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Processes for Mainstreaming Gender in Public Service Personnel Management

Gender Analysis

The first stage in the process of mainstreaming in public service personnel management involves a gender-based analysis of the existing situation. Timely and reliable statistics are the foundation of sound gender analysis. Without adequate, reliable and valid statistical descriptions, inequities can be perpetuated. For example, the role of women in decision-making positions in an organisation's functioning is generally less well recognised than the role of men. Without accurate sex-disaggregated data, the individual contributions of women in the public sector tend to remain invisible.

Qualitative gender analysis involves asking questions about women's and men's life experiences in all aspects of political, public and private life, and about how and why the current situation has arisen. Such analysis is complementary to, and to some extent dependent upon, quantitative analysis involving the use of statistical information.

Gender-sensitive indicators

A *gender-sensitive indicator* is defined as a piece of statistical information on some aspect of women's lives, status or situation vis-à-vis that of men, and on how that situation is changing over time. Such indicators are necessary tools for measuring progress towards attaining the objective of gender equality and ensuring that the benefits of development are shared equitably. It is important to ensure that government collectors of statistics, both in a central statistical agency and in specific sectors, develop and gather indicators on a gender-aware basis.

Indicators can be used, for example, to determine how women and men are recruited in the public service – at which level and in what numbers relative to each other. Research should be carried

out to account for any discrepancies in accession rates. The indicators should also show women and men's promotion rates in the different grades, and the reasons for discrepancies. Data on women should also be disaggregated according to marital status, so as to determine whether there are fewer married women in certain grades and, if so, why. Qualitative research would help to delineate whether the heavy workload of home, office, and extra-curricular activities militates against women's promotional or accession rates.

Women should be seen not as a homogenous group but as reflecting the diversity of the entire national population. Therefore, data should also be disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, class and disability in order to reveal the differential impact on women's lives not only of their gender but also of these other characteristics.

The first step is to obtain comprehensive sex-disaggregated data on the personnel of the public service at all levels including senior management, middle management, and professional, technical and support staff. This will reveal whether and where there are gender inequities and will assist the identification of strategies to correct the imbalances. The tendency is often for senior management to be dominated by men, and the lower echelons by women. However, this is changing in some countries and it is necessary to be aware of country-specific circumstances in determining appropriate strategies to advance gender equity and equality.

Based on the above analysis, the next step is to identify who the decision-makers are in public service management, ensure that women are well represented among their number, and that all, women and men, are experienced and/or trained in gender issues. Targets should be set to achieve this within a specified time frame.

It is also important to undertake a sex-disaggregated survey of the status of women and men in the broader society over an extended period of time, according to basic indicators of health, education, income, and political and economic participation. From this it is possible to identify the major areas of gender inequality, the historical reasons for these, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the advancement of gender equality and equity. Data should again be disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, class and disability.

Policy analysis

Existing personnel policies should be examined from a gender perspective to determine whether they are conducive to gender equality and equity. A useful approach to analysing government policies is to determine whether they are gender-neutral, gender-specific or gender-aware/redistributive/transformational, as follows:

- ◆ 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/transformational 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, 1994).

In addition, a process of gender analysis should be initiated or supported on the part of each of the core and line ministries in terms of their broader sectoral policies, and how these impact on men and women in different ways.

Once these gender analyses have been carried out, new personnel policies need to be developed to address existing gender imbalances. And the policy development processes of core and line ministries need to be carried out with an awareness of the gender implications of specific sectoral policy options.

Sectoral analyses

The mainstreaming of gender in government involves putting into place a visible mechanism to co-ordinate and monitor the

implementation of gender-related sectoral platforms of action which target critical areas of concern. Sectoral plans can then be consolidated into national action plans.

Major policy directions, prioritised goals, developed strategies and action plans for each sector must be included in gender-related development plans. This will ensure implementation of a gender-based approach. The public service can take a role in encouraging other related ministries to incorporate gender dimensions in their structures, policies and programmes. It is particularly important that this is done in the core ministries of finance, development planning and justice.

