding both gender and gender mainstreaming. It can create barriers and misunderstandings. Patti provides an example from an APEC meeting where even New Zealand and Canada could not agree on what was meant by gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, gender integration and gender sensitisation. She believes that the terminology gets in the way of understanding. Patti provides a summary of the current gender focus of the New Zealand Agency for International Development.

### **Gender mainstreaming in practice**

This group of papers provides a variety of case studies together with overviews of extensive experience in the field. Juliet Hunt synthesises her practical experience and research into gender mainstreaming to develop a set of strategies for addressing gender equality. Fundamental to success is the development of a shared vision and explicit consensus on gender equality objectives, the involvement of stakeholders from civil society in dialogue on development objectives and activities, the inclusion of gender equality objectives in overall program objectives, ensuring gender strategies are practical and based on quality gender analysis, the provision of in-country social and gender analysis expertise, and the collection of relevant sex-disaggregated baseline information.

To these recommendations Rima das Pradhan adds special requirements for highly technical programs, as her research indicates that technical programs remain 'gender blind'. She suggests that all agencies and consulting firms seek out women technical specialists, all technical specialist be provided with base-level training on gender mainstreaming concepts, terms of reference for highly technical programs have gender mainstreaming built into them, and at the design stage technical teams should be trained to create space for women to actively participate in the program cycle and have the necessary 'listening' and analysis skills to hear what women are saying.

Papua New Guinea is well-known as a country where the status of women is very low and where there are high levels of violence and discrimination against women and girls. Donna Loveridge discusses the challenges of gender mainstreaming the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary — a bastion of masculinity. In May 2003, women represented only 5.4 per cent of uniformed personnel, most of them in the lower ranks of the force. The project had to try to overcome deep resistance to almost all the activities designed to help improve greater gender sensitivity in the force and to increase and upgrade the role of women in it. This paper provides a valuable example of the need for very detailed gender analysis.

Jane Strachan provides an analysis of the situation of women in Vanuatu, particularly in the education sector, and the high levels of gender disparity that exist there, while Vicki Luker provides a very detailed examination of the gendered parameters of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea.

### **Gender mainstreaming and intersectionality**

Recent discussion on promoting greater equality between women and men has included the concept of intersectionality. This is discussed by Robyn Kennedy and Kirsty Nowlan. Essentially, intersectionality is an approach to understanding the differences among and between women and men and the ways that these interact to exacerbate (and often

compound) marginalisation. It is a process for identifying subordination, not solely as an issue of gender, race or class inequality, but as an issue of the locations where poverty or inequalities are clustered and compounded.

Robyn Kennedy and Kirsty Nowlan take the concept of intersectionality and investigate the contribution that the inclusion of faith might make to understanding gender inequality. This is an important addition to the discussion on intersectionality and one that has frequently been overlooked, important in part because in many countries religious minorities are discriminated against. Moreover, faith is usually integral to culture and value systems and the role of women.

### **Ways ahead**

Finally, Sarah Murison and Juliet Hunt provide valuable guidelines for developing gender mainstreaming strategies and gender analysis and we include a summary report from the IWDA Gender and Development Dialogue held in July, 2003.

## **Mainstreaming: The Pacific experience**

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### **Introduction**

The term 'mainstreaming' has been widely used in the development literature to describe a key strategy for overcoming the problem of women's exclusion from decision making. The simple image suggests that the problem of 'women in development' (more accurately described as 'women out of development') is largely due to the monopolisation of development decision making by men. The proposed solution is for similar numbers of women to join the decision making 'mainstream' with men. The image underlines the potentially transformative role of women's participation in decision making: when the waters of two streams of equal size but different compositions join together, the new stream resembles neither of its tributaries. However, the image provides few answers to the question of how the mainstreaming of women in development decision making might be accomplished. This paper records the experience of two successive UNIFEM mainstreaming projects in four Pacific Island countries.

The pioneering initiative for mainstreaming in the Pacific was the UNIFEM Pacific Mainstreaming Project (PMI), which started in 1990. Its principle objective was to integrate a gender approach and women's concerns in national development in four Pacific Island countries: Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu. The first phase of the Project was for two and a half years, the second for two years.

### **The concept of mainstreaming**

The development of the mainstreaming concept coincided with and reflects the transition in the broader women and development literature from a Women in Development (WID) to a Gender and Development (GAD) approach. The mainstreaming image of moving women into decision making with men seems to call for a political strategy focusing directly on women. However, the main activities of the PMI project adopted a technical rather than a political approach and targeted existing decision makers, most of whom were men. The main targets were development planners, especially those in central planning offices, who were considered to be the key decision makers in national development. The project sought to mainstream women's concerns and interests, rather than women themselves, by training male planners to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to planning. Such an approach would make planners aware of the difference between women's and men's gender roles and development needs and recognise the importance for the achievement of national development goals of meeting women's needs and involving them in development programmes. The project would also provide planners with the technical skills required to implement gender-sensitive plans and programmes. In this, the project reflects the newer GAD rather than the WID approach.

### **Phase 1 of PMI**

The project proposal for Phase I of PMI viewed mainstreaming as primarily requiring specific technical skills of planners. The major activities of the first phase included the



preparation of a statistical profile on women and men, and training on gender awareness and gender-responsive planning for government planners in the four pilot countries. This phase thus provided planners with a sex-disaggregated data base and technical expertise in gender analysis. Although Phase I emphasised a technical and GAD approach to mainstreaming, the WID approach was not entirely neglected. A WID component provided support to the national women's offices and sought to link them into the gender-responsive planning and gender statistics activities. However, this attempt to combine the GAD focus on planners with WID-oriented support for women's groups led to confusion and conflict between the planning and women's agencies over 'ownership' of the project in some of the participating countries.

An evaluation of the first phase revealed several gaps in the mainstreaming framework used at the time. The first and main deficiency was the project's failure to address the institutionalisation of mainstreaming in the pilot countries. Training of the current generation of development planners in gender analysis was not sufficient to ensure that gender-sensitive planning processes would be followed. Official planning documents and procedures remained gender blind. The project had also not made provision for the maintenance of gender training skills in planning agencies, particularly among new staff. Both the project countries and regional development agencies lacked gender training capacity to maintain and replace the gender skills created by the project. Finally, although the project had succeeded in producing sex-disaggregated statistical profiles for each of the pilot countries, gender statistics remained poorly understood and little developed in the Pacific at both the national and regional levels.

## **Phase II of PMI**

Phase II of PMI thus focused on institutionalising the integration of gender in development planning in the four countries so that gender-responsive planning could be sustained beyond the life of the project. At the national level, this was to be achieved by incorporating a gender-responsive approach into official planning documents, procedures and processes. At the regional level, Phase II sought to strengthen the institutional capacity of the South Pacific Commission to provide technical services in gender-responsive development planning throughout the Pacific. It also planned to train planners in the Forum Secretariat in order to create the technical capacity to support mainstreaming of gender in macro-economic planning.

In Phase II, two different approaches to institutionalising mainstreaming were adopted at the country level. In Papua New Guinea, for funding reasons, the primary responsibility for mainstreaming was handed over to the planning agency. Mainstreaming was funded through the bilateral aid programme with technical support provided at the regional level through the PMI office. In the other three pilot countries, the mainstreaming initiative continued to be managed from the PMI regional office, which also provided technical support.

## **Pacific mainstreaming experience**

The experience of Phase II has clearly shown the country-based model in Papua New Guinea to be the most appropriate and sustainable model for mainstreaming. It is clear that mainstreaming that is initiated and managed from the regional level is unlikely to be successful. In those countries where the PMI regional office continued to manage the project, national institutions did not develop a sense of ownership or responsibility for mainstreaming activities within the country. Although the countries under regional implementation participated actively in project initiatives, there was a lack of follow-up.

For example, further gender training for development planners failed to institutionalise mainstreaming processes or to promote the development of a national gender training capacity. By contrast, the planning agency in Papua New Guinea made considerable progress in modifying planning documents, procedures and processes to incorporate a gender approach. Regional gender training resources were used to train a corps of national gender trainers in Papua New Guinea who were then able to extend gender training to planners at the sectoral and provincial levels.

In the other countries, as the limitations of regional implementation for institutionalising a GAD approach became increasingly apparent, Phase II of the project began to place greater emphasis on the WID component through support for women's groups. In order to strengthen the national women's offices, the regional project supported advocacy by women's groups to promote the formulation of a national women's policy. Technical assistance was provided to the national women's offices to draft and lobby for the policy, which provides a framework within which national institutions can focus their efforts toward mainstreaming.

### **Impact of global conferences**

At the same time, opportunities created by regional preparations for the Barbados, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing global conferences were also utilised to create a supportive political environment for future mainstreaming initiatives. Activities in support of regional participation in the global conferences created greater awareness of the importance of political support for mainstreaming at two levels. Political commitment to an enhanced role for women in development is needed at the highest levels of government to ensure that mainstreaming skills and approaches are effectively utilised by planners and programmers. This is especially important in the current context, as Pacific governments face new pressures to reduce costs and increase their market orientation. Grassroots support for women's interests is needed at the community level in order to generate the political commitment for mainstreaming that is required at the highest levels. Thus, both broad community support and high level political commitment are essential for the institutionalisation of mainstreaming.

Preparations for the global conferences also heightened recognition that this support had to be largely provided by women themselves. Women's active participation in decision making in the administrative and political arms of government, as well as in communities, is also necessary for mainstreaming. Differences between women's and men's gender roles give rise to needs, interests and priorities that are specific to women. Since these will not be well understood by men, the direct participation of women in decision making is needed to ensure that women's needs, interests and priorities will be effectively incorporated in development policies and programmes. Both in the Pacific and globally, the critical importance of political empowerment for women has been one of the main lessons to emerge from the Fourth World Conference on Women.

### **Regional influences**

While it was increasingly realised that mainstreaming could only be successfully managed from a national base, many of the most influential activities in Phase II of the Pacific Mainstreaming Project took place at the regional level. This apparent contradiction was largely due to the impact of the global conferences on project activities. Through technical support activities, the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) responded to emerging opportunities to strengthen women's and NGO groups working on gender issues and to promote women's participation in decision making. The CTA

also played an active role in assisting national and regional preparations by Pacific Governments and NGOs for the Fourth World Conference for Women. This regional focus was partly a result of the project coinciding with a period of intense regional activity associated with preparations for the global conferences. However, it also reflects an important reality in the Pacific, where technical support is most effectively provided at a regional level due to the small size and limited resources of individual countries.

### **Lessons learned from the Pacific**

Not surprisingly for a pioneering project, PMI produced mixed results. Table 1 summarises the lessons learned from PMI. At the regional level, the project's role in facilitating and coordinating regional preparations for global activities was decisive. At the national level, it provided critical technical support for successful nationally based mainstreaming activities in Papua New Guinea. Although it was much less successful in managing mainstreaming activities in the other three project countries, it has succeeded in laying the basic foundations for later mainstreaming activities which, it is now recognised, need to be nationally based.

**Table 1: Lessons learned from PMI in the four pilot countries**

1. Leadership and coordination on gender mainstreaming is needed at the national level.
2. Political commitment from the highest levels is required if mainstreaming is to be sustained.
3. Community support for and monitoring of mainstreaming is necessary to generate and maintain political commitment.
4. Direct participation of women is needed to ensure that women's concerns are adequately represented in mainstreaming and that mainstreaming will be sustained.
5. A flexible approach that enables opportunities to be exploited as they emerge is required.
6. Existing gender analysis frameworks are limited and there is a need for gender analysis materials and models for use in specific sectors.

The project has also gained a considerable amount of experience in training planners in gender analysis and the incorporation of a gender approach in planning documents, procedures and processes. It has produced valuable technical materials for use in training and advocacy throughout the region: a set of general gender training and gender analysis manuals and a video produced by the project has been sold as far afield as Pakistan. Although most of the gender training activities of the project focused on general planners in the national planning offices, the project found that the special needs of sectoral planners are not well served by existing gender training and gender analysis materials. In order to address this need, the project collaborated with a project in the Fiji Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to produce a set of training materials specifically for the agricultural department. Further work is now needed to disseminate this material to other countries and to develop similar materials for other sectors.

**Table 2: Framework for mainstreaming gender in development**

**Mainstreaming Goal 1**

Implementation of gender-responsive policy, planning and programming

**Objectives**

1. To create technical capacity for gender-responsive policies, planning and programming through:
  - a. advocacy;
  - b. gender awareness training;
  - c. gender analysis training;
  - d. use of gender statistics.
  
2. To institutionalise gender-responsive approaches to policies, planning and programming through:
  - a. incorporating a gender approach in existing policy, planning and programming procedures and protocols such as Project Programme and Policy identification, design, appraisal, implementation and monitoring, Environmental Impact Assessment;
  - b. developing gender training capacity in national and regional training institutions;
  - c. incorporating gender training in the routine programmes of national and regional training institutions;
  - d. incorporating training on gender statistics in national and regional statistical training programmes;
  - e. incorporating gender statistics into ongoing data collection programmes.
  
3. To promote political commitment to gender-responsive policies, planning and programming through:
  - a. gender awareness training for decision makers;
  - b. training in the preparation of gender-sensitive bills for parliamentary drafting staff;
  - c. gender awareness training for voters on how to lobby political representatives and shape a gender-responsive political agenda.

**Mainstreaming Goal II**

Participation of a critical mass of competent and committed women at all levels of decision making to ensure that women's issues and concerns are effectively incorporated in development policies, planning and programming.

**Objectives**

1. To increase the number of women in decision making at all levels through:
  - a. monitoring sex-disaggregated personnel data in the public and private sectors;

- b. gender-sensitive recruitment, training and promotion;
- c. skills training to increase women's access to elective and appointed positions.

2. To increase the capacity of women decision makers to support gender-responsive policies, planning and programming through:

- a. gender and skills training for women in decision making;
- b. strengthening networks/organisation of women leaders;
- c. strengthening linkages between grassroots women and women leaders.

3. To promote political commitment to women's equal participation in decision making at all levels through:

- a. advocacy;
- b. monitor national and regional commitments to gender equality;
- c. promoting understanding of gender equality and equity at community level.

Mitchell, S, 2004. 'What lies at the heart of the failure of gender mainstreaming: The strategy or the implementation?', *Development Bulletin*, no. 64, pp. 8-10.

## **What lies at the heart of the failure of gender mainstreaming: The strategy or the implementation?**

*Suzette Mitchell, International Women's Development Agency\**

### **Introduction**

Gender mainstreaming is the major strategy identified by the development community to integrate gender issues into policies, programs and projects. At the IWDA Gender and Development Dialogue, held in Brisbane, July 2003, stakeholders from academia, development NGOs, United Nations (UN) agencies, women's organisations, consulting firms, bilaterals and gender specialists unanimously agreed that gender mainstreaming — as a term and a strategy — is problematic. Gender mainstreaming has not delivered what was anticipated when the concept was formalised in UN documents at the time of the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

This paper explores what I see as the reasons behind this failure. They include:

- the huge breadth of work and expectations covered by the concept of gender mainstreaming, as defined by the UN;
- lack of intellectual clarity around the term,
- the possibility that gender mainstreaming strategies may alienate and sideline earlier women-specific work;
- the embedded political agenda in a transformative approach to gender mainstreaming;
- a lack of identified measurable outcomes of gender mainstreaming across stakeholders in the development community; and
- the consistent lack of financial resourcing and related senior management commitment to the concept across development stakeholders.

These key obstacles have become apparent through experience in implementing gender mainstreaming over the past decade, and need to be addressed as a community — in dialogue across NGOs, bilaterals, academics, activists and UN agencies. Until we all agree what gender mainstreaming is, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and how to implement it effectively and measure its outcomes across countries and agencies, we will continue a process characterised by half-hearted ad hoc measures that fails to engender real change for gender equality in peoples lives at a project level.

### **Gender mainstreaming: Problems with the paradigm**

Lorraine Corner, in an analysis of the use of the term gender mainstreaming, attributes the first official use of 'mainstreaming' to the preparatory papers for the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). She states that:

The UN system both through the global Women's Conferences and the work of its agencies, has been an important avenue through which mainstreaming gained general currency and acquired specific meanings (Corner 1999:1).

Gender mainstreaming was endorsed at the Fourth World Conference on Women as the approach that governments, the UN, and other actors should take in the implementation of the PFA (UN 1995a). In 1997, due to a lack of consensus and

understanding of the term, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined gender mainstreaming as:

the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC 1997: para 4).

This definition provides a very broad mandate for gender mainstreaming, with its goal to impact all areas at all times. Specific measures or strategies were not identified or approved with the definition, which makes measurement of progress extremely difficult. A great deal has been written for and about the mainstreaming approaches that the UN bodies should adopt (Schalkwyk 1998). These works illustrate that the UN has not been highly successful in measuring the impact of mainstreaming. This is recognised in UN documents, with, for example, a 1998 ECOSOC session documenting a salient point from the 'high-level debate', namely, that 'gender mainstreaming leaves room for improvement throughout the United Nations system' (ECOSOC 1998:3).

The most recent report on gender mainstreaming within the UN is 'Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations System', which was tabled at the Commission on the Status of Women meeting in 2003. This report remains vague on the specific monitoring and evaluation indicators, and simply refers to:

2 (e) Establishing appropriate monitoring, evaluation or other progress-reporting mechanisms to assess the impact of gender equality policies and strategies (ECOSOC 2003).

Thus it appears that gender mainstreaming remains a highly inclusive term covering most aspects of development work, yet with very few verifiable ways to identify when and how gender mainstreaming is to occur, and how to evaluate it.

### **Effects of the embedded political agenda**

Rounaq Jahan (1995:13) identifies mainstreaming approaches as 'integrationist' and 'agenda-setting/transformational', with the integrationist approach involving broadening the dominant paradigm to fit women 'in' without directly challenging power structures. This is the most common form of gender mainstreaming evident in development institutions, and is similar to the 'add women and stir' approach, which was coined to depict early work in women in development (WID) work in the early 1970s. The agenda-setting approach sees masculinist power structures challenged not only because mainstreaming promotes women as decision makers, but also because it supports women's collective action in redefining development agendas. Transformational gender mainstreaming is a challenge to implement, not only because of the inherently political nature of the agenda, but because of the scale of the nature of change required.

### **Lack of clarity and comprehensive monitoring**

Within the UN system, the main mechanisms for monitoring gender mainstreaming are the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the System-Wide Medium Term Plan for the Advancement of Women (SWMTP). The 'Assessment of the implementation

of the system-wide medium term plan for the advancement of women, 1996–2001' (United Nations 2000) was addressed at the CSW meeting in preparation for the Beijing+5 Special Session. This document contains very scant analytical information. The section on gender mainstreaming strategies covers four pages, and provides basic factual information, while the section on obstacles spans only 3 paragraphs, yet it alludes to broad issues with huge implications, as evident in the second paragraph of that section:

Amongst constraints identified were *lack of understanding of gender as a concept*, or the failure to perceive issues, such as poverty, the environment or HIV/AIDS, as having gender dimensions. Lack of staff capacity to implement gender mainstreaming strategies, or carry out gender analysis were also highlighted, as were inadequately defined management competencies for gender mainstreaming, absence of strategic planning and channels of communication. Lack of staff confidence in their capacities to incorporate gender concerns was also categorised as an obstacle (United Nations 2000:18, emphasis added).

To look at only the first constraint addressed — a lack of understanding of gender as a concept — brings the whole activity of the SWMTP into question. If there is a lack of understanding of gender as a concept in the UN, how can all the issues in this system-wide plan be understood, let alone implemented? The lack of staff capacity and confidence in this area derives from this confusion, and is compounded by a lack of adequate gender analysis tools and key measurable outcomes for gender mainstreaming.

I believe it is only when there are adequate mechanisms and methodologies to measure gender mainstreaming through specific and standardised indicators that there really can be comparative analysis and monitoring of the concept across the spectrum of development practice.

### **Lack of money**

The lack of financial resources for implementation is often cited as the major obstacle to gender mainstreaming. In the year after the Beijing conference, budget cuts to the UN system were made and 'those heading the UN's operations said ... that budgetary constraints are the single biggest obstacle to moving the women's agenda forward' (Shepard 1996:9).

Thus, while the UN finally had a consolidated structure in place to address gender issues, with a system-wide plan and the policy to fit it, the resources were not available. It seems difficult to comprehend that a multi-billion dollar organisation could not find the funds to address gender issues adequately. At a special event to mark the first year anniversary of the PFA, held in the General Assembly on 11 September, 1996, Florence Butwega, a Ugandan activist and lawyer, bravely addressed this issue in a panel with Boutros-Ghali, the then Secretary General of the UN, and other UN and NGO representatives:

Beijing has raised expectations, and now the United Nations and its member states must deliver ... This 'no money' thing is turning out to be the greatest lie of the century, she added, noting that defense budgets were skyrocketing and high level corruption was diverting funds into personal pockets (United Nations 1996:2–3).

Many women from within and outside the UN system have pushed for the increased resourcing of women's issues within the UN program. In 1998, the ECOSOC session formally acknowledged this lack of resources, stating that:



The flow of resources to women is not commensurate with their responsibility in society; only 15% of development funds have reached women. Development agencies were requested to establish financial systems to track resources allocated to women and to develop gender-oriented budgets indicating whether the policy or programme had fully integrated gender equality (ECOSOC 1998:4).

Despite this, the UN continues to rely on under-resourcing gender mainstreaming. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE<sup>1</sup>) meets on an annual basis and brings together gender focal points from different agencies to discuss common strategies, review progress, and agree on new and collaborative work to implement the PFA and mainstreaming gender (King 1999:5). The lack of extra resources for IANWGE hampers its impact. In its fourth session in 1999, IANWGE addressed the issue of funding:

The committee noted that its Secretariat, as well as its activities, is accommodated within the regular workload of its members. In several instances, projects are being implemented with the help of volunteers, or interns, and the Committee expresses its appreciation to them. Several of the Committee's activities however, have been delayed, or had to be postponed, because of lack of resources. (IACWGE 1999:5, para. 24).

The committee cannot be expected to function effectively using current staff time, interns, and volunteers. Delays and postponements of the work plan illustrate that this is not a feasible or effective approach.

I see the lack of resources as one of the symptoms of a lack of prioritisation by the UN of mainstreaming gender issues. This lack of resources is compounded by an absence of political will that is structural and emanates from high-level decision makers.

## **Conclusion**

The post-Beijing era has been the ideal time for the development community to develop monitoring and accountability systems on gender issues within the sector. In looking at the substantive work of the UN in its programs and policies, we see that although clear attempts have been made to develop a comprehensive approach to gender equity and women's advancement by the UN as a whole, these initiatives have received inadequate funding and commitment. The effective implementation of gender mainstreaming within the UN system has occurred in isolated cases and by specific agencies and projects. The UN failed to grasp the opportunity provided by Beijing, and continues to integrate gender in an ad hoc manner through its projects, policy, and programs. Although Beijing generated the first document to really identify mainstreaming as an approach to attain gender equality, universal measures have not been defined and implemented. This leaves us with the question:

Why is it that a standard setting organisation like the UN is following rather than leading the world on an issue as important as equality? (UNDP 1996:20).

## **Notes**

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1. The Inter Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality has at various times been titled a network (IANWGE), a committee (IACWGE) and a meeting (IAMWGE).

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## Women transforming the mainstream — a think piece

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### Introduction

This paper proposes a new paradigm of transforming the mainstream for the UNIFEM Strategic Business Plan 2004–2007.<sup>1</sup> It builds on the earlier technical approach of mainstreaming a gender perspective through gender tools, and on the political approach of mainstreaming women's participation in decision making. Both these approaches implicitly accepted the underlying mainstream agenda as a given, and expected change to result from the mainstreaming processes. In contrast, the new paradigm explicitly seeks to transform mainstream agenda as a prerequisite for the realisation of the advancement of women and gender equity. It directly links a rights-based approach to the realisation of women's human rights through the transformation of gender relations, which also becomes an explicit target. The approach is based on an acknowledgement that women's human rights can only be realised through the transformation of gender power relations at all levels. Thus, the new paradigm involves a new relationship between women and the mainstream, recognising that:

2. Transforming the mainstream is a prerequisite for and an integral element of the full realisation of women's human rights and gender equality;
3. Gender-responsive decision making using gender-responsive tools within gender-responsive institutions and gender-responsive conceptual frameworks are essential to enable women and men to negotiate transformed personal, social, economic and political arrangements;
4. Women's active and informed participation in decision making at all levels is both a women's human right and a prerequisite for transforming the mainstream; and
5. Women must become empowered and informed decision makers at all levels on *mainstream* issues.<sup>2</sup>

Women must take, and UNIFEM must facilitate, a proactive role in developing the mainstream agenda rather than merely reacting to it. The emerging concept of human security potentially offers an appropriate framework within which women and UNIFEM might develop gender-responsive perspectives on the various components of the mainstream. These would include, among others, administrative, economic and political governance, personal, national and international security, personal, group and national identity, and economic, social and environmental sustainability and human rights.

## **Mainstreaming in the UNIFEM mandate**

As the draft Strategic Business Plan 2004–2007 makes clear, the concept of mainstreaming is a central component of the UNIFEM mandate laid out in 1984. It requires the organisation to ‘serve as a catalyst with the goal of ensuring the involvement of women in mainstream development activities’. However, interpretations of mainstreaming have varied over the three decades during which UNIFEM and the women’s movement have sought to achieve this goal. Interpretations have varied in terms of both the strategies required to achieve the goal, and the relationship between women and the development mainstream.

## **Development of the current approach to mainstreaming**

The current approach to mainstreaming is the product of three broad approaches to promoting the status of women in the context of development: the WID (women in development) approach; the GAD (gender and development) or gender mainstreaming approach; and women in politics or mainstreaming women strategies.

### **The WID approach — bringing women into the mainstream**

The early ‘women in development’ approach tended to support women-targeted activities that were token in scale and impact, and marginal to the development mainstream. The overall perspective (of both women and the mainstream) was that women and their activities were largely isolated from the mainstream. Women wanted to join the mainstream in order to gain a greater share of benefits. While some sections of the mainstream saw women as an under-utilised resource that might contribute to the wider development agenda, the overall framework within which both women and development agencies worked to advance the status of women was welfare oriented.

Development agencies sought to increase women’s participation as beneficiaries through women-targeted projects in two major areas. The more traditional approach emphasised meeting women’s practical needs for maternal and child health, clean water, social and welfare services and increased access to education. Another stream sought to increase women’s participation in mainstream development programs, although still in limited areas such as income generation and agricultural extension for women farmers. Although the term mainstreaming was used in the UNIFEM mandate, strategies were women-oriented, with little consideration of the role of men. The low status of women was in and of itself sufficient justification for efforts to increase the status of women.

### **Mainstreaming a gender perspective**

By the mid-1980s, UNIFEM and women’s groups were beginning to recognise the need for a new approach that focused more explicitly on working with mainstream institutions and the comparison between the lives and experiences of women and men. The concept of gender, which did not appear in the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, gained wider currency. Although confusion about its meaning and importance has persisted, the basic principle was comparison of the status of women and men, and recognition that women’s status was lower because decision making failed to incorporate a gender perspective. Decision makers overlooked the impact of women’s specific sex and gender roles on their access to resources and participation in development activities. The extent to which gender stereotypes — expectations — about the roles and capacities of women and men also led to considerable de facto and de jure discrimination against women.

The new gender mainstreaming approach brought three new dimensions to the debate on women and development: a strong comparative perspective that challenged the assumption of men and the male situation as the norm; an explicit objective of integrating women's concerns and priorities into mainstream decision making; and the genesis of a stronger emphasis on discrimination and, by extension, women's human rights.

Many countries identified economic decision making, particularly development planning, as the most influential component of the mainstream for advancing the status of women. New partnerships were built between women's groups, particularly the new national machineries for women in government, and development planners, as well as with the national statistics offices that provided the basic data for planning and policy processes. Important new tools, including gender analysis, gender statistics and gender awareness and gender sensitivity training, were developed as part of this approach. Capacity-building in the use of these tools targeted both women's groups and advocates and the mainstream decision makers. Institutional mechanisms, including gender focal points in mainstream agencies and departments, gender mainstreaming policies and mandates within government, and associated reporting mechanisms, were also a feature.

Thus, the relationship between women and the mainstream was increasingly seen in technical rather than welfare terms. Policy makers were beginning to recognise that women were contributing to development through their increasing participation in the formal labour force, as well as in the informal sector. The objective for women was to ensure that their (different) concerns and priorities were incorporated into mainstream decision making. The rationale for mainstreaming was often presented in instrumental terms: women's different experiences and capacities would contribute to better decision making and more effective development programs and policies. As active contributors to development, women also had a right to an equal share of the benefits of development. Thus, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was more often cited as the basis for gender equal policies, and gender equality and was given prominence in the Beijing Conference. However, although women's human rights were an increasing part of the argument for gender mainstreaming, implementation strategies did not yet involve a rights-based approach.

### **Mainstreaming women and a gender perspective**

Although the Beijing World Conference had emphasised the importance of women's participation in all areas of decision making and particularly in politics, the political dimension of mainstreaming was not strongly emphasised until after the Beijing conference. Women had begun to realise that, in most developing countries, gender mainstreaming initiatives mainly involved men because the mainstream was male dominated. While men could appreciate and to some extent respond to the different issues and priorities of women, men's other concerns tended to take priority and act as barriers to moves toward gender equality. In the absence of strong political commitment to gender equality, the technical tools of gender sensitivity training, gender analysis and gender statistics were insufficient to overcome these barriers.

It was becoming apparent that women themselves were needed in the mainstream to guarantee that political commitment: women had to become a more integral part of the mainstream at all levels. However, there was ample evidence among those women who had gained political office that being female was no guarantee of support for the advancement of women. Gender blindness was not unique to men: many women

decision makers were equally blind to the impact of gender biases and stereotypes on women (including on themselves). Thus, gender mainstreaming, gender sensitivity and awareness training and gender analysis were needed alongside a systematic strategy to mainstream women in decision making (often described in terms of promoting 'women in politics') and to ensure that women in decision making would support women's issues and priorities and promote gender equality.<sup>3</sup>

Women's human rights provided the only rationale needed for mainstreaming women in decision making at all levels: women, like men, have an inherent human right to participate in decision making. Without the active participation of women, democracy (*demos* — the people, women and men) is reduced to man-ocracy. However, the distinction between sex and gender provides a strong argument for the need to continue gender mainstreaming, regardless of the sex of the decision makers. Women have a stronger personal interest in the advancement of women and, with the support of an active and vocal women's constituency, can strengthen overall political commitment to gender equality. However, individual women are not necessarily more sensitive than individual men to the impact of gender differences in policies, plans and programs. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in decision making is not simply a matter of political will — it is a technical process that requires specific skills, tools, administrative procedures and institutional structures.

### **The mainstream has been broadened but not transformed**

A new concept of the relationship between women and the mainstream is gradually emerging that focuses on not just getting women or gender into the mainstream, but transformation of the mainstream as an explicit objective and as a prerequisite for the achievement of women's human rights and gender equality.

Increasing the numbers of women in decision making positions and processes has greatly broadened our concept of the mainstream itself. Women's interests and priorities are now moving into new areas of decision making: from income generation and microcredit to women and trade, women and finance for development and engendering macro-economic policy making; from women and water and women and energy to engendering environmental policy, engendering ICT (information and communications technology) and science and technology; from gender statistics to engendering statistical systems and gender-responsive policy analysis; from violence against women to women in peace and conflict; from women's reproductive health to a gender perspective on health systems and health policy and women and HIV/AIDS; from women in politics to women and decentralisation and women and governance.

The initial premise of gender mainstreaming was that tools such as gender analysis and gender statistics combined with gender-aware and gender-sensitive decision makers and appropriate institutional developments would ultimately bring about equality between women and men. However, experience soon showed that this was unlikely: advances in the rhetoric and even the institutions of gender equality were not matched by effective implementations or resource allocations. Gender indicators showed slow progress at best in the status of women, and in some cases absolute deterioration. Transforming the male-dominated mainstream into a women-friendly environment is not just a technical exercise.

Mainstreaming women in decision making, and especially in politics, sought to address the lack of political will that evidently has been a major obstacle to effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the male-dominated mainstream. More women are gaining political office at the national level. Some countries have

implemented quotas of up to one-third of seats in local governments. Women comprise a major share of public sector employment in many countries and even occupy a significant share of senior positions in a few. Women have also emerged as an important group of employers and business executives in the private sector in many economies. The United Nations Security Council has recognised women's right to sit at the peace table.

Despite all of these gains, the commitments to the advancement of women given at Beijing, the full realisation of women's human rights spelled out in CEDAW and other human rights instruments, and progress toward the gender equality embodied in national policy documents, remains little more than empty promises. Transforming the masculine mainstream has not been accomplished by the simple addition of women to decision making bodies.

The image of the 'mainstream' has always carried within it an understanding that equal sharing of decision making between women and men within the mainstream would eventually lead to a new mainstream. However, the existing mainstream remains better adapted to the roles, needs and situations of men, who are its primary architects and beneficiaries.

This 'masculine' mainstream must give way to a new mainstream that will equally accommodate the roles, needs and situations of women and men. Although this has been the implicit objective of all mainstreaming, the concrete means by which such a transformation can be brought about have not been adequately identified or clearly articulated.

### **The way forward: Transforming the mainstream**

Women must now transform the mainstream and mainstream institutions so that commitments the advancement of women, gender equality and the full realisation of women's human rights will be achieved in practice.

A paradigm shift is needed in the relationship between women and the mainstream, particularly the mainstream agenda. The prevailing concept of mainstreaming gender focuses on putting women's issues and priorities on the mainstream agenda through technical processes such as gender analysis or, more recently, gender budgeting and engendering economic governance. Mainstreaming women or women in politics strategies focus on putting women's issues and priorities on the mainstream agenda through the direct political participation of women leaders supported, and held to account, by strong and active women's constituencies. Both approaches emphasise adding women's issues and priorities or gender issues; neither directly challenges nor explicitly seeks to determine the mainstream agenda itself. They react to a largely predetermined and mostly gender-blind agenda, rather than seeking an equal role in setting that agenda.

A new approach to mainstreaming is emerging that is characterised by women's proactive engagement with the mainstream on mainstream rather than 'women's' issues. It is based on three fundamental principles.

#### **Principle 1**

**Transforming the mainstream is a prerequisite for and an integral element (rather than a consequence) of the full realisation of women's human rights and gender equality.**

*Example: getting women into politics requires changes in the broader issues of governance.* In the recent Cambodian election, women were unable to get high-ranking places on party lists because these must be bought — with cash, described quite openly as the candidate’s contribution to the party. The payment is a de facto investment, and the candidate making the payment must obviously be in a position to gain the returns required to justify such an investment. Even where women or their families could raise the money (and leaving aside the question the desirability or their willingness to engage in such practices) they are often not in a position to reap the same returns as men because they are not engaged in the extra-political networks, government contracts, business deals, etc where the main returns are obtained. Thus, in order to get more women into politics, women need to address the mainstream agenda issues of good governance, decentralisation, democratic reform, legal reform, etc and transform the mainstream itself.

*Example: Gender budgeting initiatives cannot be separated from mainstream budget processes and macroeconomic policies.* In gender budgeting initiatives, it is becoming increasingly obvious that gender budgeting cannot either be separated from mainstream budgeting processes or from the macroeconomic policy framework that sets the parameters for public sector budgets. In many cases, mainstream budgeting processes remain within a narrow accounting framework and the parameters of conventional neo-classical macroeconomic policy. The main issues of accountability revolve around technical issues in terms of the validity of the processes and paperwork associated with particular expenditures, often within a political context of widespread corruption and inefficiency. The question of impact and whether anyone, women or men, actually benefited from the expenditures is often not even on the agenda.

Mainstreaming gender analysis within such a budgeting and governance framework is unlikely to contribute significantly to improving women’s lives. Gender budgeting needs to engage with the mainstream budgeting and governance agenda, not focus narrowly on merely adding gender to inherently corrupt and inefficient systems. Again, in order to address the women’s agenda, we must first engage in the mainstream budgeting processes.

*Example: Eliminating the feminisation of poverty requires the eradication of poverty.* Regardless of the definition of the feminisation of poverty, all poverty, including that of men and children, affects women. Thus, although measures specifically reducing the impact of poverty on women remain an important priority in the short and medium term, in the broadest sense and the long term the feminisation of poverty can only be addressed through strategies that seek the eradication of all poverty.

