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Introduction and Overview

Gender Mainstreaming

Despite considerable progress in some areas of women's lives since the UN named 1975-1985 as the Decade for Women, gender inequality/inequity persists in all areas of life and all countries of the world. The 1995 UN Human Development Report, which had a particular focus on gender, indicated that no country treats its women as well as its men, and in almost all countries of the world women are over-represented among the unemployed and those living in absolute poverty. The gaps between women and men have closed over the last 20 years in terms of educational enrolment, literacy and life expectancy. But women still lag behind in terms of political and economic participation. And gender inequality under the law and violence against women are stark indicators of "the low status accorded women in societies everywhere" (UNDP, 1995).

The proportion of women in decision-making positions in governments worldwide, although it has increased in some countries, still falls far short of the 53 per cent that would represent the female proportion of the world's population, and indeed the target of 30 per cent endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government and by the UN Economic and Social Council. In 1995, the proportion of women MPs in parliaments globally was estimated at 11.6 per cent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1997: 3), and in the Commonwealth the proportion was even lower – just 7.2 per cent (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995a: Appendix 9). Decisions on issues that affect women's lives, sometimes quite drastically, are still for the most part taken by men, without consultation with the women who often pay the price of such decisions through reduced economic circumstances, limited access to education, health and other services, inadequate access to resources, or infringements of their fundamental human rights.

The Commonwealth is committed to taking action to bring about gender equality. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development sets out a series of strategies and measures for governments to work towards gender equality. Gender mainstreaming, one of the key strategies advanced in the Plan of Action, is the process of bringing a gender perspective into the mainstream activities of government at the policy, programme and project levels. Gender mainstreaming involves a number of activities:

- ◆ 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 all phases of sectoral planning cycles, including the analysis, development, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects;

- ◆ using sex-disaggregated data (see Appendix) 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-awareness, 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.

Because gender mainstreaming is a broad-spectrum strategy that cuts across government sectors and other social partners, it requires strong leadership and co-ordination. The Commonwealth approach to providing the necessary leadership and co-ordination is through the Gender Management System (GMS), which is designed to facilitate all aspects of gender mainstreaming.

Purpose and Scope of this Handbook

This handbook is a guide to the establishment of a Gender Management System. It is primarily intended for use by governments at the national level, but may also be used by inter-governmental agencies, provincial and local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions, professional associations and the private sector. It is designed to be flexible, presenting a menu of options that governments can adapt to suit their own national circumstances.

The handbook provides a brief overview of the history and basic concepts of gender and development, but does not seek to review in depth the various theoretical approaches to understanding gender and advancing gender equality that have been developed globally. Rather, it draws upon elements of several of these approaches to present a practical system whereby governments and other organisations can take concrete steps to advance the cause of gender equality and equity through gender mainstreaming.

The handbook is part of the Gender Management System Series, which consists of a series of publications presenting the concept and methodology of the Gender Management System, with sector-specific guidelines for mainstreaming gender in key government ministries and supporting materials/tools for gender mainstreaming. The GMS differs from many previous frameworks for gender mainstreaming in that it takes a holistic as well as sectoral approach, with both general and sector specific guidelines and tools for analysis and planning.

National Women's Mechanisms

Strong leadership in gender mainstreaming should be provided by National Women's Mechanisms (NWMs), which usually take the role of the Lead Agency in the setting up and running of a Gender Management System.

NWMs were set up in response to the UN Decade for Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, the 1987 Commonwealth Plan of Action, and ensuing international programmes. The NWM is the body or system of bodies recognised by the government as the institution dealing with the promotion of the status of women. NWMs may be Ministries Responsible for Gender or Women's Affairs, Women's Bureaux, or other government ministries or departments set up to

address gender and/or women's issues. By 1990, NWMs had been established in some 44 Commonwealth countries (CIDA, 1990).

Considerable differences exist in the status, structure and functioning of NWMs in the Commonwealth. Some are separate government ministries or departments with their own minister, some are located within the office of the Head of State or Government, others are small units in diverse ministries or departments such as employment, health, or community development. In general, a marginal location has a negative effect on the NWM's status within government and the wider society, its access to resources, and its ability to influence mainstream policy-making.