Legal framework: The legal framework that affects personnel management in the public service may include constitutional provisions (such as those concerning the public service commission) as well as particular pieces of legislation such as a Public Service Act or similar legal document. Often, this legal framework provides a general context and set of guiding principles under which particular policies regarding personnel management are developed by the government of the day.

The legal framework should be examined to determine to what extent it is or is not conducive to gender equality. Normally, a gender-positive law or principle is one which makes specific reference to gender equality or to prohibiting discrimination. Laws and principles that are silent on gender issues are not necessarily gender-neutral, but may serve to perpetuate gender inequities.

Where the legal framework is found to be wanting, efforts should be made towards constitutional reform or to a change in existing legislation. In many Commonwealth countries where public service reform programmes are under way, the Public Service Act or similar piece of legislation is being completely rewritten in order to effect the necessary reforms. This offers a good opportunity for mainstreaming gender issues into the new legislation. Public service commissions, central personnel departments and women's bureaux can take a lobbying and advocacy role to ensure that this happens.

Another important dimension of the legal framework is the administration of justice, in terms of both civil and criminal law. Issues with a critical gender dimension in these areas include:

- ◆ violence against women, including domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, coerced prostitution and trafficking in women, the sexual exploitation of the girl-child and sexual assault;
- ◆ laws regarding sexual harassment;
- ◆ the treatment of rape victims by police and other authorities;
- ◆ women's access to land and resources; and
- ◆ the rights of married women as compared to those of their husbands.

The ratification and implementation of international human rights agreements such as CEDAW is an important element of a national legal framework that is conducive to gender equality.

Macroeconomic policies: These are often seen as gender-neutral, but in fact impact on women and men in sometimes radically different ways. Gender mainstreaming means ensuring the participation of women as well as men in macroeconomic planning. Government should analyse, from a gender perspective, the overall impact of the economic structural adjustment programmes, especially in the public service where the reduction of numbers is proposed, and in the restructuring of public expenditures where gender equality and equity can be compromised.

Gender budgeting and gender accounting are processes that identify and monitor the flow of financial resources to determine their differential impacts, with a view to ensuring equal benefits and access for both men and women. Initiatives of this kind have provided useful information on the gender implications of macroeconomic policies in Australia, South Africa, and elsewhere.

Initiatives are under way in a number of Commonwealth countries to integrate gender into the national budgetary process, reflecting the need to incorporate gender awareness into economic development efforts.

Development planning: Mainstream development theories, policies and strategies have tended to analyse poverty through a gender-blind or a gender-neutral lens. However, most approaches are in fact not neutral because they assume the male actor as standard and representative of the human race. Consequently, gender-neutral policies address women's lived experiences, needs, interests and constraints only to the extent to which they conform

to or overlap with the norms set by the male actor. Within the context of poverty analysis, this leads to misdiagnoses of poverty through the omission of its gendered dimensions.

Public service planners have come to realise that development goals will only be reached by securing the active economic involvement of women as well as men in a balanced way. Because women are mostly the poor, plans and goals should be women-oriented. This means women must be brought into the mainstream of economic development so that both women and men are in a position to play a productive role. Women's right to economic empowerment should be explicitly recognised in poverty alleviation programmes which should be integrated into overall economic planning.

Education: Advancing gender equality in the education sector is of strategic importance to the public service, since the education sector is preparing the political leaders and civil servants of tomorrow. A gender approach is particularly appropriate in this sector because, in some regions of the Commonwealth, girls are outperforming boys at secondary school, and more women than men are entering the lower ranks of the public service, while elsewhere it is women who are at a disadvantage. Gender analysis makes these differences visible.

Gender-sensitive indicators of enrolment rates in tertiary education (from where the public service accesses its recruitment input) need to be subjected to analysis to determine drop-out rates and the reasons for them, and appropriate policies designed in response. Pass rates by sex in various subjects and at various levels of education, and the socialisation and streaming of girls and boys into particular, often stereotyped subjects are areas of particular relevance.

