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**MAINSTREAMING GENDER CONCERNS IN  
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES :  
POLICIES AND STRATEGIES.**

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# MAINSTREAMING GENDER CONCERNS IN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

By  
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*This article presents the conceptual framework on gender mainstreaming and traces the link between gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the planning and implementation of specific gender equality policies. It underscores the importance of gender mainstreaming strategy in the development process.*

*It also discusses the facilitating factors to employ in the process of promoting gender mainstreaming policy formulation. In this regard, the prerequisites, strategies, the profile, and the roles of the actors are presented.*

*The article further presents the measures to undertake in providing quality gender mainstreaming policies and underlines the main methods or rather what to do when formulating gender mainstreaming policies. The situation of gender mainstreaming at present is finally drawn up leading to conclusions and recommendations.*

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING FRAMEWORK**

### **Conceptual Links**

There is a strong emerging consensus that gender mainstreaming is a process leading to sustained gender equality. In discussing gender mainstreaming, the relevant policies and strategies, there is a need to clarify the meanings attached to the terms "gender", "gender equality," and "gender mainstreaming" because of some misconceptions often observed in their usage. This, in some cases, has frustrated attempts at formulating meaningful and effective policies on the subject.

### ***What is Gender?***

Many definitions have been given to gender:

- First, "gender is a term used to describe a set of qualities and behaviours expected from men and women by their societies. In this regard, attention is paid to the distribution of labour and other activities. There are a number of things, which traditionally men can do and women are not expected to do, and vice versa. A person's social identity is formed by these expectations"<sup>1</sup>.

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BRIDGE Development and Gender Brief 5: Institutionalizing Gender, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton<sup>1</sup>

**Box:**

**SRDC/WA and Gender Mainstreaming**

The Sub-regional Development Centre, West Africa (SRDC/WA) is assigned to promote gender mainstreaming in sustainable development in the West African Sub-region by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Based on this, the Center has embarked on monitoring and evaluating the progress made in incorporating gender equality in the social and economic development programmes in the West African Sub-region.

One of the methods employed by the Centre for monitoring and evaluating gender mainstreaming is to conduct studies on the status of the subject. The result of the study is reported to the annual meetings of the Centre's Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE).

Since 1997, four such studies have been produced, namely:

- Development Changes on Gender and Women's Issues in Sustainable Development;
- Progress Made in Promoting Gender Perspective in Management;
- Integrating Gender Concerns in Sustainable Development; and
- Promoting Sub-regional Integration Through Regional and Global Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives.

Each year, the progress report on gender mainstreaming status serves as a benchmark for promoting the operationalization of gender equality in member States. Accordingly, the recommendations from the Third ICE meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria, June 5 – 10, 2000 focused on policies and programmes that will facilitate mainstreaming gender into sustainable development. The present study therefore is looking at the strategies for gender mainstreaming policy formulation.

Source of information on this subject is limited; consequently the SRDC relied mainly on three sources of information. First, it collected the existing information through deskwork by going through available literature on various aspects of the subject at the Centre. Second, it worked with the ECA African Centre for Women, Addis Ababa (ACW) and tapped into its gender-related knowledge. Third, it collected information from international organizations and UN institutions dealing with gender issues through the Internet.

The objective of this study is to encourage policy makers in the member States and the main IGOs in the sub-region to initiate concrete actions in the domain of gender mainstreaming policy formulation and implementations.

- Second, gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Relations between men and women in the family, the workplace or in the public sphere reflect society's understanding of what are appropriate behaviour and characteristics of women and men. Gender therefore differs from sex in that it is social and cultural rather than biological. "Gender attributes differ from society to society and change with time. The economy, religion, culture and traditional attitude shape some of these attributes"<sup>2</sup>.

In all, gender is a word socially used for defining men and women. It emphasizes the tasks, functions and roles of women and men in society in their public and private lives. In the application, each individual's action or productivity influences gender roles and impacts on developmental achievements. In this article, gender is considered along with its role in sustainable development. Gender role in development seeks to challenge the practices in development patterns and paradigms by focusing on the relationships between women and men rather than on women alone. The approach attempts to empower the disadvantaged, particularly women, thereby allowing gender equality manifesting itself in sustainable development processes. However, this is not always the case. Gender relations in many African countries including West African countries are often patriarchal with women subordinate to men. Women's subordination is reflected both in their socio-economic status (such as their access to resources, health services, income and education), as well as in their position or degree of autonomy over their own lives.

These differences, witnessed by many gender advocates, initiated the call for gender equality. The last millennium must be remembered as one in which entire nations and disadvantaged groups within nations struggled to obtain political, social and economic rights. The struggle is to remove the burden of discriminations so that those oppressed see themselves as 'human' and as deserving of all the human rights usually accorded only the privileged members of the society.

The clamor for gender equality reached a climax at the Beijing conference. Here the Platform for Action stressed that "without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives in all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved". Thus, not only did Beijing enhance the political participation, the focus from marginal position in government bodies to civil, social and economic arena, but it also made the overall development agenda conditional to the full participation of women.

### ***What is Gender Equality?***

"Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference, and aims to promote the full participation of women and men in society"<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dhr.coe.fr/equality/Eng?final%20report%20Mainstreaming.html>; Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, Strasbourg, May 1998.

