2 Gender Mainstreaming

What is Gender Mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming means integrating a gender equality perspective into all the mainstream activities of government, at the policy, programme and project levels. It involves:

- ✦ forging and strengthening the political will to achieve gender equality and equity, at the local, national, regional and global levels;
- ✦ incorporating a gender perspective into the planning processes of all ministries and departments of government, particularly those concerned with macroeconomic and development planning, personnel policies and management, and legal and constitutional affairs including the administration of justice;
- ✦ integrating a gender perspective into sectoral planning cycles, including the analysis, development, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects;
- ✦ using sex-disaggregated data in statistical analysis to reveal how policies impact differently on women and men;
- ✦ increasing the numbers of women in decision-making positions in government, and the public and private sectors;
- ✦ providing tools and training in gender analysis and gender planning to decision-makers, senior managers and other key personnel to ensure that they know how to integrate a gender perspective into their work; and
- ✦ forging linkages between governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to ensure a co-ordination of efforts and resources.

Background

The strategy of mainstreaming has evolved out of efforts by the international women's movement to change the attitudes, assumptions, working practices and activities of public institutions which reproduce and contribute to gender inequalities.

Since the 1970s, women have called on international development agencies and governments to 'integrate' women into the developmental process. An early institutional response was the establishment of Women's Bureaux and departments which funded, targeted, or took part in a variety of women's projects. But progress was slow and there was little improvement in women's status and wellbeing while women-specific projects remained marginalised. Devoid of a fundamental reorientation of dominant gender stereotypes, this approach actually served to increase women's workloads and reinforce gender inequalities.

It was in this context in the mid-1980s that the gender and development (GAD) approach gained currency. Within institutions, the GAD approach seeks to base interventions on the analysis of women's and men's roles and needs in order to correct

inequalities and inequities. Among other things, this approach promotes a more equitable distribution of power and decision-making. According to Kabeer (1996) there are three levels of institutional power which should be taken into consideration in the mainstreaming approach:

1   Power that allows each individual to influence decisions in the direction s/he desires.
2   Power that prevents issues which are not in the interests of power holders from being placed on the agenda.
3   Power which inhibits articulation of conflicts since both the subordinate and dominant groups are unaware of the oppressive implications, or are incapable of imagining alternative ways of being and doing.

For the exercise to succeed, the aim should be to allow each individual to influence decisions. If power holders block discussion of issues outside their interests, and/or inhibit articulation by those without power the process of gender mainstreaming cannot work effectively.

Policy Approaches

A further distinction can be made between an 'integrationist' and an 'agenda-setting' approach to mainstreaming. The first merely aims to integrate women's concerns into existing development activities without necessarily altering the agenda, while the second attempts to transform the thrust of development policy as it brings women's concerns into the mainstream. Kabeer (1996) has identified three possible approaches to policy:

+   Gender-neutral policies are those that are seen as having no significant gender dimension. However, government policies seldom if ever have the same effect on women as they do on men, even if at first sight they may appear to exist in a context where gender is irrelevant. Thus policies which may appear to be 'gender-neutral' are often in fact 'gender-blind', and are biased in favour of males because they presuppose that those involved in and affected by the policy are males, with male needs and interests.
+   Gender-specific policies take into account gender differentials, and target women or men specifically, but leave the current distribution of resources and responsibilities intact.
+   Gender-aware/redistributive/transformative policies seek to transform existing gender relations by changing the distribution of resources and responsibilities to make it more equitable. These policies are the most politically challenging, because they involve altering the existing balance of power between men and women, but they also go the furthest towards addressing not only practical gender needs but strategic gender interests as well (adapted from Kabeer, 1996).

The basic choice presented here is whether media policy reflects, perpetuates, or challenges gender hierarchies. The latter approach involves the implementation of gender-transformative policies and implies a proactive effort to avoid stereotyping; ensure the equal participation of women and men role in decision-making, agenda-setting and content-determining activities; and advance gender equality on all fronts.