Gender equity targets are frequently set only for managerial positions, ignoring the professional and technical fields. In some countries there are very few women in these fields at the entry level. The problem emanates partly from differential socialisation processes and partly from covert and overt biases in the education system. A closer look at the mechanism of recruitment into these fields should be undertaken. Collaboration is required between the public service and the education sector to examine the indicators of gender disparities and jointly devise strategies to promote greater gender equality and equity.

Policy Development

The process of policy development is changing. Governments have recognised the need for gender-aware policy development and are taking steps to ensure it. It is now harder for public officials to make policies based on data which is not gender-disaggregated without prior consultation with stakeholders, and to hand down solutions without prior discussion. Women have become more organised through activism and networking from the grassroots to the pinnacle of public services at the national level, and are demanding a greater degree of consultation on policy issues.

Setting gender targets

Commonwealth Heads of Government have endorsed a target of not less than 30 per cent women in decision-making in the political, public and private spheres by the year 2005¹. The Beijing Platform for Action targets a 50 per cent figure of women holding managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000. Individual governments committed to gender mainstreaming will also set their own targets, consistent with national circumstances and priorities. Public service commissions and central personnel offices will play a vital role both in setting national targets and in co-ordinating, overseeing and monitoring their implementation.

Personnel management policies should reflect these targets and set up specific mechanisms for their realisation. A broad-based approach is needed that takes into account the multiple dimensions and complexities of the issues being dealt with. Targets should be as specific as possible, e.g., not just '35 per cent of staff should be women', but '35 per cent of senior managers at grades x – y, in z ministry, should be women by the year 2000'.

In setting targets for gender equity it is important to take into account current circumstances, and aim for a realistic, achievable target. More will be accomplished by realising a relatively modest goal than by setting a wide range of far-reaching targets and failing to meet any of them.

Gender-Related Policy Issues in Personnel Management

In mainstreaming gender into public service personnel management, there are a number of policy issues that impinge upon the activities of the three main players:

Staffing and conditions of employment

Eliminating gender-based discrimination as regards pay: A policy of equal work for equal pay should be applied to eliminate gender-based differentials in pay within a specific job. A further step is the adoption of an approach whereby different jobs of comparable worth are rewarded with equal pay, since they are of equal value to the employer. This will help to correct pay differentials between different jobs that are seen as gender-specific (i.e., for men only or for women only) – a major source of the gender ‘wage gap’. Encouraging women to enter fields traditionally reserved for men, and vice versa, will further help to redress this imbalance (IDLL, 1996: 3.3.1).

Ensuring an adequate gender balance in decision-making roles: the Commonwealth has set the target of at least 30 per cent women in decision-making positions in government by the year 2005. Governments that are already near that target are urged to aim for a 50-50 gender balance in decision-making.

In order to achieve this, governments should take active measures to encourage women to apply for senior and decision-making posts (positive action) and, where possible and consistent with the merit principle, hire women into these posts (affirmative action). Job specifications should be gender-sensitive and not assume, for example, that the incumbent will be male (IDLL, 1996: 3.3.4).

In many countries, recruitment policies tend to exclude women from certain jobs and this exclusion is exacerbated by male bias manifested in the composition of selection panels. A male-dominated interview panel may apply excessive scrutiny and pressure to women and expect them to perform better than their male counterparts. Therefore it is important to ensure that the decision-makers on matters of hiring and promotion (including interview boards) include a fair and representative number of women and gender-aware people.

Criticism has been levelled at the use of seniority as a criterion for promotion in the public service, as opposed to the application of the merit principle. Historically, women have not had education and experience at the same level as men in most countries, so the use of seniority as a criterion for promotion exercises discrimination against them. With the current programmes of public service reform, the tendency is to abandon seniority in favour of

the merit principle; nevertheless, care needs to be taken through the various stages of promotion – suitability boards, interviewing and short listing panels – to obviate the use of seniority to the detriment of merit.

The broadening of career paths, so that women may move from one path to another without loss of seniority or other penalties, will help to facilitate the movement of women into job areas traditionally reserved for men, and vice versa (IDLL, 1996: 3.3.2).