The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) South Africa states that "gender equality or equality between women and men means equal employment by men and women of socially valued goods, opportunity resources and rewards. Because what is valued differs among societies, a crucial aspect of equality is the empowerment of women to influence what is valued and share in decision-making about societal priorities". Equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but that opportunities and life chances will not depend on their sex. The policy of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) on gender equality describes gender equality to be a means by which women and men enjoy the same status. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results. Gender equality is therefore the equal value given by society to both the similarities and differences between women and men, and to the varying roles that they play.

Gender equality is not to be considered in isolation as a woman's issue or as women in development. Gender equality is participatory and open process initiatives built into development programmes, which involve all the stakeholders. This approach recognizes that both women's and men's knowledge and experience are central to development. This requires addressing the existing differences among women and men in relation to class, political opinion, religion, ethnicity, race or sexual orientation. Gender equality strategy establishes how possible it is to go further to change the structures in society in order to maintain equal power relationships between women and men. Also to reach a better balance in the various female and male values and properties. The problem is gender hierarchy not women. The objective is to ensure that the social construction of gender leaves room for differences and does not contain a notion of hierarchy placing men higher than women or visa versa. As mentioned above, it demands recognition of everybody's competence, skills and talents in building the family, the community and the society as a whole.

There have been several moves to concretize the implementation of gender equality at all levels of development. Nevertheless, imbalances between women and men continue to influence all lifestyle. It is accepted that new approaches, strategies and methods are needed to reach the goal of gender equality. The issue of gender equality needs to be addressed at a high enough level with more structural, broader level and a wider range of actors. Gender mainstreaming tends to be one of the strategies. Hence the conceptual connections between gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

### ***What is Gender Mainstreaming?***

Gender mainstreaming is a new concept, used for the first time in national text after the United Nations Third World Conference On Women (Nairobi, 1985). This is in relation to its debate with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the role of women in development. It is seen as a means of promoting the role of women in the field of development and integrating women's values into development work. "Gender mainstreaming is a (re) organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy progress so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors." It actually emanated out of Governments concerns to implement the commitments of the Nairobi Forward looking Strategies in their activities<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Activities the Group Specialist on Mainstreaming, European Commission (EG-S-M (98)

The above definition is apt because it intends to address the place of policies in gender mainstreaming in order to create awareness among policy makers and actors in development. In this regard, one could say that the definition of gender mainstreaming covers the effect of gender equality and its mainstay in the structuring and functioning of society. The definition points out areas to adjust in organizational cultures and the ways of working in institutions. This also gives assistance in developing methods for planning policies. It gives ideas of what to include in the policy.

In a nutshell, gender mainstreaming focuses on:

- what has to be integrated in the process of mainstreaming such as women in decision-making, economic empowerment of women, equal enrolment to schools, employment, health services, industries, trade, etc.
- the structure and operation of gender equality requires shifts in organizational culture and ways of thinking as well as in the goals and resource allocation.
- strategies for improving and developing policy processes.
- the full participation of women in all aspects of life as well as the analysis of all proposals relating to general or sectoral policies and programmes for a gender equality perspective.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality Policy**

Gender mainstreaming has been accepted as a new strategy for the achievement of gender equality. This means that gender mainstreaming activities must aim at fighting against gender inequality. The question is whether the gender mainstreaming activities and approaches can handle the demands of gender equality. Are there some common policies governing the association of gender mainstreaming and gender equality? The answer to this question is that policy on gender equality pinpoints the beneficiaries, the actor's strategies and goals, while gender mainstreaming focuses on the problems arising from achieving the goals set by the actors to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. In this regard, mainstreaming strategy is applied or commenced where gender equality requirements fail to fulfill their function resulting in gender inequality. For instance, in evaluating the impact made in implementing a gender equality policy a mainstreaming tool is applied. This examines development policy and readjusts it to take into account the gender equality policy necessary for the achievement of gender equality goals. Gender mainstreaming has a guarded procedure to follow, which initiates effective change to gender equality policy.

The indicators for gender equality achievements focus on the extent to which women's concerns are interacted into development by the actors. In this regard, gender equality actors often identify the issues that require policy action. The group of gender equality actors and machineries make up the gender mainstreaming experts or actors. They undertake to research, analyze and update gender mainstreaming interventions, publish and circulate experience gained on gender concerns to the stakeholders and to society.

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy builds up connections, recognition and challenges in gender equality policies by working on:

- policy makers to recognize gender issues that are neglected in policies;
- making gender equality an issue for both men and women;
- making policies to be more gender neutral and at the same time provide specific gender equality policy to deal directly with gender imbalances;

- establishing policies that can cover the specific needs of men and women;
- avoid sectoral policy that does not cover other issues relevant to the policy fields in order to make impact. Health policies, for example could have other interfacing policies for better results from education, agriculture, economy, population, etc. Gender mainstreaming strategy forms an integral part of gender equality strategy in all developmental action and the two complement each other at policy level.

### **Importance of Gender Mainstreaming Policy**

The discussion so far shows that gender mainstreaming is a strategy that has different dimensions and tools. The gender mainstreaming policy plays the following important roles in development.

