4 Gender Management System Structures and Mechanisms

The structure of a Gender Management System is a network of various bodies and their interrelationships. The mechanisms of a GMS consist of the various roles, responsibilities and functioning of these bodies. The structure and mechanisms of a GMS are sometimes collectively referred to as institutional arrangements.

The GMS puts in place a systemic and integrative approach to gender analysis. Through its structures, mechanisms and processes, it aims to ensure that the development, analysis and implementation of government policies and programmes are undertaken with an understanding of gender differences.

The structures presented here are intended not as a rigid prescription, but rather as a flexible model which governments can adapt to particular national circumstances. The actual structures set up by governments implementing a GMS will reflect those circumstances and the strengths and opportunities that exist at the national level. In some countries, structures similar to these may already exist and be amenable to adaptation along the lines of the GMS.

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders in a Gender Management System are groups, organisations and institutions which have a stake or interest in or are affected by the National Gender Action Plan. The key stakeholders are responsible for, or can significantly influence, the successful implementation of the Gender Action Plan. The GMS should ensure that relevant stakeholders are identified and consulted on an ongoing basis and not exclusively in the policy development stage.

Key state and non-state stakeholders include:
+ the National Women's Machinery;
+ all government ministries and departments, including but not limited to Finance, Development Planning, Public Service, Agriculture, Health, Education, Energy, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs, and Trade and Industry;
+ development NGOs representing women's interests;
+ university-based gender and development departments;
+ inter-governmental organisations and donor agencies; and
+ women, men and young people in the broader civil society.

Other stakeholders may include:
+ politicians;
+ the judiciary;
+ the media;
+ law enforcement officials;
+ trade unions;

◆ the private sector;
◆ professional organisations;
◆ religious organisations; and
◆ youth organisations.

Efforts to include a broad-based group of stakeholders in the implementation of the GMS are important for a number of reasons:

◆ **participatory goals** – past experience suggests that involving stakeholders in consultative processes creates a greater likelihood that the policies, programmes and projects will be devised to meet the real needs and interests of beneficiaries.

◆ **societal goals** – the Commonwealth vision of advancing gender equality and equity concerns all of society; the realisation of this vision demands a broadly-based national constituency committed to effecting gender equality and equity of outcomes in all government policies and programmes.

◆ **efficiency goals** – efficient use of existing resources and successful policy implementation depends upon those who are most affected having a stake in and feeling committed to government policies, programmes and projects. Supported by the mechanisms and structures of the GMS, stakeholder analysis – involving the participation of key stakeholders themselves – will enable key stakeholders to acknowledge both shared and divergent interests, and will facilitate a process of consensus-building around the goal of gender equality and equity.

The Gender Management System recognises the strategic importance of building partnerships with social actors at all levels. Key stakeholders should be allowed to articulate their perceptions, needs and priorities; gender balance in interest representation should be sought, taking into consideration that women and men may have unequal access to and control over appropriate resources to participate in decision-making structures.

Consultation with key stakeholders should take place not only at the project level, but also in connection with national level dialogues on government policies and programmes. Such partnerships are necessary to ensure the co-ordination of the various stakeholders' approaches to gender concerns, and the widest possible participation; to share skills, experience, expertise, responsibility and accountability; and to avoid duplication and wastage of resources. Partnerships increase the outreach of the Gender Action Plan, and capture the diversity that exists within society.

In addition to consultation with state and non-state actors within the country and Commonwealth contexts, co-operation and co-ordination with bilateral agencies, the UN system, and financial institutions should be increased. Such actors are potentially important partners in the support and promotion of gender equality, and efforts should be made to ensure that all collaborative initiatives are informed by gender analysis.

Further, partnerships and teamwork instil a shared commitment to change and ownership of outcomes among government, international organisations and non-state partners. Commonwealth governments need to inform development partners about the Gender Action Plan and the GMS and to update themselves on the policies and programmes of other agencies. There should be complementarity between the various partners at every stage of the policy development, planning and implementation process in order to co-ordinate efforts, expand resources, increase influence, and avoid duplication.