## **Principle 2**

**Women must become empowered and informed decision makers on mainstream issues. This vision must explicitly recognise the rights of different groups of women — poor women, indigenous women, disabled women, etc — to participate in decision making on mainstream issues. Mainstreaming approaches on the role of women in leadership and decision making have emphasised getting ‘women’s issues’ and a gender perspective into the mainstream.**

However, if women are to transform the mainstream, they must bring their unique experience and perspective to the decision making table in respect of the key issues of the day. They can no longer be outsiders ‘begging’ to put ‘their’ issues on the agenda: they must become key players who, by their informed, empowered and active presence,



help to shape a world in which the issues of all, women, men and children, rich and poor, will be addressed.<sup>4</sup>

### **Principle 3**

**Women's human rights can only be realised through the transformation of gender power relations at all levels.<sup>5</sup> A rights-based perspective must be explicitly based on challenging prevailing power relations. This may — and often will — include addressing unequal power relations among groups of women, as well as between women and men.**

While human rights instruments, particularly CEDAW, are critical tools, the full realisation of women's human rights requires explicit strategies to transform power relations between women and men at all levels and in all UNIFEM activities. This perspective needs to be built in to all elements of the new mainstreaming paradigm: mainstreaming a gender perspective through the use of gender tools; mainstreaming women's participation in decision making; and transforming the mainstream agenda to give equal importance to the interests and priorities of women.

### **Conclusion**

UNIFEM is engaged in transforming the mainstream in several areas, but has not yet articulated a new mainstreaming paradigm. This new approach is implicit in a growing body of work emerging from UNIFEM and the women's movement in general, but it is not yet explicitly articulated as a new dimension of mainstreaming. For example, the recent comments from the Economic Security and Rights Section on the draft terms of reference for the new Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade requested the task force to consider the unequal terms of trade, the continuation of agricultural subsidies in developed countries, and proposed new trade agreements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), all mainstream issues. International Alert's recent project, *Women Building Peace: Sharing Know-how*, included an analysis by women of their perspectives of the mainstream agenda on conflict and peace, the main factors giving rise to armed conflict and women's views that both international and local factors generate and perpetuate violent conflict.

UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Hayzer's report on UNIFEM's experience in working on women and peace in Africa suggests a recognition that women must be at the main peace table, not just to present their own issues — although that remains important — but also to contribute a women's perspective to debates on the mainstream issues of conflict and peace. Women's issues can only be addressed within the framework of solutions to the broader issues of conflict, peace building, reconciliation, justice and nation building.

### **Notes**

1. UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Hayzer requested this paper after a side discussion at a lunch during her recent mission to Bangkok. It builds on some ideas we shared about a new approach to mainstreaming, and draws on some of the experiences she shared with us on working on peace and conflict in Africa. It also reflects my experiences in developing and implementing the Asia-Pacific and Arab States Regional Programme on Engendering Economic Governance, as well as conversations with Lucy Lazo and Kornvipa Boonsue in the Bangkok office. The paper has also benefited considerably from input from Geoff Corner. It is still very much a work in progress.

2. I am indebted to Kornvipa Boonsue, Programme Manager for the ERAW Regional Programme in the Bangkok office, for this insight.
3. See Lorraine Corner, *Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming: Background Paper for the ESCAP High Level Meeting for the Beijing + 5 Review*, October 1999.
4. Others are thinking along the same lines. I recently received this notice: *World Birth* is a new magazine that aims to address the under-representation of women and children in the international news media. The mission of this newly-launched publication is to “bring the voices of leading women and children to the forefront of our global problem-solving dialogue”.’
5. Thanks to Kornvipa Boonsue for this insight.

## **Transformational development and the wellbeing of women**

*Elizabeth Reid, Gender Relations Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University\**

### **Introduction**

Some development practices transform people's lives; some do not. In the literature on women/gender and development, arguments are often made for or against a particular strategic approach: projects for women, gender focused projects or gender mainstreaming. The paper uses case studies of women-specific projects and of the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming to argue that the way development is practiced is a more significant determinant of effective development outcomes than the choice of one strategy over another. It further argues that a concentration or range of strategies may be required. The conditions in which development may be transformational are explored. The need to start from the specificity and variability of each setting and to work in particular ways with all concerned is the starting point. It is argued that the constituent elements of transformative development are processual, interactive and emergent.

### **Transformational development**

In the discipline of development practice, there is a widely shared commitment to the wellbeing of women. The grounds for this commitment have varied: feminist ideology, social justice, development efficiency, socialism, theology, and others. There is agreement amongst the committed that the benefits of and participation in development should be equitably distributed, between men and women and across all social cleavages. However, improving the wellbeing of women has proved to be one of the most difficult challenges of development practice.

Women-specific projects have been designed to achieve particular objectives, for example, the education of girls and women, women's autonomy, the gains of organising, access to income, articulateness, support to widows, etc. However, such projects have been criticised in the feminist literature and arguments have been made for alternative approaches — either a focus on gender relations in which women are subordinated to men or, alternatively, for gender mainstreaming (Pearson et al. 1984; Goetz 1997).

The practice of development has shown that women-focused, as well as gender-focused approaches may redistribute power in social relations, or may not. Women's needs do not exist in isolation, but form part of an interconnected system of social and power relationships, including gender relations. Both approaches can have as their objective the catalysing of socioeconomic changes, which can change for the better women's sense of themselves, the way people relate to them, and their ability to influence and shape what happens to them and those for whom they are concerned or responsible. Both can concern themselves with the gendered redistribution of power in social, economic and political relations. These latter are important facets of the concept of the wellbeing of women as used in this article.

## **Women-specific projects: The Kenyan example**

In the late 1970s, UNDP and UNICEF decided to review and evaluate the work of the Kenyan Women's Bureau. The evaluation mission was composed of the head of the bureau, Terry Kantai, and myself. One key strategy of the bureau had been women's self help or *harambee* groups. We visited a number of goat-raising projects run by groups of women. Traditionally, men owned goats and women provided the labour and the food for their husbandry. Men decided when the goats were to be slaughtered and then either feasted on them, cooked and served by the women, or the goats were sold and the men kept the money for their own purposes. That was the tradition.

The women we visited felt transformed. One woman showed me her elongated open ear lobes and said, 'Once that used to say who I was. Now I can say who I am.' The *collective* ownership and husbandry of the goats meant that no one woman's husband had the *droit de seigneur*, the right to the fruits of her labour. The women themselves decided when to slaughter and for what purpose.

These woman-specific projects changed the traditional balance of power, privilege and authority, the traditional gender relations. They created new patterns of relationships amongst the women and within their families, and new social spaces within which women could try out different roles and elaborate new responsibilities. It brought them in touch with local government and other officials and required of them the capacity to argue and negotiate in public and political places. The women involved felt that they themselves had brought about these changes in their lives. They felt empowered and that they were acting for a shared or common good. These projects were transformative. The entry point of a specific project for women created change in power relations in the social, political and gender spheres.

## **Critiquing women-specific projects**

The Kenyan self-help projects were not an anomaly. The women and development literature is full of similarly positive evaluations of initiatives specifically for women: seats reserved for women in local government in India (Jain 1995:245–6) and elsewhere, income generation (Heath 1995), education for women and girls (Bhasin 1995:133–135), dedicated health facilities for the treatment of fistulas (Hamelin 2002), women-specific organisations (Tripp 2000), and so on.

The research literature on women, gender and development has criticised women-specific projects on a number of grounds, including in terms of instrumentality. Instrumentalism directs resources to women as a means of achieving other policy ends — fertility control, environmental, household wellbeing, efficiency in the use of development resources, etc. The commitment is to something other than women's wellbeing. Where an argument can be made that the particular goal could best be attained by targeting women, women are used to this end. The historical example of this is the use of women for population control ends in the 1960s and 1970s. Current examples include statements such as 'investing in women can be a cost effective route to economic efficiency' (World Bank 1989:iv) and policies which focus on women in development to achieve economic performance, poverty reduction and other development objectives.

Instrumental justifications for women-specific initiatives can be considered ethically objectionable. They are essentially manipulative, with women, and perhaps worse still, their bodies, or minds, becoming pawns in the games of others, individuals or institutions, who are invariably more powerful actors on the global stage. The approach

itself can also be criticised because of the embedded view of development as linear, engineer-able and reductionist. However, it is important to recognise that, whatever the agendas of the funders and policy makers, such initiatives may provide resources that women can use for their own ends and to their own advantage.

Other critiques of women-specific projects in the literature include the claims that such initiatives do not intervene at a sufficient number of or appropriate levels of the governmental or political hierarchies. Others claim that they isolate women from their social settings or that they identify women by gender and fail to capture other forms of subordination experienced by women in their lived situation.

However, I wish to argue that it is possible to construct a development practice relating to initiatives for women that may not leave itself open to these criticisms. The development practice is transformational. It starts from the specificity and variability of each setting and works to assist those concerned to change it for the better. The Kenyan case study begins to illustrate such a practice and in so doing provides an initial reply to such critiques. Goat-raising was only one of a range of activities chosen by the women's groups as the means of changing their lives and relationships. Other women's groups choose to make school uniforms. Some started village shops. The women of Mraru dreamed of running a bus between the village and the nearby town with its markets, hospital and high school (Kneerim 1980).

The approach which was adopted by the Women's Bureau staff assumed women's agency and capacities in the concept of self-help and so did not 'problematise' women. The specificities of women's positions were appreciated and formed the starting point for the work. The approach neither socially isolated women nor constructed some determinate or essentialist category of 'women'. Gender relations were not generalised, but were recognised as dynamic, variable and changeable. Most importantly, the focus remained on women's wellbeing. Men were drawn into the processes of change, as local politicians, bureaucrats, husbands, businessmen, family members and in other capacities and, in the process, may themselves have been changed.

### **Transformational development**

Non-instrumentalist or non-interventionist development practice is concerned with understanding the dynamics of transformative processes. For practitioners, the central questions are 'how' questions (Peavey 1994). Some women-specific initiatives are transformative; some are not. Some non-women specific initiatives are transformative; some not. The challenge for the reflective practitioner is to understand the difference, and to find the strategies or entry point(s) in any given situation, in its complexity, which may help catalyse transformational processes.

The Kenyan example, where both the women raising the goats and those from the Women' Bureau who worked with them, considered the processes to have been transformative, throws some light on the conditions for transformational development. These activities enabled the women involved to gain a greater sense of agency, of self-worth, and of common purpose. They created spaces out of which the women could link into power structures in new ways. The transformational processes included women learning to work together across their differences, to solve problems together, to learn by doing, to understand the need for strategic alliances and to forge those alliances when necessary. They also included the nature of the relationships between the outsiders, in this case the Kenyan Women's Bureau and its fieldworkers, and the women' groups. The outsiders understood the solidarity of self-help and the essential horizontality and openness of relations of respect.

Learning by doing, collective problem solving, gaining a sense of agency and the forging of strategic alliances are processual and emergent. The outcomes or results may not be able to be predicted but, more importantly, to do so could undermine people's sense of agency and ownership. Such processes are constitutive of transformational development, whether it concerns women only, or communities of interest (hooks 2000), or the poor (Banuri et al. 1994).

### **Conceptualising gender mainstreaming**

Initiatives for women, or other groups, are often contrasted, again questionably, with mainstreaming strategies, strategies which integrate or mainstream issues of concern to women, and women themselves, in development. The term mainstreaming has no single agreed meaning, but has entered the development discourse to capture the claim for developmental justice: that development should be of equitable benefit, that questions such as who benefits, who loses, what trade-offs have been made, what is the resultant balance of rights, power and privilege, can and should be asked in all contexts of change.

The term mainstream describes the means by which power, influence and wealth shape social position and access to benefits. The mainstream is the arrangement of practices, institutions, ideas, values, relationships, alliances and networks that determines who gets what in a society, that is, how benefits and opportunities are distributed. In this sense, the mainstream is more than just institutions and practices, more than development paradigms or agendas (Jahan 1995). It is a set of dynamic processes, as much informal and shadowy as formal and accessible. The challenge to the social reformer/development practitioner is to determine how equity in access to benefits and opportunities can be increased. And in this context, to establish what the role of the State might be, in any particular situation, in bringing about a more just society.

### **Gender mainstreaming and the state**

The Kenyan Women's Bureau, as so many others, was established by the Government of Kenya soon after the First World Conference for Women, held in Mexico City in 1975. The World Plan of Action of the Conference stressed the importance of establishing what was referred to as 'national machinery for the advancement of women': women's bureaux, ministries of women's affairs, offices for the status of women, and such like. They are a form of women-specific initiatives.

As the staff of these units reflected on their tasks, multiple mandates emerged for these national machineries:

- funding and/or implementing initiatives to increase women's wellbeing: *direct action*;
- persuading others to work to improve women's wellbeing: *advocacy*;
- getting structures, procedures and practices in place in government to improve women's wellbeing: *making the state more responsive*; and
- working collaboratively with others outside of government to improve the wellbeing of women: *strategic alliances*.

These mandates still leave open the question, which is central to the practitioner or implementer, of how best to achieve these ends, the question of what might be the effective strategies or entry points for change. Alive to these concerns, the staff of the

national machineries for women developed a number of strategies for fulfilling their mandates:

- conscientisation and mobilisation of players: *persuasion*;
- accountability through performance criteria: *shame and praise*;
- resources, financial as well as human: *capacity building and incentives*; and
- mandatory requirements and sanctions: *power*.

The strategies available to national organisations to catalyse the state to respond in a more just or gender equitable fashion are often referred to as mainstreaming strategies, although this is a narrower sense of the mainstream than that given above, with its focus on the state alone. It is a focused application of the strategies outlined in the previous paragraph, to the state alone rather than to all key players. The Beijing Platform for Action uses this sense of mainstreaming when it states that the main task for a national machinery for the advancement of women is 'to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas (United Nations 1995:para 201).

### **Institutional gender mainstreaming**

Thus the phrase gender mainstreaming came to signify a move towards procedures and mechanisms within organisations, particularly governmental, bilateral and multilateral institutions, to systematically take account of gender issues in policy development and in program and project design, implementation and evaluation. It also carries a claim for equitable representation and participation in these institutions. With this narrowing of the application of the term came the tendency to reduce gender issues in development to the practice of governments and development agencies.

This latter is different from the recognition and understanding of the gendered nature of such institution and their broader developmental environments, pointed out by writers such as Barbara Rogers, Kathleen Staudt, Rounaq Jahan, Jane Jaquette and others. Mainstreaming strategies are only one of a possible range of ways to address the gendered nature of the institutions of development and gender issues in development.

However, given the increasing focus on the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming, often at the expense of initiatives for women, it might be timely to explore more critically the links between the practices of institutional gender mainstreaming and their impact on women's wellbeing. Can the addressing of gender issues in development be best achieved through engendering the practice of development agencies, and of the state?

### **Gender mainstreaming in practice**

I will take as a case study the institutional capacity building for gender mainstreaming implemented within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the years up to and including 1989–1991. During this latter period, I headed the UNDP women and development program. Beginning with the groundbreaking work of Ulla Ollin in the mid 1970s, UNDP staff had been pushing the organisation to become more gender sensitive and competent for 15 years when I arrived, and continued after I left the post.

I found committed leadership in the then Administrator of UNDP, Bill Draper Jr. Women-committed policies were in place, both with respect to the organisation's development practice and to the recruitment of personnel. There were oversight mechanisms involving senior management to ensure that women and gender concerns were taken into account in project and program design and evaluation. There were

checklists, model gender-sensitive instruments and instructions on mission composition. Field data and personnel data were disaggregated by gender and other key indicators (level, placement, income, etc.). Case studies had been developed of good practice and of transgressive practice. Training models, tools and materials had been developed, revised, improved, revised and staff trained, trained and trained.

The organisation was conscious of the maleness of its culture and values, and constantly reflected on ways to improve its gender competency and practices. Staff gender performance appraisals were designed and implemented as a means of strengthening the implementation of its commitment. Gender impact analyses and gender budgeting were put in place. Gender-related development indices and gender-empowerment indices were developed to measure and compare national progress in achieving gender objectives. The mainstreaming of gender in the organisation had 'ongoing attention, resources and political capital' (United Nations 2002:25).

Did these extensive assets and mechanisms mean that gender was adequately mainstreamed? Did UNDP become gender sensitive and competent as an organisation, in its development practice and in its development partnerships with national governments and others?

Complex skills are required to understand the lives of the oppressed and the factors that shape and distort them. Tools such as gender analysis frameworks are not adequate to develop these skills. They may contribute to raising the gender consciousness of staff, but fail to capture the complexity and the dynamism of social and power relations. Dichotomous gender templates are not strategic: they 'substitute a static and incomplete description for a dynamic analysis of power and difference' (Reid 1995:114). Consider the Kenyan example. A gender analysis would show that ownership and decision making over small animals were the prerogative of men, whilst women contributed on a non-reimbursable basis to their husbandry. It would not capture the ways or the extent to which these roles were negotiable or changeable. Nor does it capture other interacting systems of oppression or exclusion.

Complex insights into the reality of people's life situations come from the narratives of the silenced, the oppressed and the marginalised, for they live the way power in all its forms writes their lives and bodies on a daily basis. The skills required are the listening of the silenced and suborned into speech and the capacity to reflect on these stories. Paulo Friere, Fran Peavey, Arnold Zable and others can teach the receptive the skills of active listening, of letting people 'speak their world', of identifying the issues about which people are concerned or feel passionate, and the other skills basic to understanding people's lives. Were we expecting all UNDP staff to be able to analyse and understand the gendered nature of situations and their contexts in these ways?

Understanding a situation takes certain skills; identifying effective entry points or strategies for changing the situation takes a completely different set of skills and a different role for the 'outsider', including the development practitioner. The development practitioner can help create the spaces in which the need for change can be acknowledged, help identify entry points for change, and facilitate the processes of change, but the basic skill is the ability to contribute their knowledge and skills in non-disempowering and respectful ways.

Gendered situational analyses and strategic development require gender expertise and commitment. Well conceived and implemented gender mainstreaming strategies are rarely, if ever, sufficient in themselves to develop these capacities throughout an organisation. Furthermore, they often place the staff of the women's program in the institution in a critical, even confrontational, stance with respect to the work of the other



staff of the organisation: the ‘What about the women?’ syndrome. The professional distance created makes it difficult to form strategic alliances and collegial relationships.

Even where organisations have become more gender competent through intensive training and other gender mainstreaming measures, there remains a question of the cost effectiveness of the strategy. There is no literature which shows that increased gender competency in an organisation is causally connected to improved development outcomes for women nor are there comparative cost benefit studies which show that gender mainstreaming is more effective than other strategies.

### **Beyond institutional gender mainstreaming**

Achieving the desired developmental outcomes may require a concentration of strategies, including but not limited to gender mainstreaming. During my time with UNDP, I came to believe in the importance of focusing beyond gender mainstreaming, that is, of moving beyond measures, incentives, and sanctions within an organisation (and within government at the national level) in order to create the desired capacities external to the institution. Perhaps the desired development outcomes of the institution could better be achieved by building capacity and providing resources for women, research organisations, advocacy groups and others within a partner country to:

- articulate what was needed and how to address it;
- negotiate forms of assistance in order to bring the changes about;
- monitor the processes of change and their efficacy; and, in particular,
- assist, monitor and evaluate progress in achieving gender and similar objectives.

Such a strategy builds on the lived understanding of those concerned of the specificities of and causal influences on their situations. It strengthens skill and knowledge bases external to the organisation, as well as internally. It creates the capacity and provides the resources to hold the organisation accountable for the adequate implementation of its policies within the countries with which it is working. There are flow-on benefits to such a strategy since the capacities developed in-country could be more broadly used to leverage change in national organisations, as well as other development partners.

### **Conclusion**

A commitment to the wellbeing of women is a challenge to practice development and to govern in ways that transform women’s lives for the better, howsoever one can achieve these aims. Reducing these practices to gender mainstreaming or projects for women or any other single approach fails to grasp the reality that sometimes these initiatives work, sometimes they do not. What is needed is to better understand the conditions for transformation in any particular setting or approach.

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## **Whose World? The Bank on gender**

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### **Introduction**

As the ten-year review of the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women draws near, feminists are evaluating the fate of the Beijing Platform for Action. Sadly, the hopes of 1995 are fading; indeed, the contemporary global political environment is so antithetical to women's interests that plans for the Fifth United Nations Conference on Women have been discarded in favour of a regular session of the Commission on the Status of Women (DAW 2004). In 1995, it was possible to believe that the battle to have gender mainstreamed in the operations of key institutions was won. In 2004, while the rhetoric pervades a number of institutional and government documents, practices on the ground seem to be geared towards objectives distant from gender equality.

While most feminists remember 1995 as the year of the Beijing Conference, it was also an important year in global political economy. The World Trade Organization (WTO) joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to create a triumvirate of international financial institutions, which together manage key global economic functions of trade, investment and economic development. Elsewhere I have argued that the focus of feminists organising internationally on women's rights led to neglect in analysis of and action on the global economic trends that shape the context in which women enjoy (or not) their human rights (Foskey 2003). Since Beijing, many feminist organisations have made strong attempts to redress that balance.<sup>1</sup>

Of the three international financial institutions, the World Bank has been given most attention by feminists and other development activists. This is because the bank has the most direct impact on development, due to its provision of funds through loans for Third World development and also because it has been more accessible and responsive to civil society campaigns than the other two institutions. It has proven difficult to find means of influencing the IMF and WTO, which still maintain that gender issues are irrelevant to their work. A growing corpus of feminist analysis contradicts this understanding, indicating that structural adjustment programs (conditionalities applied by both the IMF and World Bank upon indebted governments) and the impacts of unfair trade policy fall unevenly upon poor women and their families.

The decision by the bank to 'mainstream gender' after the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women was a major achievement of the women's movement and a powerful means of improving the lives of poor women in countries where the bank works. Concrete steps have been taken by committed staff at the bank — including its president since the mid 1990s, James Wolfensohn — to have gender issues integrated into bank decisions and operations. Recent evaluations, however, indicate that there is still a long way to go in taking mainstreaming beyond rhetoric. This article looks at these critiques as part of a broader assessment that considers why, despite the best efforts of people inside and outside the World Bank, gender remains at the margins.

### **Women to the rescue**

Before examining the World Bank's efforts to mainstream gender, in this section I consider the reasons why it decided to step outside the framework of its fellow international financial institutions. The bank is pre-eminently an economic institution. It

was established by the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944 to provide long term loans for post-war reconstruction in Europe and economic development for the Third World. Its current aim for a 'World Free of Poverty' is far more ambitious.

Feminists with an interest in the global political economy see the bank as an important site for activism since it is a major source of funds for Third World development, distributing US\$18.5 billion in 2003, (World Bank 2004). Furthermore, the bank's annual *World Development Report* is highly influential in setting the policy context for governments of developing and donor countries and institutions. The bank also dedicates a high level of funds to research and economic analysis, but its ability to impact on gender politics is more pervasive:

The World Bank is in a powerful position to pressure governments to introduce policies to benefit women and girls through its Country Assistance Strategies. It has tended to reflect the views of national elite women, however, due to its limited consultation mechanisms.

The World Bank acts as a custodian, it determines the concepts, methodological categories and data base used to analyse gender issues. The 'donor community' controls the institutional framework (at the country level) ... Because the World Bank constitutes the main source of funding, national women's organisations associated with the seat of political power, will often endorse the World Bank gender perspective (Chossudovsky 1995).

In deciding to integrate gender into its operations, the bank was not deviating from its mandate of increasing economic growth, since it was acting on its own research, which indicates that investing in girls and women, and involving them in economic activities, increases economic efficiency (World Bank 2001). James Wolfensohn has stressed a number of areas that will benefit from women's involvement. At the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference, he delivered a speech entitled 'Women and the transformation of the 21st century', which centralised women in efforts towards sustainable development, economic advancement and social justice. In other documents, Wolfensohn has reaffirmed his 'commitment to the crucial importance of harnessing their talents with equal opportunity and fairness for all' and recognised that:

not to empower women is a tragically missed opportunity — not only to create a more just, but also a more prosperous society. Empowering women, by the same token, means ensuring their full participation in every aspect of development (Wolfensohn 1995).

The 1990s United Nations conferences were key sites for feminist activism to ensure that women's interests were reflected in conference outcomes. The 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) identified women's role in sustainable development, evoking familiar images of women and girls carrying water, gathering wood and working in subsistence agriculture. Consequently, consultation with women was pinpointed as an important step in environmental management, a position backed up by sections of the women's movement (World Women's Congress 1991). The bank was given the major institutional role in global efforts to manage the environment resulting from UNCED.

The World Bank was noticeably absent from the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as the bank does not see human rights as an area of relevance to its work (see below). At the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the World Bank's then president, Lewis T Preston, was more concerned about population than women. He urged development planners to 'ensure the effective implementation' of their programs by better targeting resources 'so that they reach the poor', by strengthening partnerships, and by keeping population issues at 'the forefront of the policy dialogue' (Preston 1994). Prior to the Beijing conference, the appointment

of James Wolfensohn as World Bank president by President Clinton led to more attention being paid to girls and women, with education a favoured theme.

Education for girls has a catalytic effect on *every dimension of development*: lower child and maternal mortality rates; reduced fertility rates; increased educational attainment by daughters and sons; higher productivity; and improved environmental management. Together, these can mean faster economic growth and - equally important - wider distribution of the fruits of growth. In addition, educating girls opens the door to economic and political opportunity for future generations. (Wolfensohn 1995, emphasis added).

Since 1995, the theme of 'good governance' has taken a central place in development policy and bank documents. Here, too, women were seen to offer a partial solution to the problem of corruption. Studies in preparation of the World Bank's *Engendering Development* found a high correlation between female participation and good governance, a matter of great concern to the bank since no amount of expenditure will benefit the poor where bureaucrats and politicians impede financial flows.

The study's authors established a strong positive correlation between low levels of female involvement in public life and high levels of government corruption. 'Whether this means that women are inherently more moral beings than men, I don't know,' said Andrew Mason, co-author of the study and a senior economist at the World Bank.

More likely, he said, is that a higher level of women's participation signifies a country that is more open in general, with more transparent government and a more democratic approach (Moline 2002).

The bank's gender experts have mounted strong case for centrally involving women in development planning and implementation. Nonetheless, Moser's and Zuckerman and Qing's examinations of bank practice indicate that these considerations are yet to be adopted by most of the bank's economists. But even if every section of the bank, from country representatives and staff to the president, involved women at every step of the project cycle, would this be equivalent to mainstreaming gender?

### **WID or GAD?**

Moser's 1998 analysis of the bank's attempts to include women led her to the conclusion that, far from mainstreaming gender, the bank had not moved beyond the women in development (WID) approach. Zuckerman and Qing's later analysis (2003) showed that, despite the availability of more tools for gender analysis, the project of mainstreaming gender at the bank still has far to go. My own analysis (Foskey 2003) indicates that the bank's neglect of a human rights agenda limits attention to women to instrumental interventions for the achievement of other ends (economic efficiency, good governance, better environmental management, reduced fertility) rather than an aim for gender equality.

Feminists' efforts at the United Nations conferences of the 1990s aimed to transform conditions for women. Most feminists working in the development area favour a gender and development (GAD) approach which centralises the power relations between men and women, rather than the WID focus which tends to treat women as add-ons to the main game of development. 'Empowerment of women' is central to the GAD approach and was the key element in the campaigns of DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), a network of Third World researchers which seeks to represent the perspectives of marginalised Third World women in global debates about development-related issues. Their definition of 'empowerment' is similar to this definition from Batliwala:

Empowerment is thus both a process and the result of that process. Empowerment is manifested as a redistribution of power, whether between nations, classes, castes, races, genders, or individuals. The goals of women's empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology (male domination and women's subordination); to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality (the family, caste, class, religion, educational processes and institutions, the media, health practices and systems, laws and civil codes, political processes, development models and government institutions); and to enable poor women to gain access to, and control of, both material and informational resources. (Batliwala 1994:130)

The centralisation of the redistribution of power in this definition underlines the transformative agenda of feminists who advocate empowerment. As Riley (2003:3) points out, 'gender mainstreaming has the potential to be transformative in nature, changing the dominant paradigms in which we work'.

The mainstreaming of gender and the wholesale adoption of a GAD approach would destabilise every area of the World Bank's activities. Here may lie the basis of the bank's inability to implement a GAD approach, despite the best efforts of feminists inside and outside the institution.

### **Engendering the World Bank**

Zuckerman and Qing consider 19 key areas and procedures of World Bank operations and find uneven evidence of successful gender mainstreaming. In this section I consider some of the key instruments they examine and the measures they suggest to engender Bank processes. In conclusion, I consider whether Zuckerman's and Qing's proposals are sufficient to change the bank's approach from WID to GAD.

The primary document produced by the bank to assist its staff in the mainstreaming of gender is *Integrating Gender in the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action* (World Bank 2002). A key element of this strategy is the requirement for client countries to provide periodic multi-sectoral Country Gender Assessments. While these are mandatory, gender-responsive actions are not. There is no requirement for the involvement of civil society organisations, for information sharing and for transparency in the implementation or evaluation of the strategy. Finally, the strategy lacks references to women's right to enjoy their human rights.

The document opens with the 'Business case for mainstreaming gender', an acknowledgement that this must first be convincingly established to persuade World Bank employees with an economic focus to read on. In fact, Zuckerman and Qing found that a very small proportion of staff had heard of, let alone read, the document. Many of the bank's country-based Gender Focal Points lacked either the expertise or the time (or both) to identify and investigate gender issues, which was reflected in country documents. While the Washington-based 'gender anchor' was active, its work did not penetrate to the bank's main areas of operation.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) were introduced in 1999 as a necessary prerequisite for low-income countries to qualify for external financing and debt relief. The bank's sourcebook on PRSPs includes a long chapter on ways of engendering the final document. Even so, although bank and IMF staff assist governments in the preparation of these, results are extremely uneven. Zuckerman and Qing observe a tendency to confine discussion on (and with) women, where it occurs at all, to the 'traditional' areas of reproductive health and girls' education. No attempt is made in any of the 13 PRSPs produced in 2002 to consider the gender implications of the economic restructuring measures recommended by the IMF and World Bank.

Zuckerman and Qing found that, overall, the bank has made substantial steps towards mainstreaming gender. Earlier ad hoc procedures have been systematised and a centralised monitoring and reporting system is in the process of development. Nonetheless, gender was found to be a low priority among the competing areas demanding the attention of bank staff. This is due, primarily, to the lack of mandatory requirements to attend to gender issues. Consequently, there is a lack of staff at country and regional levels; accountability measures are lacking and resource allocation relies upon the decisions of individual country directors. Zuckerman and Qing made the wider observation that women's rights are given less weight than economic arguments and that macroeconomic policies are rarely subjected to gender analysis.

Their recommendations address many of the areas of weakness they identify. They include: making a gender focus mandatory for all bank activities; expanding the number of gender experts and locating them strategically in all bank networks; giving greater power to gender experts in country offices and insisting that they play a part in engendering every operation from identification to design and implementation; the creation of real accountability mechanisms; and making gender monitoring reports public. They do not address their concern that the bank gives little attention to women's human rights as worth pursuing for women's own sake, or for the need to engender macroeconomic decision making.

### **A rights approach to gender**

Influential World Bank officials and board members argue that the mandate of economic development precludes a requirement to address human rights in its work. They claim that the bank's ability to incorporate human rights is limited by its Articles of Agreement, which state that 'only economic considerations shall be relevant' to its decisions (Gaeta and Vasilara 1998:3). Enhancing human rights can only be a secondary consideration in a framework which prioritises economic growth. Often, the objectives run counter to each other. As Elson and Gideon point out, the human rights focus 'treats people as ends in themselves, the [economistic framework] treats people as means for production and subjects them to a financial calculus (Elson and Gideon 1999:31).

The result is that the gender impacts of economic restructuring remain unexplored. In particular, the increase in women's unpaid labour as a result of removal of free social services and cost-recovery measures for health and education is not accounted for in the bank's evaluations: "[W]omen are seen as a resource to be tapped to promote the efficiency of the market and a solution to the shortfall in social services" (AWID 2002:4). The removal of subsidies for food and other essential household items such as fuel tend to be borne by women, who often prioritise the feeding of children over their own nutritional needs. Further, the privatisation of water services and catchments and introduction of user fees for water under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services or in private-public partnerships often takes place without consultation with women, despite the recognition of their role in domestic and community water management. These moves away from public provision of essential services to market determination contradicts the bank's own acknowledgement that the wellbeing of women and their involvement in project design and implementation has multiplier effects on the health and education of children. Furthermore, enforcing economic and political conditions makes loans into a policy tool, which obstructs women's access to their rights under the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## Conclusion

During their navigation of World Bank processes, worthy documents such as *Engendering Development* are in danger of losing any transformative potential their authors may have intended. World Bank governors, board and client states look for 'the business case for gender equity, not the social justice case' (O'Brien et al. 2002:45). Despite the best of intentions, the project of 'engendering' development will be impossible for the World Bank unless it changes the economic prescriptions that contribute to the problem rather than provide solutions to girls' and women's poverty.

## Notes

Deb Foskey recently attained her doctorate for her thesis on the global politics of population and reproduction. She teaches and writes in the area of development, gender and international politics and works on a part-time basis for the International Women's Development Agency.

1. For example, see recent work of Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID 2002) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO 1996; 2002).

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## **Men, gender and development**

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### **Introduction**

Should men be included in programming and policy related to gender, and, if so, how can male inclusion be made most beneficial? The belief that it is desirable to involve men in efforts towards gender equality is rapidly becoming institutionalised in the philosophies and programs of international organisations. The question of male involvement is now on the agenda in gender and development work, as it is in such fields as sexual and reproductive health, fatherhood and families, work and economy, and interpersonal violence.

How is it that men's and boys' roles in progress towards gender equality is now the subject of such attention? This is the outcome of over three decades of social change. The women's movements and feminism have offered a wide-ranging critique of the attitudes, practices and cultures among men which sustain gender inequality. There have been disruptions to and contestations of the social organisation of gender in at least three realms. In power relations, the legitimacy of men's domination has weakened dramatically, in particular under the influence of global feminism. Production relations in Western capitalist countries have undergone fundamental changes since World War II, for example, with married women's increased entry into paid employment and the decline of traditionally male areas of primary industry. Finally, there have been important shifts in sexual relations, in particular with the emergence and stabilisation of lesbian and gay sexualities as public alternatives to heterosexuality (Connell 1995:84–85). Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s in advanced capitalist countries, men's lives have been questioned and debated with passion. Men have been interrogated 'as a sex, in a way until recently reserved for women — as a problem' (Segal 1993:x).

Men show a variety of public responses to such shifts, from active support for feminism to efforts to shore-up male privilege. Small groups and networks of men across the globe, often in collaboration with women, are engaged in public efforts in support of gender equality, and men's anti-violence activism is the most visible and well-developed aspect of such efforts (Flood 2001). On the other hand, 'men's rights' and 'fathers' rights' groups are engaged in an energetic defence of patriarchal masculinity and men's power, particularly in families (Flood 2003: 37–42).

Beginning in the mid 1990s, men's role in progress towards gender equality has been the subject of growing international commitments and activity. In the Beijing Declaration, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, governments expressed their determination to encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality. This was reaffirmed and extended in the follow-up meeting in 2000. The role of men and boys has also been addressed by other intergovernmental fora, including the World Summit on Social Development (1995) and its review session (2000), as well as the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS of 2001. Across the globe, a wide variety of initiatives focused on or inclusive of men are proliferating in such fields as men's violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and fatherhood and families.

In the most recent international expression of this trend, 'the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality' is one of the themes adopted for the forty-eighth session of

the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2004, New York. Part of the preparation for this undertaken by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) was an Expert Group Meeting, held in Brazil on 21–24 October 2003. I attended the meeting, along with 13 other invited experts from Brazil, Bulgaria, Fiji, India, Kenya, Peru, South Africa, Sweden, the US, the UK, and Yemen, as well as 24 observers largely from Brazil.