#### **Providing human-centred policy**

Gender mainstreaming policy permits participatory and open processes for programme development involving all stakeholders, women and men. It is a more holistic and less of a compartmentalized, purely economic approach for the general development and management of contemporary democratic society. It puts into perspective the real needs of women and men. This results in the improvement of living standard of all people. Gender mainstreaming therefore puts everybody in perspective.

#### ***Influencing appropriate actions by policy and decision makers***

Gender mainstreaming influences the policy makers through its strategic tools to meet the needs of everybody, thereby making policy gender neutral. Attitudes, traditions, cultures, religion, etc could easily block the achievement of the appropriate actions. Gender mainstreaming unravels poor practices and introduces transparency, good governance in the process of policy making.

#### ***Identifying the importance of existing traditional equality policies***

Gender mainstreaming highlights the importance of existing traditional female institutions in most cultures, the benefits of which policy makers are unaware of, as a means of implementing positive gender equality policy. It could also be fundamentally a means of reaching grassroots institutions. Such institutions have the advantage of being known and understood by the majority of those whom one seeks to influence. It can identify what women actually want as opposed to what educated middle class women (who are few and have relatively greater socio-economic opportunities) believe that rural women want in terms of gender equality. Mainstreaming dictates that such traditional institutions focus policies on reducing imbalances between and among women as well as between women and men.

#### ***Promoting equal opportunity in employment***

Mainstreaming accepts equal opportunity for all in the world of work and for each person's productivity to be accounted for in development. Women, men, youth and the disabled are given chance to perform according to their capacity. This helps in removing imbalances in society.

### ***Making good use of peculiar identities and genetic attributes***

Gender mainstreaming accepts that women and men are not a homogenous group. Consideration is given to gender policies and equality policy instruments by allowing for differences. Mainstreaming recognizes particular situations of different groups of women where specific equality policies have not been applicable. It breaks the hierarchical ranking which grades all people according to predefined norms. It provides openness to human involvement in terms of sex, race, and class, making good use of human potentials. The whole society gains from these attributes of gender mainstreaming strategy for promoting gender equality.

### **Challenges in gender mainstreaming**

The foregoing discussion has centered on the status of gender mainstreaming in its conceptual relationship to gender and gender equality. Experience has shown that the understanding of gender mainstreaming and its strategies is still very limited.

The challenges are:

- understanding the concept of gender mainstreaming and its relationship to gender equality policies. Gender equality policies must embrace gender issues.
- the problem of structuring gender-sensitive policies and practices for sustainable mainstreaming efforts. Mainstreaming demands sustained pressure, over a long period on governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, the private sector, the media, women's movements and their allies, to institute effective mainstreaming policies.
- the mobilization of the allies, coalitions, partners and the participation of actors and machineries from a wide range of disciplines working together to attain shared goals and mutually reinforcing strategies. Thus, skills in negotiation, mediation, team-building, management, communications and advocacy are critical to the formulation of effective mainstreaming strategies and policy.
- resource availability: Many decision-makers, planners and implementers (technocrats) who are supposed to plan and implement policies are not sensitive to mainstreaming. The actors in this group are yet to grasp the concept of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, their function and importance in the sustainable development process. This calls for organized sensitization through training, lobbying, etc. There should be strong linkages between policy makers that have the ability to reorganize the policies and all other actors, such as parliamentarians, civil societies and NGOs. Where this approach is not well integrated, it could result in the lack of adequate technicians and techniques to develop new policy tools and to adapt the existing ones for effective gender equality policies.
- there is a need also not only for manpower and institutions to plan and implement policies but for financial support. Financial support so far has come mainly through external sources like donors and international



organizations. With the recent decline in the support from these organizations, mainstreaming activities are retarded.

- policy formulation and implementation: There is a lack of practical measures and positive actions for mainstreaming gender. In this regard, there is need for the formulation of policies to support allocation of funds and human resources.

Providing the needed policies for maintaining gender mainstreaming could reduce many constraints that deter progress in gender equality. The policies should be transformative and look at redistribution of resources and benefits. They should look at all known disadvantages in female and male preferential treatment and employ better strategies to solve the problems.

## **PROMOTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY**

The discussion above stressed the importance of gender mainstreaming policies and the challenges in mainstreaming gender policies successfully. There are facilitating factors in the process of promoting gender mainstreaming. Those factors are highlighted below.

### **The prerequisites**

#### ***Political Will***

Political and decision-makers are sometimes invited to participate in regional and international conferences. Such conferences include women and development conferences, like the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. Some representatives to these meetings commit themselves to promote the constitutional principle of equality. Based on this, the government issues a mission statement indicating its intention to mainstream gender equality perspectives into all policy programmes. Without a strong and clear criteria supported by the political will to help the actors, the policy of gender mainstreaming will not succeed.

The political will to mainstreaming gender involves the will to question current gender relations and the structures, processes and policies perpetuating inequality. "It implies, among other things, equal access to paid work and to economic power and the will to adapt the structures and processes to make for the sharing of family responsibilities and household tasks"<sup>5</sup>. Political will is essential to support awareness raising and dissemination of knowledge on gender equality especially as regards health services, poverty alleviation, education system, etc.