Lead Agency

Success in setting up and implementing a Gender Management System is contingent upon having an influential Lead Agency which can initiate dialogue with the key

stakeholders on the need for a gender mainstreaming strategy to accelerate the achievement of gender equality. In most governments, gender issues fall within the purview of a National Women's Machinery (NWM). This can take the form of a ministry, a department, a bureau, a desk, or an individual. Whatever the case, the NWM is almost certain to be best placed to lead the setting up and operating of a Gender Management System.

Functions

The Lead Agency initiates and strengthens the institutional arrangements of the Gender Management System and is responsible for the overall co-ordination and monitoring of the GMS. It advocates for change and works to impact upon policy decision. It plays a strategic and catalytic role, introducing critical gender concerns into the policies, plans and programmes of the core and sectoral government agencies, ensuring that key targets and indicators on the status of women are agreed upon and met, managing the flow of information on gender issues and communicating policy changes and results.

The NWM is also best placed to spearhead programmes and activities at the cutting edge of the gender and development field, for example, increasing women's participation in political decision-making; exploring issues of democracy, human rights and sustainable development; holding government accountable for the implementation of international commitments; and monitoring the impact of these measures.

A strong National Women's Machinery is important for gender mainstreaming because it must be able to function as a strategic and co-ordinating unit with the required experience and expertise in the areas of gender integration, gender planning and project management. A strong and effective NWM will have personnel with technical expertise in gender issues, skilled in administration/co-ordination, project management, training, research, information management and dissemination, and evaluation.

A strong NWM may be identified through the following features:
+ a clear and achievable mandate, with sufficient scope and flexibility to address a broad range of issues;
+ explicit political legitimacy, management scope and authority, and a central and stable position within the structure of government, such that the Minister for Women's Affairs (or equivalent) participates directly in mainstream policy and decision-making processes;
+ the allocation of sufficient funds, human resources, training and information; and
+ a broad internal structure, with strong and formal linkages with other ministries and agencies of government (Ashworth, 1994: 5).

National Women's Machineries within the Commonwealth take a range of different forms and reflect varying levels of strength or weakness. The first step in setting up the institutional arrangements of a Gender Management System is therefore to assess the institutional capacity of the NWM in a given country. The second step may be the strengthening of the NWM, if necessary.

The strengthening process focuses initially on analysing internal development and structure, and the scope for forming partnerships with other branches of government and with the wider civil society. However, as national machineries strengthen themselves and become more systemic, integrating gender through interactive planning rather than merely 'adding on' women-in-development projects to existing

plans, their role becomes more that of synthesising ideas relating to gender in policy formulation and implementation, and communicating them to other parts of the overall government system.

Gender Management Team

The core government ministries which are of strategic importance to achieving gender equality and equity are the Executive Office of the President or Prime Minister and the ministries of finance, planning, public service, and legal affairs. Their strategic importance justifies their membership on the Gender Management Team. Sectoral ministries that are of particular importance in the national context, or that are strategically placed to effect change, may also be included on the GMS team for the same reason.

The Gender Management Team could therefore comprise the Permanent or Principal Secretaries of the National Women's Machinery and the ministries of finance, planning, public service, justice/legal affairs, and any other ministries that are considered to be of key strategic importance. Where possible the Gender Management Team should also include a representative of civil society, such as the Chair or other senior member of the National Gender Equality Commission or similar body.

The identification of individuals to serve on the Gender Management Team needs to be done strategically. Where possible individuals should be selected who:
- believe in and care about the advancement of gender equality and equity;
- understand the power and gender dynamics within society and within government;
- have sufficient political clout and influence to produce real change; and
- have access to sound, high-quality empirical data.

Functions

The Gender Management Team's responsibilities include developing the GMS concept in the national context, thus providing the Gender Management System with broad operational policies, indicators of effectiveness and timeframes for implementation. The Team should seek to expand the scope of gender mainstreaming throughout the various sectors of government. Consensus regarding conflict resolution and problem-solving procedures, mechanisms and ethics should also be determined by the Team.