Determining equitable conditions of employment: The terms and conditions relating to public service employment may include provisions that discriminate against women or that fail to recognise differentials in the life courses and experiences of women and men. Allowance must be made for the fact that women in the workplace often carry a double load: their employment and their family responsibilities, which can include housework, pregnancy, child-bearing and child care (IDLL, 1996: 2.1). Terms and conditions which ignore such differentials may well be discriminatory. Pension benefits are another area in which there may be discrimination: the question of whether women and men receive the same levels of benefits from the pensions policy should be addressed.

Efforts should be made by the central personnel agency to provide on-site child-care facilities for the children of working mothers. Working hours should be sufficiently flexible to allow mothers to schedule their working day in harmony with school or other arrangements for their children, and to allow fathers to carry out these tasks as well (IDLL, 1996: 2.3).

Discipline

Ensuring disciplinary measures are devised and applied equitably: Care should be taken that codes of conduct do not contain 'hidden' discrimination, for example by applying a double standard in codes of behaviour or by imposing more severe penalties for misconduct in job areas normally occupied by women.

Eliminating sexual harassment: Many women face gender-based harassment at their workplace. This contributes to creating a working environment that is not welcoming to women. Codes of conduct for the public service should include the prohibition of and penalties for sexual and other forms of gender-based harassment.

Training and capacity building

Training in the public service has two distinct gender dimensions. The first has to do with building the capacity for gender analysis, planning and policy development, and gender-aware management and decision-making. The second has to do with access to career-related training in diverse fields; women and men do not always have equal access to training opportunities, and may suffer impediments to career choice and advancement as a result.

Gender awareness training: In mainstreaming gender in the public service, it is necessary as a first priority to ensure that the key decision-makers at senior levels are gender-sensitive. Gender awareness training should therefore be provided for the Permanent Secretaries of all core and line ministries (except of course those who have already received such training or who are conversant and experienced in dealing with gender issues). It is particularly important that the heads of such core ministries as Finance, Planning, Personnel and Justice are gender-sensitive.

Gender awareness skills should be a requirement for all those in management positions. Gender training is a means of building a critical mass of women (and men) imbued with gender-related skills and knowledge, both for use in their own professional responsibilities and to impart to others who are thus likewise empowered to become agents for change.

The ultimate goal is to raise the level of gender awareness of as many staff as possible, particularly those in key decision-making roles. However, in devising and running gender awareness training programmes, the principle of 'less is more' should be borne in mind: rather than attempting to achieve full gender awareness and equity throughout the public service overnight, training should incorporate an understanding of the prevailing socio-cultural environment and should be tailored to specific, realistic goals and targets.

The training of trainers is another important strategy to maximise the propagation of gender awareness throughout the public service. In some countries, there is potential for the training division within the public service to organise courses in gender sensitivity and gender analysis in collaboration with centres for gender and development at institutes of higher education.

Ensuring equity in the availability of training options: It is important to ensure that women and men receive equal opportunities for training – including on-the-job training – to ensure that they are equally competitive in their respective fields. Training is a particularly useful indicator of progress towards gender equality and equity since it is readily accountable, in terms of expenditures, time, number of women and men being trained, and level of skills or knowledge being imparted.

The training should itself be gender-sensitive. For example, women who are receiving management training may benefit from training in specific areas like leadership and assertiveness and in understanding the values that permeate male-dominated areas of society and of the public service. Part of the process of mainstreaming gender in the public service entails questioning the prevalent values and behaviours regarding gender.

Establishing partnerships with NGOs and the academic community: Women's non-governmental organisations can be a useful resource and partner in gender mainstreaming. Networking and active dialogue with such organisations and with the academic community will provide valuable input on such questions as providing gender awareness training, the development of gender-aware personnel management and sectoral policies, and making equal use of the existing capacities, skills and knowledge of women and men in the national context.

Incentives and sanctions

As public services move from a regulative to a performance-based approach, the scope is enlarged for applying incentives to encourage gender mainstreaming and/or sanctions on managers who practice gender discrimination.