<sup>5</sup> ibd

#### ***Gender Equality Policy***

Gender equality promotes social justice between women and men. It reduces discrimination on such grounds as disability, age, sex, etc. directly or indirectly. Gender equality policy creates a friendly environment where women and men are treated equally and could share developmental assets.

### ***Legislative means and measures***

Legislation is essential for the promotion of equality and for eliminating or reducing discrimination in most areas of productivity particularly when it is designed to benefit the vulnerable groups.

### ***Provision of mechanisms to oversee the gender equality concerns***

This includes equality commissions, councils for protection against discrimination, bureaus or councils for gender legal aid, capable national equality machinery with efficient tools and resources to exercise influence on policy at all levels. They operate to sensitize and create awareness on gender equality, conduct research and training on gender equality concerns and provide equality policies and actions to address women or men's interests.

### ***Data Collection***

Development planners often fail to reflect gender equality in their plans due to lack of information on the status of women vis-à-vis men in social and economic development. The problem is also that of disaggregated data, which can show the situation of gender. Quality gender-based data should address relevant issues for both women and men.

### ***Understanding Gender Relations***

Gender mainstreaming strategy is very complex and multifaceted. The strategy could only be effectively operationalized if actors and policy makers become knowledgeable in gender matters. In this regard, there is need for:

- more research on the causes of gender imbalances between sexes in all policy areas;
- identifying the intervention areas for creating gender equality environment;
- training personnel on gender issues;
- discussion and dialogue between men and women.

### ***Understanding Administrative Processes***

Gender mainstreaming involves reorganization, development, implementation and evaluation of policy processes as well as information about the qualities of the administrative system. This includes the knowledge of the location of gender experts, and also the knowledge of actions and steps to take and those to be in charge.

### ***Resource Requirements***

Gender mainstreaming strategy requires resources as one of the important tools for successful implementation. Gender mainstreaming is to not only mainstream women and men in processes but also involves the distribution of funds rationally for implementing activities. Many gender equality activities fail to materialize no matter the effectiveness of the policy, strength of will, or the efforts of the gender experts and machinery but for lack of adequate financial backing. Both human and financial resources are very essential for gender mainstreaming.

## **Strategies in mainstreaming**

### ***Proper Outreach and Networking***

Problems are often encountered in making the stakeholders in development conceptualize the role and importance of gender mainstreaming in development. While some developmentalists have understood and practiced gender mainstreaming in their programmes, many are very skeptical about the idea. The latter takes conventions and declarations proposed on gender as mere fun and entertainment and does nothing to implement the activities. The question is how to bring all the stakeholders to share their views. One point on which there is a general agreement is that all actors in gender mainstreaming should exchange ideas and reach a consensus in their approach. Their strategies, policies and other decisions could be shared and communicated. Information building, networking and collective decision-making should be the pillar for interventions. The group that has conceptualized gender mainstreaming and knows its worth should share its experience with those who are yet to understand the concept. It is in this regard that gender networking and information sharing are very important.

### ***Application stages***

The long-term strategy for gender mainstreaming recognizes that it is cardinal to systematically and continuously apply the strategy in all policy processes and stages of national policy planning. It should be applied not only during the policy making stage. It should be made to address the root causes and not just the symptoms of gender inequality at all time. The essential stages include:

#### ***Policy Identification Stage***

This is the stage when policy needs are established by identifying missing issues in current policies, problems and challenges to be solved and targets to be met. All the missing gaps should be included in the formulation of broad policy.

#### ***Policy Formulation Stage***

With the identified gaps as part of the backdrop for gender mainstreaming, gender equality could be considered in a very broad sense embracing a wide range of policy areas. Gender mainstreaming should not miss this stage because it is then that the marginalization of the vulnerable groups could take root and gender equality replaced by gender inequality.

#### ***Policy Adoption Stage***

It is not all the policies planned or formulated that receive the blessings of the parliaments and decision-makers. Gender equality being a new agenda with limited understanding, requires a focus and lobbying by mainstreaming actions and actors at this stage when decisions are taken. For instance, gender mainstreaming actions will build quality and timely data to clarify, justify and support issues. Mainstreaming tends to put into perspective the importance and effect of gender equality in development processes such as in gaining approval, budget allocation, managerial posts, etc. Gender

mainstreaming raises the profile of important issues which were originally labeled as women's and thus to be addressed by women, and allows such issues to be high on the policy agenda. In this regard, many gender concerns formally dropped from among priority areas could be considered for adoption and probably adopted.

### *Policy Implementation Stage*

One of the concerns of gender equality policy is in the implementation. Introducing mainstreaming is no guarantee that a gender perspective will effectively be taken into account when policies are implemented. There are big steps between detecting a gender issue, endorsing the principle of gender equality and implementing policies, which consider this issue. Gender mainstreaming intends to detect unaccomplished commitments, the problem behind the delay in accomplishing the action, the proper procedure and the actors required to bring the implementation to a successful end. It is therefore very essential to mainstream at this stage and adjust for all unnecessary omissions.