Definition of a Gender Management System

A Gender Management System (GMS) is a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organisational framework, to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organisation's work, in order to achieve greater gender equality and equity within the context of sustainable development.

A GMS may be established at any level of government, or in institutions such as universities, inter-governmental or non-governmental organisations, private sector organisations or trade unions. The Gender Management System as presented in this handbook is designed primarily for governments.

Mission, goal and objectives

The mission of a Gender Management System is to advance gender equality and equity, through promoting political will; forging a partnership of stakeholders including government, private sector and civil society; building capacity; and sharing good practice.

The goal of a Gender Management System is the mainstreaming of gender into all government policies, programmes and activities.

The objectives of a Gender Management System include the following:

- ◆ to assist government and non-state actors in implementing the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, The Beijing Platform for Action, and other gender-aware international mandates;
- ◆ to strengthen National Women's Machinery (NWMs);
- ◆ to strengthen the capacity of NWMs, core and sectoral government ministries, development NGOs, the private sector and other non-state actors in civil society, to make gender-aware development policies, plans and programmes at all levels, and to facilitate partnership-building among these actors so as to create a broad-based national constituency committed to effecting gender equality and equity of outcomes; and
- ◆ to create an enabling environment which takes into account the various factors that enhance and/or inhibit the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender-aware plans and programmes.

The GMS approach to mainstreaming

The Gender Management System adopts a stakeholder approach to gender mainstreaming. This is based on the recognition that the state is not the only player in efforts to achieve gender equality and equity, and must work in partnership with other social partners or stakeholders. The key stakeholders in a GMS are the

National Women's Machinery, other government ministries and departments, NGOs, the media, academic institutions, professional associations, inter-governmental organisations and donor agencies, and women and men in the broader civil society.

Within the stakeholder framework, the GMS is based on three broad principles: empowerment, integration and accountability.

Empowerment

Empowerment means having control over the decisions and issues that affect one's life. In particular, it means having representation in decision-making bodies and control over the distribution of resources. Where women are underrepresented in decision-making fora, the GMS recommends action to redress the imbalance. Participation in planning and decision-making processes has the additional benefit of increasing a sense of commitment to and ownership of the plan's objectives. At the personal level, commitment means more than individual men and women espousing gender equality/equity as a personal belief; it means that equality will inform the choices they make in defining gender roles and responsibilities expressed at home, in the work place and in community life. Therefore the widest possible participation in gender planning is desirable.

Integration

The GMS adopts a systemic, holistic approach to mainstreaming, aiming not merely at *ad hoc* piecemeal interventions, but at the transformation of the structures within societies that create and perpetuate gender and other inequalities. This entails a high degree of analysis, co-ordination and integration of effort. The GMS is structured to operate in a co-ordinated way at different levels and in different sectors of government and society. Such integration is necessary if the GMS is to reflect the diversity in society; 'women' and 'men' are not homogeneous categories, but include other constructs such as race/ethnicity, class/caste, age and disability. Gender inequalities cannot be addressed adequately unless the inequalities arising from these other variables are also addressed.

Accountability

Creating change within an organisation and within society requires action to motivate people to effect the necessary changes. The systems that motivate change can be of two kinds: incentive systems, which provide rewards for the achievement of specific goals; and boundary systems, which define what behaviour is unacceptable, set minimum standards of achievement and impose sanctions if these standards are not attained.