Our goal in the Expert Group Meeting was to clarify the roles that men and boys could play in achieving gender equality. In both plenary sessions and smaller working groups, we assessed approaches which have been successful in engaging men and boys in gender equality, identified obstacles to their participation, and began to map out the roles of governments, the private sector, civil society, and communities in encouraging men's contributions. Over the final two days, at breakneck speed, we wrote an Expert Group Report, containing a summary of the discussion and recommendations addressed to different actors at different levels. The Expert Group (2003) Report will provide the basis for a report of the Secretary-General on this theme to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2004.

Why then should men be involved in efforts towards gender equality, and if so, how? The following discussion addresses these questions in relation to the field of gender and development, but its themes are pertinent for any realm of gender-related work.

### **Why involve men?**

In the field of development, there are three broad areas in which men's involvement may be enacted: (1) working with men as decision makers and service providers; (2) integrating men into the development process with a 'gendered lens'; and (3) targeting groups of men and boys when and where they are vulnerable (for example in relation to issues of poverty or sexuality) (Lang 2003:8–9).

The impetus for male inclusion is associated with an important shift in how gender issues are conceived and addressed in development work. The overall shift from 'women in development' (WID) to 'gender and development' (GAD) 'has embodied greater reference to men, and arguably created greater space for the inclusion of men as actors and clients in gender interventions' (Chant and Guttman 2000:6). Of course men have always been part of the policies and practices of development work, but often they have been treated as generic and ungendered representatives of all humanity, thus perpetuating masculine norms and gender inequalities. The agenda of engaging men is not novel because of whom it addresses, but how. It addresses men *as men* — as gendered beings who participate in gender relations.

The emergence of 'gender and development' approaches has intensified attention to men's roles in two ways. First, GAD approaches are characterised in part by the goal of 'gender mainstreaming', in which gender issues are made an integral part of organisational thinking and practice. They aim to transform mainstream policy agendas from a gender perspective (rather than merely integrating gender into pre-existing policy concerns) and to re-work the cultures and functioning of development institutions (Chant and Guttman 2000:2–10). This has provoked greater interest in addressing the attitudes and practices of men, whether as clients of development agencies or as policy-makers and practitioners. Second, GAD approaches embody a shift towards a more overt focus on gender relations and the aim of creating structural changes in male-female power relations. While they continue (ideally) to address women's experiences and social situations, they also situate these in the context of the social and power relations between men and women. Before addressing the extent to which the shift from WID to

GAD has made a difference to efforts to address men, I outline the rationale for this inclusion.

At its broadest, the impetus for involving men in gender and development work is based on the recognition that men are both part of the problem and part of the solution. Gender injustice will only cease when men join with women to put an end to it. Many men's attitudes and behaviours will need to change in order for gender equality to be achieved. Many men participate in sexist practices and the maintenance of unjust gender relations, men often play a crucial role as 'gatekeepers' of the current gender order and as decision makers and community leaders, and patterns of gender injustice are tied to social constructions of masculinity and male identity. In addition, men's own health and wellbeing are limited by contemporary constructions of manhood (Kaufman 2003:1-3).

Agendas of gender equality have been widely seen as the concerns of women and not men. It was women, of course, who placed gender issues on the public agenda. The logic goes that, given that it is women who are disadvantaged by gender inequality, it is women who have a claim for redress, and thus gender issues are of no concern to men. However, this logic can no longer be sustained, for as Connell (2003:3) notes: 'Men and boys are *unavoidably* involved in gender issues.' Most immediately, men (or more accurately, specific groups of men) control the resources required to implement women's claims for justice. But, more broadly, gender inequalities are based in gender relations, in the complex webs of relationships that exist at every level of human experience (Connell 2003:3).

Including men in gender and development work is necessary because gender inequality is intimately tied to men's practices and identities, men's participation in complex and diverse gender relations, and masculine discourses and culture. Fostering gender equality requires change in these same arenas, of men's lives and relations. At the same time, involving men in efforts towards gender equality runs the risk of reinforcing men's existing power and jeopardising resources and funding directed at women (Kaufman 2003:5). The goal of promoting gender justice must be central, as I discuss in more detail below.

Rather than seeing men only as obstacles to women's empowerment, it is also worth recognising that some men already are playing a role in fostering gender equality. Some men are living already in gender-just ways. They respect and care for the women and girls in their lives, and they reject traditional, sexist norms of manhood. Individual men in trade unions and government organisations have been important advocates for women's rights. Small numbers of men are engaged in public efforts in support of gender equality, in such fields as violence against women, HIV/AIDS, and schooling.

Men show both resistance to, and support for, gender equality. Including men in gender and development work involves the recognition of this diversity, and the adoption of different strategies in responding to resistance while mobilising and building on support. Many men receive formal and informal benefits from gender inequalities, including material rewards and interpersonal power. At the same time, men also pay significant costs, particularly to their emotional and physical health. More widely, men can be and are motivated by interests other than those associated with gender privilege. There are important resources in men's lives for the construction of gender-equitable masculinities and forms of selfhood, such as men's concerns for children, intimacies with women, and ethical and political commitments. Thus, while men ought to change, it is also in men's interests to change. There is a moral imperative that men give up their

unjust share of power, and men themselves will benefit from advancing towards gender equality.

There are further reasons why efforts at gender reform should address men, to do with both the detrimental effects of male exclusion and the positive effects of male inclusion. First, the longstanding equation of 'gender' with women potentially marginalises women and women's struggles (Kaufman 2003:3). Leaving men out of efforts towards gender equality can provoke male hostility and retaliation, arising out of both exclusion and more general anxieties among men, as some development projects have found (Chant and Guttman 2000:25; Lang 2003:9). Focusing only on women, in relation to such issues as economic participation, credit, or sexual and reproductive health for example, can leave women with yet more work to do and thus intensify gender inequalities. Women-only projects can mean that women still have to deal with unsympathetic men and patriarchal power relations, and can leave women with sole responsibility for sexual health, family nutrition, and so on (Chant and Guttman 2000:26).

Including men in grassroots work on gender and development has important benefits. Given that many women already interact with men on a daily basis in their households and public lives, involving men can make interventions more relevant and workable (Chant and Guttman 2000:26). Male inclusion increases men's responsibility for change. Explicitly addressing men can increase men's belief that they too will gain from gender equality and can engage men directly in the renegotiation of gender relations. Male inclusion can speak to many men's sense of anxiety and fear as 'traditional' masculinities are undermined. Men's suffering (such as men's growing burden of illness or social and economic marginalisation among young, poor men) is worth addressing in its own right, and in terms of its potential impact on women (Chant and Guttman 2000:26–28).

None of this means that women's groups and gender-related programming must include men. There continue to be reasons why 'women's space', women-only and women-focused programs are vital: to support those who are most disadvantaged by pervasive gender inequalities; to maintain women's solidarity and leadership; and to foster women's consciousness-raising and collective empowerment. Nor should growing attention to male involvement threaten resources for women and women's programs. At the same time, reaching men to reduce gender inequalities against women is by definition spending money to meet the interests and needs of women, and will expand the financial and political support available to women's programs (Kaufman 2003:11).

### **One small step**

Despite a plethora of policy statements and pronouncements, there is little evidence that a concern with women, let alone with gender, has been integrated into programs and planning among development agencies, bureaucracies, funding agencies, or governments (Chant and Guttman 2000:2). Despite three decades of effort, actual development work has continued to marginalise women and women's concerns. Furthermore, the shift from WID to GAD did little to shake the lack of attention to male gender identities, and there is little evidence of 'male-inclusive' gender initiatives (Chant and Guttman 2000:2,14).

There are both good and bad reasons for the ongoing absence of men-as-men in GAD policy and programming. Given the persistence of widespread gender inequalities which disadvantage women, and the limited availability of resources for GAD work, there are good reasons for continuing to focus on women (Chant and Guttman 2000:16–19). There are understandable fears as to what may happen if men are invited in, in the

context of a history of grassroots examples where women have lost out, men have taken over, and women-oriented projects have been diluted or subverted (Chant and Guttman 2000:19). Women may be hesitant to share a realm which has been historically a place of sanctuary for women (Lang 2003:3). In addition, in development organisations there is some resistance to a GAD approach, for example, because it is harder to address gender relations, interventions into social relations of gender may be seen as inappropriate 'cultural interference', and GAD calls for more fundamental transformations which may be seen as 'confrontational' (Chant and Guttman 2000:20).

The patriarchal organisational structures and cultures of development organisations, and governments, inhibit attention to men's roles in gender equality (Lang 2003:2–3). Women's sectors in development often are weak, marginalised, under-funded, and have had little impact on mainstream developmental policies, programs and processes (Chant and Guttman 2000: 21). In this context:

Men may feel threatened by women's challenge to male entitlements, they may feel that gender has nothing to do with them, they are less likely to recognise gender relations as unequal, or may avoid raising gender issues for fear of disapproval and ridicule (Chant and Guttman 2000:21–22).

Men may also feel that as men they have been seen as 'all the same', and may resent approaches that are tactless or overly negative. Overall, as Chant and Guttman conclude (2000:23), there might be more willingness to include men in GAD if women had been given an equal place and say in development in general and if worldwide gender inequalities had lessened. Nevertheless, including men will be critical to the successful creation of gender equality.

## **Engaging men**

How should men be included in gender and development work? The bottom line of course is that any incorporation of men and men's gendered issues into development practice and policy should further the feminist goal of gender equality. As in gender policy in general, there is the danger that in speaking to men's concerns, interests and problems, the impetus for justice for women will be weakened and slide into anti-feminist backlash (Connell 2003:10). Yet gender equality initiatives must include an engagement with men and masculinities if they are to be effective. Thus the rationale of gender equality must be kept central, such that the 'involvement of men-as-men in GAD [is] couched within a clear feminist political agenda' (Chant and Guttman 2000:43).

In taking on such work, development practitioners can learn from the positive experiences of male involvement in GAD documented for example by Chant and Guttman (2000) and the pioneering work of Oxfam Great Britain. Practitioners and policy makers can make use of a rapidly growing literature offering frameworks with which to articulate the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. Three recent documents which do this are Connell's (2003) framework prepared for the Brazil meeting, Kaufman's (2003) 'AIM framework: Addressing and involving men and boys to promote gender equality and end gender discrimination and violence', and the Expert Group (2003) Report itself. Other important discussions of men's roles in progress towards gender equality are given by Lang (2002) and Greig, Kimmel and Lang (2000). Also, in pro-feminist academic writing on men and masculinities, there is a very substantial articulation of men's relation to feminism, exploring questions of epistemology and political practice, including recent texts by Digby (1998), Gardiner (2002) and Pease (2000; 2002). Pro-feminist men's writing and activism also features on

the Internet, for example in the articles, lists of websites, and other resources collected at XYonline (see <<http://www.xyonline.net>>).

Beyond the overarching principle of gender equality, there are further elements to any effective and beneficial strategy of male inclusion. One is that funding for work with men and boys should not be at the expense of funding for gender equality work with women and girls (Expert Group 2003:14). Another is that work with men should be done in partnership with women. Partnerships with women and women's groups enable men to learn from existing efforts and scholarship rather than 'reinventing the wheel'. They lessen the risk that men will collude in or be complicit with dominant and oppressive forms of masculinity. And they are a powerful and practical demonstration of men's and women's shared interest in democratic and peaceful gender relations. Another element is that rather than having separate and parallel policies for women and men, we should adopt integrated gender policies which address the relations between women and men (Expert Group 2003:13).

Development agencies themselves must also model gender equality, addressing their own policies, staff and organisational culture (Lang 2003:1). This should include reflection by male staff on their own experience, privilege, and gendered practice. One detailed example of such a process comes from the United Nations Working Group on Men and Gender Equality. Formed in the late 1990s, this group involved both male and female staff from UN-based organisations in New York. The group invited men to reflect on the connections between gender equality and their personal and professional lives, using this as the springboard for broader organisational change. Lang (2003:4–7) reports that the promotion of greater gender self-awareness can produce shifts in organisational culture and gender relations and encourage deeper partnerships among and between different groups of men and women.

## **Conclusion**

The impetus for men's involvement in gender-related work is likely to increase in the next few years. It is fuelled by ongoing shifts in gender relations, feminist and pro-feminist recognition of the need to transform and reconstruct masculinities, and trends in particular fields such as development work, as well as more troubling agendas such as non- and anti-feminist interest in 'correcting the balance' by focusing on men. There is no doubt that involving men in efforts towards gender equality has the potential to greatly enhance the impact and reach of this work. But whether or not it does so will depend on the play of political and cultural forces and relations. Still, building a world of gender justice will bring benefit to both women and men, and the reconstruction of gender will require our shared commitment and involvement.

## **Note**

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## **Gender mainstreaming: Moving from principles to implementation — The difficulties An ACFOA discussion paper**

*Australian Council for Overseas Aid, compiled by Jenny Wells and Trish McEwan*

### **Introduction**

In 2002, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) endorsed the new 'ACFOA Commitment to Gender Equity, Diversity and Flexibility'. The commitment:

recognises that women and men have different needs and power structures and that these differences should be identified and addressed by employers in a manner that rectifies imbalance between the sexes. Gender equity strategies seek to achieve fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men, and recognise that different approaches may be required to produce equitable outcomes (ACFOA 2002).

At the same time, an analysis of over 40 non-government organisation (NGO) case studies demonstrated that good gender analysis and gender-focused programs were not a strong feature of Australian NGO work. The research indicated that NGOs ensure that women are the targets of programs and projects, and that they count participation by women. However, very few undertake full gender analysis or develop strategies for interventions that address the different development needs of men and women.

### **Background**

Over the past three decades, development agencies have sought greater recognition of women in the development process. Today, Australian NGOs recognise that for real change to occur women need to be not only in control of their own development, but to also be able to influence the development process. A gendered perspective of development has the potential, through analysis of social relations, to transform structures of power entrenched in the development agenda thus providing the potential to reshape the social, political and cultural landscape of development practice (Porter and Verghese 1999).

### **International frameworks**

The fundamental human right of gender equity is identified in the affirmation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and all persons are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms without distinction on the basis of sex. Since this broad principle of gender equity was universally adopted over 50 years ago, some of the specific gaps in international human rights standards on issues of gender equity have been closing. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sets out specific areas to be addressed in the prevention of discrimination against women. These include (but are not limited to) equity in education, remuneration, representation before the law, public functions, opinion, marriage and family. Importantly, CEDAW outlines that the whole of society, not just governments, has a role

to play in protecting against gender based discrimination. Other international human rights conventions specifically refer to protection of gender equity. For instance, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) established a unique protection framework on children's rights, and states that all children must be protected against discrimination on the basis of sex (OHCHR 2003a). The Declaration on the Right to Development further recognises the importance of gender equity in participation in development interventions (OHCHR 2003b). Measures must be put in place to ensure that women have an active role in the development and decision-making processes affecting their lives.

Following the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, gender mainstreaming was adopted by the UN as the key methodology for achieving gender equality. This was endorsed by the Platform for Action and outlined as the approach that government, UN and other actors should take in the implementation of this platform.

In 2002, the international community adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) comprising eight internationally agreed goals, with supporting targets and indicators, which aim to halve global poverty by 2015. Gender is specifically addressed by Goal 3, to 'promote gender equality and empower women', with a target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and in all education by 2015. Beyond this, gender is recognised as central to the achievement of all the MDGs, and gender analysis is being built into many countries' plans and reports on the goals. Yet, although the principles of gender equity have been identified and adopted, implementation in practice remains the current challenge for governments, NGOs and communities.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming seeks to integrate men and women's experiences and needs into development at all levels. This, combined with specific actions for women's empowerment, is viewed as an essential means for the promotion of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is a process of ensuring that all our work, and the way we do it, contributes to gender equality by transforming the balance of power between women and men.

However, for gender mainstreaming to be relevant and effective, it should not be something imposed but instead embraced by the communities involved. Most important is community ownership of gender mainstreaming strategies. People at all levels must be committed to and support the implementation of gender mainstreaming, given that this process of change takes place within complex social and political environments. Therefore, Australian NGOs need to be drawing on local knowledge and ways of understanding to develop 'solutions' that are appropriate to the context in which they apply.

In 1996, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) explored how gender mainstreaming can be effectively implemented within organisations. SIDA identified three 'arenas' in which mainstreaming strategies are relevant to development: the development cooperation agency, the development program and the developing country itself (Schalkwyk et al. 1996). The study also highlights two background themes for effective gender mainstreaming. The first, that women are not a homogeneous group; and the second, that it is necessary to address both the technical and political dimensions of mainstreaming. Additionally, the study identifies the technical dimensions of mainstreaming as 'reliable data, sound theoretical underpinnings and people with the ability to spot opportunities and interpret gender

equality requirements to varied groups' (Schalkwyk et al. 1996). Effective gender mainstreaming therefore requires relevant sex-disaggregated data and a sound appreciation of why gender equality is a necessary outcome (IWDA 2003).

### **Identifying challenges of gender mainstreaming**

In principle, Australian NGOs recognise the importance of enhancing gender equity in order to be more effective in our work. Putting this into practice, however, raises a number of challenges.

Through a series of ACFOA consultations and conferences in 2003, Australian NGOs identified that gender mainstreaming needs a whole-of-agency focus that endorses gender mainstreaming with a commitment instilled at a senior management level. At the field level, comprehensive contextual analysis needs to be conducted that considers the specific needs of target communities. Clear and relevant indicators then need to be identified to measure the effectiveness of development programs. The development of appropriate tools and resources is often required to enable NGOs to put gender equity principles into practice, while at the same time building the capacity of beneficiaries is essential to bring about effective and long-term change for gender equity to become a reality.

ACFOA members have also identified that adopting a Western/paternalistic approach inhibits their capacity to support and maintain positive change towards gender equity through their programs. Instead, it reinforces stereotypes and alienates the communities/individuals involved. Australian NGOs acknowledge that developing strong relationships based on trust and shared understanding is crucial to their success as change agents, however, this is often easier said than done. Further consideration has to be given by NGOs when establishing partnerships to the type of relationship desired and the level of support that can be provided. A comprehensive assessment of partners should be conducted to examine the institutional and individual capacity of all partners.

In order to be effective in addressing gender equity, good monitoring and evaluation systems need to be established. Documentation of program results must support learnings from NGO experiences. The ability to effectively mainstream gender is often constrained by limited resources, including time and funds. For gender mainstreaming to be successful, like any other aspect of effective development programs, development agencies need to work together more collaboratively through the sharing of resources and knowledge.

### **Developing strategies in gender mainstreaming**

In order to move forward and address the more entrenched challenges to mainstreaming gender into NGO programs, Australian NGOs have identified the following key areas and questions that need to be asked:

- 1. A strong organisational commitment to human-centred development**
  - Is there an institutionalised commitment to gender equity, including senior management responsibility and accountability?
  - Do all staff, including senior managers, have gender-related key performance indicators (KPIs)?
  - Does the organisation have a gender equity policy?
  - Is there a gender training/capacity building program across the whole organisation?

- Are gender equity considerations incorporated into strategic plans and resourcing?

## **2. Clear and comprehensive operational policies, frameworks and guidelines for design and planning**

- Does the organisation have guidelines for mainstreaming gender across programs?
- If the guidelines exist, what are the mechanisms for implementation and feedback?
- How does the organisation learn in relation to gender practice? For example, does gender analysis inform program development?
- Does the organisation include gender outcomes in design and throughout the project cycle?

## **3. Operational relationships based on mutual respect, learning and sharing**

- Does the organisation undertake joint contextual analysis with partners?
- Are partners aware of the organisation's gender policy?
- Does the organisation adopt gender inclusive/participatory approaches?
- Does the organisation allocate resources for capacity building for partners and field staff?

## **4. Inter-agency collaboration and learning**

- Do the frameworks inform organisational strategic planning?
- Does the organisation contribute to collective learning from either an international/national perspective?
- How does the organisation contribute to the gender practice discussion within the Australian NGO sector?
- Does the organisation share lessons learned in relation to gender practice?

## **Conclusion**

Australian NGOs endorse the internationally agreed principles of gender equity and mainstreaming and are actively seeking to improve the quality of our work. It is accepted that gender equity must be fundamental to the overall effectiveness of development interventions, but to achieve this Australian NGOs need to strengthen their commitment to, and support of, more robust and trusting relationships, better contextual analysis, better management and operational systems, more ownership by beneficiaries and partners, and better learning.

To do this, Australian NGOs, through ACFOA, have committed themselves to working together on more collaborative programming, evaluations and sharing lessons learned to address the challenges faced in mainstreaming gender in their programs.

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## **Defending diversity, sustaining consensus: NGOs at the Beijing World Conference on Women and beyond**

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### **Introduction**

This paper discusses access and involvement of non-government organisations (NGOs) in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, September 1995. It also looks at the impact on consensus-building of the growing diversity of NGOs participating in these global United Nations (UN) events and at the effects on the international women's movement of the frustrations and difficulties faced in the follow-up to Beijing as agreements have been reopened or rolled back. In this climate, women activists and feminist analysts are questioning the future viability of the UN as a political space for women's organising, and, under conditions of rapid globalisation, are increasingly divided on strategies for implementation and activism.

### **Background**

Leading up to the Beijing conference, women's NGOs succeeded in building effective strategies for reaching consensus on contentious issues at the various global conferences held during the early 1990s on the environment, population and social development. Recognising the potential power of a common position, they put aside often fundamental differences to expand the international agenda on women's equality. Some of their strategies were developed in training courses organised by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Women's Tribune Center on how to influence a UN conference; others emerged from the tireless efforts of the Linkage Caucus organised by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) under the leadership of Bella Abzug. In all of the conferences of the 1990s prior to Beijing, women's NGOs acted like a fifth column to bring gender into the negotiations.

At Beijing, the number of NGO participants and the diversity of the groups accredited far exceeded anything seen before. Over 4,000 NGO representatives attended the government conference and 30,000 attended the parallel NGO Forum. Many were focused on special interests rather than broad agendas. New to the scene were neo-conservative groups such as Concerned Women of America and the Real Women of Canada.

The accreditation process opened the conference to NGOs of many persuasions, but proved to be a highly political and difficult exercise that consumed an enormous amount of time and energy in the lead-up to the conference. The Conference Secretariat placed the names of NGOs that met the criteria for accreditation as laid down by the General Assembly before the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Accreditation became so contentious that it fell to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meeting in Geneva just two months before the conference to make final decisions on the most controversial NGO applications.

The practice of enlarging the number of NGOs that could be accredited to a global conference can be traced back to the Rio Conference in 1992 where, for the first time, large numbers of NGOs were admitted to the governmental meetings as observers.

Previously, NGOs were mainly relegated to parallel forums that they themselves organised. At the three previous UN women's conferences, NGO meetings were held to enable NGOs to gather to discuss the issues before the conference, but the actual number admitted as observers at the governmental conferences was very limited. At the Mexico City conference in 1975, NGOs had almost no direct access; they presented their petitions to the Secretary General of the Conference, Helvi Sipilä. At the mid decade conference in 1980 at Copenhagen, NGOs at the governmental meetings again were few, and at the third conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985, fewer than 250 NGOs, representing large international coalitions, were given direct access to the governmental conference. These were organisations that had consultative status with the ECOSOC and included groups like Zonta, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, the International Federation of University Women, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. For Beijing, close to 2,000 organisations sought accreditation; nearly 1,500 were approved.

The UN Secretariat screened the applications for NGO accreditation. In this process, many organisations purporting to have a 'family' agenda were initially held back if they did not explicitly show concern for women's issues since the Secretariat found that attention to family per se did not necessarily mean support for women's equality. Such groups included Focus on the Family and family organisations linked to Catholic and other religious groups. At the same time, most organisations could claim some level of interest in women, thus making it difficult to assess applicants.

In reviewing applicants, governments individually and collectively ruled out certain groups and fought over others. Iran objected to Iranian women's groups in exile for fear they would be critical of the regime. China opposed groups favoring self-rule for Tibet or separate status for Taiwan, as well as any groups opposed to China's human rights policies. Governments such as the US, believed to support civil society participation at the UN, were reluctant to 'overextend' accreditation. Despite the difficulties, the ECOSOC chairperson successfully brought negotiations to a close by ensuring that, as a result of the intense 'horse-trading', governments were either equally happy or equally unhappy with the outcome.

### **Beijing and beyond: The role of NGOs**

Throughout the Beijing conference, NGO organisers were faced with the challenge that the diversity posed for reaching any kind of common positions. In the end, the loose coalition designated to coordinate the NGO input to the final document persuaded a large number of NGOs to reach a consensus, but others, particularly those NGOs that did not agree with the progressive 'feminist' agenda evolved over nearly 50 years, conducted their own lobbying efforts.

In the follow-up to the Beijing Conference, both at subsequent sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and at the five-year review of implementation, rifts that threatened to block adoption of a set of agreements at Beijing are re-emerging. The religious right and conservative governments are revisiting reservations entered to the Beijing Platform on issues such as reproductive rights, gender, sexual orientation, inheritance rights and land ownership, and even on what constitutes violence against women. Some US delegates, for example, appointed by the Bush administration, have disassociated themselves from positions taken by the US in 1995, allying with countries such as Iran and Sudan, and with the Holy See.

For NGOs who since 1995 have been engaged in advancing the international agenda on women's rights and gender equality, the current resistance and backtracking are



frustrating and disenchanting. Long-time advocates see a slackening in political will resulting in weak agreements that lack mechanisms for reporting on implementation (CWGL 2003). At the 2003 session of the CSW, resistance and reaction to agreed positions hit an all-time high. The Commission met an impasse aimed at weakening the link between violence and women's human rights in a previously agreed paragraph on violence against women.<sup>1</sup> Governments blocking the consensus were Iran, Egypt, Pakistan and the US, while Iran also tried to introduce new language on pornography. Newly elected chairperson of the CSW, Kang Kyung-hwa (Korea) characterised the differences:

Every country's position on violence against women is different. While some argue that Islamic cultures' attitude toward women is violence, others say that pornography in Western society is the real violence against women. It all depends on how you define the concept (Ji-young 2003).

The lack of political will to prevent the rolling back of gains already made and the emergence/re-emergence of a conservative/religious agenda are causing many women to question the viability of the UN as a political space for their activism. Moreover, recognition of the impact on women of policies of powerful international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organization is shifting attention away from the UN. Women's NGOs in many places have shifted focus from narrow gender issues to wider questions of globalisation and its impact on women and girls. Women are working to coordinate activities where questions of trade, economics and finance are being negotiated, but a new emphasis on identity politics poses challenges for groups that differ by race, culture, ethnicity, religion and class.

There are also those who see the UN as reflective of a male power structure and a discourse that is narrowly focused on social justice with little attention to important issues such as economic justice. For instance, they contrast the focus on land rights for women in the Beijing Platform with the general UN failure to address broader questions of people's land rights.

Others argue that the UN, supported by coalitions and networks with broad mandates, promotes a kind of politics that defines issues in such broad, general terms in order to gain acceptance, and thus waters down ideology. These broad mandates have meant that the goals or strategies for change in women's lives pursued by these groups have remained vague, and working with the UN often leads to weakening of the base.

Feminist Gayatri Spivak characterises the UN as co-opting women, particularly women from the South, and making UN feminism a monoculture of Western liberal feminism where elite, upwardly mobile (generally academic) women of the new diasporas join hands with similar women in the so-called developing world to celebrate a new global public or private 'culture', often in the name of the underclass (Spivak 1996).

Discomfort with and doubts about the UN's effectiveness take other forms as well. Some argue that the rights' perspective of the UN fails to question the current development model, which they argue directly undermines these very goals. Others have chosen to keep their involvement in the UN process to a minimum because they identify the major problems of women as outside the control of the UN. They feel that global economic issues are framed outside of the control of local citizens and that they do not have the power to make change at these levels. With the advent of globalisation, some consider the interests of non-government communities have become fragmented. Labour, environmental, and women's groups are trying to protect different interests and thus their strategies for action often come into conflict when working at the global level (Lynch 1998).

The debates over holding a fifth world conference on women under the auspices of the UN illustrates some of the uncertainty that prevails among women NGOs about the future. Those in favor of a fifth world conference emphasise women's successes in influencing the international agenda on women. They view the UN's multilateral fora as valuable and necessary. For them, the aim is to continue to engage with the UN in order to make it more responsive to a feminist perspective. They still see UN documents such as the Platform for Action as important tools for public accountability and cite instances where, through women's participation, UN conferences have offered 'crucial handles to redress cruel customs, laws and systems of exclusion' (Vargas 1995). New entrants to the movement, particularly those from developing countries, find it helpful to be able to hold governments accountable to international commitments: 'It embarrasses them and it often speeds up the process of work on policy' (Freeburg 2003). Others take the position that there is need to transform international institutions such as the UN to make them more responsive to equality demands and to advocate a strategy that would maintain pressure both at the national and international levels.

## **Conclusion**

The challenge ahead seems to be to find ways to salvage gains made during the Beijing process while building new movements that can respond to feminist critiques and to the challenges of globalisation and neo-conservatism. Continued efforts to work at the community level hold out some of the greatest promise, but if women's NGOs are to continue to play a leadership role in setting an international agenda for women's rights and empowerment, serious fractures in the women's movement need to be addressed, new alliances need to be built through potentially painful struggle, and the watchdog role of the NGOs needs to be strengthened. In so doing, it will be essential to re-examine who the participants at UN meetings on women are, what their agendas and strategies consist of and how they are presenting issues, how the fora and arenas that women have been using are changing, and what identities and political communities are currently involved (Tarrow 1998).

## **Note**

1. The paragraph under consideration read: 'Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.' Iran proposed to add: 'and refrain from invoking freedom of expression to justify such manifestations of violence against women as pornography and democracy to justify prostitution.'

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## **Developing gender mainstreaming and 'gender respect'**

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### **Introduction**

Gender mainstreaming has become the dominant development discourse for achieving gender equity in developing regions. It is the most recent in a series of strategies that have had varying success in delivering the feminist goals of women's emancipation and gender equity in developing regions such as Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Gender mainstreaming is arguably a depoliticised and toned-down version of its predecessors, which attempts to avoid direct feminist confrontations while ultimately aiming not to exclude or threaten stakeholders in the development process. Experience indicates that as a result, gender mainstreaming is in danger of becoming yet another ineffective tool to promote gender equity.

Much groundwork has been laid for promoting gender mainstreaming in developing countries, and, since the 1995 International Women's Conference in Beijing, there have been some serious attempts to implement these strategies. Tempting though it may be to resign ourselves to the status quo, we argue that the status of women can only be advanced through gender mainstreaming strategies that are first adapted to each specific culture, place and political context, and which address the concerns and aspirations of locally active agents of change.

Essentially self-critical, our writing here is borne out of our own work with women and men on gender issues and gender mainstreaming in Fiji, Indonesia and East Timor. This experience of gender mainstreaming training has brought into sharp relief the pitfalls of using generalised resources in strictly time-bounded workshops. At the same time, we have identified opportunities to 'do' gender mainstreaming more effectively. The challenge ultimately lies in attempting to merge feminist theory with bureaucratic practice.

### **Defining and developing the theory**

Typical official discourse in gender mainstreaming manuals tells us that

At the fourth UN International Conference on women held in Beijing 'gender mainstreaming' was established as the internationally agreed strategy for governments and development organisations to promote gender equality. This was in response to consistent lessons that have emerged from at least twenty years of experience of addressing women's needs in development work (Derbyshire 2002:7; and see Overseas Development Group 2004; Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada 2004).

However, gender mainstreaming continues to elude accurate definition because of bureaucratic jargon that conflates policy and practice.

Gender mainstreaming was endorsed by the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The goal of this action was for, 'governments and other actors [to] promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively' (United Nations

1995). Ultimately, the goal of gender mainstreaming is gender equality (see Baden and Goertz 2001).

Gender mainstreaming seeks to include both women's and men's concerns and experiences in overseas development projects and in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, policy and programs across government departments, so that women and men benefit equally. According to the mainstreaming rhetoric, men and women should participate equally in decision-making processes and planning in order to influence the entire agenda. Often agenda setting becomes the preserve of development practitioners and elite members of any given society, and an international approach to gender mainstreaming may be limited by its capacity to change the local distribution of resources.

Previously, Lyons has argued that Third World women are silenced by Western feminist discourses 'in the very speech intended to liberate [them] from oppression' (Lyons, 1999). Western women and men continue to maintain the monopoly or authoritative voice within the discourses of the WID, WAD, GAD parade and now within gender mainstreaming (see Sylvester 1995; or, for more on the development and evolution of these approaches, Baden and Goetz 2001; Crewe and Harrison 1998; and Jahan 1995, 1997). In fact, several authors argue that very little has changed within feminist development approaches, despite the emergence of gender mainstreaming as a dominant policy approach since the Beijing conference. Are we just witnessing a discursive shift in acronyms from WID to WAD to GAD to GM?

The existence of a dominant policy necessarily silences marginal voices and ideas. According to Mbilinyi, 'other perspectives find it increasingly difficult to be heard or to get funding' (Mbilinyi 1993:956, see also Mikell 1997; Alcoff 1991; Nzenza-Shand 1997 and Lal 1996). What, in fact, has been the point of the discourse of the 'politics of positioning' when Western-based gender mainstreaming experts continue to control the agenda and resources and to espouse a particular policy framework that may not be useful in a particular local context? Even with the best of intentions, is gender mainstreaming about assisting women in developing countries, or more about promoting a Western, white feminist middle-class consciousness?

If reflections on feminist struggles and gains have taught us anything, it is that the advancement of women is achieved through a nexus of activists, pressure groups, leaders and various stakeholders. They act as individuals or in concert to apply pressure and ultimately bring about change using strategies that make sense and are effective in a *particular cultural paradigm*. Whether radical or conservative, action is inevitably underpinned by a sociocultural logic that makes sense in that context.

### **Avoiding the pitfalls of gender mainstreaming**

Across the globe, many people strive to improve the status and quality of life of women. As an international movement, there is power and strength in this solidarity. However, this unity does not, and should not, translate into a transnational blueprint for the advancement of women. In the current situation, gender mainstreaming templates may serve to cut across important local activities that are fundamental to the success of any change in the gendered order. Although Sylvester has noted that many gender experts *are* now indigenous women, Western women tend to retain control or monopolise the 'global funding and resources such as publications and consultancy work' (Sylvester 1995:956)

Despite good intentions, both 'gender experts' and the gender mainstreaming discourse can arguably fall into the trap of 'neo-imperial' discourses. As Western

feminists concerned with the position of women in many developing regions, how can we overcome this labelling? How can we ensure that we are not snared in the trap? This goal should be considered just as important to any development project or plan as locating (situating) the local cultural context. Lyons has argued that we can achieve this equality in development through engaging in a dialogue with the women we intend to 'help' (Lyons 1999). If we cannot do that, then there will be no useful engagement, development or change in the foreign aid recipient country, or indeed in the status of women.

One of the challenges faced by gender experts is that as soon as dialogue or interaction extends beyond groups of individual researchers, local networks and/or NGOs, they lose their ability to make targeted and locally relevant changes for women. That is, when it gets to the level of bilateral aid between states, local women's issues, concerns and needs are usually silenced. Gender mainstreaming, even while being ranked as a priority in the post-Beijing euphoria, has failed to deliver the anticipated results. The gendered components of development aid projects have typically become tokenistic, and thus increasingly ineffective. This may reflect the policy vacuum within which gender mainstreaming continues to operate, or indeed may reflect the practical limitations of a gender mainstreaming policy that is primarily based upon Western feminist conceptions of women's equality with men.

Furthermore, True and Mintrom have argued that 'the diffusion of gender mainstreaming' has been driven by 'the transnational networks of non-state actors' (2001:50), for example, NGOs and the UN, which continue to keep gender mainstreaming on the agenda. Countries that adopt gender mainstreaming within their institutions through alliances, networks and agreements do so because of their intrinsic links to international society. However, a gendered policy approach will ultimately depend upon whether countries create a high level institution specifically to address gender equality policy. Importantly, there also needs to be sympathetic people in decision-making positions, but this relies upon the 'implementation and effectiveness of these mainstreaming institutions'. This scenario does little to guarantee women's access to equality (True and Mintrom 2001:50–51).