### *Policy Monitoring and Evaluation*

It has been stated above that mainstreaming strategy should be systematically and continuously built into policy-making procedures. This cannot be very efficient unless the policy is constantly monitored, reviewed and evaluated. It is the results from the monitoring process that show the effectiveness of a policy in promoting gender issues. Monitoring and evaluation services provide materials for developing a new policy and consolidating the ongoing one.

### *Follow-up support services*

Follow-up and support services are used in verifying whether mainstreaming gender is provided to enhance the achievement of gender equality. The service helps to detect malpractices in day-to-day gender activities. They make certain that the requirements for better results are not neglected. Mainstreaming at the stage of follow-up and support services can correct the findings identified during monitoring and evaluation and thereby increase the impact on development.

### *Policy Areas for Gender Mainstreaming*

Many policy areas can be very important for gender mainstreaming particularly in creating a healthy environment for building human relationships and recognizing the potentials of individuals. In the case of West Africa, one could demand that policy planning be centered on events that are disrupting development at the moment such as peace-keeping, the resolution of armed conflicts, debt crisis, international trade and poverty alleviation. These require gender equality policies and therefore are very relevant to gender mainstreaming strategy. Governments and the major IGOs in the West African Subregion are expected to design and implement gender sensitive policies and programmes to deal with the issues discussed above.

The policy areas to be used could be drawn from the Platform for Action (PFA) adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the commitments from

the ECA 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference and several other fora. These identified several critical areas that require gender policies, including:

- persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
- inequalities and inadequacies in access and provision of education and training
- inequalities and inadequacies in access to health care and related services
- violence against women
- the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
- inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
- insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
- lack of respect for and inadequate provision for promotion and protection of human rights of women
- stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media and the safeguarding of the environment
- persistent discrimination against women and violation of rights of the child.

The above are the priority areas originating from the Beijing Platform for Action and Declaration<sup>6</sup>.

Many countries in the West African Subregion attended the Beijing Conference and committed themselves to formulating and adopting national gender policy and plans of action. One will like to know how far each government in West Africa has gone ahead and taken actions.

The South African subregion has its Regional Critical Areas of Concern, which include:

- insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;
- inequalities between women and men in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;
- inequalities in economic structures and policies in the form of productive activities at all levels;
- lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of human rights of women and the girl-child.

The South African Development Community (SADC) engineered the identification of these four priority areas for gender mainstreaming on which gender policies have been formulated. "The SADC Council of Ministers and Summit of Heads of State and Government respectively, have approved and recommended the Plan of Action for Gender in SADC to the Council of Ministers. The SADC Gender and Development Declaration is being taken as a guiding principle by all member states in gender mainstreaming"<sup>7</sup>.

The West African Subregion recognizes the areas of Beijing priorities listed above. The governments and the economic communities might consider drawing gender mainstreaming policy areas in accordance with Beijing Platform for Action or starting with gender mainstreaming policy areas that are known to be gender neutral. All policy areas that affect the daily life of communities or individuals such as transport policies, urban policies and social policies are very important although they are not always recognized. Thought should be given to further research on the subject as what areas to be prioritized. The area of priorities identified by the research will provide timely evidence to convince policymakers and decision makers of the need for gender mainstreaming.

With inequalities often observed in the organization of political and administrative institutions, the labour market, employment, education, social and family concerns, it is important to formulate policy in them in order to achieve gender equality. In any case, all the areas identified above are very relevant as policy areas for gender mainstreaming. It is very important to realize that gender mainstreaming is at its best when it is reflected in major reforms and new legislation taking place in any country.

### **The Profile and Roles of the Actors**

The stages in developing gender mainstreaming have been discussed as have the policy areas relevant to mainstreaming. The question now is which actors will initiate the process and what roles they are to play.

Gender mainstreaming requires actors who can formulate, implement and evaluate policies in the areas that require gender policies. Each policy area will require an expert who will understand the issues involved. For example, health services require the services of medical specialists while governance might require political experts. In this regard, most of the priority areas listed will require potential actors, embracing politicians, administrators, gender equality machineries, researchers, experts, NGOs, interest and pressure groups, the media, civil society, religious groups and international organizations and institutions.

Essentially, policy formulation on gender mainstreaming is not a case for the government or women's organization alone. The formulation, execution and supporting services require a broad range of actors who are capable of handling issues on gender. Some influence and the idea in the formulation of gender mainstreaming policies fall on the actors. This means that the national gender policy and national plan of action call for different actors.

### ***The Gender Equality Machinery***

Each gender equality machinery should focus on facilitating work that will enhance gender mainstreaming. The gender mainstreaming machinery plays the role of identifying gender concerns in order to develop required strategies and establish knowledge and expertise for the implementation. It stands as an institution for issue gathering and analysis. Gender equality machinery is to be the main source for operationalizing gender mainstreaming. It plays an effective role in sensitizing people on the importance of achieving gender equality and creating awareness on politicians' need to achieve gender

equality. When a gender unit is created in an organization (meaning gender equality machineries) it supports other actors involved in mainstreaming. It assists in gender information-training and follow-up to train or formulate and adapt existing policy instruments to fit the requirements of gender mainstreaming.