Other functions of the core ministries include identifying, in collaboration with the Lead Agency, what are the required results from gendered policies and relating these to the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Commonwealth Plan of Action; identifying points in the mainstreaming process where technical assistance will be required and determining the financial and material resources necessary for a Gender Management System.

Members of the Gender Management Team should receive training in gender-sensitivity, analysis and planning as appropriate. An orientation to the role and responsibilities of the Gender Management Team should include information on the outcomes of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Meetings. The Team should also test the assumptions underlying its work, regarding such issues as the reliability of information systems, democratic styles of management, and concepts of participation, among others.

Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee

The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee comprises senior staff from the National Women's Machinery and the Gender Focal Points of all other ministries (see below). Its exact composition is determined by the specific allocation of portfolios within the country. Chaired by a representative of the core government ministries, the committee reports to the Gender Management Team. This committee represents a broad-based, second level management team. Even so, sectoral representatives should be high enough in the hierarchy to influence policy.

Functions

The role of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee is to ensure that the goal of gender equality and equity is taken up in all ministerial programmes. Its responsibilities include setting sector goals regarding gender mainstreaming. Regular meetings to review sector performance as an aspect of monitoring should generate reports on gender integration which should include opportunities, obstacles and lessons learned. The members of this Committee should, like those of the Gender Management Team, be oriented into their role through gender training.

All sectoral ministries, without exception, should be represented on the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee. Table 2 shows some of the key gender issues in a number of sectors. The work plans of these and all ministries should reflect gender goals.

Gender Focal Points

Gender Focal Points are designated senior members of staff within each ministry/department/division, who are either directly involved in, or able to influence, their sector's planning process.

Functions

The responsibilities of Gender Focal Points include the following:
+ sitting on the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee;
+ providing support for the development of gender-sensitive policies and programmes;
+ serving as in-house gender advocates, experts or resource persons, sharing information with their colleagues and advocating the implementation of the Gender Action Plan within their ministry/department/division;
+ conducting sector-specific, quantitative and qualitative analyses of gender disparities;
+ collecting and disseminating information and best practices;
+ in collaboration with the National Women's Machinery, supporting the functioning of the Management Information System; and
+ in collaboration with the Gender Management Team, assisting in monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

The Gender Focal Point is often the main agent for facilitating gender mainstreaming on a day-to-day basis within an institutional structure. Supported by the structures and mechanisms of the GMS, and the political commitment to gender equality represented by the Gender Action Plan, the Gender Focal Point plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the GMS.

In order to strengthen the capacity of the Gender Focal Points, efforts need to be made to:

◆ ensure that Gender Focal Points in all ministries/departments/divisions are senior staff;

◆ provide Gender Focal Points with gender training that is both general and sector specific, to increase their competence in gender analysis and to provide the analytical tools necessary to engender their ministry/department/division's policy and planning processes and programme implementation;

◆ provide Gender Focal Points with skills/expertise in the area of monitoring and evaluation;

◆ support Gender Focal Points, especially in larger departments, by either employing additional gender experts with sector-specific skills or engaging qualified external gender experts; and

◆ ensure that the work of Gender Focal Points is not carried out on an *ad hoc* basis but written into their terms of reference (job descriptions) and reflected in resource allocation.

An important aspect of the work of Gender Focal Points is the socialisation of gender knowledge and experience, which should be seen not as static, but as continually advancing. It should therefore be communicated through regular meetings and other means such as newsletters as part of the ongoing process of promoting gender-awareness. Thus a key feature of the methodology of training and development of Gender Focal Points is the sharing and documentation of experiences.

In some countries, it may be appropriate to group Gender Focal Points in the larger ministries into a Gender Unit for that ministry. For example, the Ministry of Public Works in a particular government may consist of several thousand staff members. The process of mainstreaming gender in such a ministry and addressing the gender needs of its staff cannot be achieved by one individual alone, but requires the resources of a fully staffed Gender Unit.