Another example of the challenges facing gender mainstreaming approaches can be seen in the New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD) document that includes gender equity as a principal aim. As de Waal has noted, however, 'in common with most high-level African initiatives, the involvement of women has been at best marginal, and commitments to gender equity such as those adopted in Beijing have not been accorded mainstream status within NEPAD' (de Waal 2002:473). This same also holds for Fiji, where a Women's Plan of Action was developed by the Ministry of Women and Culture to be implemented between 1999 and 2008 (Ministry of Women 1998). Broaching four areas of concern for women — the law, microenterprise development, decision making, and violence against women and children — this document offers more scope for policy evaporation than it does for positive development for women in Fiji. While there may have been many hours spent on consultation and development of these plans, arguably, gender mainstreaming is often only a recent addition to the 'good governance agenda', a response to foreign donor expectations. However, a successful gender mainstreaming policy would substantially shift and change the socioeconomic power structures in society. Indeed, it may be considered even more threatening than democracy in many countries. If this is the case, then resistance to it will be paramount.

## **Practical responses to the challenges**

We have identified a problem in the implementation stage of gender mainstreaming where workshops, training courses and seminars are employed to train local staff and 'influence' the local context. Many Australian overseas aid projects have a focus on gender mainstreaming which is located within discourses (and programming) on democracy and good governance. As an example, capacity building training projects in Southeast Asia and the Pacific usually factor in a gender expert or gender mainstreaming training for donor recipient government bureaucrats. This gender mainstreaming often relies upon the gender consultants to be dynamic and sell the idea, which may or may not be appropriate or considered important and valuable in that local context. In the authors' experience, gender may take on the role of a threatening import in many circumstances, which can result in resistance to the policy of gender mainstreaming.

For example, in line with AusAID's gender policy, a typical in-country capacity building training course requires a gendered component (AusAID 2003). Hence, assuming the funding is available a (usually female) gender specialist is one of the experts who travels to the recipient country. A course of one week's duration would require one afternoon on the issue of gender, to highlight and discuss the gendered impact of the policy. From our experience, that afternoon becomes token, and the gendered issues invalid, until confirmed and consolidated by the other development experts as important. It is very difficult for a (female) gender consultant to be taken seriously in-country, when there are 'more important' development issues at stake (that is, transparency and good governance, land ownership, race, etc). In these circumstances, gender may not be integral to the training process, but simply an additional box to be ticked off to satisfy compliance with donor agreements.

During a specific gender mainstreaming training course in Fiji in 2002, as consultants we quickly realised that the participants (both men and women) were uncomfortable with what was perceived as a 'Western-dominant discourse' on gender equality, and indeed did not take to our Western-style managerial training. We thus adapted the program to suit their needs.

Subsequently, for example, each day was begun and ended with a song and a prayer, and the sessions were shortened to allow participants time to complete their other work-related duties. Despite the individual commitment of most participants, the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies was subverted to the other demands. The release of the Fiji National Budget coincided with the timing of the workshops. As a result, more than half of the registered participants failed to attend because they were committed to make budget submissions for their respective government departments. In this instance, the level of commitment was challenged by bureaucratic timelines.

Another variable complicating the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Fiji was simply uncoordinated international donors. In our short time based in Suva, we became aware of a plethora of other international agencies which had either come before us, or were currently there, to do essentially the same thing — to implement gender mainstreaming. As a result of this, most participants that attended our pithy training course had already done gender training. Within the time frames offered by Western development agencies there appears to be little scope or capacity for us as international feminists to reflect upon our own dominant discourse, and to actually communicate, negotiate and have dialogue with donor aid recipients about their needs.

Nonetheless, despite these encumbrances, this particular gender mainstreaming workshop was successful in achieving local goals. While the participants agreed with the

importance of gender mainstreaming, they modified the approach, concluding that 'gender respect' was more appropriate for their society. The outcome of this workshop was the Nadave Declaration on Gender Respect:

To acknowledge the biological sex differences between men and women, with respect to cultural, religious, ethnic and age differences, enabling both to reach their full potential in society (Gender Mainstreaming Workshop, Fiji, November 2002).

### **Cultural differences and gender mainstreaming**

The Nadave declaration by Fijian workshop participants demonstrated their commitment to gender mainstreaming, while expressing the need to adapt gender mainstreaming terminology and ideas to the Fijian context. In particular, it was stressed that Fiji needed to move forward slowly and carefully with the aims of gender equality, to ensure that existing positive cultural norms and practices were not threatened. To these workshop participants it was important to distinguish between 'gender equality' as a Western construct and 'gender respect' as a more appropriate Fijian modification of the concept.

Feminists from developing countries have consistently called for a more holistic approach, linking class and race-based inequalities to that of gender (Jahan 1995:8). In recent development work in East Timor, globally dominant ideas about women's rights and empowerment were perceived as foreign, radical and out of step with local realities. Women were more familiar and able to speak about gender roles, discrepancies of power and access to resources in terms of broader concepts of human rights. This situation parallels the Nadave declaration from Fiji.

In Indonesia, some government officials enlisted in capacity building training demonstrated high levels of resistance to gender equity when it involved community participation in development. Issues of race and class were obvious forms of cleavage in these discussions, but were not overtly stated. While some participants — particularly young women more likely to benefit from Western feminist ideologies — embraced the theories of gender equality, they were also unlikely to have the power or be in positions that would enable them to effect significant social change.

Gender mainstreaming is not a value-free concept and is inherently political because it aims at facilitating social change. So, when the Australian consultant is charged with addressing gender mainstreaming within the context of good governance or capacity building, they are by necessity being political. The empowerment and opening up of opportunities for women is underpinned by a Western feminist agenda. While this is not explicitly stated, these constructs become obvious when attempting to debate gender mainstreaming in other cultures.

Gender, as a cultural construct, differs from one culture to the next. How is it then that can gender be mainstreamed in *any* place through a prescriptive set of understandings and methods? For example, a concern for mainstreaming gender in Indonesia arose in that gender was likened to *janda*, the Indonesian word for widow, evoking the image of a spinster or older women on the margins of society. Promoting gender in this context was undermined because of the perceived linkages.

### **Conclusion**

Our research indicates that the status of women can only be advanced through gender mainstreaming strategies that are adapted to each specific culture and place, addressing the concerns and aspirations of locally active agents of change. This will entail a shift from currently dominant institutional strategies (which target inputs, structural change



and policy implementation) to be balanced with complementary operational strategies (which consist of output-orientated guidelines, training, research and projects) (Jahan 1995:13–14). As Bronwen Douglas has argued in relation to Melanesia, we need to appeal to the local level, because the gap between state and civil society is growing and local communities away from state centres are less engaged in state affairs (Douglas 2000). The solution she offers is to invite international experts to listen to what local people are saying and respond to their needs, rather than to preach ‘developed discourse’.

In order to effectively mainstream gender in a local context, a two-pronged approach is necessary, implementing operational strategies while applying institutional strategies to reflect and support practical change. Thus, as concerned global feminists, we need to rethink our approach and work with new, locally coined terminology. We need to be able to repackage gender so that it can be utilised more effectively. We need more local-context specific strategic terms, which necessitate the elimination of universal terms that privilege the voices and power of Western consultants.

In practical terms, this means that women and men at the forefront of mainstreaming gender (focal points, consultants, experts, trainers) would be required to:

- spend time in location listening to the people who are the focus and key stakeholders of the mainstreaming activity; and
- work with local communities to adapt training materials, strategies, policies, etc to that particular context before they are presented, implemented and/or ratified.

Initial groundwork on gender relations could work to adapt and customise generalised information and training tools on gender mainstreaming, which are freely available through development agencies and the web. In this way, gender mainstreaming can then occur effectively, at a pace and in a way that is locally appropriate, rather than just being another workshop, training exercise or policy formulation meeting that forms part of an international obligation.

We are advocating a new approach that first acknowledges and maps changes and challenges in relation to women and gender issues in the local context. Taking this as a point of departure, generic training materials can be adapted and examples from other contexts can be used to stimulate discussion and a future agenda.

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## **Gender mainstreaming: Getting it right in the workplace first**

*Jeannie Rea, Victoria University, Melbourne\**

### **Introduction**

This paper is a brief response to the keynote speakers at the IWDA Gender and Development Dialogue who were 'taking stock' of gender mainstreaming. The paper focuses upon two things: firstly, some observations on the ideological climate in which we have worked to mainstream gender, and, secondly, issues for working women, especially the implications of the women's experiences in unions for women workers in development organisations.

### **Background**

I first started working on WID (women in development) in the mid 1980s, whilst doing an independent evaluation of the participation of women in a five-year bilateral project water and sanitation project. It was the first time I encountered the work that had been done by the Nordic and North American agencies in developing comprehensive gender analysis strategies and tools. Already the field was being critiqued, as women theorists and practitioners sought to make development work for women. The organisation Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and others were protesting the lack of inclusion of the voices and perspectives of Third World women and, in Australia, the Women and Development Action Network (WADNA) was seeking to include women around our region. Around the same time, the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) was founded in response to the frustration experienced in trying to get women on the agenda with government, commercial and non-government agencies.

Several years later I moved into academia and started teaching and writing in gender and development, GAD as it had then become. I also intermittently involved in advising, training and education on gender with governments, businesses and development NGOs. So, compared with most participants in this symposium, I have had a watching brief rather than a practitioner role over more than 15 years. On the basis of this experience I would like to make four observations.

### **First observation**

Looking back I would argue that there have not been huge changes in the basic theory and practice of gender and development. The analyses have continued to draw upon developments in feminist and other theory, including the 1990s' focus on identity politics. There has been refinement and finessing and moulding and targeting — all in an effort to get the problem of gender to fit with the program, the mainstream development program. However, it is about time we looked instead on transforming the program to fit with women. Like many of us here, I have watched and critiqued the moves from WID to WAD to GID to GAD (and WED came in for a while, but unfortunately seems to have dropped off lately.) In the last decade we have seen the wholesale adoption of mainstreaming as the strategy.

## **Second observation**

What has to be remembered and reiterated is that mainstreaming is not a strategy that comes out of the particularity of the gender and development experience. It is a more broadly applied strategic approach, which arose in response to the stranglehold of neo-liberal economic ideology through the 1990s. Mainstreaming was seen as the way to keep gender on the agenda, as gender-targeted projects, affirmative action and women's programs were cut back until they collapsed.

## **Third observation**

The focus on gender relations, rather than women's rights to equality, was probably strategically sensible in a backlash climate, but only partially successful in keeping the women on the agenda. Ideologically, the gender relations argument has not been that successful. Whilst it is arguable that the 'gender agenda' should include men and that the objective is changing the relations between men and women, this approach has backfired at times. The focus goes back to men far too easily. A local Australian example is in the way that after pioneering work on improving education for girls, it is now virtually impossible to get resources for research and action on gender unless it is for boys. As soon as girls started to gain some advantage from gender equality strategies, the pendulum swung back, and boys are now perceived to be missing out at schools.

This analysis seems to ignore the reality that men still run the world and the corporations, governments and bureaucracies. The (white, middle-class) boys inevitably reclaim their advantage. Another relevant Australian example is in the way that equal opportunity legislation is used by men against women, such as in the case of the men who alleged gender discrimination when a swimming pool scheduled a separate session for Muslim women and girls.

The other point is that in general, in most languages and cultures, 'gender' translates as 'woman'. Gender is translated as about advancing the rights of and improving the status of women. The language of gender does not fool men who oppose women's rights to equality and justice. Therefore, just using terms like "gender" does not usually assist in promoting a gender inclusive approach. More problematically, using the terminology of gender can render women invisible again.

## **Fourth observation**

Over the past two decades, there has not been a significant cultural shift in understanding about gender or gender relations. I am not referring to the resistance to women's empowerment amongst the husbands and sons in some communities targeted by the developers, but to the Australian development community.

Masculinist culture remains pervasive in the attitudes and expectations of the middle-aged and older men who have moved into management and leadership over the past decade. Development organisations, like other workplaces, remain largely unchanged when it comes to work practices. There are more women employed and in a greater diversity of positions, but the gendered culture is still pervasive in work practices and in promotional opportunities. The man with a partner in the background remains the most likely to get ahead, as he is unencumbered at work and has a support system outside of work. Many of the women who have developed careers in development are single, as having children seems to be as much of a problem and career destroyer in the development field as elsewhere in the Australian workforce. Men who seek a better balance of work and family life often also find that their careers stall and opportunities dry up.

## Working women

I would like to further pursue this important issue of commitment to gender equality amongst development organisations as employers. I want to talk from other sites of my experience about mainstreaming, which I think tell some similar stories as we take stock of the progress of gender mainstreaming. I work as an academic in a university. Higher education was recently noted as one industry where some reasonable flexible policies are common, including 12 or more weeks paid maternity leave, provision for double annual leave days through averaging pay over 48 rather than 52 weeks, home-based work, flexible hours and job-sharing. However, there are still few female role models in senior positions, and many women have found that taking advantage of flexibility effectively stalls their career. Additionally, academic work is the second most casualised field in Australia after hospitality. Whilst our conditions are largely codified and enforceable through our industrial agreements negotiated between the university and our union, the National Tertiary Education Union, the struggle to improve our conditions continues.

The other site about which I want to make some observations is the trade union movement. I have spent my working life as a union activist and much of my focus in research has been on women and emerging labour organisations in developing countries.

Unions have mainstreamed gender too. There are worthwhile experiences that can be exchanged between the development sector and the labour sector, as we do have common ground in our shared commitment to change and improving the lot of the disadvantaged. So advancing the status of women should be integral to both endeavours and does enjoy wide philosophical commitment. The problem, though, arises in the tensions inevitable in really incorporating gender equality in all aspects of an organisation, both at home and abroad. For unions, changing themselves has been as hard as changing the practices of the employers of their members (My experience is that this is also the case for development organisations!).

In Australia, unions had very masculinist structures and, historically, many have been dismissive of even covering women workers. Unions have had to restructure to enable women to become active members and leaders and to prioritise 'women friendly' policy. The strategies and assumptions have been those with which we are familiar and often include in our gender targets and checklists. Such strategies include affirmative action to ensure women's representation, holding meetings when and where it is safe for women, providing child care, and keeping issues such as equal pay and paid maternity leave on the negotiating agenda. When male leaders have to argue for women's rights there is a real shift in gender relations. I believe that we will have mainstreamed gender when these issues stay there at the top of the negotiating agenda.

What have been the breakthroughs from the last 20 years of trying to make the 30-year-old slogan 'women need unions need women' a reality? It is not just getting good legislation and policy, although they are useful sticks to wield. The change to ordinary women's lives starts happening when women trade union leaders can be mothers and carers too, and there are enough women in the top decision making bodies that the 'women's issues' do not fall off the agenda. A significant Australian example is the current Australian Council of Trade Unions test case on work and family. This has only happened because there are feminist women in the leadership of the ACTU to make this a priority, along with the provision of child care for working parents *and* the campaign to improve the wages of child care workers.

It has also been very important for women union activists to be part of an international trade union movement where women unionists have fought out these issues with their incumbent leaderships. (One big advantage of unions is that they are membership organisations and, while power can be entrenched, it can also be voted out!) Internationally, women unionists have found many shared experiences of the problems of entrenched gendered attitudes, both internal and external to their labour organisations.

Earlier this year, the ACTU hosted the women's conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Melbourne. The conference agenda would be familiar to campaigners for women's rights. Whilst there was clearly a principal focus on women's paid working conditions, the agenda also recognised the fullness of women's lives and the broader social, economic, religious, political and cultural barriers to women being able to earn decent incomes with dignity. The involvement of women has brought the realities of women's lives into the trade union movement. Unions now recognise that lives go on outside the hours of paid work, and that these other lives impact upon our paid working lives. Unions, whether in Australia or the Philippines or South Africa, now have action-based programs on sexual harassment and male violence, on childcare, on sharing the domestic load and so on. Unions also take up HIV/AIDS, racism, religion and ethnic discrimination, the immigration policies of their governments, indigenous rights, children's rights and other issues once argued as not union business.

Women in unions have also challenged the ambit of unions. Most women work part time and casually. Many women in most countries work in the informal sector and are not covered by labour laws or industrial agreements. Many are, in effect, self-employed or sub-contractors. Unions have to acknowledge that they have to change their old ideas of work and union coverage. An ongoing campaign that has involved unions, women's organisations, some governments, the International Labor Organisation, churches and some development NGOs has been the international outworker campaign (see <[www.fairwear.org.au](http://www.fairwear.org.au)>). This campaign is significant both in its achievements and in the successful coalition of many often disparate organisations. The campaign has worked on a number of levels from the local to international, including organising workers to advocate for them, getting unions to seek industrial agreements and successfully lobbying governments and companies for minimum wages and conditions and for codes of practice for manufacturers and retailers.

Women in unions have still have a long way to go, but, as we know, women do respond to glimmers of hope, we do grab at opportunities to improve the lives of our families and our communities. The objectives of mainstreaming in unions have differed from the objectives in development organisations. The aim has not been about trying to get resources out to women, but to seek women's support by listening and respecting them. Union financial resources come from membership fees, yet if unions are not listening to women members, they will lose them. Unions are learning that they need women in order to be relevant and successful, and that women's rights are workers rights are human rights. I think there are learnings across the development and labour sectors about what is similar and different.

## **Conclusion**

A major impediment to successful mainstreaming is the attitudes and cultures in our development organisations, which carry the baggage of their own quite traditional male cultures of work and power. These attitudes and cultures continue to be transferred in

practice at home and in the field. There is fear that the transformative potential of really taking on gender discrimination and oppression may shake things at home as well as in the field. In terms of what additional steps need to be taken, I would argue cleaning up one's own backyard should be a top priority. A good start for Australian development organisations should be to aim to be a market leader as exemplary equal opportunity employers.

**Note**

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## **Rethinking gender mainstreaming (or, Did we ditch women when we ditched WID?) — A personal view**

*Patti O'Neill, independent consultant, New Zealand\**

### **Introduction**

The debate on the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming is gradually emerging among practitioners. The International Women's Development Agency sparked the debate in our own region and last year's conference of the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID) in Guadalajara left many of us both energised and reflective. The IWDA meeting was a great opportunity for us to honestly grapple with some tough issues, learn from each other's experiences and feel inspired to return home ready to tackle the issues in our own agencies. This paper reflects on:

- gender mainstreaming and the gender jargon;
- the potential for convergence of the women's rights approach and the gender and development approach;
- new ways of working at NZAID; and
- NZAID's work supporting promotion of the CEDAW in the region.

### **Gender mainstreaming and the gender jargon**

Some of us in the donor agencies are concerned about the lack of critique of gender mainstreaming and of the gender and development approach in practice. There has been some danger that because we welcomed gender mainstreaming. We have done this without taking the time to step back and critically assess whether the approach has produced positive changes in the way development is conceived, planned and implemented. My feeling is that in Beijing we invested too much in gender mainstreaming as a sort of silver bullet. And we have since had too many debates about whether gender mainstreaming is an end in itself or simply a tool that we can use as we strive towards gender equity.

I am more than a little allergic to the language of both gender and of mainstreaming. Both suffer from overuse syndrome. Gender is too frequently used as a form of shorthand when we should be talking about 'women', or 'men and women', or even 'sex'. (Don't you just love all those application forms that now use gender instead of sex? Presumably this is because gender is somehow a nicer word — not dirty like sex — but just plain wrong.)

On the other hand I do believe that if we used the gender word less, it could become a more genuinely useful concept. It is the overuse that creates all sorts of barriers — sometimes when you least expect them. A few years ago, when I was working at the New Zealand Ministry of Women's Affairs, we were developing a gender framework for use by APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) economies. It quickly became apparent that even Canada and New Zealand could not readily agree on what was meant by gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, gender integration and gender



sensitisation. If we can't agree on what these are, how can we possibly convince others of their value?

In my work at the Ministry of Women's Affairs I used to see senior government officials' eyes glaze over when the gender language was tossed around — and I don't believe that it was because of any lack of commitment or any lack of preparedness to listen and learn — I simply think that the terminology got in the way of understanding.

Mainstreaming itself is being overused as a concept. At present, development agencies love to 'mainstream' — gender, human rights, the environment and HIV/AIDS to name just four. And I am sure many practitioners will have heard comments such as, 'oh well, we don't need to worry about women, now that gender is mainstreamed', or, if such comments are not actually heard, similar sentiments are nonetheless reflected in the actions which follow.

### **Is convergence the way forward?**

Since last year's global conference of the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID), I have felt that we are on the edge of something new — a new shift in the understanding of how we approach gender and development. Some interesting thinking was emerging there and I am very attracted by some of the analysis by AWID's Executive Director, Joanna Kerr (see Kerr 2001).

Joanna makes the point that throughout the 1990s there have been two approaches and two distinct communities — one concerned with women's human rights and another working from a gender and development perspective. We have tended to be working in different spheres and using different languages. Our paths have crossed or converged at times such as the Beijing Women's Conference (1995) and its Plus 5 session in 2000.

Her paper has helped me to sharpen my own thinking and to understand some of the discomforts I have felt since I moved into a development agency. I have now swum in both streams. For most of my life I have been in the women's rights stream (as a feminist activist, a trade unionist and a Ministry of Women's Affairs' bureaucrat). For the past three years I have been swimming in the development stream. Joanna's paper has given me a glimmering of understanding of why I have sometimes felt as though I am swimming against the current. Now perhaps the tide is changing, or the two streams are, as Joanna puts it, converging.

One issue for the future is how, or indeed, whether, we should be trying to nudge our organisations towards a rights approach rather than a gender mainstreaming approach — or whether there is a way in which we can find an accommodation that incorporates both approaches, without adding to the gender confusion. Because I come from a strong women's rights perspective, I have found it difficult to understand why some agencies are so nervous about adopting a more explicitly rights-based approach.

I do acknowledge that both approaches have their strengths. As Joanna says, development approaches offer strong analytical and methodological tools for understanding and shaping the effects of economic forces. The gender and development approaches have been more broadly focused and participatory, although the notions of gender are often abstract. Arguably there has also been better analysis of power and control issues, but relatively little evidence of practical approaches to address these. In my view, the women's rights approach provides us with a clearer set of goals to work towards — gender equity. We almost certainly need both approaches in order to respond appropriately to specific circumstances.

## **What is NZAID doing?**

In July 2003 the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) marked its first anniversary. It is an exciting place to work, full of energy and a commitment to practise our craft better and to do things differently. The agency is attracting excellent staff from a wide range of backgrounds who are bringing in diverse skills, experience and knowledge. We are harnessing this in a very interesting way by developing cross-agency teams to develop sectoral strategies in areas where we have previously lacked a clear policy framework. These include areas such as trade, conflict and peace-building, and even old favourites such as education and health. There are really interesting synergies and perspectives in these teams. We are all learning together and building agency commitment and knowledge at the same time.

The slowest two of these teams to get off the ground have been gender and environment — perhaps because we already had quite good policies and there was a relatively high level of confidence in the established approach.

NZAID's current policy deals with gender mainstreaming as follows:

Promote an active policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in NZODA policies, programmes and projects to ensure they include consultation with women and men, are based on a full analysis of differential impacts of activities on women and men and provide equal opportunities for women and men to contribute to and benefit from development (NZODA 1998).

Since Beijing, the New Zealand agency has made some very good efforts at gender mainstreaming at an agency level and at a programming level. There are still some significant challenges at partner-country level, as I am sure my colleagues from the Pacific would agree. Overall, I feel that our existing gender and development policy is good as far as it goes. I hope that we will develop this further into a gender equity policy with an explicit rights and empowerment overlay. There is no lack of commitment at agency level, but I would really like some fresh ideas for further embedding or institutionalising that commitment.

## **NZAID's support for work on promoting and implementing CEDAW**

NZAID's recent efforts to support the promotion and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Pacific region are likely to have a far-reaching, long-term impact. These efforts also reflect an interesting convergence of the human rights streams and gender and development streams. In-country mainstreaming necessarily occurs as a pre-condition for implementation of CEDAW. The whole of government needs to be involved and actively participating if we are to make a difference for women.

When I worked for New Zealand's Ministry of Women's Affairs I was responsible for coordinating the preparation of two of New Zealand's reports on progress with implementing CEDAW. I always had this sneaking feeling that in New Zealand we were not making quite as good use as we could have of the reporting cycle process to progress both the policy debate and action on women's status domestically.

Concentrating on CEDAW reporting could be viewed as simply a bureaucratic exercise. This is not how I see it. I am convinced that CEDAW is a powerful tool for improving the status of women in Pacific Island countries. It has taken time — at least 15 to 20 years — but there is now a depth of understanding and a strong desire to make full use of the convention. And the leadership for that is now coming from Pacific countries and Pacific women.

Complying with CEDAW will continue to be a very important part of NZAID's work in the region for some time to come. These efforts are a powerful example of gender mainstreaming at partner-country level. The effect is that government agencies work together with the explicit aim of improving the status of women or improving women's access to services. In implementing CEDAW, governments are effectively taking a rights-based approach — the convention serves as an international bill of rights for women. In addition, governments find that they also need to work together with NGOs or civil society to give effect to the convention. Other benefits of CEDAW include:

- it provides a great opportunity for women's offices to provide leadership and to increase their profile;
- reporting on implementation prompts governments to action — they want to be seen in the best light (especially when under international scrutiny) — as do their political mistresses and masters;
- statistics and data need to be gathered regularly;
- reporting provides a baseline against which progress can be measured over the longer term (it may not initially mean that good analysis necessarily follows — but the availability of the data means that it can come);
- the CEDAW Committee assists governments to identify priority areas for future action. This has the potential to encourage government agencies to take specific medium-term actions to address issues and improve women's status or become more responsive to women's needs;
- reporting provides a measurable and visible focus for activists to put pressure on their government; and
- reporting can increase clarity about which part of government is responsible for which area and take pressure off the under-resourced women's offices.

This list sounds like the standard definition of gender mainstreaming — yet it is driven by a specific women's rights approach and end objective.

### **Mainstreaming and CEDAW in the Pacific**

In late April, the Women's Bureau of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community convened a workshop in Apia, at which countries could learn from the experiences of both Fiji and Samoa with preparing and following up CEDAW reports. This workshop had Pacific 'ownership' and leadership in a very real sense. In just two years, Pacific countries have developed a depth of understanding about just what a powerful tool the CEDAW reporting process can be. The trainers from the United Nations were certainly impressed.

One very important impact has been the way that the process has encouraged other government departments in both Fiji and Samoa to work cooperatively with the women's ministries — often for the first time. Each has learned that they cannot be effective unless they work in partnership across government and alongside NGOs.

### **Gender mainstreaming: Think tank outcomes**

The think tank allowed us to explore the question of whether we should return to gender-specific 'tagged' funding in our agencies (does financial evaporation follow 'the amazing disappearing woman of gender mainstreaming') and to consider new ways of approaching the whole issue of 'gender and development' in our own institutions (including whether we should look to carrots or sticks to achieve our goals). Discussion and collaboration such as this also provide an opportunity to learn how to avoid the trap

of gender just being an 'add-on' or 'clip-on', to think about how we can make 'gender' a more genuinely useful concept and not simply a proxy for 'women'. We have the chance to explore how we might accommodate a rights approach with a human development approach and, most importantly, a chance to move forward — to be inspired into action.

## **Conclusion**

Even now, after doing this job for three years in a committed agency, I feel very challenged about how we can make gender mainstreaming really work. If it is to work, we need to more clearly identify the practical benefits it brings to the development and implementation of projects and programs. Improved statistical evidence, increased involvement of women in the design of projects and policies and a clearer understanding of the impacts of policies and programs can only improve the quality of the project. Once the benefits can be clearly demonstrated, it becomes far easier to engage the necessary political will and commitment. We have to work out ways of being smarter and stealthier about getting these messages across.

I feel that we are at an interesting point in the whole women in development/gender and development/women's rights field; that we are on the edge of something new. As a lifelong feminist I'm glad to still be involved so that I have this opportunity to learn.

## **Note**

At the time of writing, Patti O'Neill was an advisor with the New Zealand Agency for International Development. She is currently administrator of the OECD's Gender Network.

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## **'Women hold up half the sky': Gender mainstreaming and women's inequality in Australia**

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### **Introduction**

'Women hold up half the sky' is an old Chinese saying indicating that gender is an important consideration in social affairs. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reaffirmed the belief in the equal rights of men and women. Despite this, women experience considerable disadvantage and discrimination, a phenomenon perpetuated by gender-differentiated structures. The nature of and reasons why gender inequality persists in Australia, and the failure of gender mainstreaming as a mechanism to remedy this inequality, are explored in this paper.

### **Gender and equality in context**

Gender is a socially constructed and its meaning varies from society to society and changes over time. Women are not a homogeneous group and their lives vary depending on the place in which they live as well as their age, social class, ethnic origin and religion (Lupton et al. 1992; Lake 1999; Grieve and Burns 1994). In all societies, female subordination is a common denominator of the female gender, although the relations of power between men and women may be experienced and expressed differently in different societies and at different times (Rowbottom and Linkogle 2001). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) unequivocally concluded that no society treats its women as well it does its men. In 1985 it was reported to the UN Committee on the Status of Women that women composed one-half of the world's population and performed two-thirds of the world's work hours, earn one-tenth of the world's income, own less than one-hundredth of the world's property and were everywhere poorer in resources and poorly represented in decision making positions (Pettman 1996; Dominelli 1991; UNDP 2001).

Little has changed since then. The Human Development Index (HDI), a measure of the achievements in basic human development across the world, measures gender inequality in terms of economic and political opportunity, and gender empowerment in terms of participation and decision making power. The latest HDI (2001) indicates that gender inequality is present in every country, although there are considerable variations across nations (UNDP 2001).

Australia's performance on the HDI appears good. Women in Australia have made significant gains over the last few decades, achieving high levels of participation in the labour market, high levels of tertiary education and gaining significant support in the context of the welfare state, such as state protection in domestic violence. However, despite years of women's activism, gender inequality still persists in Australia (UNDP 2001).

The material realities of disadvantage still exist for women (as a group) and there is still a long way to go before gender equality for women is realised. The following figures illustrate the way inequality persists in Australia. Women still have major responsibility

for caring and domestic work, they are still concentrated in lower paid or casual jobs, and they occupy lower level positions in organisations. Women have lower levels of financial security than men, no paid maternity leave in many professions, they are under-represented in formal leadership and decision making roles, and they face negative social attitudes relating to violence, sexuality, body image, gender stereotyping (Saunders and Evans 1992; Hughes 1997; Scutt 1997).

In 2000, women earned 84 per cent of men's full time average earnings. Today, women hold only 29 per cent of positions on government boards and only 10 per cent of such positions in the private sector. Only 25 per cent of parliamentarians are women (Queensland has the highest number of female members of parliament in Australia with 33 per cent). In 2002 3.8 million Australians were not working or not looking for work. Two thirds of these were women and 29 per cent of these women said that lack of childcare and the changes to childcare subsidies were keeping them out of the workforce (Summers 2003).

Women's safety is a key concern in Australia. Thirty-eight per cent of women had experienced one or more incidents of physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 and women are four times as likely to experience violence perpetrated by a man than by a woman. Only 20 per cent of women who experienced physical assault reported the incident to police, while 73 per cent of women who experience violence from a current male partner live in fear (OSW 2001; ABS 2001; OFW 2000).

### **The struggle for equality in Australia**

The notion that the 'personal is political', which women activists used to demonstrate that personal experiences reflect wider social and cultural conditions and socially structured gender power relations, has in recent years been pushed into the background. The main messages coming from the Federal Government are about 'family values', and the family is promoted as the main unit responsible for caring and nurturing. Thus, the private and public sphere dichotomy, where the private represents the world of the home, and thus primarily of women, is being more clearly drawn through the abrogation of responsibility by the state and other institutions of society to the private sphere of the family, the home and the women. Key services, hard-won over many years of struggle, such as subsidised childcare and other support for domestic carers, have been diminished and are tightly means tested, rather than available through universal access to all women. Furthermore, key government systems have been dismantled. We no longer have women's units within key government portfolios to ensure that women's disadvantage is addressed in key areas, such as employment, education, social support, safety and economic support.

For these reasons, many in Australia are critical of the ways in which gender issues are viewed. This has led to a number of outcomes — growing questions from 'Other' women's voices about identity, race and ethnicity, sexual difference, femininity and mothering roles; growing concerns from the mainstream about the role of men in society and changing policy contexts for gender issues.

Key debates centre on the paradoxical and contradictory ways in which women are excluded from full citizenship rights. Women are discriminated against when they have the same rights as men; they are treated the same as men when only differential treatment would make equality possible; and rights, particularly social rights, are different for men and women (Visvanathan et al. 1997). It is important to note that in the Australian context different groups of women (and men) are privileged differently based

on class, ethnicity, ability, and sexual orientation and have varying access to power and resources.

This poses a challenge for social policy. Many countries in the Western world are struggling with this and the role of the state in managing gender issues has become complex. It is clear that the state has a key role in shaping lives of women and men, with gender policies adopted often determining the choices for men and women. Thus the state becomes a site for contest in policy terms (Saunders and Evans 1992). The way in which the Australian state negatively shapes the lives of women is a subject of serious critique. Some have argued that the state reinforces male power through its systems, laws, and medical profession (Scutt 1997; Watson 1990; Sawer 1990; Baldock and Cass 1983). Today, many of the feminist bureaucrats of the 1980s are no longer in policy roles. In both the federal and state systems, gender and women's policies are more often being formulated and implemented by conservative bureaucrats. Other viewpoints point to the mobilising the resources within the state to represent and respond to women's interests.

### **The interplay of gender mainstreaming and inequality**

Gender mainstreaming was adopted by the UN Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995 as a key methodology for achieving gender equality. To facilitate implementation of the policy, the United Nations has developed guides and tools for agencies to use in adopting gender mainstreaming (United Nations 2002). Yet while gender mainstreaming was intended as an 'integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres' (ECOSOC 1997:2), in fact, gender mainstreaming has entered Australia's official policy domain in only a very marginal manner. A casual perusal of the web pages of relevant federal and state departments and offices for women show this clearly.

At the Commonwealth level, the agency responsible for women's affairs is the Office of Status of Women (OSW) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. This unit has adopted a gender mainstreaming approach and developed a Gender Mainstreaming Help Line service for Commonwealth Government agencies to assist them in integrating gender into their policies. There is a focus on the role of men and boys and OSW is conducting research into this topic, but the office has yet to formulate a policy position. Overall, there is no national benchmarking on the progress made on gender equality in Australia. It is not officially systematised in policy or the programs of government agencies, nor is there any systematic reporting back against achievements.

Gender mainstreaming was accompanied by changes to policies that impact on women in the areas of health, employment, education and childcare. The OSW's budget was cut from \$5.58 million to \$3.68 million in 1997 (Summers 2003). Women's policy units within key government agencies, such as the Women's Bureau in Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, had been shut down by 1997. In adopting gender mainstreaming, the Commonwealth's tack has been to dismantle the very systems that would assist in addressing gender inequality, and, moreover, has done so without replacing these systems with appropriate gender analysis mechanisms.

At the state level, only the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales have gender mainstreaming on their agenda. However, as at the Commonwealth level, gender mainstreaming has not been adopted in a systematic manner. It is confined to limited projects, such as a gender analysis resource kit which contains guidelines for agencies to develop gender inclusive approaches in their work or research projects. In the other states and territory, gender mainstreaming has not been officially adopted.

There is a focus on women's policy units, but in each of these policy units there is no benchmarking or reporting of performance in relation to gender or women's equality.

With the infrastructure for women's policy largely dismantled and in the absence of external feminist voices, gender issues are picked up in a piecemeal fashion across various government policy units. However, all of these offices are small, under-resourced and have little clout. In many states, women's issues are not even taken up as important election issues. The way government funding of external programs is structured has also shaped how the non-government women's sector operates — largely divided into service areas, such as children's services, domestic violence, health and so on. This has resulted in the absence of a cohesive approach to women's issues or gender equality outcomes.

### **The impact of gender mainstreaming**

In 2004 we can observe serious problems in gender mainstreaming experience in Australia. With the abandonment of the focus on women-specific policies and programs, most jurisdictions have in effect adopted a gender mainstreaming approach by default.

Gender issues have become invisible or marginalised, only being picked up in situations where there is a crisis or problem. There are no systems established across government or in government-funded programs to undertake gender analyses and determine impacts in terms of equality outcomes.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that there is a lack of conceptual clarity around what is meant by 'gender mainstreaming'. Some agencies do not use the term and certainly there is a fragmented approach across and within jurisdictions. An additional by-product has been the abandonment or reduction of women-specific services and programs that have traditionally targeted areas of the greatest inequity, under-representation and disadvantage. The broad language and rhetoric which has accompanied the gender debate has clouded the key problem areas. An example is the use of terms such as 'family violence' rather than 'domestic violence'.