The depth of gender stereotyping among all those involved in the information and communications process needs to be both openly acknowledged and acted upon – training, guidelines and processes need to be established to counteract and break down these attitudes. Varying degrees of resistance can be expected – from power-holders as well as those who are subordinated. Resistance can even come from those who have been working on women in development (WID) issues, if they feel that gender and development issues will supersede WID in the ministry's action agenda (Kabeer, 1990; Moser, 1993; Razavi and Miller, 1995).

Even though gender relations are always present, taking them into account requires a special interest in seeking them out. This involves asking a number of searching questions:

✦ To what extent does the media environment (decision-making, programming, editorial policy, employment and assignment practices) reflect the needs, interests and voices of women in fair proportion to that of men?

✦ Are policy-makers, reporters and editors armed with the knowledge and awareness that is required to advance gender equality and equity in and through the media?

✦ Are there guidelines, staffing and financial resources in place to enable them to develop and implement policies to promote gender equality in copy and on equal access to expression and participation in the media?

✦ Is there 'space' for both women and men to pursue their media careers?

✦ Are gender relations monitored when women head the production team?[1]

The task requires clear political will and the allocation of additional human and financial resources as needed. The government ministry responsible for information and (tele)communication may give responsibility for the gender mainstreaming task to a specific team or group of persons but care must be taken to ensure that these persons have the authority and/or seniority to adequately promote a gender-aware perspective among staff in general and senior management in particular. Benchmarks should be established and concrete work plans drawn up in respect to actions, mechanisms and processes throughout the system. A credible monitoring mechanism should be in place, as should standards of accountability.

An understanding of the concept of gender should not be assumed. Steps should be taken to raise awareness among all levels of staff including the introduction of non-sexist language guidelines and gender-aware editorial practices. Unless staff at all levels feel they have a stake in the exercise and unless action is taken to encourage their participation, involvement will be unlikely to go beyond the small circle of staff with direct responsibility. Women should be targeted by creating spaces for them to freely articulate their specific needs and concerns.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Ministry

The government ministry responsible for the information and (tele)communications sector is assumed to have the following functions in relation to the media:

1 Policy analysis and development
2 Policy-making at the political/ministerial level
3 Administration and implementation of policy (policy deployment)
4 Regulation
5 Government information and media services