### ***Politicians***

Politicians are among the main decision-makers as regards gender mainstreaming since they decide on priority areas and approve policies. They should make certain that the needs of the whole population is considered and that policies promote the well being of society. Good governance upholds gender equality as well as human rights. This is why gender equality is important in sustaining democracy. Only politicians can provide political will to ensure that gender mainstreaming fulfils its goals.

### ***NGOs and Civil Societies***

Many groups play essential roles in gender mainstreaming. These include NGOs, church or religious groups, women's groups, traditional groups such as chiefs and traditional rulers, trade unions, migrant groups, etc. These groups can detect the need of communities and societies and can operate at all levels, particularly at grass roots level. Through their links with the community they can extract important information, lobby and influence policy makers in their choice in policy formulation and implementation. They work for democracy, transparency and good governance and make equality a reality.

### ***Administration***

Administration provides the machinery for policy planning, formulation and implementation. It plays a crucial role in implementing gender mainstreaming. Even when the government and politicians approve the gender national policy, the execution depends on the administration. If the technocrats in the administration do not understand gender and gender mainstreaming processes the whole policy will be left on hold. Administration should be made to appreciate the importance of gender mainstreaming and must be given the tools for integrating gender equality perspectives in the daily process of policy making.

### ***The Researchers and Experts***

It has been stated that there is need for disaggregated data and timely information on gender equality to influence the development of gender policies. This could be satisfied if there is a good research programme, researchers and experts. They are to detect and define policy issues and pinpoint ways to meet them. They are the ones to provide data on gender equality status. These are required to influence the policy makers' decisions on gender policies and changes in policies. Policies on gender mainstreaming require new ideas from time to time, tools for implementing, and monitoring, and technical support. These fall under the roles of the researchers and experts.



## ***The Media***

Gender mainstreaming is a new strategy that is open to some misinterpretations like terming it 'women's issues'. The gender mainstreaming concept requires publicity. The main means for accomplishing this is through media. Media can do and undo issues depending on the exposition it gives to the issues. In this regard, the media can influence the politicians, the researchers, administrators and all other actors through the way it presents gender mainstreaming issues. The role of the media should therefore be to create awareness of current gender relations, strategies of gender mainstreaming, the tools and processes to achieve gender equality.

## ***Economic Communities and Relevant Institutions***

Many institutions and communities form partnership with governments and politicians in the process of implementing economic and social development activities. Their position in the economic and political structure could provide them with the power to support the policy actions. They can provide Treaty and mandates to facilitate the implementation of some conventions and declarations on women and gender mainstreaming. They can establish mechanism for exchanging and disseminating information between member states, international organizations, private sectors, NGOs and individual advocates. It is the role of the communities and institutions to encourage these groups to use their initiatives and authorities in gender mainstreaming. Their superiority position makes them a think tank, which allows them to take the lead in developing new perspectives and stimulating the initiative, policies, tools and techniques. In this way they play an important role in favouring networks between those who are active in gender mainstreaming in the member countries.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY ACTIONS**

This article has so far attempted to create an understanding of gender mainstreaming and to provide the conceptual framework that should facilitate the processes and techniques to integrate gender-mainstreaming perspectives into policy initiatives. It will now raise concrete questions in order to identify measures that could result in good practices in formulating policies for gender mainstreaming.

### **Formulating Gender Mainstreaming Policy Plan**

There is need to formulate mainstreaming policy plan which will embrace all the prerequisites discussed above and consider the identified areas and stages highlighted. The development of gender mainstreaming policy requires the following activities:

- identifying and installing individuals or groups in charge;
- describing the actual status of events and needs;
- elaborating the expected achievements;
- clarifying the policy areas and the standing status and steps to follow;
- establishing tools and techniques, stating the need for developing new tools, how to develop and use the tools and determining the need for educating the group;
- identifying the focal point for gender mainstreaming and also the intermediaries for monitoring and support services.

The main issue here is linking the stages and the actors in gender mainstreaming as discussed above to the policy process, policy areas, strategies and techniques for implementation. The best practices of gender mainstreaming policy plan encompass combining the essential prerequisites and initiatives with the policy context and priorities of a given area. The information presented under "promoting gender mainstreaming policy" needs to be concretized into a gender mainstreaming policy plan and adjusted for the fulfillment of required policy.

To help the policy makers in the subregion formulate and implement gender mainstreaming policy successfully, the correct responses to the questions below could form guidelines and facilitating conditions for gender mainstreaming policy actions.

### ***To What Extent Are the Prerequisites of Gender Mainstreaming Met?***

- Is there the political will ?
- Has the goal of gender equality already been accepted and defined as one of the important goals to attain ?
- Do the current commitments of the people or institutions explain the importance of achieving gender equality in all areas of life ?
- What is the purpose of mainstreaming a gender equality perspective into policies and programmes ?
- What are the criteria for gender mainstreaming ?
- Is there public awareness of gender equality issues ?
- Where is the political will concentrated in the government, political parties, and the parliament ?
- Is there a mission statement or any other document on gender equality or on gender mainstreaming ?
- To what extent have existing commitments been put into practice ?
- Is there support for gender equality in the administration?