Gender Caucus in National Parliament and Local Government

Although some countries have too few women at parliamentary and local government levels to effectively promote a gender mainstreaming strategy, many other countries do have adequate numbers. It is anticipated that as countries seek to address the objective of increased access to power and decision-making by women, the new millennium will see more women in national parliaments, provincial and local governments.

A Gender Caucus is a useful structure if a good number of gender-sensitive women and men are in parliament or local government. In parliament, the Caucus serves to introduce a gender perspective on issues being debated. Members of the Caucus can lobby support among their colleagues, articulate issues in parliamentary debates and generate public support through the media, political parties, NGOs and other entities.

The Caucus may act as a catalyst for affirmative action in the political arena by: reviewing laws that discriminate against women or that are insensitive to gender interests; lobbying to bring about action on specific issues of concern to female constituents; and campaigning to have 'safe' seats allocated to women.

At the local government level, the Caucus may consider such steps as: undertaking gender audits of local government structures and programmes; promoting mentoring programmes for women who are active in the political arena; and ensuring a gender balance in committees and community meetings.

Table 3   **Gender Issues in Sectoral Ministries**

	Issues
Finance	Points of entry for gender mainstreaming in the finance sector include: ongoing macroeconomic management, including the annual budget cycle, the fiscal deficit, external and internal debt, and the balance of payments; structural reforms to improve the efficiency of resource use and support poverty alleviation, particularly in approaches to deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation; and the specific context of credit liberalisation and the provision of micro-credit. Barriers to gender mainstreaming include: insufficient analytic clarity regarding the Ministry of Finance's work and its changing role as a result of globalisation and economic liberalisation; lack of clear understanding of how gender is linked to that role; non-conducive institutional structures and ethos of Ministries of Finance; and insufficient capacity among women's organisation to engage effectively in macroeconomic policy debate.[a]
Development Planning	Planning processes that are partial and anti-cyclical have tended to contribute to increasing gender inequalities and the 'feminisation of poverty'. Development needs to be understood as human development, i.e., in terms not only of economic development but also of health and education, and needs to be measured using gender-sensitive indicators. Mainstreaming gender in the development planning process entails integrating a gender perspective in each of the main planning cycles of government – the macro/sectoral policy cycle, the annual budget cycle, the aid cycle and the project cycle – in order to produce a gender-sensitive medium-term development plan. The planning process should include the participation of the beneficiaries.[b]
Public Service	The three strategic points of entry for gender mainstreaming in the management of public service personnel are the Public Service Commission, the central personnel office, and the line departments. Between them, these institutions are responsible for appointments and promotions, setting terms and conditions of employment, discipline, and staff training. Policy issues in this area include: eliminating gender-based discrimination as regards pay; ensuring an adequate gender balance in decision-making roles; determining equitable conditions of employment; ensuring disciplinary measures are devised and applied equitably; eliminating sexual harassment; providing gender-awareness training at all levels; ensuring equity in the availability of all training options; establishing partnerships with NGOs and the academic community; providing incentives for good performance and sanctions for practising gender discrimination; and adopting, where possible, a broad-based multi-pronged equal employment opportunities policy to address these issues.
Agriculture	Agriculture, a major sector of the economy in many developing countries, is heavily populated by women in subsistence farming, market vending and informal trading. Although both women and men are employed in this sector, the norm of unwaged work for women, men and children needs to be addressed in the context of gender roles and responsibilities, access and control of resources and counting unwaged work in national accounts. Issues relating to global and regional free trade agreements which include restructuring the agricultural sector and the impact of such restructuring on women and men also need to be addressed by the GMS. In terms of gender equity, there is a particular need for advances to be made in three areas: land tenure, access to credit and technology, and the equal participation of women and men in policy-making and planning processes.
Trade and Industry	Traditional perceptions of the capacities of women can hamper their equal access to trade and management training, entrepreneurial development credit and finance. Many women lack the personal confidence as well as technical skills experience and financial resources to enter aggressively into the business environment. Gender imbalances in the staffing of Ministries of Trade and related bodies need to be addressed; the Ministry of Trade should offer incentives to encourage private sector businesses and parastatal enterprises to take up gender as a priority issue and to increase recruitment of women into management level posts. Legal, administrative and policy issues include: the constitutional and legal aspects of commercial operations; property rights, licensing, and company registration; access to credit and financing; and trade-related human resource development, including equal access to training.[c]
Health	There is growing recognition of the need to acknowledge the different health experiences and health care needs of women and men. Priorities should include objectives emanating from the International Conference on Population and Development in such areas as reproductive health and the empowerment of women. STDs and HIV/AIDS require special gender focus, as do primary health care services. Countries in which structural adjustment policies have eroded health services, causing additional burdens on women to provide health care at the household and community levels, should factor this reality in the renewal processes of the health sector. Many Ministries of Health include environmental management and population policies in their portfolio. The relationship of these areas to gender should be reflected in sector plans and programmes.