The critiques of gender mainstreaming in Australia are similar to those developed in response to the situation in other countries (Jahan 1995; Pettman 1996; Mitchell 2003). Seven years after the Beijing Platform for Action, we have major problems in terms of measuring outcomes for gender equality in Australia. There are no clear objectives, just broad motherhood statements about gender equality. Few agencies have a pathway mapped out for achieving progress in achieving gender equality. Although many have stated visions, their solutions seem to be issue based, rather than a pathway for consistent and continuous effort. No Australian jurisdiction has binding benchmarking or performance criteria for its agencies. The infrastructure for monitoring and reporting is often rhetorical, and depends on the nature of the relationships between the offices for women and other agencies. The inter-departmental committees established around gender issues have very little impact and are often attended by lower level officers who have no ability to effect change in their own agencies.

The overall impact of gender mainstreaming in Australia has seen a lack of sex-disaggregated data collection, lack of articulation of gender equality outcomes in policy documents, reliance on small women's offices for women to 'fix' the gender issues, lack of gender impact statements in most policy and program areas, and the loss of infrastructure which would progress issues relating to women. Agencies do not have the internal capability and expertise to undertake gender analysis and the will to seek external expertise lies with the voluntary sensitivity of senior officers. Very few agencies have developed frameworks or tools for gender analysis and, where they have been



developed, there has been no central mechanism that requires agencies to apply, use and report against these frameworks. Finally, despite a lack of gender expertise, 'gender training' programs are also few. Apart from Equal Employment Opportunity legislative responsibilities, agencies do not invest in resources for gender analysis training.

Achieving gender equality outcomes requires leadership, staff capacity and internal and external champions. Moving to a gender equality framework without these elements has left gender issues, particularly women's issues, in a vacuum and without political impetus. There is lack of incentives for senior managers to deliver on gender equality outcomes. For example, there is an absence of gender equality criteria for performance assessment, promotion and financial rewards, and performance is most often related to economic outcomes and benefits. More broadly, there has been an inability to articulate the benefits of gender equality in economic and other terms that would have given it the political mandate it lacks.

## **Conclusion**

Experience over the last decade indicates that gender mainstreaming in Australia has not been an effective mechanism for achieving gender equality, despite the intent of women's policy units and government vision statements. Very little evaluative or other academic work has been published in Australia about the impact of gender mainstreaming. This itself is an indication of the level of attention this topic receives.

If gender equality is to be achieved within a gender mainstreaming framework, some key issues need to be addressed, including institutional accountability measures to ensure agency compliance, development of clear objectives and action plans, monitoring, tracking and development of key indicators of achievement, sufficient resources within agencies, key units and officers devoted to gender analysis, development of capability for gender analysis within agencies, and specific incentives for senior managers to bring about cultural change.

As outlined in the beginning of this paper, gender — like race, ethnicity and class — is a social category which impacts on one's life chances, shaping a person's ability to participate in the economy and society. Addressing gender equality is about strengthening the ability of a nation to address the key issues it faces and to harness the potential of all its people. The persistence of gender inequality has economic and social consequences that no society can ignore.

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## **Successful strategies for addressing gender equality issues in programs and projects: What works?**

*Juliet Hunt, independent consultant*

### **Introduction**

How can we increase the likelihood of women benefiting equally from donor-funded development programs and projects? What lessons can we learn from development initiatives where some progress has been made towards equality between women and men? In other words, what strategies have worked in practice in the field?

### **Do we know what works?**

The recent *Review on Gender and Evaluation: Final Report to DAC Working Party on Evaluation* (Hunt and Brouwers 2003, hereafter referred to as 'the review') provides evidence of change strategies that have actually worked in the field. The review assessed 85 evaluations undertaken by bilateral and multilateral donors from 1999 to 2002. Half were thematic evaluations designed to evaluate gender equality, mainstreaming and women's empowerment efforts, and half were general program or project evaluations, which included some gender analysis. The database for the review represents the highest quality and quantity of gender analysis in evaluations from 19 agencies. There was significant consensus among evaluators about the strategies that have helped us to address gender equality issues in programs and projects, regardless of the type of development assistance, the donor agency, the partner country or the program/project sector.

### **Build partnerships on equality for women through dialogue**

Building partnerships on gender equality is an important principle for success. What this means in practice is that development workers need to talk to their partners about how equality of benefits for women is necessary and relevant to the work that they plan to do together. This type of dialogue and negotiation on gender equality needs to occur at policy level, during the development of country assistance strategies, and during program/project design and implementation. Fundamental success factors are:

- *Develop a shared vision and explicit consensus on gender equality objectives for the country strategy or development activity.* Of course, these objectives are far more likely to be owned by the partner agency if they are transparently relevant to the policies and commitments that the partner has already made on equality for women. One challenge here is for development workers to articulate, in a very concrete manner, how women's needs, benefits and rights are relevant to the development activities being planned and implemented, taking into account the social, economic and political context. The ideal outcome from such a dialogue is agreement on investments and activities, with a clear understanding of how benefits for both women and men will be realised.
- *Involve stakeholders from civil society in dialogue on development objectives and activities.* National machineries for women, local women's organisations, NGOs

and other local advocates for gender equality can play a key advocacy role in setting the directions for country strategies and in the design of development activities, if they have a place at the table. Ownership of development interventions and sustainability of outcomes may also be enhanced. Civil society organisations can play an important role in holding partner institutions accountable to close gaps between policy commitments and practice.

- *Make long-term commitments to development activities.* This is essential for making sustainable progress towards gender equality, and is also important for building the trust upon which partnerships are based.

Like those of other donors, AusAID's gender and development policy recognises the importance of high-level consultation in ensuring that partner countries are aware of the policy and that the priorities and commitments of partners are considered in programming to address gender inequalities (AusAID 1997:11). However, the need for the same type of dialogue to occur during program/project design and throughout implementation has not been acknowledged. Similarly, most Australian NGOs now have gender policies, but it remains relatively uncommon for those policies to be translated into local languages, or discussed in any detail with partners during program/project design and implementation.

Knowing and understanding your partner and their context is a prerequisite for effective dialogue and for the development of shared objectives for program/project interventions. Nevertheless, assessing and building partner capacity and commitment for gender-responsive programming remains one of the weakest links in our efforts to ensure that women participate and benefit from development activities. (Most evaluation reports did not identify partner capacity building for gender sensitive planning or implementation as a successful strategy. This may be because assessment of partner capacity remains rare, along with efforts to build partner capacity for gender sensitive development work).

### **Successful strategies for design, implementation and monitoring**

Attention to gender equality issues in program and project design and implementation is essential if agencies want to increase the likelihood that both women and men will participate and benefit, and to ensure that neither is disadvantaged by development activities. This statement may seem blindingly obvious or trite. Nevertheless, lack of participation by women in design, poor needs analysis, lack of baseline data on key gender differences germane to the specific program/project, and a failure to address gender issues in program/project objectives and monitoring are most commonly cited as major obstacles to women participating and benefiting from development activities. Even limited attention can make a significant difference to whether women participate or benefit. Successful strategies most frequently noted in evaluation reports are:

- *Include gender equality objectives in overall program/project objectives wherever possible.* This is noted as a key reason for success when evaluators find positive benefits and impacts for women. This does *not* mean that development activities need to focus exclusively on achieving equality between women and men, or that women-specific activities are the only way to make progress towards equality. It means that there is a greater likelihood of both women's and men's needs, participation and benefits being considered if they are *explicitly* reflected at some level in program/project objectives. For example, the Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) review of gender mainstreaming found that projects with the most explicit gender equality

objectives also had the most positive impacts on gender equality (Mikkelsen 2002:viii). My own experience strongly supports this finding: many design documents now include some gender analysis, but unless this is reflected in the design in a concrete way (such as in the logical framework matrix), it is less likely that gender equality issues will be given systematic or serious attention during implementation.

- *Use participatory strategies to involve both women and men in design and implementation.* Having adequate time and resources for participatory fieldwork is essential. However, participatory strategies by themselves do not guarantee that gender equality will be adequately understood or addressed, since participatory methods still often overlook women (Guijt and Shah 1998).
- *Ensure that gender strategies are practical, and based on quality gender analysis.* One finding from the review is that even where gender analysis is undertaken during design, it is often of a general nature, not linked to the activities to be implemented, to the expected results, or to overall social, poverty or sustainability analysis. This increases the likelihood that women will be marginalised during implementation. A number of evaluations note that an explicit gender strategy is critical, but most qualify this by saying that the strategy must be high quality and practical. This means that gender strategies need to identify, in very concrete terms, how gender equality is relevant in each program/project and context, and what this actually means in practice: what activities are needed, with whom and why; what results are expected; how these activities and results will contribute to achieving program/project objectives; how the strategy will be resourced; and how the strategy and its results will be monitored. The author's experience also suggests that 'stand-alone' gender strategies generally have little impact. To be implemented, key elements of the strategy need to be integrated into day-to-day project implementation and management tools and processes, such as in the logframe, budget, annual work plans, project monitoring and progress reporting.
- *Include explicit responsibilities for implementing gender equality objectives and strategies into job descriptions, scope of services documents and terms of reference for all personnel through every stage of the program/project cycle.* It may seem ridiculously obvious to note that development workers need to be told (through their job descriptions) that they have a responsibility to implement gender policies. Nevertheless, this is not yet routine practice, and evaluators found that it significantly increases the likelihood that gender equality issues will be seriously addressed. The challenge here is to ensure that statements about responsibilities are specific, meaningful and relevant to the program/project in question, rather than a resort to vague or general references to policy. One key to success noted by some evaluation reports is having competent and committed staff and stakeholders in the field, who also have the time, resources and support to dedicate to this issue.
- *Provide in-country social and gender analysis expertise.* It is hardly surprising that this has also been a key success factor where there is some evidence of

success in meeting women's needs or making progress towards gender equality. In addition to analytical skills, gender specialists need good strategic assessment and planning, communication, advocacy and negotiation skills to be effective change agents within their design and implementation teams. Experience suggests that progress is more likely to occur when gender specialists are effective resource people, motivators and facilitators who mentor and support their colleagues to address gender equality issues in their specialist areas of work (Hunt 2000:32–33).

- *Collect adequate and relevant sex-disaggregated baseline information, and use gender sensitive indicators and monitoring processes as a minimum standard for program/project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.* Sex-disaggregated information is needed on who participates and benefits, what prevents males and females from participating and benefiting, unintended or harmful effects of programs/projects, and changes in gender relations. Unfortunately, many development activities still lack relevant sex-disaggregated baseline data and gender-sensitive indicators. These are serious constraints to assessing possible differences in participation, benefits and impacts between males and females. Where sex-disaggregated information is collected, it tends to focus on inputs and activities (such as the attendance of women or men at training, the number of women in groups set up or supported by the project, or the number of loans provided), rather than on benefits or longer-term impacts (such as learning outcomes from training, the benefits to livelihood or changes in gender relations from participation in groups, or whether women control or benefit from loans). Unintended impacts on women, or any other social group, such as men, women or children living in poverty, minorities or disadvantaged groups, were seldom investigated in the evaluation reports included in the review.

### **Effective approaches for making progress towards gender equality**

The *Review on Gender and Evaluation* found evidence that the strategies listed above increase the likelihood of women participating and benefiting, and decrease the likelihood of women being disadvantaged from development activities. However, attention to gender issues in design and implementation is a necessary but insufficient condition to ensure that benefits are in fact achieved and sustained. Moreover, ensuring that women gain some benefits from development programs and projects is not necessarily the same as making real progress towards equality. This requires particular types of benefits, in addition to sustainability of benefits, which in turn depends greatly on local context, and the capacity of partner agencies and communities to sustain positive outcomes.

For example, a subset of evaluations (macro-level policy, sectoral and program studies) concluded that the local cultural, institutional and policy context of interventions is a more important determinant of whether women benefit, and whether benefits will be sustained, than any specific actions to address gender issues during design or implementation. The World Bank found that this also works in reverse: women were able to benefit from largely gender-blind World Bank assistance in Poland and Vietnam where implementing agencies stepped in with targeting mechanisms, or where both women and men were able to access benefits because of other factors in the local social and institutional environment (World Bank 2002:14–16).

It is still rare for evaluations to acknowledge that men also have a role to play in changing gender relations. Where evaluations have found evidence of progress towards gender equality, a combination of approaches are identified as being keys to success:

- use of participatory approaches which strengthen women's leadership capacity;
- support for women's organisations as agents of civil society; and
- targeting of women to ensure that they have access to key project resources.

Using female staff, extension agents and women's groups facilitates women's participation, and helps to ensure that they have access to program/project resources. While this may seem self-evident, effective targeting strategies (including analysis of the constraints which prevent women from accessing resources and benefits), are not yet routine. The content of targeted programs is as important as the strategy of targeting. The provision of leadership training is a key feature in some successful programs. In others, providing women with skills training has had an empowering impact on women's decision making capacity, particularly when combined with participatory planning and monitoring processes, or group formation strategies which enable women to either work together or gain support from each other. Supporting women's organisations as agents of civil society enhances progress towards sustainable changes in gender relations, particularly where women's group identity and organisational capacity is strengthened, and where support is provided for women's advocacy activities with men and local institutions. Activities which have been specifically designed to empower women and promote gender equality, by strengthening local women's organisations to pursue their own agenda for equality, show the strongest evidence of strategic changes in gender relations. Some programs demonstrate increased participation in decision making by women, either at household, community or local government level. These are very positive examples; sadly, many of these activities remain small-scale.

### **The obstacles**

None of the approaches listed above is a 'magic bullet'. However, they are core requirements if we wish to increase the likelihood of females participating and benefiting from development activities, along with males. More to the point, none of these approaches is new: most fall into the category of 'lessons learned', which we have failed to apply consistently to development cooperation efforts. The evidence from the review is overwhelming: systematic attention to gender equality issues in program/project design, implementation and monitoring is still rare.

Why is progress towards gender mainstreaming and programming for women's rights so slow in donor organisations? Lack of accountability to gender equality policy continues to be a serious obstacle to ensuring that both women and men benefit from development activities in all types of donor organisations (bilateral and multilateral agencies and NGOs). Evaluations highlight the problem of crowded policy agendas, which results in a failure to prioritise gender equality objectives in country strategies and in program/project design and implementation. Many agencies do not provide adequate guidance on how to operationalise gender equality policy. Policy commitments are not sufficiently embedded into agency procedures, management tools and systems, which results in a failure to monitor policy implementation sufficiently at any level. Many agencies are reluctant to utilise mandatory systems, or do not utilise them to their full effect, and there are few incentives for good performance on gender equality (Hunt 2000:15–17). Confusion about gender equality concepts and objectives remains

widespread: the word 'gender' is still frequently used as a synonym for 'women', or is used without qualification (rather than being used meaningfully in relation to equality, relationships, roles or responsibilities). Links are rarely made at any level (policy, country assistance strategies, program/project interventions) between poverty reduction and gender equality objectives.

Overall there is a sense that momentum has been lost since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. For example, while the history of progress on this issue within AusAID is largely one of individual effort from below, there were a few years (centred around the Beijing conference) when the implementation of gender policy was more likely to be seen as mandatory. However, in recent years, major policy initiatives such as the 2001 Strategic Plan, the 2002 Ministerial Statement to Parliament, and policies on governance, water, and humanitarian programming have given little or no attention to gender equality policy or issues (AusAID 2001a, AusAID 2002a, AusAID 2000, AusAID 2003, AusAID 2001b). While AusAID's policy on poverty reduction (AusAID 2001c) makes a number of references to women, the links between gender inequality and poverty reduction are poorly articulated.

Despite the obstacles, there are many positive examples of development activities which have made serious efforts to involve and benefit both females and males, and donor staff who are highly committed to finding and nurturing space within development programs to benefit women and make progress towards gender equality and human rights. This is certainly the case in Australia in AusAID, NGOs and contracting companies.

### **Conclusion: A strategic approach to gender mainstreaming**

While we now have a strong basis in evidence regarding approaches needed through the program/project cycle, this does not mean that these approaches are easy to apply in the field, or that changes in gender relations will automatically follow. Making progress towards equality for women is complex, with a variety of economic, social and cultural obstacles. As a result, change is bound to be incremental and impact will be demonstrated in the medium to long-term only if benefits are sustained. Moreover, the role that development cooperation can play in changing gender relations needs careful reflection, collaboration with partners, and future investigation through well-designed research and evaluation.

Does gender mainstreaming lead to improvements in women's lives? The question cannot be answered: we simply do not have enough examples of authentic gender mainstreaming, on any scale, to present evidence in favour or against the proposition. What about activities which have been specifically designed to promote gender equality? Here we are on somewhat firmer ground, although existing evidence is based mostly on small-scale interventions and sustainability is closely linked to an enabling social, institutional and economic context.

Where should gender specialists and advocates focus their energies now? Charlotte Bunch's (2003) suggestion seems the best way forward. We need to take a strategic approach by focusing on areas where we can actually make a difference. For me, a strategic approach to gender mainstreaming means:

- Focus more on supporting activities designed and owned by female and male advocates for human rights and gender equality in partner countries. This builds an enabling political and social environment for progress and sustainability at the micro-level in individual development activities, as well as at the macro-level.



- Scale-up or replicate activities and strategies that have demonstrated equality of participation and benefits, and sustainable progress towards equality and human rights for women.
- Continue efforts to improve design and implementation, by applying the proven strategies noted above, and by using gender-sensitive indicators as a minimum standard for design and implementation. It is essential for governance activities to address gender inequalities.
- Strengthen internal accountability within donor agencies. Progress to date owes so much to the commitment of donor staff and contractors who nurture human rights approaches and who support programs which advance the status of women. Commitment from below will be critical to sustain progress already made within donor agencies.
- External accountability needs to be strengthened. In donor countries, this requires donor NGOs to ensure that their houses in order, so that they can be credible advocates for gender equality. In partner countries, this takes us full circle again to the first point above: support activities undertaken by local women and men who are advocates and activists for women's human rights.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Practical challenges for gender mainstreaming in governance projects: Observations of a consulting practitioner**

*Rima das Pradhan, IDP Americas and IDP Education Australia\**

### **Introduction**

This discussion is based at a practical level from the viewpoint of a practitioner involved in the development-consulting sector.<sup>1</sup> It aims to highlight the challenges in responding to, and implementing gender mainstreaming strategies at the field level while meeting project targets set out by donors. The 'conversation' below is not meant to be a comprehensive academic piece on gender mainstreaming, but 'thinking-points', broad observations and a record of experiences made over the course of responding to the terms of reference set out for projects. The particular focus of this paper is to look at issues in ensuring effective gender mainstreaming in governance projects such as public sector reform, corporate and financial reform (for example taxation reform, pensions reform, banking reform) and legal and judicial reform. While gender mainstreaming is still problematic in sectors such as health, education, rural development and microfinance, project terms of reference in these sectors generally identify gender as a priority issue. Activities that aim to address issues of capacity building, access to resources, and decision making are usually included. However, gender mainstreaming is less visible in the governance sub-sectors that are more technically focused particularly involving agencies at the central level of government.

### **Gender as a cross-cutting issue**

Gender mainstreaming is a synthesising concept that addresses the well being of women and men. It is a strategy that is central to the interests of the whole community. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 pushed the dialogue on gender mainstreaming to the fore at an international level and was endorsed by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action<sup>2</sup> as the approach by which goals under each of its Critical Areas of Concern are to be achieved. All players in the development sector since the Fourth World Conference on Women have been in agreement that gender matters. Since then, widespread commitment has been made by governments, donor agencies, non-government organisations and other international and national players to gender mainstreaming. There is substantial evidence to demonstrate that the key players in the development industry have identified gender equity as a priority objective. For example, each donor agency has a gender strategy paper. Some donors require organisations receiving funds to have a gender and development (GAD) policy.

Despite the tremendous progress in policy development and the abundance of information available on gender mainstreaming, all players in the sector, including multilateral and bilateral agencies, consulting firms and non-government organisations are the first to say that translating gender mainstreaming policy objectives to true outcomes in the field are challenging. This discussion aims to identify some of the factors that result in gender still being an add-on as opposed to being an integral part of the process.

## Challenges faced by development consulting firms

Some general observations about the challenges in gender mainstreaming are identified below.

### Focus on technical aspects

When priority is given to the more technical aspects of the reform process, gender often is not a consideration. For example, in projects involving privatisation, which usually result in workforce downsizing, the solutions designed to deal with labour redundancy issues are often based on the needs of a broad target group, the majority of whom are male and who often have differing issues and needs from women. Generally, women are less skilled or work at lower-skilled jobs that are easily replaced by technology. Differing working schedules of women due to competing family responsibilities mean that women can be left out of the consultation process unless there are strategies in place to ensure their full and active participation. The differing demographic factors can also mean that compensation packages do not adequately cater to women's needs.

### Sources of technical specialists

The technical specialists required for the type of projects listed above often include a requirement for very senior specialists who have the necessary status to give credibility to the reform process and to ensure the project management meets societal and institutional cultural norms. For example, in legal and judicial reform projects, tender selection panels tend to take into consideration 'status issues' so that the team is seen to be credible and able to engage at senior levels in the recipient country. The general pool for both international and national consultants who fit this criterion comprises active senior public servants, former senior public servants and academics.

**Lack of developing country experience:** While these specialists may be highly competent and skilled in their particular field of expertise, many international technical specialists, particularly those who fit the 'status' criteria, have had little or no experience in developing countries or their developing country experience is limited to high-level negotiations or involvement as members of official delegations and conference participants. All these experiences are relevant but limited.

**Implications of the lack of women as senior decision-makers in the resource pool of specialists:** There are proportionately fewer women in senior decision-making positions in both developed countries and developing countries. Consulting firms thus have great difficulty in putting together a gender-balanced team.

**Gender blindness within the pool of specialists:** The combination of these factors often leads to teams who are highly skilled, but have little experience in the developing country context, with the added 'baggage' of not having gender on the agenda. Even if women are included on teams as technical specialists, this does not necessarily mean they have the specialist gender skills that are needed to put gender on the agenda, particularly in developing country contexts.

**Gender as an add-on:** While some terms of reference set out the requirement for technical specialists who have experience in gender, problems can still arise at the implementation stage because, for example, the technical input requirements are small; the team member responsible for gender has to contend with resistance and biases of other specialists who are more focussed on the technical aspects of the project; or because of existing biases within the project country's executing agency. The end result is that gender considerations become mere add-ons.

### **The need to consider issues relating to intersectionality**

In the International Women's Development Agency's gender and development dialogue background paper, intersectionality is described as:

an approach to understanding the differences among women and among men and the ways that these differences interact to exacerbate marginalisation. It identifies subordination not solely as an issue of gender or race or class inequalities but as a location where there are often simultaneous and compounding relationships of subordination. Intersectionality offers potential as a framework for contextual analysis that may improve development outcomes for women by ensuring that particular groups of women are not excluded in policy and practice (IWDA 2003:2).

The paper also identifies the limited discussion and incorporation of intersectionality in both policy and practice (IWDA 2003:14).

### **Real understanding and commitment to gender mainstreaming in executing agencies**

If gender is included in a set of terms of reference, it means that the government and/or the executing agency have agreed to the project objectives and activities with some form of a no-objection sign-off. The level of real commitment and understanding of gender mainstreaming within the recipient government agency, however, is often a significant constraint. In many instances, recipients adopt the language and concepts of gender mainstreaming without real commitment. The process of the sign-off is essentially a 'tick in the box' to demonstrate their 'commitment' to gender.

### **The resurgence of 'Empowerment of Women' projects**

While there is no doubt that capacity building activities need to address the range of inequalities faced by women, there seems to be a resurgence of projects that focus solely on women, with a focus again in the 'softer sectors'. The objectives are clearly praiseworthy, however, the very language and positioning within the project document goes against the notion of gender mainstreaming across the board. Projects constructed in this way provide an opportunity for donors and recipients alike to add 'a tick to the gender box' as a way of showing a commitment to gender mainstreaming, but without really incorporating gender mainstreaming strategies in the sub-sectors that are the focus of this discussion-aspects of which provide the over all framework for addressing gender inequalities. Such approaches also lead to the danger of compounding the trend towards 'gender fatigue', as it creates an opportunity for stakeholders to point to a perceived imbalance in the relative amount of resources being directed to women. This can undermine any gains made in gender mainstreaming, and be seen as a Western-imposed notion.

### **Capturing and institutionalising gender mainstreaming expertise**

An overall problem with the tendering process is that it provides opportunities for a changing pool of consulting firms with a different mix of teams for each project. Donors often have to work within project funding cycles for the purposes of accountability to their own stakeholders and break up broad sectoral objectives within phases, each phase lasting as long as a project funding cycle. While there are often situations where a consulting firm is successful in winning contracts due to their positive track record in earlier phases or similar projects in the country or in the region, often a new mix of players are involved in subsequent projects and phases. One of the implications is that

often these new players can perpetuate existing gender blindness or setback any progress and lessons learned from earlier projects.

### **Listening to women**

Women usually have very different ways of communicating. Often, it is necessary to create a space for women to be heard across the board, that is, across different levels within the agency and outside, and amongst other stakeholder groups. While women at the various levels amongst stakeholder groups may not have the necessary technical framework or expertise to articulate issues in technical terms, they often communicate issues pertinent to projects in experiential terms, and this information can be valuable and relevant to meeting overall project objectives.

### **Collecting, using and access issues to data**

Collecting gender-disaggregated data as baseline data is an important step. While this happens to an extent, often the focus is on a quantitative methodology with only basic qualitative and contextual analyses. Collection of data through surveys and interviews can also direct responses towards what the surveyor wants to hear, rather than providing an opportunity to have situation and context specific dialogue. Such data are often kept separate from the core project data, and not fully integrated into core project documents. Gender analyses are often located in a separate document that is usually only accessed and used by those who already have gender on the agenda.

### **Performance indicators**

There are a number of critical issues in relation to performance indicators that can perpetuate gender blindness in the project cycle. Donors place a great deal of importance in measuring outputs and impacts. The monitoring and evaluation process, while important, is driven by the desire to ensure greater accountability and cost effectiveness, and to capture lessons learned in a manner that fosters cumulative knowledge about various interventions. Donors, particularly bilateral donors, are under significant pressure to be accountable to their stakeholders in relation to budget and resource allocations. Bilateral agencies are usually under the most pressure in this regard, particularly when conservative governments are in power, and are under stress to demonstrate visible, measurable impacts/deliverables, value for money, and cost-effectiveness to the public. The end result is that evaluation can become an end in itself, and its meaningfulness and utility is diminished. In this situation, the overly rigorous evaluation and reporting demands can be an impediment to effective project implementation in the field.

**Quality of baseline data:** If the quality of the baseline gender-disaggregated data is poor, it usually follows that measurement of real progress on gender mainstreaming is limited. Furthermore, team members have to have the necessary skills to develop and monitor progress against gender mainstreaming goals.

**Challenges in measuring attitudinal change:** Progress and lessons learned in implementing gender mainstreaming strategies need to involve not only quantitative gender-disaggregated data, but also comprehensive contextual qualitative analysis. Outcomes such as overall attitudinal change are not products, but intangible process-oriented objectives. In traditional development projects, macro-indicators relate well to precise measurement (for example for education projects: gender-disaggregated data on basic literacy rates) or project objectives can be easily measured and identified in advance with micro indicators (for example gender-disaggregated data on attendance in

primary schools). The intangible nature of gender mainstreaming objectives means that identifying indicators that are amenable to observable, replicable, verifiable measures is problematic.

**Causality and attribution:** Finding a relationship between the project and changes within stakeholder groups is one of the most difficult issues. There are many problems relating to causality. Some of these issues include correlations without causal links, delayed causality, mutual causality and interactive causality. Delayed causality is of particular importance as outcomes such as attitudinal change can take years and generations to occur arise outside the project funding cycle.

**Practicalities in the field:** The political situation in the field can be highly fluid. This scenario is generally significant particularly in newer democracies where decision makers frequently change and key actors may have shifting priorities. This can lead to an overall sense of 'one step forward, two steps back' for implementers. Implementers are under pressure to ensure that projects are not seen as failure, as such a result generally has implications for future funding or consulting opportunities. There is a sense amongst implementers that, despite the known challenges, donors have high expectations about project outcomes and expect implementers to demonstrate positive outcomes within a limited period of time, that is, within the project funding cycle. This result is that implementers often focus on the technical targets of a project, while gender is considered only superficially.

**Gender blindness of independent evaluators:** Increasingly donors and implementers alike are using 'independent' evaluators for the purpose of looking at the project with 'fresh eyes'. However, such evaluators tend to be just that, 'fresh eyes' who often have limited skills in evaluating progress against gender mainstreaming strategies and understanding of the gender context of the particular project.

## Recommendations

It is widely accepted that mainstreaming is not about adding a 'woman's component' or even a 'gender equality component' into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda. With this framework in mind, some broad recommendations that arise from observations discussed above to incorporate gender mainstreaming at a practical level are:

1. As a starting point, gender mainstreaming strategies need to be increasingly integrated into the important sectors that are the focus of this paper — sectors which are highly technical and still gender blind.
2. All agencies, including consulting firms and organisation such as the International Women's Development Agency, actively seek out women technical specialists who are interested in working in the development sector.
3. All technical specialists should be provided with at least base-level training on gender mainstreaming concepts and tools in the overall developing country and country-specific contexts.
4. When terms of reference are developed for projects in these highly technical fields, gender mainstreaming should be built in as a key requirement.
5. An ongoing dialogue on gender awareness and gender mainstreaming needs to be built-in across the board, at all levels and across all stakeholder groups. This should not be dealt with as a separate issue, but integrated into all aspects of staff development.

6. While doing stakeholder analyses for the project sectors in question, it is essential to identify target groups such as civil society and professional groups, within and outside agencies and internationally and nationally, which have gender on the agenda to discuss project implications in relation to gender mainstreaming.
7. At the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages, the technical team, or members of the technical team should be trained to create the space for women to actively participate in the project cycle, to have the necessary 'listening' and analysis skills to 'hear' what the women are saying, and to capture such analysis and findings into all aspects of the project cycle.
8. Gender-disaggregated baseline data, information and quantitative/qualitative and contextual analysis should be included as a matter of course at all stages of the project cycle. The baseline information at the design stage should be tested at the project inception and implementation stages, and developments tracked at the monitoring and evaluation stages. Lessons learned and successful gender mainstreaming in the particular project's context should be well recorded, collated and made widely accessible. This information while classified and collated in the 'gender' section of knowledge management systems and processes, should also be included upfront within core project information so that it is not seen as a side issue.
9. Consulting firms should be strongly encouraged to institutionalise gender mainstreaming within their own internal organisational environment through strategies including having:
  - an in-house gender specialist who advises on all aspects of the project process, including an audit of technical proposals submitted for tenders;
  - an ongoing process of gender-awareness raising and training within the organisation, which involves business development, senior management and project management teams as a part of staff development strategies;
  - a briefing on context specific gender mainstreaming as part of the briefing process for mobilisation of teams;
  - a process to capture lessons learned from past and current projects on gender mainstreaming which is accessible and shared internally and across teams directly involved in project implementation;
  - a process to share these lessons learned with donors and recipients as part of the overall knowledge management process; and
  - active involvement in the ongoing dialogue process at institutional, national, regional and international levels on gender mainstreaming and intersectionality;
10. Gender specialists need to be included in the tender assessment process. If there is a presentation is part of the tender assessment process, team members should be tested on their thinking on gender mainstreaming within the specific project context; and
11. The international development sector as a whole needs to give greater recognition to the importance of attitudinal change and recognise it as a long-term process.



## Conclusion

Effort must be made to ensure gender fatigue does not jeopardise the translation of policy into practice. A fine balance must be maintained, so as to minimise any perceptions of gender mainstreaming being ‘forced’ on projects and so undermining the credibility of efforts to date. At the same time, gender mainstreaming should be given the full attention it deserves as a strategy for improving effectiveness at the implementation stage of projects, particularly projects in the governance sub-sectors. This process of bringing the issue onto the radar screen, and incorporating it effectively, requires sensitivity and skill. Dialogue processes such as that organised by the International Women’s Development Agency, which include all the players in the international development sector, are commendable. With their strong practical implications, processes such as these should continue at all levels. A common understanding of gender mainstreaming, developed in an environment of mutual support and learning, will promote its effective implementation.

## Notes

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- i. Due to word limitations, the observations are limited to gender streaming and issues around intersectionality have only been touched on. In addition, these observations are personal, and do not represent the views of the author’s current employer.
- ii. See Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, ‘Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action’, paras. 79, 105, 123, 141, 164, 189, 202, 229, 238, 252, 273), the full document is available from the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women Beijing+5 web site at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm> >.

## Reference

IWDA (International Women’s Development Organisation) 2003, IWDA Gender and Development Dialogue — GAD and intersectionality in the region: Forging the future’, Brisbane, 3–4 July, background paper.

## **Gender mainstreaming in the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary**

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### **Introduction**

The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the context in which the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Development Project (RPNGCDP), Phase II and III, is being implemented, and the lessons learnt regarding effective gender mainstreaming strategies in this context. The paper reviews project initiatives that have been successful and others that have not achieved the expected results. The importance of understanding context when designing and implementing gender-related development activities is emphasised. To this end, the paper also looks at the impact of policy, social and cultural factors in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

The project has been funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), while ACIL Australia Pty Ltd has been contracted by AusAID to implement Phases II and III of the RPNGCDP. ACIL has been involved with the project since 1993.

### **Background**

Papua New Guinea has a well-established policy framework that requires the promotion of equality in opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, development. The PNG National Goals and Directive Principles enshrined in its Constitution outline a commitment to equality for all. The National Women's Policy was developed in 1990 to contribute to these goals and principles through achieving 'increased participation by women as both beneficiaries and agents in the development process and improvement in the quality of life for all'.

Despite PNG's strong policy framework, women's status throughout the country remains low, and, in most communities, women are considered inferior to men. High levels of violence, heavy workloads, and discrimination in educational and employment opportunities hinder achievement of the National Goals. In most spheres, women have little independence. Men see themselves as entitled to have power over women because of their gender and therefore men's interests take precedence over those of women and children. These beliefs are deeply ingrained in many social institutions and, given PNG's cultural diversity, the social context cannot be oversimplified.

### **The social context**

Women have limited access to political power. Men view politics as fundamentally a man's game and women have largely been excluded from participating. Women have mostly been unsuccessful in election campaigns. At the national level, there have only been four women elected to National Parliament since PNG achieved independence in 1975. Currently, there is only one woman in PNG's 109-member parliament. The national situation often reflects the situation at the grassroots level, where men also typically hold public political power. Women have minimal opportunity to participate directly in the community decision-making processes and, at times, suffer threats, by men and women, if they successfully enter into the male domain of government.

Inequality in households, including significant disparity in the equality of household members' workloads is common. Women tend to undertake greater workloads than men as they have multiple tasks of caring for children, maintaining gardens and looking after animals. In addition to these more traditional family responsibilities, women's responsibilities for income generation and children's education are expanding, which is further increasing women's workloads.

Violence against women is a significant problem at all levels of society, with high rates of violent crime, ongoing tribal disputes in rural areas and widespread domestic and sexual violence against women and children. Actual levels of violence are difficult to determine due to underreporting. However, the impact of violence against women is well known. Many women suffer physical injuries that result in permanent damage and disability, including loss of sight, loss of hearing and harm to reproductive organs.

Women tend to hold lower status positions within the workforce. For example, it is more common for women to hold secretarial positions than managerial. Women can also feel unable to accept some employment opportunities because it puts them into contact with men outside of their wantok or ethnic group.<sup>1</sup> However, there is some evidence that the situation is changing, particularly in the government sector where merit-based overseas educational and training opportunities have increased female participation rates.

### **The institutional context**

The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) is characterised as a strongly male-dominated organisation. Policewomen see the style of policing within the constabulary as masculine, highly physical and often violent. As at May 2003, women represented only 5.4 per cent of uniformed personnel. The majority of women are in the lower ranks of the police force, with only seven women having the status of inspector, senior inspector or chief inspector. Women are not represented in the highest ranks, and the highest rank ever attained by a woman in the RPNGC has only been superintendent, one position above chief inspector. The term 'Constables for Life' or 'CFL' depicts policewomen's lack of expectation of promotional opportunities. Generally, policewomen are less qualified and educated than their male counterparts, and, historically, have been provided with fewer development opportunities.