GMS structures

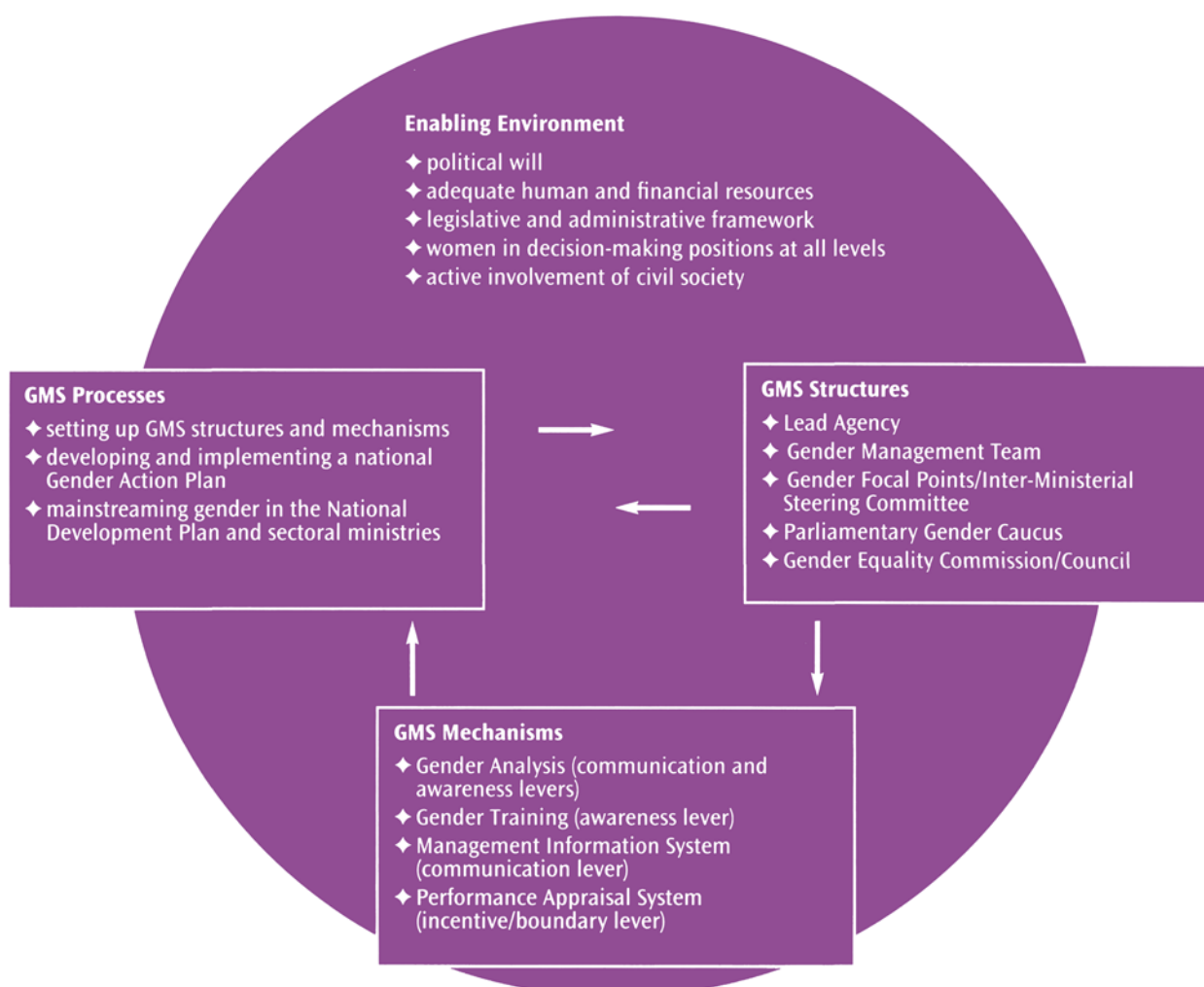
At each stage, a successful process of gender mainstreaming involves decision-makers at senior levels in government ministries, non-governmental developmental organisations (NGOs) representing gender equality interests, the private sector and other non-state actors in civil society. In other words, the management of the process of gender mainstreaming is everybody's business.

Enabling all these stakeholders to participate effectively in the mainstreaming of gender into governments' policy and programming requires the establishment and/or strengthening of formal institutional arrangements within and outside government. These arrangements can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ 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 bringing a gender perspective to bear on parliamentary structures and

Figure 1 The Gender Management System



- procedures, and matters under debate; and
- ◆ 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.