Table 3 *continued*   **Gender Issues in Sectoral Ministries**

	Issues
Education	Educational institutions are agents of socialisation, therefore all factors relating to the socialisation process need to be analysed from a gender perspective. In most developing countries, more women than men comprise the human resources of this sector, especially at the level of classroom teachers. However, at the level of policy-making and senior management, typically there are more men. Integrating gender into education policies and plans should address such issues as literacy, enrolment, access to education, attainment, legal and administrative frameworks, the organisation of schools and classrooms, increasing the numbers of women managers, policy-makers and decision-makers, teacher training, curriculum development, textbook-stereotyping, and male marginalisation in some areas.
Information/ Communications	The governmental information service should serve as the GMS's state-level media on gender affairs. Efforts to raise the gender-awareness of writers, reporters and editors need to focus on the following critical areas: *Language*: authors and editors need to examine current conventions, use non-sexist language to avoid perpetuating questionable attitudes and assumptions about gender roles, and substitute more precise usages. *Stereotyping*: Women in positions of influence are often tagged with stereotypical labels, or described in terms of their physical appearance, while male colleagues are described in terms of achievements. This delegitimises the achievements of such women. *Story selection*: Many stories about women are never told because they are not given importance, or because there is no effort to find out what women are doing or what their views are. Questions that need to be asked by media practitioners include: Who gets coverage? From what angle? Through which lens? Are stories helping to advance women's place in society or are they angled in ways that uphold traditional inequalities? Are women's concerns being separated from those of society in general?[d]

a Sen, 1999
b Taylor, 1999
c O'Regan-Tardu, 1999
d Ross-Frankson, 1999

Gender Equality Commission/Council

The building of effective partnerships between the National Women's Machinery and non-state actors in civil society is essential to the functioning of a Gender Management System. This partnership with civil society's key stakeholders can take a number of forms, one of the most useful of which is a national Gender Equality Commission or Council.

The Gender Equality Council provides a direct link between the National Women's Machinery and the constituency representing the interests of gender equality in the wider civil society, through its representative on the Gender Management Team.

The Council should include representatives of a cross-section of organisations which support the goals of the Gender Management System:
✦ development NGOs representing women's/gender interests;
✦ university-based gender and development centres;
✦ labour unions and professional associations
✦ political parties and groups;
✦ national private sector organisations, (e.g., Chambers of Commerce);
✦ the media (which may be represented by the government information service and/or leading private media organisations);
✦ other key groupings within civil society, such as religious organisations; and
✦ inter-governmental donor organisations.

This membership reflects the need for critical advisory support for the GMS, the exchange of experiences and the sharing of skills, expertise and other resources in order to facilitate the process of mainstreaming. It will also help promote the interests of non-state actors in the policies, plans and programmes of government ministries.