Policewomen see the duties they are assigned as mainly determined by their gender. Women are frequently given desk duties since it is perceived they lack strength and are less able than men to competently undertake operational duties. Beliefs are also reinforced by institutional policies. Policewomen are officially prohibited from undertaking mobile squad and riot duties and are systematically denied entry into the dog squads. Policemen believe women are not strong enough to handle the dogs and that menstruating women will irritate the dogs.

Policewomen claim that they are frequent victims of sexual harassment. While an internal complaints process is operational, many women fear using this process due to possible retaliation by superiors or charges of insubordination. Some women also perceive that the internal discipline process is gender-biased since in several adultery cases involving policemen and policewomen, only the policewomen have been disciplined.

Women police officers report that domestic violence is prevalent in police barracks and their reports of domestic violence are not taken seriously. Many women are reluctant to report domestic violence, as they fear retaliation and the loss of family income in the event that their husbands are fined or suspended.

## **Project initiatives**

The development goals of the governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia underpin the gender and development activities undertaken as part of the RPNGCDP. The Australian aid program seeks to 'promote equal opportunities for women and men as participants and beneficiaries of development'. Through RPNGCDP, AusAID provides support to achieving this aim and PNG's National Goals through technical assistance (six months of gender adviser input per year) and training. RPNGC's current gender and development strategy aims to develop inclusive activities that support women, and raise awareness with male colleagues of women's needs and the benefits for men and the agency of ensuring that women have the opportunity to participate fully in the work of the organisation.

During Phases II and III of the project a number of initiatives have been implemented. Some have been more successful than others, but all have highlighted the importance of giving sufficient recognition to the complexities of cultural and gender relationships. Lessons learnt have helped provide the project implementation team with a greater understanding of gender issues and improved knowledge about how to minimise resistance and achieve objectives within the RPNGC.

## **Diploma of Women in Public Sector Management**

In recognition of the disadvantaged status of policewomen, the RPNGCDP, in collaboration with Divine Word University, developed a management course specifically for policewomen — the Diploma of Women in Public Sector Management. In 2003, 25 policewomen commenced the course. This initiative is the largest affirmative action strategy for policewomen undertaken by the project to date and presents their greatest opportunity for career advancement. In addition to enhancing their knowledge and personal development, the diploma aims to provide policewomen who have not matriculated the opportunity to gain entry into officer training, for which cadets are traditionally required to have completed Year 12 as a minimum educational entry standard.

An evaluation of the program and consultation with participants indicates that both the selection course and residential school are proving satisfying, relevant and stimulating for policewomen. However, a number of issues arose. The low level of participants' computer skills at the commencement of the course has proved challenging, although many have worked hard to improve their ability. Some participants have been reluctant to ask questions during lectures, as cultural factors and the hierarchical structure of the RPNGC influence participants' behaviour in an unfamiliar environment.

In addition, students have questioned the absence of men from the diploma course. This can primarily be attributed to two factors. Firstly, they have become increasingly knowledgeable about gender relations and gained an appreciation of the need to educate men about gender. Secondly, after the selection course, many policemen openly questioned the right of women to access a course of their own. Despite this feedback, no action has been taken to include men in the course since, based on lessons learnt, it is believed that culturally prescribed gender relations will further affect class room interaction and limit women's active participation in course activities. For example, at a previous Policewomen's Conference, while many women had much to contribute, as soon as a man spoke, women became reluctant to speak. Additionally, relations among policewomen are characterised by factionalism, jealousy and competitiveness. In response, the project has emphasised the need for women to bond together in order to advance themselves and believes that the introduction of men into

the course would interfere with the developing solidarity of the policewomen in the diploma.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy**

The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary introduced its Equal Employment Opportunity Policy (EEO Policy) in early 2001. Since then, the project has supported the promotion of the policy, which has been included in key corporate plans and statements, including being referenced as one of four cornerstones for success in the RPNGC Corporate Plan 2002 – 2007. The plan states:

It is our plan over the next five years to ensure that our members are not disadvantaged by race, religion or gender. It is our aim to ensure that the right person is selected for positions, promotions, transfers and special assignments. For too long, *wantokism* has meant that many people have received unfair advantage, and this practice will be stopped. Women also play an important role in the Constabulary. It is our intention to ensure that they receive equal opportunities to appointment, training and advancement.

EEO is specifically included in the goals of the corporate plan in the areas of leadership and accountability and human resource management. An EEO Office has been created and EEO awareness-raising workshops have been conducted in most of the country. The EEO complaints process brochure and cartoon posters have been distributed.

The introduction of the EEO Office replaced the formal Policewomen's Network. The network has continued to operate on an informal basis. The Policewomen's Network operates throughout the country, with Provincial Policewomen's Network Coordinators coordinating network meetings on a monthly basis. Policewomen's Conferences are also held every two years in various regions of the country. While attitudes towards women have not changed dramatically following the introduction of an EEO Policy, there are some encouraging signs, including that men have a greater level of understanding of ethnic discrimination or *wantokism*.

### **Driver training**

One identified barrier to obtaining greater operational roles was the low number of policewomen who had driving licences. To increase opportunities, driver training for women commenced in 1996. Driving is traditionally viewed as a prestigious and generally male role, and, unfortunately, the gendered nature of the job was not taken into consideration when designing the initiative. In addition, most male police officers did not have driving licences either. As a result of both factors, the level of resistance to the women-only training was high.

To overcome the resistance the training was offered to equal numbers of women and men. The initial objective of training women was achieved and the resistance largely overcome.

### **Mentoring program**

In late 2001, the RPNGCDP assisted the Constabulary to implement a pilot mentoring program. This was established to promote women in the police force and to assist in the development of continuous improvement and learning opportunities for all employees. Mentoring relationships are seen to provide career and personal development opportunities for staff involved as 'mentees', and leadership and management

development opportunities for staff involved as mentors. Thirty-eight employees were selected to participate in the program, ten as mentors and 28 as mentees.

A review of the mentoring program was undertaken after a year, and key findings were as follows. Some female participants indicated that a mentoring relationship with a male officer could present difficulties in relation to their family situation and how other staff members perceived the relationship. While having female mentors and female mentees working together was preferable, the small number of senior female staff made this difficult to achieve.

The significant differences in rank between the mentors and the mentees created tensions, especially for those in the lower ranks. Mentees did not feel comfortable contacting their mentors given the difference in rank and the relatively low level of regular contact through normal work between the mentors and the mentees.

Some officers perceived the mentoring program, which encourages staff to operate outside the strongly observed chain of command, as a form of *wantokism*. This perception was particularly apparent if the mentor came from the same province as the mentee. However, conversely where a mentor had a person from another province as a mentee, difficulties could arise from perceptions of the *wantoks* of either party.

## **Conclusion**

The project continues to monitor activity progress and behaviour changes within RPNGC. Lessons learnt are fed back into project implementation and also to other aid projects and programs. The complexity of the PNG social and political environment presents numerous challenges to mainstreaming gender in the particular institutional context presented here. These challenges were recognised by AusAID in the *Gender and Development Review* undertaken in 2001.

## **Acknowledgement**

ACIL would like to acknowledge the contribution of the implementation team to improving the status of women in PNG.

## **Note**

1. 'Wantok' means 'one talk' or a person who speaks the same language and 'wantokism' is a form of ethnic identity that is a basis for favouritism.

Luker, V, 2004. 'AIDS and the burden of care: Mainstreaming gender or 'main-themeing' women?', *Development Bulletin*, no. 64, pp. 78-81.

## **AIDS and the burden of care: Mainstreaming gender or 'main-themeing' women?**

*Vicki Luker, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University*

### **Introduction**

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), when a person falls sick with AIDS, the main site of care is home, and the main providers of care are family members. In theory there are merits to this arrangement. Being at home can be comforting for the sick person. Loved ones might be able to provide more tender attention than could hospital staff. Caring for the sick at home is also praised as 'traditional', and certainly repudiates the stigma often associated with HIV and AIDS. But in Papua New Guinea, perhaps the greatest virtue of care by relatives at home is necessity. Hospital beds are few, often inaccessible, and AIDS is already taxing hospital facilities in the major centres. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is increasing, and the limited introduction of antiretroviral therapies from mid 2004 is not likely to significantly reduce AIDS-related morbidity or mortality in the foreseeable future, particularly among adults. The growing need to support families and communities in what is called 'community-based care' is widely recognised.

This paper reflects specifically on the gendered burdens of AIDS-care within the family, and some of the difficulties of redressing them. As UNAIDS has stated in its current campaign document, 'HIV and AIDS have significantly increased the burden of care for many women. Poverty and poor public services have also combined with AIDS to turn the care burden for women into a crisis with far-reaching social, health and economic consequences'(UNAIDS 2004:4). In PNG too, AIDS increases the burden of care for women. While the consequences of this burden are many, the potential effects upon the health of women and girls alone deserves attention. Although mainstreaming gender (and HIV/AIDS) is necessary, I will argue that the gendered burden of AIDS-care highlights the prior importance of 'main-themeing' women in research upon which policy and programs can draw.

### **The epidemic, families and households**

PNG is the only Pacific island country to report a generalised epidemic of HIV/AIDS. Since 1987, when the first case of AIDS was reported, 7,587 infections have been formally notified, but the National AIDS Council estimates that 20,000 people out of PNG's population of 5 million are currently infected (Anon. 2003). Observers predict that the prevalence of HIV could reach the levels of the worst-affected sub-Saharan countries, where between a quarter and a third of the adult population is infected (Caldwell and Isaac-Toua 2002).

Sex between a man and woman and the gestation, delivery and nurturance of an infant by its mother are two of the foundational relations of family life. These are also the intimacies through which HIV is commonly transmitted in PNG. As doctors in PNG recognise, AIDS is a 'family disease' (Shann et al. 2003:154). Although 'family' and 'household' are difficult to define, because in practice they are fluid and can vary enormously, here I take those relations that make a woman a 'mother' and in some sense of the word a 'wife' central to both.

Three different scenarios depicting the pathways of HIV into family relations are analytically useful, although they by no means capture all the possibilities.

**Scenario A:** Doctors believe that most HIV-positive women in PNG have been infected by their husbands or sole partner (Gerawa 2003). Vertical transmission can then occur from the wife to their baby. In this sequence, the first sign of HIV being present in a family is likely to be the sickness and death of an infant due to AIDS. Though the virus suppresses fertility, it is common for the HIV-infected mother to have more than one baby dying of AIDS before she herself dies of the disease. Usually, her husband has also died of AIDS before her.

**Scenario B:** Since women (in PNG and everywhere) tend to become infected at a younger age than men, some women, having contracted the virus earlier, may subsequently marry an HIV-negative husband. Again, the first sign of HIV in the family is likely to be their infant falling sick and dying of AIDS. The mother may or may not have more babies, some of whom might also become infected and die. She too will die, but her husband, if he remains uninfected (and the chances of an HIV-positive wife infecting her partner in a single act of unprotected intercourse are fewer than the other way around), may well survive her and be able to help support any surviving children.

**Scenario C:** A family member can become infected, and eventually fall sick, without the virus passing from him or her to another family member. This is often the case when a son or daughter, without a partner or children, falls ill with AIDS and relies on parental family for care, but many variations within this paradigm are possible.

Related to all three scenarios, but especially to A and B, is a fourth — scenario D — in which the family dependants of a man, or a woman, or a couple who died from AIDS, join another household for support and survival. These refugees may be elderly persons; the AIDS widow or a widower, with or without children; or orphaned children. Some of these orphans may also be HIV-infected, and require much care from the new household when they too sicken. The plight of AIDS orphans has already received some media attention in PNG (for example Gerawa 2004). Often these children do not find a home in another household, and suffer relative neglect when they do. According to anecdote, orphans infected with HIV are harder to place in a new household than the uninfected.

### **Burdens of care**

Traditionally, women in PNG, as in most other societies, provide most of the care for children, the infirm, and the sick. They are also recognised as the main carers, within families, of people with AIDS.

Yet, while AIDS care in families needs more research in PNG, some published discussion tends to discount the burden that women are likely to shoulder. A number of reasons may contribute to this underestimation. It is easy, for instance, to overlook the way in which AIDS typically clusters in families and sequentially manifests in members, so as to make AIDS an unusually taxing family condition for women to care for. Within the family, the father, for many complex reasons (to be further discussed below), may also find it difficult to contribute to day-to-day care. Moreover, although households ideally belong to a network of reciprocal relations with other households and these relationships can be activated for help, the amount and kind of help available can be limited by factors such as poverty and the degree to which other kin believe they 'owe' assistance to those who need it.



Bryant Allen's thoughts on the capacities of households in PNG to cope with AIDS can demonstrate some of these difficulties (Allen 1997). He rightly argued that the diversity of circumstances in PNG and people's ability to respond creatively to the impacts of AIDS must be recognised. Although Allen was mainly concerned with the effects of AIDS on household agricultural production, his discussion inevitably referred to the ways in which families might cope with the needs of an AIDS-afflicted member for care. Because studies relating to the impacts of AIDS on PNG households were (and are still) lacking, Allen argued from analogies.

One set of analogies used by Allen derived from Shirley Lindenbaum's ethnography of the degenerative disease kuru, which occurred among the Fore people of the eastern highlands and only affected women, usually later in life (Allen 1997:122–123; Lindenbaum 1979). Lindenbaum had described how many men, when their wives became incapacitated with kuru, assumed a range of female roles — including childcare and nursing the sick wife. By analogy, one could suppose that men confronting AIDS might well assume female roles, and also care for their children and wives who are sick with AIDS — thus contributing to care and ensuring the survival of the household as an entity. In support of this analogy, anecdotally, and from personal observation, there are examples of men in PNG who have tenderly cared for women, children, as well as men with AIDS, and also stories of HIV-negative husbands who have cared for wives and children who had AIDS.

But there is also considerable anecdotal evidence to the contrary, and at important points the analogy between the response to kuru and the response to AIDS breaks down. First, for husbands to take a female role in family care, they have to be present. Due to labour migration, formal or de facto polygyny, and in some places continuing habits of sexually segregated accommodation, men are not always co-resident with their wives and children or even nearby. Moreover, in scenario A, which appears to be the most common pattern for the occurrence of AIDS within families in PNG, by the time the wife/mother is sick with AIDS, at which stage the family may be in desperate need for a prime-aged adult to help in her care and to keep the remaining members of the household together, the husband is already dead.

Second, men have to be willing to assume female roles in care. Despite the example of the Fore men, the gendering of care as '*em samting bilong ol meri*' has already been noted as an obstacle to the involvement of men in HIV/AIDS counselling and home care (NHASP 2002:14). Added to the force of cultural barriers, are psychologically complex factors in the case of a man who later learns that he has infected his wife, and through her their infant or infants, or for a man who had known at the outset he was HIV-positive and did not protect his wife. Anecdotally, men often find it hard to deal constructively with their role, or potential role, in infecting their families with HIV, and this is a major challenge for those involved in HIV and AIDS counselling. At any rate, when AIDS occurs in the family, gender roles are already in place and precedents established for the work of care to primarily be the labour of the wife/mother, with help from her female kin.

The nursing requirements of a person with AIDS, and the sequencing of the disease among family members, must also be appreciated when calculating the female burden of care. As AIDS requires intensive nursing for a relatively long period, the needs of caring for just one family member with AIDS can demand considerable time and effort over and above the more usual and sometimes spasmodic calls on a woman for care. In scenarios A and B, it is likely that she will have cared for more than one family member

with AIDS before she herself gets too sick to continue, and will no doubt by then have been exhausted by these demands.

A sick woman may, sadly, receive a lesser standard of care than that she gave to others when she was able. Anecdotally, many women in scenario A, who have carefully nursed their children and husbands with AIDS, do not receive a similar quality of care when they themselves fall ill. Much depends on whether a woman's own mother is alive, at hand, and well enough to care for her, or if she has daughters capable of helping. Unfortunately, by this stage, the ability of the remaining members of a family to call upon aid from kin may be limited by the fact that much of the (sometimes scarce) help that could be given has already been 'used up' in caring for the husband who was sick with AIDS before her. Moreover, the sick woman's social standing may have shrunk with her widowhood and the diminution of her immediate family. These are the severely straitened circumstances in which a grandmother and her granddaughters may often try to do their best for a dying woman.

### **Care and female health**

While the impacts on a household of having a member, or a series of members, afflicted with AIDS, are myriad and far-reaching, the burden of care has complex consequences specific to women, including consequences for their own health.

HIV/AIDS, although it may not as yet have had great effects on major indices of health in PNG, enters into a social dynamic in which women's health was already faring poorly. Female life expectancy in PNG continues to be shorter than men's. Maternal mortality continues to be high. By some indications, rates of infant mortality may have increased over the last ten years or so (Lukere n.d.). Two basic reasons for the disappointing health status of women in PNG are, bluntly, that they are overworked and undervalued.

The expectation that women must care for others often combines with their limited powers for making executive decisions about family health (these tend to be a male prerogative) and other demands upon their time and energy, particularly in agricultural labour. As a result, women's opportunities to care for themselves can be limited. The greater cultural value attaching to men rather than to women, and the cultural value attached to procreation, means that the needs of men and children for care take precedence over women's. Women, too, subscribe to a hierarchy of values that places their own needs last. In the case of an HIV-positive mother, who has contracted the virus from her husband and has cared for babies with AIDS and a husband with AIDS before she herself fell ill, this ideological order of precedence is confirmed and paralleled by the actual chronological sequence of the disease among family members. Her needs for care come last in both senses.

The additional burden of providing AIDS care will almost inevitably, for many female caregivers, further erode their own health. More than a decade ago, Joy Gillett noted that any measures to improve family health that require women to do additional work should be carefully considered. Since women already work so hard, further demands upon them, if not countered by forms of avoidance, might only further compromise their health. As examples, Gillett referred to the extra demands placed on mothers with respect to recommendations for infant feeding (Gillett 1990:40-41). The demands of caring for someone in the family with AIDS are infinitely greater.

These demands also have consequences for the care received by other family members, especially female. Grandmothers, though they may be called upon to assist in the provision of care when a family member has AIDS, may themselves be in need of

care while receiving less. A mother caring for a person with AIDS will not be able to give as much attention to her other children either, who are therefore more likely to die of disease and deprivation (Shann et al. 2003:154). Again, given the higher cultural value attached to males than females, it is likely that female children, though they (like grandmothers) will be called upon to help their mother, will also suffer more health-wise from differential neglect.

Thus 'community-based care' may in many circumstances prove to be a euphemistic way of referring to the fact that AIDS places on women very great burdens of care, detrimental to their own health, while delivering to women and girls an inferior level of care when they themselves need it. A comment by Carolyn Baylies on community-based care in sub-Saharan contexts has some resonance with the situation in PNG: 'To the extent that HIV feeds on structured inequalities and power relations (not least around gender), reliance for assistance on structures and mechanisms which reinforce rather than challenge those inequalities is of questionable value' (Baylies 2002:624).

### **Difficulties**

PNG's previous medium-term plan recognised that 'the responsibility for home care of AIDS patients will increasingly fall on women', and no doubt the new national medium-term plan for the years 2004–2008 will give more attention to the evolving issues of care (PNG 1998:17). Nevertheless, for a number of reasons, the greater female burden of care will almost inevitably remain a relatively neglected and extremely difficult issue.

First, the issue is not a topmost priority. Understandably, the needs of AIDS sufferers for care receive more attention and advocacy than the needs of carers for recognition and support. Second, there are strong economic incentives to overlook or discount the costs, especially to women, of home care, because from the government's viewpoint it is the most cost-effective approach to the care of AIDS sufferers. Third, cultural justifications for this approach as 'Melanesian' or 'Christian' also invoke a rhetoric of sharing and caring that disguises shortfalls, gender inequities or breakdowns in kin-based delivery mechanisms.

Yet, even if there is a will to examine the issue and respond, practical difficulties intervene. The household falls outside many common frames of economic analysis and is simply hard 'to count'. Thus a report on the potential economic impacts of the epidemic in PNG acknowledged that large consequences flow from the effects of AIDS on households, but data concerning household responses are scarce (CIE 2002:3, 11, 71–72). With households in shadow, so too much of women's lives and work remain shadowy. Also because households are many, varied and mutable, they are difficult objects for governments and large organisations to target and differentially assist (Barnett and Whiteside 2002:193). Making AIDS the criterion for assistance to households raises difficulties too. Why should one household with an AIDS-sufferer receive relief, and another household with a member chronically sick or severely disabled for other reasons receive nothing? Lastly, a number of interventions, designed specifically to assist women, often lose their gendered focus. One example is a particular respite centre, originally founded with the aim of helping women with AIDS, but because men wanted to use it, and women were happy to share, the centre now caters for both sexes.

## **Conclusion: 'Main-themeing' women**

The gendered burden of AIDS care points to old, familiar problems: the difficulties of making women visible; prioritising their needs; and tackling the disadvantages and inequities which women can systematically suffer.

These old problems moreover underscore the importance of 'main-themeing' women in basic research. Such research can at least help to make women visible, highlight their needs, and bring into the frame of analysis shadowy realms such as the household. It can also, in the case of AIDS, challenge tendencies to 'compartmentalise' the disease in ways that make it hard to appreciate how the experiences, for instance, of giving care and being sick can converge on a woman. 'Mainstreaming' gender into policy and programs is an empty gesture if it cannot draw on such research, and if it distracts attention from the need for such research to be done.

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## **Some reflections on gender mainstreaming and intersectionality**

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### **Introduction**

Gender mainstreaming and intersectionality are both approaches to forwarding gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is the strategy used to implement gender and development thinking. It is defined here as:

the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is gender equality (ECOSOC 1997:2).

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) definition is used throughout the United Nations (UN) system and by its agencies, and is widely accepted by other multilateral and bilateral development organisations and NGOs. This definition is a compromise between a number of different perspectives and agendas. The result is inherent tensions and paradoxes that make gender mainstreaming simultaneously potentially transforming and potentially problematic. Nonetheless, mainstreaming remains widely accepted as the means to pursue gender equality. The first part of this paper is focused on gender mainstreaming.

Intersectionality is an approach to understanding the relationship between gender, race and other aspects of identity that are sources of systematic discrimination. The definition adopted here was:

An intersectional approach to analyzing the disempowerment of marginalized women attempts to capture the consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of subordination. It addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, class and the like ... racially subordinated women are often positioned in the space where racism or xenophobia, class and gender meet. They are consequently subject to injury by the heavy flow of traffic travelling along all these roads. (United Nations 2001).

Intersectionality is an approach to understanding the differences among women and among men and the ways that these differences interact to exacerbate marginalisation. It identifies subordination not solely as an issue of gender or race or class inequalities, but as a location where there are often simultaneous and compounding relationships of subordination. Intersectionality offers potential as a framework for contextual analysis that may improve development outcomes for women by ensuring that particular groups of women are not excluded in policy and practice. This is explored further in the second part of this paper.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming was adopted by the UN as the key methodology for achieving gender equality following the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995. This was endorsed by the Platform for Action (PFA) (United Nations 1995) and outlined

as the approach that government, UN and other actors should take in the implementation of the PFA.

Gender mainstreaming is a political process that alters the balance of power; it is inherently 'complex and resistance will come in many forms' (Schalkwyk et al. 1996:5). Power is challenged not only because mainstreaming promotes women as decision makers, but also because it supports women's collective action in redefining development agendas. Thus, gender mainstreaming has the potential to be transformative in nature, changing the dominant paradigms in which we work.

Jahan (1995:13) categorises mainstreaming approaches as 'integrationist' and 'agenda-setting' or 'transformative'. The integrationist approach involves broadening the dominant paradigm to fit women 'in' without directly challenging power structures. The agenda-setting approach emphasises the transformative power of gender mainstreaming whereby women start to affect and alter the direction of the mainstream, rather than be submerged by or integrated into it. It is generally accepted that mainstreaming will only truly address the logic of inequality when it enables transformation of structures and relations (Beveridge and Nott 2002:300)

The essence of gender mainstreaming thus makes it a challenge to implement. The task is formidable not only because of the inherently political nature of its transformative potential, but because of the challenge of scale in terms of range and the nature of change required (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002).

Realising the potential of gender mainstreaming requires significant and systematic change. Experience to date suggests that the move from policy to practice has been challenging. Across the UN system and in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labor Organisation (ILO), the World Bank, government aid providers such as AusAID and NGOs, gender and development (GAD) policy and strategies have varied in their impact, but all have fallen short of the articulated goal of gender equality (see Riley 2003). In most cases, implementation has also fallen well short of declared policy.

Key issues that emerge from an overview of experience to date include:

- the common reality of partial implementation — making it difficult to determine definitively if the problem lies in gender mainstreaming as a strategy, or in the inadequacy of its implementation to date;
- the challenge of integrating mainstreaming into existing workloads, given its scope;
- the need for, and limits to, conceptual clarity;
- the need for further work on what constitutes good gender mainstreaming practice and good gender equity outcomes;
- the importance of appropriate and practical analytical frameworks and tools;
- the key role of training, at all levels, so people 'see' gender; and
- the importance of specific individual responsibility and accountability at all levels.

Jahan's early (1995) study on women in development (WID) and GAD policy implementation in the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNDP and the World Bank identified a number of organisational-level weaknesses, including lack of accountability measures, lack of tracking of policy implementation and gaps between mandates and resources. Jahan stressed the importance of clear policy objectives to achieve

outcomes. In a similar vein, AusAID's GAD Review found that confusion between WID and GAD methodologies affected the 'enabling GAD environment' (AusAID 2001).

Some assessments see significant barriers to change as inherent in large organisations (Schalkwyk et al. 1996:33). Others see hierarchical organisational structures and workplace cultures as obstacles to policy implementation (see Longwe 1999; Goetz 1997; del Rosario 1995). But there are also a number of texts on 'how to' successfully gender mainstream organisational change (see Rao, Stuart and Kelleher 1999; Macdonald, Sprenger and Dubel 1997). Political will within organisations, as well as ability, affects the degree to which they assist in building the capacity of staff to implement a gender mainstreaming strategy.

The broader operating environment also influences organisational priorities. Donors often fund short-term development projects (for example, three years) with an emphasis on delivering concrete, measurable outcomes. Measurable change in terms of gender equity may take longer to manifest and outcomes are often less tangible and more difficult to quantify. Short-term, outcomes-driven development models can make mainstreaming gender less of a priority. Changes underway to lengthen time frames make possible the wider review of tools to better capture incremental change.

Deeper questions about the usefulness of mainstreaming as a strategy persist and influence commitment. Some feminist writers challenge the development mainstream per se and thus see gender mainstreaming as fundamentally flawed (see Porter and Judd 1999; Brownell 1999). Other recent critiques argue that GAD does not integrate 'other' voices into its theoretical framework, although some authors note that GAD does have the space and flexibility to include indigenous voices (Rathgeber 1995). Some point to the challenges of successfully involving men into GAD projects as indicative of the overall challenge of mainstreaming (Roche 1999; Chant and Gutmann 2000). Queries about the adequacy of tools and knowledge, or the value of 'good' gender mainstreaming rightly raise doubts and concerns, even among those who are very committed to gender equality. However, they also provide cover for limited commitment.

There is a paradox in the immense amount of information and training available for institutionalising gender mainstreaming, apparent institutional acceptance through policy directives, and the outcomes achieved. In-house multilateral, Northern NGO and national government audits and reviews all suggest policy outcomes are not as intended. The tendency to shelve difficult reports in turn limits their capacity to inform institutional change (Hunt 2000). Organisational learning is also mediated by the internal tendency towards caution when individuals and organisations worry that honest identification of areas for improvement will have negative ramifications. NGOs, commercial firms, bilateral and multilateral agencies continue to 'speak of gender mainstreaming', tick boxes and guess percentages of budgets allocated to women and men.

There is a spectrum of views on the experience with gender mainstreaming. At one end it can be argued that the challenges and learnings of recent years are an inevitable part of implementing a new strategy that is far-reaching in its vision and in the scale of change required. At the other end are arguments that gender mainstreaming is an inherently flawed approach to gender equity that threatens to 'disappear' women into the mainstream rather than empower them.

At the same time, as reviews confirm the challenge of implementing existing strategies, there are calls for gender mainstreaming to extend its scope. Although gender and development is founded on a recognition of difference, gender analysis is, in the main, focused on differences *between* genders and does not sufficiently account for the differences *among* women. Some argue that this failure to distinguish gender from



other aspects of identity such as class, religion, race, ethnicity, age, ability, caste, sexuality, and location slows the transformative potential of the mainstreaming approach (Kerr 2001). And it is problematic over the long term to pursue a strategy that locates the primary basis for poverty and exclusion in gender. Mainstreaming must eventually incorporate a broader agenda that accounts for other avenues that constitute and regulate difference (Beveridge and Nott 2002:311).

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a concept that seeks to acknowledge the impact of multiple identities and discriminations on women's and men's experiences. Proponents argue that the differences among women as a class and men as a class are such that effectively pursuing gender equality necessitates development of more holistic models and analyses that integrate other dimensions of discrimination. This need not complicate the gender mainstreaming agenda, but, rather, make it more relevant and more inclusive of other factors that inform and mediate women's and men's experiences differently. But it does present the immediate challenge of how to learn from the experience of a decade of mainstreaming while engaging with intersectionality as an approach that may help overcome some of mainstreaming's weaknesses.

Critical to the development of ideas about intersectionality is Crenshaw's (1991) exploration of the race and gender dimensions of violence against women of colour, and argues that the experiences of women of colour are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism. Various other writers have explored the failings of gender analysis to comprehend racial and class divisions among women (Marchand and Parpart 1995; Mosse 1993).

Given this, the growing number of development organisations adopting a rights-based approach to development over a gender mainstreaming approach could be perceived as a more holistic and promising approach. Kerr (2001) argues that it is within this context that an intersectional analysis of identities such as race and gender can inform human rights approaches, particularly given perceived tensions between respect for diversity and recognition of the universality of (women's) human rights.

Nevertheless, intersectionality is still primarily used to frame the experience of Black women in the global North. These limits were acknowledged by the editors of the 2002 *Feminist Economics* special issue on gender, colour, caste and class, whose aim was 'to advance the limited, sometimes parochial, dialogue about the intersection of race and gender' (Brewer, Conrad and King 2002:9).

There is as yet limited discussion of intersectionality in terms of class/economic status and race and gender in the global South. If an intersectional approach is to be useful in the development field, it needs to be informed by the experiences and views of women in the South. We need to know how understanding the situation of an HIV-positive woman living in South Africa as an intersection between gender, race and HIV status would affect development work.

There has been some development of intersectionality thinking, models and implications through a series of recent international meetings. In the lead up to the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, the UN Division on the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) held an Expert Group Meeting in Zagreb, Croatia, 2000. Its aim was to discuss how the gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination could be incorporated in the WCAR process.

Three expert papers were presented, including one by Crenshaw (2000), proposing an intersectional approach to gender and race discrimination. Building on her earlier work, Crenshaw argues that intersectional subordination is often invisible, with women who experience multiple forms of discrimination being inadequately addressed by either gender or race discrimination frameworks; the result is likely to be either over-inclusion or under-inclusion. Over-inclusion occurs when a problem is presented as gender subordination without consideration of the simultaneous racial or ethnic subordination (for example trafficking). Under-inclusion occurs when a subset of women experience a problem that is not seen as gendered, because it is not the experience of women from the dominant group (for example sterilisation).

Crenshaw seeks to capture both *dynamic* and *structural* causes of multiple forms of subordination. To explain this, she uses the metaphor of roads and traffic. The roads are the axes of power/subordination (such as patriarchy, racial hierarchy and class system) that *structure* the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities and classes in the social/economic world. The traffic on these axes/roads is made up of the specific acts and policies that create burden, or the *dynamic* aspects of disempowerment. Marginalised women are located 'in the cross roads' where two or more axes intersect. Here they are subject to a heavy flow of 'traffic' from two directions, increasing the risk of 'accidents'.

The interaction between different aspects of identity can effectively disempower and silence. For example, the obligation women have to their social or national group can be an obstacle to organising for material change in their lives. Indigenous women may feel constrained to speak out against violence perpetuated by Indigenous men because of concern about being interpreted as betraying the groups' interest (Crenshaw 2000:21). Such women are affected by the privileging of social, ethnic or national interests over their gender needs. Women who criticise practices deemed 'traditional' or 'cultural' can find themselves in a similar predicament. Practitioners, advocates and Western feminists who ignore such challenges and needs leave women of colour at the crossroads to dodge racism and sexism. One consequence can be race/nation resistance to feminism and feminist resistance to an anti-racism focus.

### **Ways forward?**

There may well be benefits in developing a more comprehensive gender mainstreaming tool that not only accounts for the differential impact of policy and programs on women and men, but also accounts for other modes of subordination. This could result in a gender mainstreaming strategy that is more relevant and more contextual, more attuned to the reality 'on the ground,' and thus more transformative and more effective in achieving development goals.

At the same time, the experience of gender mainstreaming in the last decade suggests that efforts to expand ways of understanding and analysing are likely to be constrained in their impact if the barriers and challenges experienced to date are not addressed. We may well need a more comprehensive, holistic, integrated and responsive understanding of discrimination if efforts to improve gender equality are to be more effective. How might this be pursued in ways that also acknowledge and address the practical barriers and challenges experienced to date? Some questions emerging from issues outlined in this paper are listed below, to focus and encourage discussion about practical ways to improve gender equality.

### **Conceptual and policy issues**

1. How effective has gender mainstreaming been as strategy to achieve gender equality in the Australian context?
2. At the level of policy, are there additional steps that would help in putting declared policies into practice? What is required for these to happen?
3. Does the tension between the potential of gender mainstreaming to transform power structures and ways of working, and to absorb and 'disappear' women's voices and interests need to be addressed for substantial progress to be made towards gender equality?
4. Is the primary objective of gender mainstreaming as it is currently practiced to make programming more successful or to increase gender equality? Can one be achieved without the other?
5. Does gender mainstreaming adequately account for diversity amongst women? In what ways, if any, would an intersectional approach be helpful in broadening the mainstreaming strategy?
6. What learnings from the experience of implementing gender mainstreaming need to inform development of frameworks that better account for the intersection between different sources of discrimination?
7. What might be fruitful ways to assist the development of intersectionality thinking in areas such as religion, HIV/AIDS status, ability, and sexual identity.

### **Practice and implementation issues**

8. What are the roles of various actors in narrowing the gap between policy and implementation? Are there areas where collaboration between stakeholders would help?
9. To the extent that there are structural constraints within institutions implementing gender mainstreaming, what practical steps can be taken to address them?  
What approaches have people found helpful in negotiating the mainstreaming of gender into programming with partner governments or counterpart organisations?
10. In your experience are gender-focused activities more susceptible to budgeting constraints? What are the implications of this in your experience? What other options are available to improve budget outcomes for women?
11. Can we, currently, adequately define and describe good (or promising) practice and approaches to gender and development?
12. How can promising practice best be identified, modelled, replicated and shared?

13. What is a good gender mainstreaming outcome? Are existing monitoring and measurement tools adequate? To what extent do they provide a basis for developing tools that capture the interaction of various forms of discrimination?
14. What (tools, information, approaches) would make a practical difference to the capacity of non-specialists (desk officers, project workers, contractors) to give effect to gender equality policies?
16. What are the practical challenges to and possibilities for mainstreaming gender in areas such as country strategy documents, institutional strengthening programs, sector-wide programming, thematic programming, training, performance assessment and appraisal, tender assessment and contracting?
17. Financial audits are a mandatory requirement in many areas of development activity. What are the disadvantages, benefits, costs and practical challenges associated with introducing more specific, mandatory requirements regarding gender performance.

These are certainly not the only questions to be asked, but are offered as a way to start unpacking the challenges of gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve gender equality.

### **Note**

This article is a condensed version of the background paper distributed prior to the International Women's Development Agency think tank, Brisbane, 3–4 July 2003. A full version of this paper was printed as part of the Melbourne University Private School of Development Studies Working Paper Series. The background paper did not purport to be a comprehensive overview of gender mainstreaming and intersectionality. Rather, it provided a brief background on these approaches, policy directions and, in the case of mainstreaming, experiences with implementation, to enable some shared knowledge of trends, issues and ideas, and provide a basis for wider discussion and collaboration. Two other documents were also suggested as useful background: UN 2001, *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, New York; and Marsha Darling, 2002, 'Human rights for all: Understanding and applying "intersectionality" to confront globalization', AWID Forum, 3–6 October 2002, Guadalajara, Mexico.