### ***What Assistance is Available From Gender Equality Machineries?***

- What is the mandate of the national equality machinery as an administrative organization ?
- What is the position of the gender equality machinery in the hierarchy of the administration ?
- What equal opportunities and out-discrimination exist and how comprehensive are they ?
- How much capacity do gender equality units have to build up further gender expertise ?
- What specific equality policies exist ?

8 The questions are adapted from the checklists of the Final Report of the Activities of European Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming (EG-S-MS (98) 2). The group was set up by the Council Europe in 1995. The terms of reference of the group was to carry out survey of measures taken and implemented for the mainstreaming of gender perspective into general policies, programme of Europe and regional or international organizations. The information on the report quoted in this report are collected through Internet <http://www.dhdirhr.coe.fr/equality/Eng/Final%20ReportMainstreaming.html>

- Are there gender focal points for gender mainstreaming at all levels of the administration ?
- Are there budgetary and human resource provisions tools within the mechanism?

#### ***What Statistics are Available***

- How complete is the range of statistics available now, compared to what is needed for gender mainstreaming ?
- Do sex and other background variables have regular disaggregated statistics ?

#### ***Is Comprehensive Knowledge of Gender Relations Available ?***

- Is comprehensive knowledge of gender relations available? If so, where can it be found ?
- Are gender expertise and curricula available in universities? Is there gender expertise in other bodies (research and documentation centres) ?

#### ***How Does the Administration Work?***

- How is the decision-making process organized ?
- What actors are normally involved in policy making ? What steps have been taken to involve them in mainstreaming? Who is normally responsible ?
- What are key positions in the administration in relation to mainstreaming ?
- How are the key administrators trained? Are women's studies or gender part of the training ?

#### ***Where are Funds and Human Resources found ?***

- What financial and human resources will be needed for gender mainstreaming? What budget is available for specific gender equality policy ?
- What decisions are needed to reallocate regular financial or human resource for gender mainstreaming ?
- Are funds to be mobilized? From where and by whom ?
- Who develops the human resources and how ?

#### ***Can Support From Representatives in Politics and Public Life Be Expected?***

- How is gender policy considered in the allocation of positions in the political field especially at the level of decision-making ?

The response to many of the above-stated questions may not be positive. Understanding that the prerequisites to gender mainstreaming demand a positive response to all the questions will facilitate the provision of good practices, which will concretize gender mainstreaming implementation. The answers to most of the questions can be found in different parts of this article.

## **Monitoring the Impact of Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender policy initiatives require follow-up in order to collect information on their effects. Monitoring is more than evaluation. It consists of the continuous scrutinizing, evaluation and follow-up of policies. For continuity to be achieved, the monitoring of gender mainstreaming policy has to be part of the normal monitoring process. The way monitoring takes place has to be decided when the gender mainstreaming project is started. The basis of monitoring has to be laid down when preparing and planning policies. It is during this stage that the techniques, tools and criteria for monitoring policies are defined.

The most important steps in monitoring are to:

- identify what has to be monitored i.e. the activities of actors, the results for gender relations, the effectiveness and efficiency of the gender mainstreaming process
- choose techniques and tools for monitoring development indicators
- organize follow-up

Monitoring is very important in gender mainstreaming, particularly when it is conducted in a continuous way starting from the inception of the project. Monitoring fulfills its goal when the results of the monitoring and evaluation are applied to improve gender mainstreaming.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PRACTICE**

### **The status of Gender Mainstreaming**

As explained under gender definition, Beijing conference in 1995 was a landmark for establishing gender mainstreaming as a strategy. Fifteen countries in the West African Subregion were represented in this conference and thereafter committed themselves to the promotion of gender equality. The achievement of this goal demands gender equality in all policies and programmes for development. Gender mainstreaming addresses the need for active participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making, government, and civil, social and economic bodies. The achievement of the goal requires also gender-segregated studies, laws, initiatives, and leadership training programmes, as well as financial commitment to ensure the necessary transformation.

By the mid-1990s, this focus on increased participation for women had culminated in the concept of mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is "the exercise of economic, politic and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at which they are involved. Mainstreaming addresses mechanisms that ensure effective participation of all groups in society, particularly the women and youth. The concerns of governance therefore demand directly for gender mainstreaming in development.

Five years after Beijing, there has been another conference in New York (June 2000) for the assessment of gender mainstreaming actions in development. The finding was not encouraging. Even though many governments, social institutions, civic organizations support the idea of gender equality and balances, gap and disparities still exist in many

areas of social and economic development, such as in decision-making, academics, employment, health, etc. Women continue to be under-represented at the legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels, as well as at the highest levels of corporate sector and other social and economic institutions.

An example is being drawn from data on the proportion of parliamentarians who are female around the world including West African Countries. On the average, increase since Beijing has been marginal, from 11.3% to 13.4% globally. In all, there are important variations, with the Nordic countries registering 38.9% and the Arab States 3.4%. The average for Sub-Saharan Africa is 11.5%, although this is not too low a difference from Europe (excluding the Nordic countries - 13.5%) and the Americas (15.3%). The table below reveals the differences between African nations. Representation at the executive (ministerial and sub-ministerial) levels rose from 5.7% in 1995 to 11.7% in 1999 for the world.

