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Introduction

Education, Gender and Development

Education is universally recognised as playing a key role in sustainable social and economic development. Regardless of the ideology underlying approaches to development, education is always cited as a priority area for attention and the investment of resources.

“The benefits of education are by now well established. Education improves the quality of life. It promotes health, expands access to paid employment, increases productivity in market and non-market work, and facilitates social and political participation.”

Bellew and King, 1993: 285

That such benefits should be experienced by both women and men is fair and equitable. It is also increasingly recognised that ensuring that women receive education makes sense in terms of sustainable economic development. For example, the World Bank's 1996 progress report on the implementation of its gender policies indicated that since 1985, there had been increased lending for education programmes benefiting women, reflecting the Bank's recognition that educating women is one of the most important steps in promoting economic growth and development.

The education of women is particularly important given their reproductive role as homemakers and care-givers of children:

“Educated women have smaller families, fewer of their children die in infancy, and the children who survive are healthier and better educated. Moreover, educated women are better prepared to enter the paid labour force, which is critical to the welfare of the many female-headed households in developing countries.”

Bellew and King, 1993: 285

The education of girls and women is therefore an important investment, despite the precarious economic contexts within which many developing Commonwealth member countries have to provide for education. Not only does education have a significant multiplier effect, given the responsibility of women for socialising the next generation, it also enhances the potential of women for contributing to the social, economic and political aspects of national development. Education also has considerable potential, in its many dimensions and processes, for bringing about change which can redress imbalances between women and men as well as other social groups.

However, considerable gender inequalities exist in the education sector. These inequalities are found not only in indicators which can be readily obtained from population census data, such as literacy, enrolment, achievement and levels of schooling attained, but also in several other aspects of education which are of

concern in the pursuit of gender equality and equity, for example, management personnel in decision-making roles, curriculum content and reform, and teacher-student interaction.

Furthermore, current research on gender and education carried out internationally indicates that education, in its many facets of literacy, classroom interaction, curriculum, enrolment, attendance and achievement patterns, and teacher training, plays a significant role in perpetuating gender inequalities.

Gender, equality and equity

Gender refers to the socially constructed, rather than the biologically defined, sex roles and attributes of females and males. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development defines gender *inter alia*, as the socially defined/constructed differences between women and men that result in women's subordination and inequality in opportunity to a better life.

Gender refers to the historical and sociological relationships between women and men. If development is seen as an attempt to raise the quality of life of all people, gender in development works toward ensuring that the special needs of women vis à vis those of men, are met in this process. The approach presented in this manual recommends a process of gender analysis whereby differences in the status and experiences of women and men in education can be brought to light. In many cases, this may require specific measures to be taken so that women can enjoy the same rights, levels of achievement and standard of living that men do. The advantage of the gender approach is that it also brings to light situations in which it is men who are at a disadvantage – for example, the current under-achievement of young males in the educational systems of many Caribbean countries.

Although the terms gender equality and gender equity are often used interchangeably, they have come to have specific meanings. Gender equality refers to sameness or uniformity in quantity, amount, value and intensity of provisions made and measures implemented for women and men. Equality can usually be legislated. Gender equity refers to doing whatever is necessary to ensure equality of outcomes in the life experiences of women and men. Equity is difficult to legislate: identical treatment may satisfy the equality, but not the equity criterion.

Scope and Objectives of this Manual

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidelines for mainstreaming gender into the education sector, in particular the formal education sector (primary, secondary and tertiary education) of Ministries of Education.

The manual provides an overview of gender issues in the educational sector, including global and Commonwealth mandates for promoting gender equality. It examines such traditional indicators as literacy, enrolment, access to education and attainment, as well as other areas such as legal and administrative frameworks, the proportions of women in decision-making positions, resource allocation, curriculum development, and the organisation of schools and classrooms. It also examines ways in which gender inequalities are perpetuated through the education system.

The manual provides tools for gender analysis and proposes a number of policy interventions which governments may consider adopting, depending on particular national circumstances.

This manual is designed primarily for use by governments which are seeking to implement a policy of gender mainstreaming in their policies, plans and programmes. It is intended for use in the context of a Gender Management System, the gender mainstreaming model promoted by the Commonwealth to assist member countries in working towards gender equality and equity in government and in the broader civil society.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming means the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In the education sector, this would include not only the activities of governments, but also those of schools, colleges and education institutions, and, where appropriate, those of NGOs and the private sector as well.

Mainstreaming gender differs from previous efforts to integrate women's concerns into government activities in that, rather than 'adding on' a women's component to existing policies, plans, programmes and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages, and in every aspect of the decision-making process. Gender mainstreaming may thus entail a fundamental transformation of the underlying paradigms that inform education.

Why gender mainstreaming?

The concept of mainstreaming has developed out of a historical background of efforts to advance equality for women. In 1970, Ester Boserup used data and information on development projects in Third World countries to highlight the differential impact on women and men of development and modernisation strategies. Responding to this, liberal feminists in the United States advocated the use of legal and administrative reform to ensure that women and their concerns would be better integrated into economic systems. This led to the development of the women in development (WID) approach, based on the rationale that women constituted a large untapped resource which should be recognised as being potentially valuable in economic development.