GMS processes

This handbook outlines three interrelated Gender Management System processes: setting up a GMS; developing and implementing a national Gender Action Plan; and mainstreaming gender in the National Development Plan and other government policy-making, planning and programme activities.

Setting up a GMS

The process normally begins with a feasibility study and stakeholder analysis. This should include a review of the status of women nationally, any GMS-related mechanisms already in place, and recommendations on what structures, process and mechanisms need to be put in place and, where appropriate, on the appointment of a technical expert to work with the government in setting up the GMS. The feasibility report is presented to the NWM which tables it in Cabinet. Once it is approved, the NWM or Lead Agency co-ordinates the process, which includes the following steps:

- ◆ reviewing the national Gender Action Plan or developing such a plan if none exists;
- ◆ reviewing the National Development Plan to determine its gender-awareness;
- ◆ setting up the GMS structures;
- ◆ strengthening the National Women's Machinery;
- ◆ developing a gender training programme;
- ◆ building gender analysis and planning expertise in the various government sectors;
- ◆ establishing or strengthening linkages between the NWM and other stakeholders;
- ◆ establishing monitoring and evaluation and reporting mechanisms;
- ◆ developing a programme of public awareness through the media; and
- ◆ networking with donors and other agencies to seek resources for the GMS and gender mainstreaming.

Developing and implementing a national Gender Action Plan

A central element of successful gender mainstreaming is the creation and implementation of a national Gender Action Plan. The Gender Action Plan should include an analysis of the status of gender equality/relations in all sectors of society, a proposal for setting up or strengthening the GMS structures and mechanisms, and plans for enhancing all ministries' capacity for gender-sensitive policy development and planning.

Mainstreaming gender in the National Development Plan and sectoral ministries

The mainstreaming of gender into the National Development Plan as well as the regular policy, planning and implementation cycles of all other ministries of government is a key GMS process. The National Development Plan is often the central planning instrument from which all sectoral activities emanate, and is therefore of strategic importance in advancing gender equality and equity at the national level. It is therefore essential to review this Plan and take steps to ensure it is gender-sensitive, i.e., that it seeks to transform existing gender relations into those of equality and equity by redistributing resources, power and responsibilities more evenly between women and men.

Planning processes can be seen as cyclical, with five main phases. A gender perspective needs to be integrated at all phases of the cycle: analysis and diagnosis; policy development and appraisal; planning; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

GMS mechanisms

There are four principal mechanisms for effecting change within an organisation using a GMS:

- ◆ **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 (for example, 30 per cent of those in decision-making positions within government and the public and private sectors should be women by the year 2005; 25 per cent of decision-makers in this department should be women by the next planning cycle). 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 and overhauled 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.

Given that there is usually a scarcity of and competition for financial and human resources within government, it may not be possible to create all of the GMS structures and mechanisms, especially in the initial phase. It is therefore advisable to prioritise them according to which are the most compatible with existing structures and most appropriate to national circumstances.

What Does a GMS Achieve?

A Gender Management System can have the following beneficial impacts:

- ◆ development policies and programmes that work because they take into account the realities of more than half of the world's population;

- ◆ a fair and equitable distribution of power, resources and decision-making between women and men;
- ◆ government ministries that are able to respond to the needs of both women and men within their respective sectors;
- ◆ staff who are trained and experienced in addressing issues from a gender perspective; an efficient and effective mechanism for meeting reporting requirements under international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Box 1

A Gender Perspective on Government Policies, Plans and Programmes

A gender perspective focuses not only on women but on the social relationships between women and men and how societies are structured along gendered lines. It is concerned with:

- ◆ women's involvement, concerns, needs, aspirations as well as those of men;
- ◆ the differential outcomes of policies, plans and projects on women, men and children;
- ◆ assessing to whom financial and other quantitative and qualitative benefits accrue and in what ways;
- ◆ eliminating discrimination and taking positive action to achieve equal outcomes;
- ◆ differences among women;
- ◆ possible alliances which can be formed between women and men to address inequality; and
- ◆ the process of gender planning.