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## **The political uses of obscurantism: Gender mainstreaming and intersectionality**

*Susan Hawthorne\**

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC, quoted in Young and Hoppe 2003:39)

### **Introduction**

Gender mainstreaming and intersectionality have become buzz words among women and men who work primarily as bureaucrats in the large national and international organisations that have become so powerful in the last decade or so. Both words continue the path of obscurantism that began with postmodernism in the 1980s. The problem posed by the use of postmodern theory is not just one of access and intellectual elitism, it has also been a process of depoliticisation. Postmodernism has rendered many silent, many speechless, including those whom the theorists claim to defend, namely, the dispossessed, the marginalised, the poverty stricken and the politically powerless.

Before I expand on the difficulties I have with both these words and their political uses, I want to say a few words about gender. The word gender is hugely overused. It is used in contexts where it means women: 'the gendered dimension'; it is used in contexts where the word sex should be used: 'the gender of the baby'; it is used to unmark the marked differences between women and men, to whitewash and hide: 'transgender'; it is used when the word feminist is considered too threatening: 'the gender debate'; or it is used for appearances, to suggest that women are included when they are not: 'bringing gender into the discussion', or it is used as a way of pretending that men are included when they are included only as an afterthought. In ECOSOC's definition of gender mainstreaming in the quotation that heads this article, note how the use of language and context is so broad in this definition that it has become meaninglessly inclusive.

The word gender is deeply depoliticising. It is a word that is favoured by marketing departments, politicians, human resources practitioners, and institutions. It is one of the words that Don Watson could have written about in *Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language* (2003). I suspect that the reason he doesn't is because he is male and he reads the word gender as irrelevant to him. This, I believe, says something very significant about the danger of using 'gender' (Barry 1996:188–192).

Gender is such a soft word. It is a word that asks permission to exist. It is a word without demands. Without political clout. Without power. To use a word such as gender might let us sneak past the guards at the door of the boys' cubby house, but it will not get us to the table where the decisions are being made. And, in the unlikely event that it

does, no-one will hear the woman who speaks of gender because it applies only to her. Not to the real business of life, or politics, of war, or profit.

When gender is teamed with mainstreaming the effect is deadening. Gender does not and cannot belong in the mainstream. Gender is girls' stuff; the mainstream is where the boys swim. Gender drowns in the mainstream. Or perhaps is pushed under, held down, and drowned.

Gender is the word that pretends that women can be just like men. But listen to men talk. How many men do you know who talk regularly about gender? If they do, have they been gender trained?

### **Gender mainstreaming as assimilation**

In the 1950s and 1960s it was considered progressive to support the policy of racial assimilation. In Australia assimilation required that the people — Black people, Indigenous people, Asians, Europeans from a non-English speaking background — should be very happy to 'fit in', 'to blend' and be invisible within the local Anglo-centric white culture.

Among the processes used to support assimilation were stealing children — especially those who may have had a white parent — from mothers and families. Children and adults from non-English speaking backgrounds were actively discouraged and often forced to ignore their mother tongue and their culture. Gender mainstreaming operates in a similar way along the continuum of culture. Based on a liberal view of the world, in which differences are smoothed out and diversity is denied, gender mainstreaming suggests that feminist demands be toned down so that the men who benefit from the institutions and power structures of patriarchy do not really have to change, do not have to give up their privilege. Gender mainstreaming encourages feminist projects to have the same aims as projects that benefit men. Gender mainstreaming asks feminists not to rock the boat, not to go too far, not to demand anything other than equality of treatment in a badly skewed system, rather than equality of outcomes.

For example, a gender mainstreaming position is used to argue that Australian men are victimised by the federal government's Child Support Scheme. Such claims are used to fuel demands that men — including violent men — should be given continuing access to children. These arguments cannot be sustained, and the Chief Justice of the Family Court, Alastair Nicholson, has been reported as saying: 'I must have been somewhere else. Those cases (when men were victims of family violence) missed me. The number of cases in which there have been serious allegations against women I think I could count on the fingers of one hand' (Munro 2003:5). Gender mainstreaming fosters the view that everyone should have the same access to social systems, even though it is patently obvious that there are vastly different circumstances and levels of power between those whose lives come under the jurisdiction of such courts. Gender mainstreaming does not allow for context sensitivity, instead it goes for a one-size-fits-all approach which actually only fits the person deemed of a standard size, the norm (Hawthorne 2002:87–109).

Racial assimilation had seriously negative effects on the people subjected to it, and continues to do so. Gender mainstreaming is likely to have similarly deleterious effects on women's lives over the next 30 years, as we try at some time in the future to disentangle ourselves from it. Most progressive people these days can see the shortcomings of racial assimilation. It is time to acknowledge that the same shortcomings will manifest out of the practice of gender mainstreaming.



## **Gender mainstreaming in Women's Studies**

There have been two competing forces in the theorising of Women's Studies since its inception. On the one hand there are those who wish to 'transform the curriculum' and incorporate Women's Studies into other disciplines and be prepared to shift naming conventions as it becomes expedient (Friedman et al. 1996). On the other hand, there are those who have fought for the establishment and continuation of Women's Studies as an autonomous discipline (Bowles and Duelli-Klein 1983).

Those who have fought for the first option have had some achievements, but the curriculum has not exactly been transformed. Were it transformed it would have had the effect of challenging the structures in which such courses are taught. We would also be now seeing social change occurring in which hatred of women and violence against women was reduced. Such changes have not occurred indeed, hatred and violence are on the increase.

Those engaged in the project of transformation have not appeared to be too worried about calling Women's Studies and Feminist Studies, Gender Studies or Cultural Studies or indeed subsuming what was once Women's Studies into courses on Politics, Sociology, History or any other discipline (Robinson and Richardson 1996:179–187). However interesting such courses may be, they are not courses in Women's Studies. Gender Studies and Cultural Studies are widely available, and many of them encourage students to read postmodern theorists whose work is not informed by feminism or by the discipline of Women's Studies. Again, however interesting this is to particular students, it does not constitute Women's Studies (see Bell and Klein 1996:279–417).

By watering down the content of what used to be Women's Studies, students are no longer inspired by feminism and by the prospect of feminist activism and research.

Those who argued for Women's Studies as a separate and independent discipline have attempted to make courses challenging, women-centred and inspired by feminist research methodologies and feminist pedagogy or gynagogy (Klein 1986). Where Women's Studies has successfully maintained an autonomous existence, students and teachers speak of the energy of courses, of the ways in which their lives are transformed by reading, discussion, writing and research (Ås 1996:535–545). Gender mainstreaming has led to the demise of many autonomous Women's Studies programs, or the invisibilising of the research of feminists whose work has disappeared from the curriculum in less than a couple of decades. The result of this will be the need for the next generation to reinvent the wheel.

## **Gender mainstreaming and queer politics**

Lesbians have been at the forefront of the movement for women's liberation, for feminist activism, and for making it possible for lesbians to live lives against the grain. Lesbians have challenged the discourse of heterosexuality more thoroughly than any other group. But in the new era of global and social homogenisation, 'queer' is disappearing lesbians. The argument usually runs that queer is the word of choice for the younger generation ('young' is unspecified, it appears to extend from about 20 to 40 years of age). What is said is that young lesbians who call themselves queer socialise more with young gay men. The outcome of this is that many young lesbians no longer know their lesbian cultural history. Queer has become so inclusive that it doesn't allow the space for lesbians to exist (Jeffreys 1993:79–98; Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996:359–382; Jeffreys 2003).

At a conference in 2003, in a discussion about queer, one academic noted that queer was useful politically in universities and that if she didn't really want to be noticed she would use the term 'queer' to describe herself rather than the more confronting term 'lesbian'.

In the last few years another term — full of inclusivity — has come into use: LGBTI. LGBTI is short for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/intersex. There are more arguments between the members of these groups than there are commonalities, and lesbians — even though they head up the list — can be quickly forgotten.

We also find the term (and what a ragged term it is) 'same-sex-attracted'. And I ask, 'Is that all?' Where is the celebration of culture that one finds in the word 'lesbian' and its offshoots in various European languages? Where is the poetry? Where is music and song? The joy and outrageousness? The wild and passionate? The language of the twenty-first century is making lesbians retreat; it is clouding, obfuscating, euphemising lesbians out of the world.

How much nicer say the government departments, the fearful politicians to hear the term 'same-sex-attracted'. 'Same-sex attracted' reduces lesbians to a mechanics of robotified sexuality. It is formalin-covered sex. It is sex without fun, without emotion, without joy, without even the vagaries of distrust and betrayal. It is a clinical term stripped of feeling that does nothing for lesbian politics and cultures (Hawthorne 2003a).

The process of mainstreaming in queer politics has led to a depoliticisation of lesbian politics. It also assists in the continuation of violence against lesbians through torture and in contributing to making lesbians invisible and non-existent yet again (Hawthorne 2003b).

## **Gender mainstreaming and international politics**

Gender mainstreaming has found a comfortable home in bureaucratic structures such as the United Nations and the European Union, as well as in national and state governments. Gender mainstreaming is put forward as an aim in such institutions and this makes it appear that something is happening to bring more women and more women's issues into the centres of power. What happens instead, is that gender units are under-funded, short-staffed and not prioritised as central commitments by governments and institutions.

It is not dissimilar to the way in which the language of multilateral trade agreements appropriates the language of social justice with talk of equal treatment, when in fact the field is not equal and the subsidies given to the main players means that they continue to win the game. What it actually enables is that the big boys and little boys do things the same way and the big boys just keep winning and doing what they have always done.

Gender mainstreaming allows the bureaucracies to appropriate feminist language, to insert that feminist language into official 'gender' documents and then do nothing. In the process the vibrancy of feminist language is lost. Lesbians become same-sex attracted; a concern with diversity is turned into the 'diversity position', where one person has the task of catering to the manifold needs of 'clients'; and benefits to poor women (who could certainly do with them) are broadened out so that everyone — women and men — can share the benefit equally.

Gender mainstreaming allows institutions to appropriate feminist research and use it to water down and undermine feminist projects. In the area of development, it is being used to pull women into the global economy. Women have been quite resistant to this because women's work is so often unpaid or underpaid, and their consumption patterns

reflect not avid consumerism for luxury goods, but survival goods for their children, elderly relatives and themselves (Hynes 1999:189–201). But globalisation demands that every person not yet included in the global consumer and producer market should be, and so women are led into microcredit schemes, sometimes producing goods that have perhaps a small place in the market, but never one that allows them to truly flourish. It tends instead to keep them in poverty (Hawthorne 2002:262–309). It is not dissimilar from the Indigenous forest people of Indonesia of whom Michael Dove writes (1993:17–24). He points out that the forest people are allowed access to global markets only through goods that do not have high value in the global marketplace, and should that change, those things are then declared public or wild and appropriated by large corporations. This has been the pattern for intellectual property rights over medicinal plants across the world. It is an area in which women are frequently the major custodians of knowledge. But it is not the women who are making the profits.

At the same time women begin to be bombarded by advertising for consumer goods for which their need is minimal, and the pressure from their children to participate in the global culture is overwhelming. So Coca-Cola and McDonald's find a foothold in markets around the world, undermining the traditional diets of people and also undermining the health of people. Diabetes begins to flourish, along with alcoholism, petrol sniffing and a host of other preventable modern-day social ills.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming is used as a sop to feminist demands, but it does not meet the demands and it does not improve the lot of women around the world. Instead it entrenches a neo-liberal view of the world that allows the global institutions to more effectively pull women into the global economy, both as producers and consumers.

In the process, the original ideas are watered down to a point where they are no longer recognisable as political demands for social justice. They are simply mechanisms for keeping rowdy people — especially women — quiet.

Gender mainstreaming sounds like a good idea, but it ignores the context of women's lives, and it ignores the realities of men's violence and hatred. Like globalisation, it is hazardous for women. Women who are passionate about their concerns need a grassroots approach and an approach that is women-centred. That is, it begins from the experience of women and does not attempt to fit women's needs and demands into frameworks that work for men. This is not new, Virginia Woolf (1938) warned of the hazards of joining the processions of educated men, that is, of becoming part of the system, in her remarkable book *Three Guineas*.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a more hopeful term than gender mainstreaming. This is because it is at least an attempt to take account of the diverse situations of women in the real world. It is an attempt to consider issues of class, of race, of ethnicity and religion, of geography and migration, and of mobility or immobility, as well as of sexual orientation. It takes account of simultaneous multiple oppressions. This is a good beginning.

But the trouble is — like the term 'gender' or the term 'queer' — it includes so much that it is very easy for parts of what it does include to disappear. In one context — let's say that religion is a defining factor — religion then becomes the axis along which people think. Class, race, sexuality, disability, age can easily be lost as the main focus tends to obliterate those issues not seen as important. In another context, where class is

all important, it can focus, say, on white working-class people and ignore the fact that Indigenous people are often left out in discussions of class.

Intersectionality is an 'end' term, one that can be useful as a way of discussing the ways in which oppressions manifest in multiple ways, that none of us lives a uni-dimensional life, although some aspects may be more important than others in determining our life paths.

In discussing the ways in which we can come to understand the intersections and interplays, I suggest playing the Dominant Culture Stupidities game. The game involves looking at several axes simultaneously, for instance, class, race and mobility. If a person is from a middle- or upper-class position, chances are that they will not be as sensitive to issues of poverty as those who experience it as a daily struggle of making ends meet, of putting food on the table, paying the medical bills or not being able to afford the school outings for their children. Likewise, a white person — unless s/he happens to be a minority in their social context — will not notice the small vilifications those from a despised or even barely tolerated social group will experience. Often this is tied to poverty, but if poverty is not a factor, race will still emerge as a significant factor in that person's life. The able-bodied person barely notices the step from the road to the footpath, nor the stairs to the workplace or public building. But to a person in a wheelchair or suffering an illness that imposes mobility difficulties, such small steps can be major barriers (Hawthorne 2002:45–50).

Making an analogy to sex and gender, it becomes clear just why it is that gender is so irrelevant to so many men. It simply does not hit their radar. Such games can and have been played to great effect (the blue eye/brown eye game, for example), but until those in the dominant culture — whatever it is — have played it along the many possible axes, it can be easy to ignore those which are irrelevant in daily life. Such games are useful ways of exploring intersectionality.

The other problem with intersectionality is its intentional neutrality. It stirs no emotion, it is yet another depoliticised word and runs the risk of becoming further eroded over time. Another term which may have some usefulness, at least for a time is the 'diversity matrix'. The diversity matrix names the political alliances that people make across their differences — of experience, priorities and political demands (Hawthorne 2002:383). It shares the criss-crossing aspect of intersectionality, but puts up-front the issue of political position and of political alliance. I suspect over time, it too will lose its gloss, but, nevertheless, the incorporation of politics into the term is one of its strengths.

## **Conclusion**

Language has its political uses and obscure language is always helpful to those with power. Orwell named this in his novels *1984* and *Animal Farm*, referring to the need to confuse others either by applying contradictory terminology or by using terms that are so vague as to be rendered meaningless. Politicians and bureaucrats revel in obscurantism and one of the powerful challenges to this is sheer clarity of language. Obscurantism leads to political passivity and social fatalism. Feminists need always to be awake to such strategies and the use of clear, context specific and direct language is the first step in truly transforming society.

## **Note**

Dr Susan Hawthorne is a Melbourne author and academic, and the author of *Wild Politics: Feminism, Globalisation and Bio/diversity* (2002). Her work focuses on the

intersection of women's lives across poverty, ethnicity, sexuality and dis/ability with the forces of globalisation and ecological sustainability. She is currently working on a book about war.

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## **Gender, faith and development: Rethinking the boundaries of intersectionality**

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### **Introduction**

The aim of this article is to contribute to conversations on the issue of intersectionality by investigating the contribution that the identity marker of faith makes to the practice and discourse of development. Our approach is to examine the experience of Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in international aid and development. However, we believe the views we express to be equally relevant to local and national NGOs whose focus is community development.

It is important to establish at the outset that we do not seek to offer any definitive descriptive or normative conclusions about the role of faith in development or its relationship to other identity markers. Rather, we have been prompted to offer this tentative contribution by what we regard as the omission of faith from contemporary conversations around intersectionality in the context of development. Other forms of identity, for example gender, race and/or ethnicity and class are acknowledged and ever present in the scholarship on intersectionality. We believe it is important to place some of the issues surrounding faith 'on the table', in order to provoke further reflection and deepen the debate and understanding around these issues.

### **Faith and secularism in development practice**

Discussions around the place of faith in development tend to begin by noting the enormous scope of religious diversity within developing communities. In Asia alone (the focus of much of Australia's development assistance), Christians are a minority of 8 per cent with Hindus making up 24 per cent, Buddhists 21 per cent and Muslims 18 per cent of the Asian population (West 2003). Many of these religions are alien to the experience of most Australians. Even within the Asian Christian minority, the religious variation continues with Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Charismatic Christians all represented to varying degrees. While any discussion of faith and development must consider the religious context of developing communities and take account of the need for development practitioners to expand their knowledge of the beliefs and value structures of other faiths, we contend that there is another vital issue that requires consideration. That is, we believe that it is also crucial to focus attention on the role of faith within contemporary Western societies, and moreover to challenge the assumption that development professionals and agencies need only consider the impact of faith as it pertains to those with whom we work in 'the field'.

The historic and contemporary articulation of Western identity as increasingly secular, and the professionalisation of the development industry creates the backdrop against which individuals, NGOs, governments and multilaterals, are able to claim spiritual and religious neutrality in the policy and practice of community development initiatives. To be secular is to be neutral and universal, whereas to claim membership of a faith community is to be marked and particular. This particularity is augmented by the notion that faith is either a default position or a choice; For example, I am Catholic because that is the way I was brought up, or, I converted to (chose) Buddhism. The subject is

therefore positioned as one step removed from faith, in a way that is not the case with gender or race, where the popular assumption is that the identity is 'given'.

By refusing the choice of the particularity of faith, secularism seems to suggest a self stripped of the layers of given or chosen identity. Defined by reference to its 'other', secularism is positioned within the binary logic of Western identity as a category (similar to whiteness or masculinity) that resists examination. We can investigate the values of particular religions, but where is the canon of the secular, what values attend the 'choice' to believe in no specific religious dogma (or to relegate that belief to the weekend or the census form)? Spiritual and religious values of countries and individuals are separated from our engagement with those countries and individuals. Such engagement is ostensibly without consequence to the neutral and secularised people of the West.

On those occasions when faith is accepted as a legitimate issue for investigation, it is often in the context of the existence and spread of religious fundamentalism. While not seeking to deny the significance of this issue for the practice of development and emergency relief, the problem with this approach is that it suggests that faith is relevant only in the margins, where it can be clearly identified as the explicit and dominant organising force within communities. Such an approach continues to ignore the relevance of the faith of development practitioners, which, even when it is exposed, is necessarily inscribed as 'reasonable' when compared to the belief systems of fundamentalism. Finally, it contributes to the easy assumption that the margins are to be found in the developing world.

### **Secularism and faith-based organisations**

Within the international NGO community there are a limited number of agencies, such as Samaritan's Purse and Serve International, which are transparent in their desire to be seen as champions of religious fervor. In the main, however, development agencies seek to remove themselves from too close an association between their faith and their practice under the (mis)apprehension that they do not bring values of faith and spirituality to their work and can retreat to the relative high ground of spiritual and religious neutrality. This position is mandated within government legislation and further compelled by the industry's code of conduct. However, the ACFOA code (at 2.1) requires that organisations 'accord due respect to the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of the people with whom [they] work' consistent with principles of basic human rights. The question provoked by this article is whether we can accord respect by ignoring religion/faith? Or, to put it somewhat differently, can we respect the religion/faith of others if we do not acknowledge our own?

There are some agencies, for example, the Red Cross, that have guiding principles which espouse neutrality as intrinsic to their philosophy. Others, such as the Salvation Army, Islamic Relief and World Vision Australia, belong to the group identified under the banner of faith-based organisations (FBOs). The easy application of the title FBO belies the complexity of the category. What does it mean to be or belong to an FBO? How does that impact on development practice? Unsurprisingly, FBOs are not an homogenous group. Their values and belief systems are themselves a reflection of the spectrum of faiths and traditions within the community. To describe an organisation as Christian is at once descriptive and meaningless; I may understand what the organisation is not (not Islamic, Jewish or Buddhist), but even a cursory knowledge of Christian identity reveals that there are an almost infinite number of ways to 'be Christian'. Conservative Christians may have more in common with conservative Jews than with their liberal



cousins. Nor does the label suggest how development practice may be affected by a commitment to a particular faith.

Within FBOs there are differing degrees of self-awareness. It is easy to assume a common language without ensuring common understanding. Christianity may mean a commitment to Biblical values, but how are those values to be interpreted: literally, as a social text, as a guide to life, or as a vague reference point for the sermon on Sunday? There is little doubt that within FBOs, faith becomes a more prominent identity marker than it would otherwise be in a professional context. But what does that do to the dynamics of intersectionality? How do we understand ourselves as Christian women, in the context of a church history that has privileged the identities and capabilities of men? This is further complicated by the perceptions of others within the sector. Some stakeholders regard Christians and by extension agencies that claim a Christian identity as tainted with the politics and history of the Church. As a historical vehicle of women's oppression, Christian agencies may be viewed with some suspicion by those who focus on women's empowerment. How then, do we reconcile, or at least begin to unpack, the complex bonds of identity and the contradictions of belief and practice?

### **Issues in development practice**

It is our contention that the refusal to interrogate the role of faith within our own social context is at best misguided and at its worst almost certainly counterproductive. It has the potential to have a profound impact on the quality and integrity of development practice. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the impact of faith on development practice in any great detail, we would like to propose three sites at which the current lack of recognition is a potential hindrance: the aspiration to holistic practice, peace-building initiatives, and emergency relief and disaster mitigation.

Australian NGOs work with diverse communities in a way that purports to be holistic, with consideration of the intersecting attributes of race, ethnicity, ability, and gender. This commitment to intercultural practice often ignores the fact that development is also (almost) inevitably an interfaith encounter. Issues of faith and religion are dominant in every tradition and culture. The lack of acknowledgement of faith as a key influence on both NGOs (and their employees) and the communities with whom we work ignores the fundamental ways in which faith structures identity by providing a framework for understanding self and the relationship between self and others and by establishing systems of values and meaning. Is it possible to claim a commitment to holistic practice without acknowledging and including any consideration of religious or faith orientation of those with whom we seek to work? Often the hard realities of poverty are ascribed meaning by systems of spirituality and religion which then inform people's view of the world. Perhaps more crucially, can agencies and individuals that propose a holistic practice shirk responsibility for acknowledging their own religious, faith and spiritual perspective and influences (be they current practices and beliefs or the remnants of religious understandings and practices of the past)?

Faith is also of critical importance to development organisations that seek to promote peace building. It may seem somewhat trite to note that violence and violations of human rights are regularly carried out in the name of faith. Without inter-faith dialogue and a careful and respectful attempt to understand different religious beliefs, the sustainability of development initiatives focused on peace building will be necessarily compromised. Successful engagement requires an understanding of both the context and values of those whom NGOs seek to support and empower, as well as the values of development exponents. Our own identity and values are critical and must be

understood in order that we have a basis from which to acknowledge, understand and work with others.

Continuing focus by NGOs on issues of emergency relief and disaster preparedness and mitigation is critical in mitigating the likelihood and impact of disasters, both natural and man-made in poor and developing communities. Agencies with a specific focus on these issues of relief and emergency response must understand the contexts of religion and faith so that their response will not be solely focused on the material emergency response, but will be holistic and informed by an understanding of the broad faith, spiritual and religious dimensions of affected communities. Many communities, as is their right, see emergency situations and natural disasters as sent by a supreme deity. Unless aid professionals are aware and informed of issues such as this, they may in fact reduce the quality and impact of their own efforts.

## **Conclusion**

Naila Kabeer (1994) refers to the 'purportedly neutral institutions within which development policies are made and implemented'. The experience and analysis of feminists has revealed that those institutions are often sites of patriarchal power. Scholarship around intersectionality and gender has significantly complicated that debate to reveal the way in which a number of different categories of identity constitute, enable and constrain women and men within both the developed and developing world. As we proceed with this discussion, we would like to suggest the imperative of acknowledging the way in which faith is and will be woven into these intersections. This is an issue of critical importance for communities with whom we work and for the quality of our practice; but it cannot be regarded as an issue for 'them'. We must begin to dismantle the myths of neutrality that have defined our understanding of ourselves and our work and to uncover the particularity of faith and secularism in the construction of all identity.

## **Note**

This article is the view of the authors only and does not necessarily represent the views of World Vision Australia or World Vision International.

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## **Elements of a gender mainstreaming strategy: A 14-point framework**

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### **Introduction**

It is not possible to achieve a controversial goal, such as gender equality and equity, without a clear strategic plan setting out policy, objectives, action, time frame and resources. Yet, in many cases, the individuals and units within organisations who have been assigned responsibility for gender mainstreaming are attempting to deliver on this responsibility with no clear strategy in place.

This paper briefly describes the elements of strategically effective action for gender mainstreaming that have been developed over the decade since the term was firmly lodged in global policy at the Beijing Conference in 1995 and adopted as the development community's agreed methodology to achieve gender equality (United Nations 1995 and 1997). The paper touches upon the central issues in gender analysis that must guide gender mainstreaming activity, pointing out that although most program officers do not need to undertake a complete gender analysis, they need have a grasp of certain foundation principles that govern that analysis.

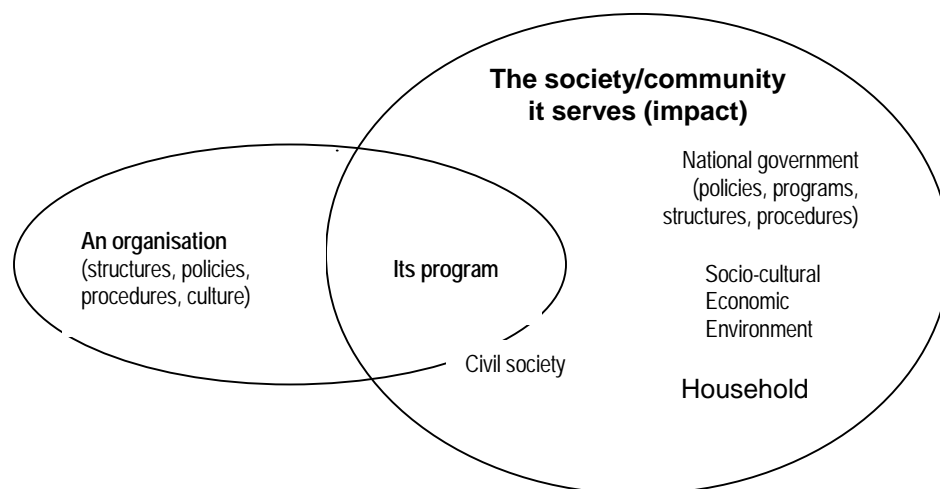
However, gender mainstreaming is about more than gender analysis. It involves all the steps between analysis and incorporating that analysis into the policy and program decisions that will contribute to equality of outcome for men and women in all development work (Hunt 2000; UNDP 2000). In other words, gender mainstreaming is about advocacy, networking and knowledge management as much as it is about analysis. It is about policy influence as much as it is about project and program design. Ensuring that such diverse elements produce coherent results requires a clearly defined strategic plan.

The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) has identified gender mainstreaming strategies as being relevant in three linked arenas or 'spheres': (a) in an organisation's structures, policies and procedures, and in its culture; (b) in the substantive activity that it undertakes (its program); and (c) in the impact of this work on increased gender equality in the broader community (Schalkwyk, Thomas and Woroniuk 1996:3).

Figure 1 shows the inter-relationship between these three arenas. Activities in each arena are critical to ensure effective gender mainstreaming. However:

at times strategies and assessments have tended to blur these three arenas, and have often lost sight of the fact that change in the third level is the final goal ... it is important not to conflate these three arenas, as different strategies and indicators of change apply to each' (Schalkwyk, Thomas and Woroniuk 1966:4).

**Figure 1 The interlocking arenas of gender mainstreaming**



Source: Adapted from Schalkwyk, Thomas and Woroniuk 1996:3.

### **Fourteen elements of a complete gender mainstreaming strategy**

While it is of absolute importance not to conflate these three spheres, it is also useful to think of them as 'levels' that a unified organisational gender mainstreaming strategy must encompass. At each level there are several of the 14 elements to be put in place, including tracking and reporting mechanisms adapted to the issues relevant to each level.

The three levels are distinct, with a need for networking, planning and capacity development predominating at the organisational level, socioeconomic (gender) analysis and consultation at the program level, and various forms of monitoring and information sharing at the level of impact. Taken together, these elements comprise a 14-point framework for an organisational gender mainstreaming strategy, which is discussed in brief schematic form below, grouped by the three levels indicated in Figure 1.

#### **Level One: Organisational structures, policies, procedures and culture**

AN ORGANISATION ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIVELY TO GREATER GENDER EQUALITY WOULD HAVE THE FOLLOWING SIX STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE.

**Element 1: A clear policy** on its commitment to gender equality, supported by the proactive drive of senior and middle management (political will), and expressed in a written policy or mission statement.

**Element 2: Time-bound strategies** to implement the policy, which are developed in broad consultation with staff, and include mechanisms to ensure that staff understand the policy and its implications for their everyday work, and have the competencies and resources required to implement it effectively.

The competencies required, all of which can be developed systematically once identified, include the following (UNDP 2001)

- (a) political savvy, an adroit grasp of contingency and considerable resilience, because gender mainstreaming addresses issues of power that are not susceptible to purely technical solutions;
- (b) the ability to plan and act strategically, and to identify and seize ad hoc opportunities at all stages of policymaking, and throughout the full program planning and implementation cycle;
- (c) a grasp of socioeconomic analysis, including the basic principles of gender analysis;
- (d) the ability to influence decision making productively (through networking, advocacy and sound information and knowledge management) because policy making and program design and implementation occur through sequences of decision making;
- (e) mindful, careful leadership, team membership and communication skills; and
- (f) strong process management skills (time management, meeting management, document management, etc.) because gender mainstreaming is a *process*.

**Element 3: Human resource practices** that are sensitive to the gender needs and interests of both men and women on the organisation's staff, as well as in their constituency. Human resource strategies have a dual internal/external function in relation to gender mainstreaming:

- (a) **internally**, they advance the organisation's ability to practice and model gender equality in its own internal functioning, for example to be equitable in its hiring and promotion practices, and recognise the links between the personal and professional responsibilities of staff; and
- (b) **externally**, they enable the organisation to contribute more effectively to greater gender equality in its program and impact, for example by including commitment and competence to work for gender equality in job descriptions, terms of reference and performance criteria.

**Element 4: Internal tracking and monitoring capability** to ensure that strategic milestones are being reached, and to support both organisational learning and management accountability. These might include monitoring of staff recruitment and promotion, budgetary allocations, procurement from companies that implement ILO

conventions regarding female employees, and the performance of managers and supervisors in discussing and following up on gender equality initiatives.

**Element 5: A central gender mainstreaming unit** with policy responsibility and a mandate to guide the overall gender mainstreaming process. Some organisations also have specific units to support the incorporation of gender issues into their programs, while others combine the policy and program functions.

**Element 6: A recognised network of staff responsible for gender equality** issues in their respective work units, coordinated as a team by the policy unit (often called a Gender Focal Point Network). Ideally, this network takes the form of a community of practice that is self-organising, knowledge sharing, peer supporting and serves as an acknowledged channel for the integration of learning on gender equality into the organisation's functioning.

### **Level Two: The organisation's program**

Although gender mainstreaming involves far more than project and program design and implementation, an organisation's program is the 'heart' of gender mainstreaming. It is the arena in which commitment to gender equality takes concrete form in the community served by the organisation. An effective gender mainstreaming strategy therefore includes at least the following four programming elements:

**Element 7: Systematic ongoing consultation** with women, as well as men, to identify their own priorities, success stories, lessons learned, tools and mechanisms. This is only possible in organisations that genuinely value consultation and the types of knowledge that it produces and allocate the necessary staff and budgetary resources. Consultation does not end with the design phase of the project, but must be undertaken throughout project implementation. This is of critical importance, because the ultimate impact will be watered down if the project strays from community concerns, or does not adjust to any changes in these concerns (see also Point 11 below).

**Element 8: Project management** that is technically proficient, aware of the implications of gender differences for project outcomes, remains in touch with the constituency, and establishes positive incentive and accountability mechanisms to ensure consistent results is extremely important.

**Element 9: Effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms** capable of reflecting how far the project is contributing to greater gender equality.

**Element 10: Gender analysis** (a subset of socioeconomic analysis) that explores the national and international context in which the concerned communities are operating, clarifies the ways in which this context impacts differently on women and men and the implications of these differences for project activity.

Gender analysis helps to make the difference between men and women, and the policy and program implications of these differences, more visible. Several gender analysis methods and tools are available (March et al. 1998). Whichever method is used, a grasp of basic gender analysis principles is important. However there is already a vast amount of information available, and most program officers do not need to

undertake a gender analysis themselves. In almost all cases, they can or should call on experts to select the right analytic approach, and undertake a tailor-made analysis if needed. Therefore, program officers usually need only sufficient understanding of gender analysis principles to select relevant information, to guide consultants productively and to understand the implications for their programs of the outcomes of gender analysis.

These basic gender analysis principles may be summarised as follows:

### **The sexual division of labour**

- (a) The sexual division of labour describes the contributions of men and women, boys and girls to social and economic processes, and the rewards they gain from these contributions.
- (b) The sexual division of labour underlies all human relationships and productive processes, and hence all development activity.
- (c) Differential access to and control over resources, assets and benefits are integral aspects of the division of labour.
- (d) The sexual division of labour is constantly changing, usually slowly, but often quite fast, especially in times of crisis. Typically the rate of change of the division of labour in different parts of the same economy varies (the division of labour within the household, for example, is notoriously inelastic). Often the actual division of labour changes more quickly than beliefs about what is appropriate for men and women to do, causing both stress to people forced to change their behaviours, but unable to change their beliefs, and denial about the real character of the division of labour.
- (e) Resources, assets and benefits are of two kinds (a) tangible, such as property or education, and (b) intangible, such as status, influence and, above all, time.
- (f) A critical aspect of the sexual division of labour is that significant amounts of economically important work is unpaid, hence not reflected in national accounts, or in the assumptions underlying legislation, national plans and other mechanisms through which the distribution of resources, assets and benefits is managed (UNIFEM, 2000:22–27).
- (g) Nevertheless, like all economic activity, this labour, often undertaken within the household, requires energy, inputs and time, which have costs. These costs are generally born by those doing the work. This kind of unpaid work

has been described as the 'care economy' and is popularly defined as 'women's work'. It plays a central role in the maintenance and reproduction of current and future wage-earners and taxpayers, at a cost to the economy (both private and public sectors) that is highly subsidised.

### **Practical and strategic needs and interests**

- (h) The distinction between women's practical gender needs within the existing division of labour, and their strategic gender interests for change in the division of labour (Molyneux 1985; Moser 1993), is therefore critical, not only for the women concerned, but also, because it is one of the factors that affects the price of labour, for the economy as a whole.

### **Formal and substantive equality**

- (i) Formal equality refers to equality enshrined in law, an essential first step, providing basic equality of opportunity. Substantive equality refers to the actual experience of equality in real life — the extent to which the law is enforced, and/or can counteract belief, custom and tradition, in order to achieve equality of outcome.

The core tasks of those working for gender equality are thus (a) to support the establishment of formal equality where this does not exist, and (b) to help bridge any gap between the formal situation and the actual enjoyment of equal rights and wellbeing. Full substantive equality between women and men is the goal.

### **Level Three: The outcomes and impact**

The outcomes and impact of effective gender mainstreaming activity in Levels One and Two are seen in progress towards measurable improvement in meeting women's practical needs and strategic interests, and greater gender equality (both formal and substantive) in the communities served. It is important to show that substantive activity has not simply reached a certain number of women, but that it has improved equality between women and men.