Gender is a cross-cutting theme that should extend across the entire gamut of the system. Ministries of Information and Communication have a key role to play in this process, including raising awareness of gender considerations within government sector programming and to the broader society. Within the government, two key areas to link with are the education sector and national women's machineries. Within civil society linkages should be forged with the private sector media, professional media bodies, women's development NGOs, and alternative media networks.
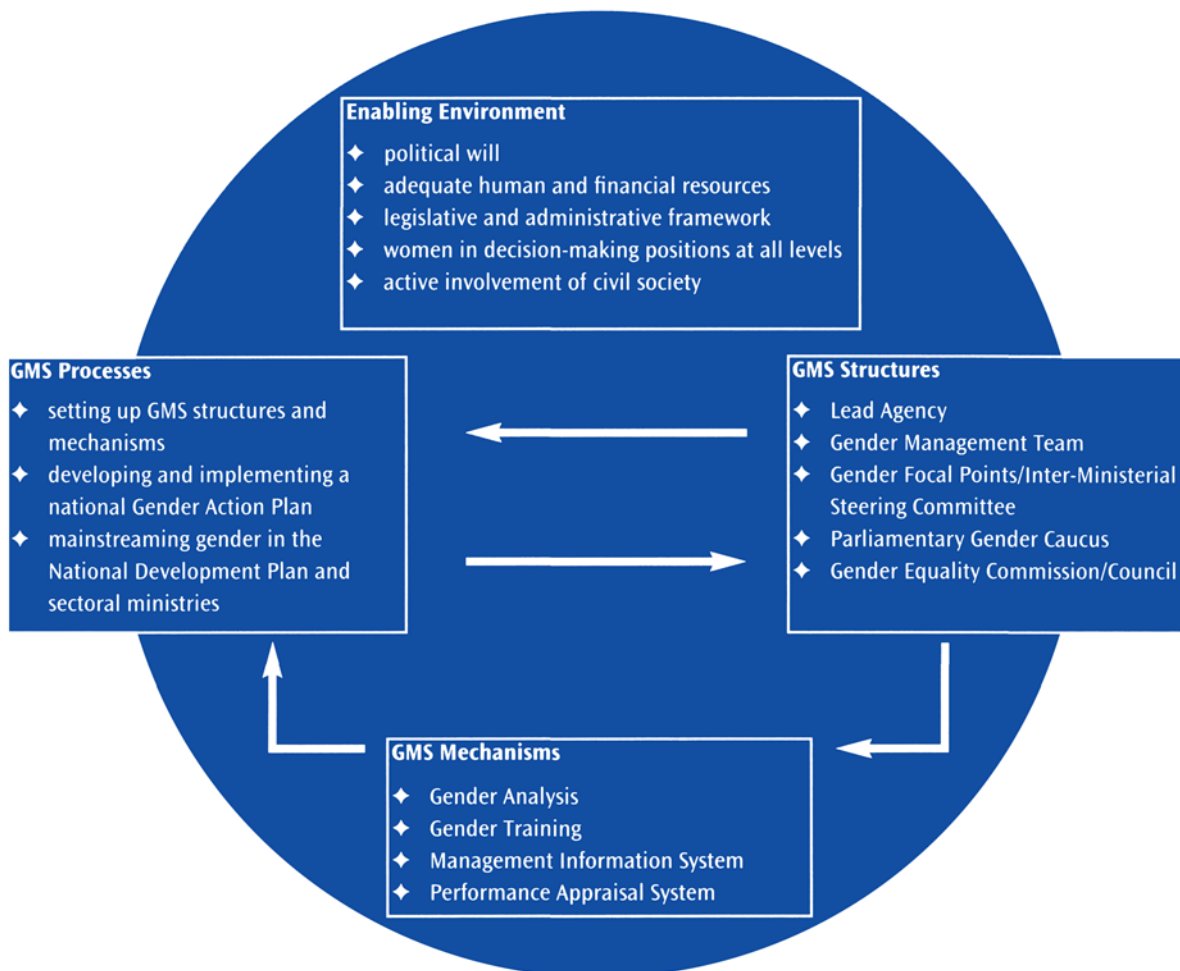
The Gender Management System

The Gender Management System (GMS) is an approach to gender mainstreaming developed by the Commonwealth. The GMS is an integrated network of structures,

mechanisms and processes designed to make government more gender-aware; increase the numbers of women in decision-making positions within and outside government; facilitate the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, plans and programmes; and promote the advancement of gender equality and equity in society.

Figure 1   **The Gender Management System (GMS)**

Enabling Environment
- political will
- adequate human and financial resources
- legislative and administrative framework
- women in decision-making positions at all levels
- active involvement of civil society

GMS Processes
- setting up GMS structures and mechanisms
- developing and implementing a national Gender Action Plan
- mainstreaming gender in the National Development Plan and sectoral ministries

GMS Structures
- Lead Agency
- Gender Management Team
- Gender Focal Points/Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee
- Parliamentary Gender Caucus
- Gender Equality Commission/Council

GMS Mechanisms
- Gender Analysis
- Gender Training
- Management Information System
- Performance Appraisal System

The enabling environment of a GMS

The establishment and operation of a Gender Management System requires an enabling environment. There are a number of interrelated factors that determine the degree to which the environment in which the GMS is being set up does or does not enable effective gender mainstreaming. These enabling factors include the following:
- political will and commitment to gender equality at the highest levels;
- global and regional mandates such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Commonwealth Plan of Action.
- adequate human and financial resources;
- a legislative and constitutional framework that is conducive to advancing gender equality;
- the presence of a critical mass of women in decision-making roles;
- civil society and the role it can play in advancing gender equality; and
- donor aid and technical assistance, such as that provided by the Commonwealth and other international agencies.