Incentives for good performance: Once targets have been set for advancing gender equality, managers who achieve those targets can be rewarded through an established and credible performance appraisal system. These rewards do not necessarily have to be financial; in fact, research suggests that recognition and feedback may be more effective than money as motivators (Jorm, Hunt and Manning, 1996: 40).

Non-financial rewards can include certificates, awards of merit and medals or pins. For such awards to maintain credibility, they should

indicate that recognition of good performance has come from the highest levels, namely the President's or Prime Minister's Office, or the minister of the relevant department (Jorm, Hunt and Manning, 1996: 42).

Sanctions for practising discrimination: If managers practise gender-based discrimination or fail to implement an equal employment opportunities policy, a first step would be to determine the cause of the discrimination or failure. Is the manager gender-aware? If not, could the situation be improved through gender-awareness training? Ultimately, such discrimination or failure could result in other sanctions, such as transference to another post, reduction in grade level, or disciplinary action (Jorm, Hunt and Manning, 1996: 47).

Equal employment opportunities policy

The best way to ensure that the above issues are addressed is through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive Equal Employment Opportunities policy.

Policy Appraisal

Policy appraisal is the term given to the analysis of proposed or existing policy before implementation. Gender-based policy appraisal entails assessing the differential impact of policies and programmes on women and men. Some of the questions that can be asked in the process of a gender-based policy appraisal are as follows:

- ◆ How many and which women and men have been consulted about this policy and at what levels?
- ◆ How many and which women and men are included in its implementation?
- ◆ How many and which women and men will benefit from this policy, and by how much?
- ◆ Does this policy have deleterious effects on women or men?
- ◆ How should this policy be changed to correct any imbalances?
- ◆ How does this policy advance the government's overall objectives and international commitments regarding equality and equity between women and men?
- ◆ What obstacles might prevent women's equitable participation in the policy and an equitable outcome for women? How can these obstacles be overcome?

Gender Action Plan

The outcome of a gender-based appraisal of personnel management policies should be a plan of action to mainstream gender within the public service. The plan could include the following:

- ◆ action to realise established targets for numbers of women in decision-making positions in the public service;
- ◆ action to eliminate gender-based discrimination in matters of appointments, promotions, pay, conditions of employment and disciplinary procedures;
- ◆ action to provide gender awareness training where needed, especially for heads of department in the core ministries, line department heads, managers and decision-makers throughout the public service;
- ◆ action to set up institutional structures for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in all core and line ministries (for example, a Gender Management System) and to supervise and monitor the functioning of these structures;
- ◆ action to ensure that gender issues are integrated in the development of core and sectoral work plans and budget allocations;
- ◆ action to establish or strengthen working partnerships between the public service and women's non-governmental organisations;
- ◆ action to establish or improve monitoring and reporting systems, to ensure that information on gender issues is timely and accurate; and
- ◆ action to provide incentives to, and/or impose sanctions on, government departments to encourage a full implementation of plans for gender equality.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Once the plan has been implemented, it is of course necessary to determine how successful it has been and draw lessons from it for the next planning cycle. Monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of policies offer opportunities for further improving policy through feedback using statistical and economic analyses. These analyses can take various forms: cost/benefit analysis, impact assessment, and mechanisms for quantitative and qualitative progress measurement.

The basic tools of these analyses are similar to those used in the gender analysis and project appraisal phases of the cycle; they include the use of gender-sensitive indicators complemented by qualitative research and analysis to account for differences and disparities in gender issues. Thus the monitoring and evaluation phase of one policy cycle feeds directly into the initial analysis phase of the next cycle.

Internal and External Communications

An efficient and reliable communications system is of vital importance in undertaking a process of gender mainstreaming. Communications channels serve two important functions:

- ◆ They provide a means of monitoring and evaluating progress; accurate data on current circumstances is necessary for the development of effective policy options for the future.
- ◆ They provide a means of communicating changes in policy, both internally within government and also externally to the broader civil society; this is essential, in the first instance, for the effective implementation of the policy, and secondly for reasons of transparency, public awareness and acceptance.

Notes

- 1 This was the target set at the 1996 Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The target was endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their 1997 summit in Edinburgh.