This arena of an organisation's gender mainstreaming activity provides the ultimate purpose of this activity. If gender mainstreaming strategies are not systematically linked to the end in view and do not include mechanisms to measure and report upon changes in this arena, they are liable to become tautologous — ends in themselves (Schalkwyk, Thomas and Woroniuk 1996:7). The measurement of impact is currently the least developed of the areas for gender mainstreaming activity, just as it is for other development themes. However, strides are being made, and it is important that all internal gender mainstreaming strategies are crystal clear on the ways in which they



contribute to the ultimate goal of gender equality in the communities served. Effective gender mainstreaming strategies therefore include the following final four elements.

**Element 11: Relevant baseline information, and appropriate milestones and indicators**, derived from gender analysis, so that progress towards greater gender equality can be identified and described.

**Element 12: Consultation with the community concerned** to check and compare their perspectives with the information revealed by formal indicators.

**Element 13: Clear reporting mechanisms** that can get the word out efficiently.

**Element 14: Good relationships** with the media, opinion leaders and decision makers both in the community being served, and in the wider society, so that lessons learned can be effectively disseminated, and absorbed into social practice.

## **Conclusion**

An organisation's structure, policies, procedures and culture govern the kinds of programs it is capable of producing. It is logically impossible for an organisation consistently to produce projects and results that are at variance with its own internal practices and culture. A gender mainstreaming strategy is likely therefore to require considerable internal scrutiny, and strong alliances between those organisational divisions responsible for policy, program and human resource management.

The 14 factors above comprise important elements of a complete gender mainstreaming strategy that an organisation might pursue. The list can therefore be used as a preliminary assessment tool — a kind of checklist to identify gaps and opportunities for stronger organisational response to gender equality issues, although in many cases a more complete gender audit may be necessary. For organisations in which none or very few of these elements are in place, it may not be possible to work on every issue, especially in circumstances where human and other resources are limited (Hunt 2000; Morris 1999).

Successful action on each of these elements will ensure that the basic organisational structures that promote gender equality are in place. It will not necessarily, however, address the critical, and prior, question of organisational culture. Organisations in which work for greater gender equality has most potential have an organisational culture that is open, well connected to their constituency and environment, knowledge-sharing and team-based. They are 'learning organisations' in the sense that diverse forms of knowledge are valued, that information and knowledge flow freely in the organisation, that individual knowledge is converted readily to team knowledge and team knowledge into organisational knowledge, and that management is proactive in incorporating new learning into decision-making processes.

The establishment of an appropriate organisational culture requires attention to staff capacities for leadership, knowledge sharing and positive working relationships, and how such capacities interact with, and impact upon, organisational structures and procedures, which are themselves the product of such capacities and which govern the extent to which they can be exercised. It also requires attention to the political processes by which knowledge is incorporated into policy, to the kinds of knowledge and knowledge channels are seen to have value in the organisation (Kolb et al. 1998). These

comprise a much more complex and dialectical set of issues than can be addressed in the space available here.

Nevertheless, while a typology such as that given here cannot be absolutely definitive for all situations or sufficiently dynamic to capture adequately the question of organisational culture, such a framework does provide an opportunity to conceptualise the 'whole picture', and is a useful basis for the strategic process of setting action priorities according to individual organisational needs.

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## Introduction to gender analysis concepts and steps

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### Overview

During program and project design, gender analysis is the process of assessing the impact that a development activity may have on females and males, and on gender relations (the economic and social relationships between males and females which are constructed and reinforced by social institutions). It can be used to ensure that men and women are not disadvantaged by development activities, to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of activities, or to identify priority areas for action to promote equality between women and men. During implementation, monitoring and evaluation, gender analysis assists to assess differences in participation, benefits and impacts between males and females, including progress towards gender equality and changes in gender relations. Gender analysis can also be used to assess and build capacity and commitment to gender sensitive planning and programming in donor and partner organisations; and to identify gender equality issues and strategies at country, sectoral or thematic programming level.

There a number of different frameworks for undertaking gender analysis. Some of these have been developed in Northern countries (Moser 1993; Overholt et al. 1985), and others have been developed and adapted by development practitioners from the South (Parker 1993; Longwe 1991; Kabeer 1994). This article outlines the essential steps that need to be addressed to undertake gender analysis for each of the different levels referred to above, and draws on concepts from a number of different frameworks.

### Summary of key gender analysis steps

1. **Collect sex disaggregated household, workplace and community data/information** relevant to the program/project for each area below.
2. Assess how the **gender division of labour and patterns of decision-making** affects the program/project, and how the program/project affects the gender division of labour and decision making.
3. Assess who has **access to and control over resources, assets and benefits**, including program/project benefits.
4. Understand women's/girls' and men's/boys' different **needs, priorities and strengths**.
5. Understand the **complexity of gender relations in the context of social relations**, and how this constrains or provides **opportunities** for addressing gender inequality.
6. Assess the **barriers and constraints** to women and men participating and benefiting equally from the program/project.
7. Develop **strategies to address barriers and constraints**, include these strategies in program/project design and implementation, and ensure that they are adequately resourced.
8. Assess **counterpart/partner capacity** for gender sensitive planning, implementation and monitoring, and develop strategies to strengthen capacity.

9. Assess the potential of the program/project to **empower women**, address strategic gender interests and **transform gender relations**.
10. Develop **gender-sensitive indicators** to monitor participation, benefits, the effectiveness of gender equality strategies, and changes in gender relations.
11. Apply the above information and analysis throughout the program/project cycle.

### **Step 1: Collect sex-disaggregated data/information**

This refers to the differentiation by sex of statistical data and other information and is sometimes called gender-disaggregated data. This means that we must count both males and females when gathering information for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development activities. Disaggregating information by sex is a basic good practice requirement for gender-sensitive programming. Without disaggregated information, it is difficult or impossible to assess the different impacts of development activities on males or females. It is important to disaggregate data not only by sex, but also by age (girls and boys, older men and women), race, ethnicity, caste and any other socioeconomic group which may be affected positively or negatively by a development activity.

There are many ways that development workers can gather sex-disaggregated information. Data collection methods and the quantity of data required will vary according to a range of factors, including the sector and type of development activity, the scale of the activity, the resources and time available for data collection during design, implementation and evaluation, and the institutional context. While there are now many sources of quantitative data on the status of women and girls, up-to-date and relevant information specific to the location and activity can sometimes be difficult to get. Sex disaggregated qualitative information based on consultation with key stakeholders and local women's groups is also essential. Participatory methods may provide opportunities to hear from both women and men separately (for example, participatory ways of gathering information on the gender division of labour, or on access to resources), and for women and men to hear each other's perspectives.

The following factors may influence the accuracy and coverage of data:<sup>1</sup>

- **Who is present:** In some cultures women will respond very differently to questions about their economic and social activities, and their views about gender relations if men are present. If men answer questions first, women may remain silent, even if they disagree, or if inaccurate information is given.
- **Time of day, season and location:** Women may not be available at certain times of day, and men may be less likely to be present at other times. It is important to choose both a time and place which is convenient for women, for individual and group interviews or participatory information-gathering exercises. Women and men may be less available during peak labour periods, such as harvesting or transplanting times.
- **Who is the facilitator/interviewer:** In some cultures and situations, responses to questions will be more accurate if women gather information from women. Training and supporting beneficiaries to collect and interpret data is also one way of involving women in project planning, implementation and monitoring, and may increase the accuracy and quality of data and its analysis. Class, age, ethnic background and occupation may also influence peoples' responses. It may be necessary to monitor whether these factors are introducing bias.

- **Language difficulties:** Men and women may have different proficiency in national (as distinct from local or ethnic) languages, particularly where gaps in education and literacy between males and females are significant.
- **Collect information on all relevant work:** Overlooking unpaid and subsistence work will result in under-reporting and misrepresentation of both women's and men's workload. Without this information, it can be difficult to identify the constraints which may face them in participating in or benefiting from development activities. Much of women's work is under-valued or 'invisible' to men and outsiders. Typically, men may not give accurate information about what women do, how long it takes to do it, where the work is done, or who benefits from different activities.
- **Local women's organisations:** Women's organisations and groups can be accurate sources of information about the gender division of labour, patterns of decision making, access to resources, women's and men's needs, priorities and strengths, how gender relations are changing, and the factors causing changes in gender relations. Often, these organisations have a rich knowledge of how current development activities and trends are helping or hindering women and men. With adequate resources, they can be effective catalysts for engaging the participation of women, men, boys and girls.
- **Cross-check data:** It is always necessary to cross-check data for accuracy and bias, including gender bias, regardless of the data collection method used. Local women's groups and local female researchers may be good sources for cross-checking, as well as other key community informants. Cross-checking may assist with analysis of data, and may indicate differences in perception about social and economic conditions, rather than actual inaccuracy in data collected. Using a range of reliable informants knowledgeable about the target group and women's and men's experiences is critical.
- **Technical and sectoral expertise:** It is helpful to have a social scientist with expertise in participatory data collection and gender analysis on design, implementation and evaluation/review teams. However, it is just as important for each team member to be responsible for collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated information in their own sector or area of expertise.

## Step 2: Assess the gender division of labour and patterns of decision making<sup>1</sup>

This step in the gender analysis process describes who does what, within the household, community, workplace, organisation or sector. Important issues to consider include:

- **What work is done, and by whom** (female and male adults, elders and children)? One good rule of thumb is to ask how the gender division of labour will affect the implementation of program/project activities; and how these activities are likely to affect the gender division of labour.
- Different types of work to consider are: **productive (formal and non-formal sectors), reproductive, essential household and community services, and community management and politics.** It is also important to explore **who makes decisions** about different types of work, and how this is changing. For example, in the education sector, it is important to know in which areas and at what levels females and males predominate as learners, teachers and decision

makers, and why. In the health sector, women are often traditionally responsible for providing basic health care in the family and community. It is important to know how men and women are involved in the provision of health services (formally and non-formally), and how the gender division of labour, responsibility and decision making in the family impacts on women's and men's health. Decision making about reproduction, about who in the family is resourced to go to health centres, tolerance of violence against women, and the physical burden of work can greatly influence women's and girls' health. Understanding decision making patterns can also provide insight into who has control over labour in the community.

- **How much time is needed** to undertake each activity, and when is the work done? This information helps to identify periods when there is a high demand for labour, so that an assessment can be made of any extra demands that project inputs will make on women, men and children. This is particularly important for rural development projects, where the scarcest resource for low-income women is time. For example, the different domestic and productive workload of girls and boys has been identified as an important factor in both enrolment and retention rates at school, as well as in educational achievement.
- **Where does each activity take place** (for example, home, village, marketplace, fields, urban centre or rural area, and how far away from the household)? This gives insight into female and male mobility, and allows an assessment to be made of the impact of the program on mobility, method of travel, the travel time needed to accomplish each activity, and potential ways of saving time. For example, for women to participate in training activities, timing and location needs to be carefully considered. In a police project, it is important to know whether women are stationed in rural areas, and whether they are primarily assigned to office-based activities.
- It is important to consider all the above **for each socioeconomic or ethnic group** targeted by the program/project, or affected by the program/project. A good gender analysis is undertaken within the context of a broader social analysis.
- With most projects and programs, it is also important to have a **sex-disaggregated employment profile** of the partner organisation.

### **Step 3: Assess access to and control over productive resources, assets and benefits**

This part of gender analysis describes who has what, within the household, community, workplace, organisation or sector, including who has power. Questions to be asked include:

- Who has **access** to productive resources and assets such as land, forests, water supplies, equipment, labour, capital, credit, new technology and training?
- Who has **control** over how these resources and assets are used, and over who uses them? It is important to distinguish between access to these resources (who uses resources informally or traditionally) and control or decision making power.
- Who belongs to **formal or informal groups or organisations**, who gets mentored or promoted?

- Who **benefits** from the product of women's and men's labour, and who benefits from development activities and education and training opportunities? Questions to ask include:
  - Who benefits from income earned and spent? For example, cash cropping projects often rely on the unpaid family labour of women and girls, but women are often less likely to control or have access to income from cash crops.
  - Who owns and uses any assets or goods created?
  - Who gains formal or informal political power, prestige or status?
  - Who has access to services, for example health and education, and what factors determine access? For example, the location of facilities, and the attitudes of service providers, may influence women's access to health services.
- Who has **access to program/project resources**, who has access to information from the project/program, and who participates in project management processes?
  - Project participation and consultation processes may be designed to enhance women's and men's access to information about the project and the resources which it offers. For example, the establishment of project implementation groups (such as water user groups, credit groups or farmer co-operatives) may determine who knows about the program, and who gets control over its resources.
  - How information is distributed and to whom, may determine who has access to training opportunities by a project.
  - Formal education prerequisites for education and training may impact on men and women very differently.
  - These factors will have an impact on women's and men's current productive activities and will often change existing gender relations.

For example, **in emergency relief and post-conflict situations**, it cannot be assumed that women will receive equal access to resources unless this is specifically planned for. Women may also raise different priorities for resources than those identified by the male leadership of displaced persons. For example, women in Rwandan camps in Tanzania identified a range of priorities and concerns regarding access to resources once they had gathered together in their own groups, such as how to get their proper share of food, the need to provide extra food and support to women caring for unaccompanied children, the need to ensure that single mothers and widows also receive resources, and the need to provide recreation and schooling for children (Woroniuk et al. 1997).

#### **Step 4: Understand differences in needs and strengths**

It is not unusual for men and women to have different perceptions of their needs and strengths. They may also have different ideas about who does what, who uses what resources, and who controls resources or makes decisions in other important areas of life. Women and men may also have different views about gender relations, how they have changed already, and how they should change in future.

Insights into women's/girls' and men's/boys' needs and strengths may be gained from finding out about the gender division of labour, use of and control over resources, and patterns of decision making. Consultation with participants, in a way which allows both women's and men's voices to be heard, is essential.

### **Step 5: Understand the complexity of gender relations in the context of social relations**

Recognising that development programming occurs in a complex and changing social context, this aspect of gender analysis considers social, cultural, religious, economic, political, environmental, demographic, legal and institutional factors and trends, and how they will impact on the program/project. Questions to be asked include:

- How will these factors and trends influence and change the gender division of labour, women's and men's access to and control over resources and benefits, and other aspects of gender relations such as decision making?
- How will these factors and trends constrain or facilitate the program/project, and the likelihood of successfully achieving objectives?
- How might the program influence these factors and trends, either positively or negatively?
- Which factors are changing and why, and which are very difficult to change?

There are many forms of discrimination, which result in violation of basic human rights to both females and males of all ages. It is important to remember that women face multiple barriers through different stages of their lives, and to understand the different types of discrimination that affect both males and females.

This analysis of social context can help to identify assumptions and risks in the logical framework matrix. Both women's and men's experiences and perspectives need to be considered when identifying critical planning assumptions and risks. Project objectives or methods may need to be modified in the light of these factors. For example:

- The experiences of boys and girls within the education system need to be considered when identifying factors which contribute to access to education, and educational outcomes.
- Demographic trends such as male migration may mean there are large seasonal variations or long-term changes in the numbers of households supported solely by women. If so, assumptions about the availability of women's and men's labour for program activities may need to be reconsidered. Such factors may also affect boys and girls access to schooling.
- Cultural factors restricting women's and girls' mobility may mean that services (for example, health, education or credit services) are under-utilised if they are located outside the immediate locality.
- For cultural and religious reasons, it may be important to establish separate groups for women and men at the community level. Training and consultation may need to occur separately with women and men, and female extension agents and community workers may be required.
- Legal factors and customary practices may make it very difficult to transfer resources directly to women (such as ownership of land or hand pumps, or access to credit).

Changing attitudes, economic circumstances and trends **may provide opportunities for improving women's social, economic and legal status**. Analysing such factors and trends may assist planners to identify areas where the program can address both women's practical needs, as well as their strategic gender interests (as defined by women themselves) to redress current inequalities in the gender division of labour, and in women's access to and ownership of productive resources. Work in post-conflict



areas and in humanitarian/emergency relief situations may also present opportunities for advancing gender equality.

### **Step 6: Assess barriers and constraints to women and men participating and benefiting equally in the program/project**

Key constraints and barriers to men's and women's participation as beneficiaries and decision makers need to be identified during project design for all components and key activities, based on information gathered in the steps above. This is an essential step in the process of gender and social analysis which is often missed. Who benefits and participates, how and why/why not, also needs to be monitored closely during implementation.

### **Step 7: Include and resource strategies to promote gender equality in project design and implementation**

Strategies and activities need to be identified to overcome barriers to women and men participating and benefiting. It is important to assess which constraints, barriers or imbalances can realistically be addressed over the life of the project. It is also essential to ensure that strategies are adequately resourced and monitored. For example, gender-sensitive communication, consultation and participation strategies need to be developed and tested. Project staff need to consider how and when contact is made with target groups, and who may be excluded directly or indirectly by the communication strategies used.

### **Step 8: Assess counterpart/partner capacity for gender-sensitive planning, implementation and monitoring**

Partner capacity for gender-sensitive implementation is still often overlooked. For most bilateral and multilateral development projects, the counterpart agency has already been decided long before implementation commences. Nevertheless, an assessment of counterpart institutional capacity to implement gender-sensitive activities is essential as early as possible in the project cycle, so that appropriate strategies for strengthening this capacity can be explored and costed (Hunt 2000).

### **Step 9: Assess the potential for the program/project to empower women and address strategic interests**

It is useful to distinguish between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests which may be addressed during program/project implementation:<sup>1</sup>

Practical gender needs are the immediate and practical needs women have for survival, which do not challenge existing culture, tradition, the gender division of labour, legal inequalities, or any other aspects of women's lower status or power. Projects which focus on practical gender needs may make it easier for women and girls to carry out their traditional roles and responsibilities, and relieve their daily burden of work. These practical needs are shared by all household members. However, because women are generally responsible for providing these needs for the family, they are often more easily identified by women as their highest priority needs.

Strategic gender interests focus on bringing about equality between females and males, by transforming gender relations in some way, by challenging women's

disadvantaged position or lower status, or by challenging and changing men's roles and responsibilities. Women may not always be able to articulate their strategic interests. It is important to have discussions with women about their role and place in society, their rights, and how they would like things to change. It is equally important to have discussions with men on these issues. Strategic gender interests may express women's and men's long-term aspirations for equality.

It is possible to address women's strategic interests by: working with men as well as women (for example, by raising men's awareness of the impact of their sexual behaviour and power inequalities on women's health); focusing on practical needs in an empowering way, which also promotes strategic interests (for example, by involving women in decision making in areas where they do not traditionally have a role or power, such as in the management or maintenance of water supplies); and using practical needs as an entry point for raising awareness about inequality and rights, or about women's and men's roles and responsibilities and their long term interests.

What is strategic in one social and cultural context may not be strategic in other contexts. Some examples of strategic gender interests are women's rights to: live free from violence; have equal land tenure; have equal control over other productive resources such as credit, forests, water supplies; be involved in decision making; and have equal educational and training opportunities and outcomes.

### **Step 10: Develop gender-sensitive indicators**

Gender sensitive performance indicators are essential for monitoring the impact of activities on males and females, and on changes in gender relations. To be gender sensitive, indicators need to:

- require the collection of sex-disaggregated information wherever possible on who participates and benefits;
- assess whether the program/project has different benefits and impacts for males and females, and assist us to analyse why these differences between women and men occur;
- assess whether the program/project is bringing about a change in gender relations, and assist us to analyse how gender relations are changing (positively or negatively), and how this impacts on the achievement of overall program/project objectives; and
- involve both women and men in developing indicators, and in collecting and analysing information.

It is important to include a mix of both quantitative and qualitative indicators, in order to assess benefits, changes in gender relations and other impacts. Reporting on indicators should always be accompanied by qualitative analysis, to ensure that data is interpreted correctly.

For example, a quantitative gender sensitive indicator for a HIV/AIDS program may measure the number of males and females who attend awareness-raising workshops. Qualitative indicators may assess whether females and males can identify ways to protect themselves from HIV infection, whether they are able to talk about and use condoms with sexual partners, and whether there is increased community acceptance of women and men living with HIV/AIDS. In a water and sanitation project, a quantitative

indicator may be the number of women represented on water committees. Qualitative indicators may assess whether women have actively participated in management and decision making on water committees; or assess men's and women's views on the appropriateness of the location and type of water facility provided.

### **Step 11: Apply information and analysis through the program/project cycle and to all major program/project documents**

This requires the formulation of a range of questions which will vary according to the nature and sector of the project/program, and the social and development context. Many agencies now have useful tools to assist with this process which are available electronically (for example, AusAID 1997 and DAC nd).

**Each of the above steps needs to be considered throughout the activity cycle,** beginning with country and sectoral programming, and continuing through project design, implementation and evaluation. For example, during country and sectoral programming, an assessment of partner government capacity and commitment to gender sensitive programming is critical, along with other aspects of gender analysis. During project design, the gender analysis process is not complete until project-specific operational strategies and gender-sensitive indicators are devised to ensure that both men's and women's needs and priorities are systematically addressed. During implementation, as information is collected to verify indicators, it is important to be prepared to change the way we carry out programs/projects if we find that there are unintended or harmful effects, or if we find that women's or men's needs or priorities are being overlooked. This may require changes to objectives, as well as to activities.

Gender perspectives need to be systematically integrated into all major project documents, rather than confined to a separate section of a document, or to a separate Gender and Development Strategy. It is particularly important that logframes adequately reflect social and gender analysis undertaken during design. Explicit references to gender equality outcomes, or to the benefits to be gained by women and men, are needed in the first column of the logframe, in the statement of the goal, purpose, objectives or outputs. In addition to gender-sensitive indicators, means of verification need to ensure that both women's and men's voices are heard. Planning assumptions and risk assessment also need to consider gender dimensions.

### **Conclusion**

Gender analysis is most useful when it is applied routinely to all aspects of program and project planning, implementation and review (rather than as an after-thought or 'add-on'); when it is undertaken in a participatory manner; and when it is applied to program and project objectives, so that they are modified in response to the needs and interests of both women and men. One major challenge for the future is to ensure that gender analysis is integrated into a broader social analysis of programs and projects, along with sustainability and poverty analysis.

### **Acknowledgment**

This article adapts material from various gender training notes produced by the author over many years, including Hunt, Juliet 2003, *Gender and Development throughout the Project Cycle: Course Workbook and Materials*, IDSS Professional Development Program, Melbourne.

## Notes

1. Some of these tips are drawn from Evans 1992.
2. Sections 2, 3, 5 and 11 are steps in the Gender Analysis Framework and include original material as well as adaptations from Overholt et al. 1985.
3. This section is adapted from Moser 1989 and Moser 1993.

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## **IWDA Gender and Development Dialogue, 3–4 July 2003: Summary report**

*Jenny Riley, International Women's Development Agency, Melbourne*

### **Context**

Following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, there was widespread commitment, among bilateral and multilateral agencies, non-government organisations and others, to gender and development at a policy level, and to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for pursuing gender equality. There was common agreement that gender in development mattered, and that integrating gender at all levels was central both to effective development work and to the realisation of women's rights.

Eight years on, there is an almost universal gap between policy and implementation. The promise of gender mainstreaming — to bring gender considerations from the margins to the centre — is not being realised.

Women continue to be under-represented in development activities, to obtain fewer benefits, and have more limited control over and access to resources. Some development activities actively disadvantage women. And we regularly see policies, programs and projects that are simply gender blind.

Development organisations are of a belief that gender matters and that gender equity in development is a priority objective and a marker of effective, quality work. But the gap between commitment and implementation is similarly virtually universal. There is a further apparent paradox between the immense amount of information and training available to support institutionalising of gender mainstreaming and the outcomes achieved.

Despite years of good policy development, and clear commitment to gender equality and to mainstreaming of gender in development, the experience of multilateral and bilateral agencies, commercial firms and non-government development organisations alike indicates that the translation of policy into outcomes remains challenging. Whether one comes from a public policy perspective, a strategic planning perspective or a gender activist perspective, this situation requires reflection and response.

At the same time as reviews confirm the challenge of implementing existing strategies, there are calls for gender mainstreaming to extend its scope to integrate other aspects of discrimination such as race, religion, health status and ability. There are also other trends influencing the context in which this work is done, including moves to a stronger thematic focus, and decentralisation of policy and management responsibilities. Do these trends offer new opportunities to improve gender outcomes or risk complicating an already challenging task?

### **Overview**

On 3–4 July 2003, the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) convened a gender and development dialogue to take stock and explore ways to collaboratively move around or beyond challenges and barriers to promoting gender equality in development. The forum was held in collaboration with the World YWCA, with the support of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Queensland; Development Studies

Network, Australian National University; International Development Support Services Pty Ltd (IDSS); ACIL Australia Pty Ltd; GRM International Pty Ltd; SAGRIC International Pty Ltd; OXFAM/Community Aid Abroad; World Vision Australia; and Foundation for Development Cooperation (FDC); and assisted by IDP Education Australia Ltd and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

The gender and development dialogue brought together senior decision makers and specialists from different parts of the development sector, including NGOs, academics, commercial development firms, consultants with decades of collective experience in gender work, government representatives, and international and regional experts. The rationale was that by sharing challenges, ideas, learnings and approaches among players from different parts of the sector, spaces for change could be identified and practical ways to improve development experiences and outcomes could be found. The dialogue was structured to maximise opportunities for cross-stakeholder dialogue on gender issues, as a first step in an ongoing process to strengthen cooperation on gender between aid and development workers in different parts of the sector.

A background paper was prepared and distributed to participants prior to the forum (the full text can be accessed through the IWDA website at <[http://www.iwda.org.au/features/gender\\_symposium/index.htm](http://www.iwda.org.au/features/gender_symposium/index.htm)>). The paper provided an overview of gender mainstreaming and intersectionality to enable some shared knowledge of trends, issues and ideas, and provide a basis for wider discussion and collaboration at the forum. The fact that the paper identified that challenges in implementing gender mainstreaming were virtually universal provided a safe and constructive space for a diverse group of stakeholders to openly discuss barriers, ideas and priorities — to look forward to practical solutions.

The forum focused on three themes:

- gender mainstreaming: taking stock;
- closing the gap between policy and outcomes: good practice in building equality; and
- intersectionality and gender: shaping the future.

These themes allowed participants to explore the central role of gender in development, moves to more holistic approaches to development, and the challenges experienced across the sector in implementing gender mainstreaming. The program did not presume what the issues were from any particular perspective, but sought to allow actors to say for themselves how things looked, thereby identifying spaces for change, opportunities to address barriers in practical ways that would fit their needs, and possibilities for collaboration.

What follows is the summary of the discussion, open sessions, working groups and feedback from participants during the forum in Brisbane, 3–4 July 2003.

## **Outcomes**

IWDA deliberately left open the question of outcomes from the meeting, to maximise participants' ownership of proceedings and avoid absorbing too much time in negotiating agreed conclusions among a very diverse group. There were some very clear common concerns, themes and priorities, with general agreement from participants that the forum was timely and that bringing together players from different parts of the sector was particularly valuable given the limited opportunities for structured cross-stakeholder dialogue. There was also agreement that the status quo is not acceptable, and that participants would need to work individually and collectively in some new and different ways to make change happen in the current environment. Working together across

organisational and sectoral boundaries was seen as essential, and there was a willingness among those present to be part of 'communities of interest' across organisational boundaries to take particular issues/work forward.

Other recurring themes included:

- Mainstreaming has value, but it has also been a problem in as much as it 'disappeared' women from the agenda. It has provided an opportunity for organisations to render staff and programs that focus specifically on women redundant due to gender being 'mainstreamed'. Hence gender is everywhere but nowhere in organisations and programs.
- Putting in place policies to mainstream gender doesn't necessarily lead to the commitment of senior management to make real change. Gender training tends to go to a converted audience rather than reaching those who really need it. Nothing will change unless those in power listen to the gender dialogue. The challenge remains to get men involved in the need for change, to be active partners and to acknowledge that gender equality is a basic human right. The intention of GAD is that women cannot achieve equality unless those who have power share/make space.
- Doing good gender work is a complex undertaking that requires high levels of knowledge and skill. But many of those who are required to take account of gender in policies and programs don't have gender analysis skills. We need to invest in more straightforward, useable, practical, context- and sector-specific resources for use in analysis.
- We need to invest in training. There is a sense in which decision makers in organisations feel that gender has been done — that people understand and have internalised its importance, so there is less need for specific in-depth training. Given the rate of staff turnover in organisations, and the lack of a comprehensive understanding of gender by most staff, this is a flawed assumption. There remains a need for a conscious investment to increase knowledge and training.
- There needs to be more and better documentation of approaches to gender analysis that work and a sharing of this between stakeholders. We need to find mechanisms that make this possible in a sector that is increasingly structured around competition among commercial and non-government organisations.
- Individual and organisational responsibility and accountability for gender strategies, implementation, reporting and outcomes needs to be formalised and obligatory, so that there is a clear and specific requirement to integrate gender, and a basis for individual and organisational accountability for achieving outcomes. Performance needs to be monitored at the agency level, not just the project or individual level and action taken where outcomes are consistently under-achieved. There need to be direct costs to poor performance and incentives and rewards for good performance. If gender is a key requirement of effective development, it needs to be treated as such.

- Gender mainstreaming as currently practiced does not account for the diversity of women. So we need to ask fundamental questions about which women are being mainstreamed in development programs.
- While the term intersectionality is new and, for some, unhelpful, recognition of the need to address the multiple layers of discrimination that women experience is not new. The specifics of gender inequality cannot be understood without taking account of other aspects of discrimination that can compound women's situation, such as race, class, caste, ethnicity, marital status, sexuality, age and religion.
- Effectively addressing gender inequality requires a detailed assessment of the specifics of context. If all aspects that affect a woman's reality are to be appropriately considered, women must be enabled to tell their own stories so that their concerns and context can be understood from their perspective.
- We know what works in terms of involving women and beginning to address inequality. The challenge is getting support and resources to do things on a scale large enough to make a difference for a reasonable number of women and girls.

### **Priorities and recommendations**

A range of priorities and recommendations emerged from four working groups in the final session of the forum. These groups advocated a need to:

1. increase clarity around language and concepts, to facilitate a common understanding of core concepts and clearer and more effective communication to different audiences;
2. increase targeted communication strategies and policy dialogue;
3. improve documentation and dissemination of policy, issues, case studies, learnings and good practices, including through collaboration among organisations. Tools for strengthening the way gender issues are addressed must meet the needs and realities of organisation;
4. learn from international benchmarking — lessons from developing countries;
5. commit to contractual/obligatory development of gender strategies, implementation and reporting in the sector, so that there is a formal requirement to integrate gender, and a basis for individual and organisational accountability for achieving policy outcomes. Performance needs to be monitored at the agency level, not just the project level. If there are few direct costs to under-performance and limited direct incentives to excel, change will be slow.
6. introduce standards for gender knowledge in tender selection panels, include gender specific outcomes and indicators in logframes, and make gender equality results more explicit in contracting arrangements;
7. review of the impact of gender mainstreaming on organisation policy and practice, with a particular focus on capacity building;



8. look for opportunities to collaborate on resources and documentation, for example, the Global Development Network has a research competition for developing country researchers.
9. revive networking that links women and organisations internationally and develop inclusive forums for discussion on GAD, to foster a collaborative environment, for example, an online forum with participation across organisations.
10. provide feedback on this forum (and similar discussions) within our own organisations, to encourage dialogue on gender. Subject areas for feedback could include the potential of software to reach very poor, illiterate women (for example, Anne Walker's CD for use in Africa); HR processes; the need to change criteria and cultures biased against women's expertise and ways of working; and the need for gender equity to be addressed on panels (for example, to review tenders and provide technical advice);
11. be more inclusive of mechanisms to explore organisational trends (such as devolution) and an increased focus on themes and sectors (such as governance or HIV AIDS) and their impact on gender work;
12. provide adequate resourcing of gender work and competence within organisations is a priority, including in design, implementation, monitoring and review groups and technical advisory bodies. If it is hard for busy desk officers to access specialist knowledge, and there is limited time and accountability for integrating gender, it is no surprise that outcomes are patchy;
13. work strategically, to use the current focus on themes such as governance or capacity building as a vehicle for promoting gender equality and demonstrating the value of taking gender seriously in development;
14. review gender issues and policies within the human resource areas of organisations. Most development organisations at senior levels remain very male dominated, and practices and policies are not supportive of women's contributions and values. There are still too few women on boards in the public and private sectors. There is a need to identify mechanisms and strategies to put a gender perspective back into high-level decision making, including increasing emphasis on leadership training;
15. exchange ideas and strategies to strengthen our own organisations;
16. lobby funding organisations (government, private and NGO) to review terms of reference and selection criteria for consultants, to eliminate criteria that exclude or work against women's experiences and expertise; and
17. address gender inequality — we need to develop a vision for a different future, with a focus on the value base of society, legal change, education, and media.

### **Participants' suggestions re IWDA roles on issues discussed**

Feedback forms sought participants' views on the roles they see IWDA playing on the issues discussed at the GAD dialogue. The suggestions offered to IWDA, from the forms returned, are reproduced below, grouped roughly by theme. They provide a further indication of priorities and areas for development.

### **Research**

- help link research partners from Australia with overseas;

- increase collaboration with many stakeholders that are working in developing countries;
- develop research papers/program using framework referred to by Beris Gwynne from FDC; and
- identify well-targeted research to take some of the issues forward.

### **Best practice**

- promote 'best practice' — to stimulate/inspire others;
- develop and duplicate leadership training/mentoring programs;
- increase partnerships with other NGOs to undertake development projects; and
- develop forms and charts available to all stakeholders, for audits, evaluations, etc on the implementation of gender equity policies.

### **Advocacy**

- IWDA could act as the secretariat for a resource group for lobbying efforts;
- develop a media press kit on gender equity policies; and
- work with ACFOA on lobbying donor agencies to review their processes to get gender back on the agenda.

### **Next steps: options and ideas**

Some of the suggestions made at the forum can be set in train quite quickly, others will take discussion, development, strategising and advocacy. One specific, concrete outcome from the forum is a collaboration between IWDA and the Development Studies Network at the Australian National University, to produce this issue of *Development Bulletin*. The aim is take the issues discussed to a wider audience and set the scene for a conference in 2004/2005 that brings together analytical, policy and program developments to look at where we are with gender and development a decade on from Beijing, and explore the organisational and political dimensions of taking intersectionality and gender issues seriously in an increasingly complex and dynamic sector.

A number of donors expressed interest in exploring opportunities for collaboration such as joint capacity building/training for their own staff, consultants, contractors, NGOs, partners in the development and implementation of gender strategies, and in good gender practice. They would also explore jointly developing gender training and resources for particular sectors and themes, such as governance or sustainable livelihoods.

Other participants signalled their interest in being part of virtual working groups to share learnings and ideas and develop strategies for the better integration of gender in strategic areas such as governance, post-conflict rebuilding and HIV/AIDS.

### **Your feedback**

IWDA will continue talking with participants and other organisations about ways to take forward the change possibilities identified during the two days of dialogue. We would appreciate feedback on the ideas below, and an indication of ways in which your organisation could be involved:

- establish and facilitate an email discussion group on key issues emerging from the forum;

- make papers/presentations from the GAD dialogue, and evolving discussion and proposals available via web;
- convene quarterly (or more frequent) informal lunch/discussion on gender and development issues — to network, exchange information and explore ideas;
- establish a working group of consultants — AusAID, commercial firms and NGOs to agree on practical steps to strengthen integration of gender into the tendering process (tenders, tender assessment, panels, consultant teams) and program delivery, and enhance accountability for gender outcomes;
- establish a virtual working group to develop/bring together strategies, resources, etc for promoting gender equality through programs focused on:
  - (a) governance
  - (b) capacity building of civil society
  - (c) post-conflict rebuilding
  - (d) HIV/AIDS
    - organisations to undertake their own review of barriers and challenges in giving effect to gender and development policies and mainstreaming strategies, and identify practical steps to address these, with associated timeframes and indicators; and
    - organisations to review existing accountability mechanisms (for achieving gender policies and outcomes) and identify ways that these could be strengthened to help organisations achieve their declared objectives.

We encourage the addition of other initiatives and suggestions, and honesty in terms of whether you think particular ideas are worth pursuing and what you see as the role of your organisation, for example, as a contributor of resources, as a facilitator, coordinator, host or participant. Please forward your views to Gender and Development Dialogue, PO Box 64, Flinders Lane, Victoria, 8009, or email with 'Gender and Development Dialogue' in the header to [iwda@iwda.org.au](mailto:iwda@iwda.org.au).