**Table: WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT IN AFRICA AS OF MARCH 2000**

<b>Country and Rank</b>	<b>Total Women</b>	<b>% Women</b>
1. Mozambique	71	28.40
2. South Africa	137	28.00
3. Seychelles	8	23.50
4. Uganda	50	17.86
5. Rwanda	12	17.14
6. Botswana	8	17.02
7. Tanzania	45	16.36
8. Angola	34	15.45
9. Eritrea	22	14.67
10. Namibia	14	14.10
11. Senegal	28	14.00
12. Zimbabwe	21	14.00
13. Mali	18	12.24
14. Congo	9	12.00
15. Tunisia	21	11.54
16. Cape Verde	8	11.11
17. Liberia	10	11.10
18. Zambia	16	10.13
19. Lesotho	12	10.70
20. Burkina Faso	30	10.40
21. Ghana	18	9.00
22. Gabon	20	9.50
23. Sao Tome and Principe	5	9.09
24. Guinea	10	8.77
25. Guinea Bissau	10	8.77
26. Sierra Leone	7	8.75
27. Malawi	16	8.29
28. Madagascar	12	8.00
29. Mauritius	5	7.58
30. Central African Republic	8	7.34
31. Benin	5	6.02
32. Burundi	7	5.98
33. Cameroon	10	5.56
34. Equatorial Guinea	4	5.00
35. Togo	4	4.94
36. Swaziland	6	4.20
37. Algeria	20	3.80
38. Kenya	8	3.57
39. Nigeria	15	3.20
40. Chad	3	2.40
41. Mauritania	3	2.20
42. Gambia	1	2.04
43. Ethiopia	11	1.70
44. Niger	1	1.20
45. Morocco	4	0.67
46. Egypt	9	1.98
47. Djibouti	0	0.00
48. Libya	0	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>9.00</b>

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union, Geneva

The data above shows that equal representation of women in decision-making bodies is still below standard in the West African Sub-region. 9 out of 15 countries fall below 10%

average in the number of women in parliament in Africa as of 1st March 2000. It is well-known that there are only a few random mainstreaming practices in the West African sub-region. These are in nominating some women to decision-making positions (as the table above indicates), training in leadership, giving girls scholarships to attend school, allocating budget for health services for women. However, none of these are done in a substantial degree or with sufficient policy support.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this article is to stimulate the various policy actors of the member States in the subregion in initiating concrete actions in gender mainstreaming policy and strategy formulation and implementation. It has therefore highlighted the conceptual framework of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming. It briefly discussed the importance of gender mainstreaming and the requirements of its policies and strategies in sustainable development.

The article has also identified some problems deterring progress in mainstreaming, such as lack of knowledge of gender issues among politicians, planners, managers and officials in the ministry and institutions. Many of them do not understand what is expected of them or what it means to employ gender perspective into their normal work.

Gradual awareness raising and training courses have to be set up for the various actors concerned, ranging from general awareness raising courses for all the staff, including the highest levels of management, to very specific interactive training sessions transferring specialized knowledge. Courses should begin from the highest level, e.g. with members of government and parliamentarians. These courses should mainly focus on awareness raising, forming an important impetus for strong political commitment to gender mainstreaming. As well as highest levels, middle and lower management also need courses.

These courses should not only focus on awareness raising but equally highlight how the people can put gender mainstreaming into practice and integrate it into their work. Finally, there should be courses for people who have to apply gender mainstreaming into very specific aspect of policy process, and who need the knowledge which enables them to apply specific tools and techniques such as gender assessment. Those people have to be able to understand precisely the implications of gender, to detect gender issues and to formulate concrete answers to them.

Some of the prerequisites to gender mainstreaming are discussed and sets of questions to help in checking whether the prerequisites are met are provided for a successful mainstreaming. The success of gender mainstreaming starts with a mainstreaming policy that gives a context-specific overview of the possibilities and necessities for gender equality. Consequently, great emphasis should be laid on the formulation of potential policies and strategies for introducing reformation and changes.

## **Recommendations**

In each Member State, the government, bilateral and multilateral agencies, the private sectors, the media, and women's movements should adopt gender mainstreaming policies

and strategies. There should be a meeting point for all the stakeholders to plan, monitor and adjust mainstreaming policies and strategies from time to time.

ECA/SRDC can play the role of pulling the groups together through workshops, seminars or round table discussions.

Planners and implementers (technocrats) who are supposed to be resources for mainstreaming gender should be sensitized on gender mainstreaming. This requires training workshop and lobbying. ICE member states should collaborate with SRDC in conducting subregional training for the technocrats (planners, decision-makers and financing and budgetary managers in the procedures and management of gender mainstreaming and policy programming).

ECOWAS should institutionalize a mechanism for gender mainstreaming with adequate financial, human resources and clear policy guidelines to ensure successful programme implementation on gender equality.

Each ICE member country should conduct a study to identify disadvantages in preferential treatment of women and men or other vulnerable groups in developmental programmes and policies. The questions raised on the prerequisites for promoting gender mainstreaming could constitute part of the questionnaire for the study. The findings of the studies will help the ICE Member States to establish the areas of development that are devoid of gender equality. Gender equality policies could be formulated around those areas. The result of the studies and new policies formulated should be reported at the next ICE meeting by each Member State in year 2002.



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