GMS Mechanisms

The GMS structures are between them responsible for implementing all the processes and mechanisms of the GMS. In particular, the Lead Agency, the Gender Management Team and the Gender Focal Points are responsible for ensuring that the GMS applies the appropriate mechanisms to achieve its goals. These mechanisms apply the communication, awareness, boundary and incentive 'levers of change' that will produce real changes within an organisation.

Gender analysis

Gender analysis is the process by which the differential impact on women and men of development policies can be discerned. It involves the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data which reveals the different status, conditions, roles and responsibilities of women and men. This data is fed into the policy process, to enable assessments of the differential impact of existing policies and programmes on women and men. Gender analysis also involves assessing how gender-inequitable power relations may impact on the achievement of a range of development goals including the goal of gender equality and equity.

Gender analysis needs to be both quantitative and qualitative. The use of gender-sensitive indicators in such areas as demographics, patterns of human settlement, households and families, education, health, economic activity, access to land and credit, legal rights, gender-based violence, and macroeconomics can provide useful quantitative data which should be complemented by qualitative data including historical and socio-cultural analyses that help to clarify the 'why' as well as the 'what' of gender differences in a given society, and put forward concrete strategies for change.

Gender training

Gender training is necessary in order to build capacity in gender analysis and gender planning, to raise levels of gender awareness and to increase gender sensitivity.

A number of measures should be taken to improve the quality and scope of gender training:
+ capacity-building in gender awareness and gender analysis should be undertaken throughout government structures, not only in the social sectors;
+ gender training should include both more general gender-sensitisation exercises and substantive, sector-specific training exercises directly related to knowledge gaps identified by policy-makers themselves;
+ gender training should be regular and ongoing;
+ gender training should include briefing on the GMS, explaining its mainstreaming aim and its component parts;
+ since the promotion of gender-awareness is a cumulative process, gender training should not be seen as a 'one-off' exercise but should be provided at regular intervals in an ongoing programme.

Management Information System

The Management Information System is the repository and clearing house for all information relating to the establishment and functioning of the GMS. Its function is to gather, synthesise and disseminate information on the goals, activities and achievements of the GMS and on other topics relating to gender mainstreaming and the advancement of gender equality and equity.

The Management Information System is normally the responsibility of the National Women's Machinery, which sets it up and maintains it in collaboration with the Gender Focal Points. However, in cases where the NWM is not strong enough to develop and maintain a Management Information System, support should be provided from the Gender Management Team (from one of the core government ministries). The Management Information System works closely with the government statistical agency or census bureau. It promotes and develops the use of sex-disaggregated data based on gender-sensitive indicators to provide material for gender impact analysis, policy appraisal, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Management Information System also works closely with the government information agency and with media contacts to disseminate information regarding gender mainstreaming and the GMS. This may be achieved through a periodical (monthly or quarterly) information sheet, bulletin or newsletter. Information that should be made available includes:

+ relevant gender analysis methodologies;
+ gender checklists and tools;
+ best practices and relevant research findings;
+ gender training materials;
+ information and guidelines on gender-sensitive indicators and data collection;
+ sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data;
+ information on project management and monitoring;
+ regularly updated information on staff arrangements for and functioning of the GMS.

Innovative methods for collecting, documenting, storing, retrieving and disseminating such information should be devised. Appropriate resources should be made available for such efforts, which play a key role in transforming the institutional belief systems and organisational culture.

Performance Appraisal System

In collaboration with the government's central personnel office (Ministry of Public Service or Public Service Commission) and sectoral ministries, a gender-sensitive performance appraisal system should be set up to measure changes in individual and departmental standards of achievement of the goals of the Gender Management System. In particular, it should measure the extent to which individual staff members have acquired gender awareness (e.g., through training) and have applied such awareness in their work (e.g., through the achievement of gender goals or the institution of gender-specific programmes). This information should form part of the criteria for career advancement.

Incentives do not necessarily have to be financial; for example, gender-awareness awards of merit, publicised through the Management Information System, could help to transform the institutional culture to one that is more gender-aware and more supportive of gender equity goals.