GMS structures and mechanisms

The GMS puts forward the following structures to facilitate gender mainstreaming (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999):

+ a **Lead Agency** (usually the Ministry of Gender or Women's Affairs or other National Women's Machinery), which initiates and strengthens the GMS institutional arrangements, provides overall co-ordination and monitoring, and carries out advocacy, communications, media relations, and reporting;

+ a **Gender Management Team** (consisting of representatives from the Lead Agency, key government ministries and civil society), which provides leadership for the implementation of the GMS; defines broad operational policies, indicators of effectiveness, and timeframes for implementation; and monitors its performance;

+ an **Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee** whose members are representatives of the Lead Agency and the Gender Focal Points (see below) of all government ministries, and which ensures that gender mainstreaming in government policy, planning and programmes in all sectors is effected and that strong linkages are established between ministries;

+ **Gender Focal Points** (senior administrative and technical staff in all government ministries), who co-ordinate gender activities (e.g., training), promote gender mainstreaming in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all activities in their respective sectors, and sit on the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee;

+ a **Parliamentary Gender Caucus** (consisting of gender-aware female and male parliamentarians), which carries out awareness raising, lobbying, and promoting the equal participation of women and men in politics and all aspects of national life, and brings a gender perspective to bear on parliamentary structures and procedures, and matters under debate;

+ representatives of **civil society** (a National Gender Equality Commission/Council, academic institutions, NGOs, professional associations, media and other stakeholders), who represent and advocate the interests and perspectives of autonomous associations in government policy-making and implementation processes.

Mechanisms for advancing gender equality in the context of a GMS include the following:

+ **Gender analysis:** This involves the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data which reveals the differential impact of development activities on women and men, and the effect gender roles and responsibilities have on development efforts. It also involves qualitative analyses that help to clarify how and why these differential, roles, responsibilities and impacts have come about.

+ **Gender training:** many of the stakeholders in a GMS will require training in such areas as basic gender awareness and sensitisation, gender analysis, gender planning, the use of gender-sensitive indicators, and monitoring and evaluation. Since the GMS aims at the gradual transformation of organisations and a realignment of the belief systems, power structures, and policy and planning processes within them, training may also be required in conflict prevention and resolution, and the management of change.

+ **Management Information System:** this is the mechanism for gathering the data necessary for gender analysis, and sharing and communicating the findings of that analysis, using sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators. The Management Information System is much more than just a library or resource centre; it is the central repository of gender information and the means by which such information is generated by and disseminated to the key stakeholders in the GMS.

◆ **Performance Appraisal System:** based on the results of gender analysis, the GMS should establish targets in specific areas. The achievement of these targets should be evaluated both at the individual and departmental level, through a gender-aware Performance Appraisal System. This should not be separate from whatever system is already in place for appraising the performance of employees – rather the present system should be reviewed to ensure that it is gender-sensitive. The Performance Appraisal System should also take into account the level of gender sensitivity and skills (e.g., as acquired through gender training or field experience) of individuals. The Gender Management Team should work in partnership with the central personnel office of government and sectoral personnel departments to ensure that the Performance Appraisal System in place reflects these concerns (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999).

GMS processes

The processes involved in implementing a Gender Management System include developing and implementing a national Gender Action Plan, which should include provisions for setting up or strengthening the GMS structures and mechanisms, and for engendering core ministries and sectoral policy and planning. Normally spearheaded by the Ministry of Women's Affairs or other national women's machinery, the Gender Action Plan should include specific guidelines for setting up Gender Focal Points and mainstreaming gender into the regular policy, planning and implementation cycles of the Ministry of Information and Communications. These cycles have five main phases, and a gender perspective needs to be integrated in each phase:

1 **Gender analysis:** this involves analysing the status of women vis-à-vis men in the sector and examining the impact on women and men of information and communications policy.

2 **Policy development and appraisal:** establishing gender priorities according to individual national circumstances, developing policy options to address gender imbalances, and appraising options to determine their gender impact.

3 **Gender-aware action plans:** the output of policy development is a plan which should have a clearly defined gender dimension.

4 **Implementation:** the implementation of the engendered work plan takes place as part of the normal functioning of government.

5 **Monitoring and Evaluation:** this involves reviewing key indicators on the status of women in the national context in the sector, and feeding the findings into the next planning cycle.

Notes

1 Exchanging one gender role for another is not in itself a sign of gender awareness. "Men and women can do different types of jobs and be equal, and they can do the same kind of job and be unequal. What matters is not so much who does what, but rather who defines the role of the other, and whether both women and men have a choice" (Farr and Chitiga, 1991).