The thinking behind the WID approach was strongly affected by the 'trickle down' and 'human capital' development theories of the 1960s and 1970s. These theories were based on the assumption that heavy investment in education systems and in the development of highly trained workers and managers would result in the transformation of 'backward', predominantly agricultural societies, into ones which were industrialised and modernised. The resultant improvements in living conditions, wages, health services, and education would then lead to a 'trickle down' effect in all sectors of the society, and it was assumed that women and men would benefit equally from these changes.

This assumption began to be questioned in the 1970s, however, as the relative position of women over the two decades of modernisation had not only shown very little improvement, but had actually declined in some sectors. In most countries, women's enrolment in educational institutions, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, was not as high as men's. As new agricultural technologies were developed and introduced, their use was usually directed at men rather than women, despite the fact that many women were involved in agricultural production. And in the formal industrialised sector, women were usually found in low-skill, low-wage, repetitive jobs, which in some cases threatened their health. This was partly due to their low levels of education, but also to the belief that they were not the primary wage earners for their families. Gradually, it became widely recognised that women's experience of

development was different from that of men, and research began to focus on women's views, opinions and experiences.

Initially, intervention programmes were designed using the women in development (WID) approach; providing services or introducing technologies which would reduce the workloads of women, so that they could participate more in educational and other opportunities offered by society. Very little work was done to try and determine *why* women had not benefited as much as men in the development process. There was an acceptance of the existing structures within society and an avoidance of any questioning of, or challenge to the origins of women's subordination. The WID approach also focused on sex as an analytical category without simultaneously examining the effects of race, class and culture; and the potential for, and actual discrimination and exploitation of women by women.

An alternative to the WID approach was offered in the 1980s: the gender and development (GAD) approach. This approach questioned the previous tendency to view women's problems in terms of their sex, i.e. their biological distinctions from men, rather than in terms of their gender, i.e. the social relationship between men and women in which women have been subordinated and oppressed. The GAD approach also emphasises the importance of taking into consideration class/caste and race/ethnic distinctions as these relate to gender. There is, however, the recognition that the concept of patriarchy – the process whereby societal power is generally invested in men, and the various structures of society consistently assign inferior and/or secondary roles to women – operates within as well as across classes/races to subordinate women.

The GAD approach supports the WID view that women should be given the opportunity to participate on equal terms in all aspects of life, but its primary focus is to examine the gender relations of power at all levels in society, so that interventions can bring about equality and equity between women and men in all spheres of life. The state is expected to assist in this process of promotion of women's emancipation, and has been called upon, for example, to assume the responsibility of facilitating women's participation in the productive sphere by providing social services such as child care, which women in many countries provide on a voluntary or private basis. The GAD approach also places strong emphasis on legal reform.

It has been noted that planning using the WID approach is much more popular than gender planning because it is less threatening (Moser, 1993). The WID approach is, however, an 'add-on' rather than an integrative approach to the issue. In the GAD approach, women are viewed as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development assistance. The intervention strategies of a GAD perspective do not seek merely to integrate women into ongoing developmental initiatives; they seek to bring about structural change and shifts in power relationships, and in so doing, to eliminate gender biases at all levels.

Mainstreaming gender in the education sector

Key issues and challenges involved in engendering the education sector incorporate both WID and GAD perspectives. These issues include:

- ◆ obtaining a clear quantitative picture of gender roles and ratios in various levels and areas of the educational system using gender disaggregated data;
- ◆ identifying possible factors related to any gender gaps and inequalities identified, and planning for the elimination of these factors;
- ◆ assessing the special educational needs, immediate and practical as well as long term and strategic, of girls and boys, women and men, and planning specifically to meet these needs; and

- ◆ ensuring that women and men share equitably in the designing, planning, decision-making, management, administration and delivery of education, and also benefit equitably in terms of access, participation and the allocation of resources.

Whereas a WID approach addresses some of women's needs, it does little to break down existing stereotypes and male-oriented cultural patterns. Most authorities have difficulty accepting gender as an important planning issue. This has been attributed to the fact that, although in many countries, women's bureaux and ministries have been established, the decision-making processes are still largely male-dominated and gender-blind. When gender planning does take place, it still tends to be an 'add-on' type of activity, and also perpetuates gender stereotypes (Moser, 1989).

It is important in planning policies and strategies for mainstreaming gender in the education system, therefore, to consider the theoretical bases from which development projects for women originate – the shift in emphasis from women in development to gender and development has the potential for more efficient use of development resources, and greater long term benefits, since a major objective of the GAD approach is ensuring that women are empowered to affect development planning and implementation.

The process of mainstreaming gender thus includes:

- ◆ questioning the underlying paradigm on which the national policy, goals and objectives have been based;
- ◆ joint programming with other development entities, including other government ministries and departments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations (IGOs and NGOs);
- ◆ aligning with other entities' priorities, activities and critical issues;
- ◆ placing gender-sensitive women (and men) in strategic positions in policy-setting and decision-making;
- ◆ making women visible in all data; and
- ◆ providing training in gender analysis, methodology and awareness.

These are important elements in the mainstreaming of gender in education, which will be guided by overall national goals, objectives and priorities, but should specifically seek to:

- ◆ make explicit the importance of gender along with race/ethnicity and social class/caste as a factor for consideration in the process of education;
- ◆ ensure gender equity in access both generally, and in relation to studies which lead to better careers and job opportunities;
- ◆ overcome structural barriers, whether they be legal, economic, political, or cultural which may influence the access and/or participation of either sex in educational offerings;
- ◆ increase the awareness of the active role which women can and do play in development; and
- ◆ increase the participation of women in decision-making in the management and implementation of education.