CONCEPT ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 3
Conceptualization of Gender Mainstreaming ..................................................................................... 3
   Tools and methods ............................................................................................................................ 4
Challenges ............................................................................................................................................. 5
Recommendations ............................................................................................................................... 5
Introduction

Gender Mainstreaming is the one most essential part and sign of good developmental governance as it seeks to ensure that a government, policies, programs and projects respond to the needs and interests of all members of the society and distributes benefits equitably between women and men.

The gender mainstreaming concept is based on the understanding that women and men have different life experiences, different needs, and priorities and are affected differently by policies and programs implemented. Gender mainstreaming essentially implies changing the way governments and organizations operate so that the complexities and differences between men' and women' experiences, needs and priorities are equally valued, automatically considered and addressed. Henceforth, incorporating the elements of a mainstreaming within an institution's developmental agenda and program cycles can show significant changes at all levels, in all sectors, at all stages.

It is worth noting that gender mainstreaming is not simply about integrating or including women in development agendas decided by others. This necessitates a transformative process. Indeed, it may come under the disguise of changes in goals, strategies and actions where both women and men can influence participate and benefit from the development process. This may also include changes in organizational structures, within procedures and cultures to create a conducive environment, for the change to occur, towards the promotion of gender equality and achievement of broad-based gender equality throughout society.

The core element of mainstreaming Gender is cognizant of the fact that gender equality issues can exist at all levels, in all sectors, and involves all members of the society. Nevertheless, the most important aim of this concept is to affect the entire mainstreaming process so as to ensure that it is flexible and responsive enough in an environment for and to all members of the society, both men and women to achieve its desired objective of equality and development of the society at large.

Conceptualization of Gender Mainstreaming

Within an institution, the Gender Mainstreaming concept or approach requires that all its bodies consider a gender perspective in their work and take measures to ensure that gender disparities are not made worse off by policies and programs, and strategies put in place on the contrary with the view of promoting gender equality.

This conceptualization lies upon the understanding that broad-based gender equality can only be achieved when the mainstream approach is operating in a gender-responsive and conducive manner. At its core, the main responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming approach is system-wide and is initiated from the highest level.
In so doing, the following basic principles of Gender Mainstreaming are to be followed as cornerstone of the system:

- Understanding the different roles, responsibilities, experiences, needs and inequalities between women and men in relation to the issues being addressed;
- Identifying opportunities in order to actively involve women as well as men in the consultation process and acting based on women's as well as men's priority concerns;
- Identifying strategies to reduce gender disparities and promote gender equality.
- Keeping in mind the assumption that issues or problems are seldom neutral from a gender equality perspective;
- Clear and supportive political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resource where necessary, are crucial to implement the envisioned commitment of the organization in various forms holistically into the different sectors, works, structure and personnel;
- Efforts must be made to broaden women’s equitable participation and decision-making across all levels;
- Mainstreaming does not replace the importance of targeted women-specific policies and programs and positive legislation nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.

Tools and methods

Subsequently, it is essential to associate key relevant tools and methods in the process of implementing a Gender Mainstreaming approach. The major tools and methods for gender mainstreaming may include:

- Gender awareness and continuous gender sensitivity training programs;
- Gender analysis which identifies the underlying causes of the differences between men and women in access to and in terms of control over resources, over participation in decision making and benefits, and the direct and indirect impact of policies, programs and projects;
- Engaging and participating in discussions on gender issues i.e. opening workshops, chairing panels, sponsoring discussions. Speaking out assertively about what needs to change and how to do it to achieve gender equality, especially in the face of resistance towards gender equality.
- Supporting policy advocacy, dialogue and activities on gender issues, e.g. raising it regularly in discussions with representatives of organizations and liaising with all stakeholders
- Interdepartmental collaboration and joint efforts shall profoundly be encouraged for successful eventuality.
To this effect, it is important to remain cognizant of the fact that Gender Mainstreaming and the above mentioned tools and methods should be implemented at two levels i.e. Systems and operational levels: At a systems level, gender issues should be considered within the organizational goals, objectives, staff balance/ HR, organizational culture, technical capacity, policies, guidelines, procedures, structure and management. At operational level, the main focus lies upon program/ projects with special and specific attention on addressing needs, participation and equitable benefit of both women and men from the development programs.

**Challenges**

During the implementation stages of a gender mainstreaming approach, many distinct challenges are often encountered as per the unique context of each approach and environment. However, some of the key challenges often encountered are summed as below:

- Inadequate commitment and willingness to gender mainstreaming which must be enforced at the higher level;
- Lack of consideration of gender balance as one of the core values of the organization;
- Lack of constant communication with focal point or responsible department for women affairs in regional, national or local offices;
- Under representation of women in decision making and leadership positions;
- Inadequate contribution by the middle and higher management to the sectoral goals of gender equality;
- Lack of adequate responsibility and accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming;
- Gaps between the policy and practical aspects of gender equality in the sector;
- Inadequate gender mainstreaming component within plans and budgets.
- Inadequate participation of women in different committees across all spheres of the society.

**Recommendations**

In order to remedy the above challenges, the following mechanisms are meaningful solutions in:

- Providing recognition to personnel for innovation, best practice and achievements related to gender equality approaches and strategies.
- Integrating gender mainstreaming issues and perspectives into speeches and statements on arrange of subjects and not reserving comments on this theme purely for gender and/or women-specific occasions.
- Conduct surveys, studies, guidelines and checklists for the programming aspect of the strategy
• Medium and long term Gender Budgeting and Gender Audits which analyze resource allocation, ownership in terms assets or shares of the directed toward meeting the needs of women and men, and report the extent to which government agencies match their commitment to Gender Mainstreaming with concrete financial allocations to address gender and women’s issues.

• Database consolidation: Sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics that collects and presents individual data divided for women and men, boys and girls and provides specific data on emerging gender issues;

• Gender indicators and indexes such as the gender and developmental index, gender empowerment measure, which enable progress toward gender equality to be monitored and the impact of particular approaches and strategies to be measured;

• Monitoring and Evaluation. Periodic assessment which helps provides feedback to the implementation of the gender mainstreaming objectives, and tests it relevance in the face of dynamic local conditions. The monitoring and evaluation can be focused both on the implementation, as a process, or on its results.

Specific to the sector of educational institutions and curricula, the following recommendations can be employed:

• Reviewing of academic curricula so as to enable further integration of gender-sensitive curricula. As gender cuts across all areas of social sciences (i.e Sociology, Psychology, Social work, Philosophy, Political Science and Law) this can also be done through the inclusion of training courses and training programmes

• Encouraging and supporting interdisciplinary knowledge and mobility of lecturers at home and abroad

• Integration of Gender-sensitive courses with a focus on local problems and issues with the introduction of specialists to critically co-design gender mainstreaming programmes

• Creating a demand for women-targeted programmes and projects by creating an university grant /award system

• Ensuring the adequacy of the curricula, with funds and competent staff by promoting gender transformative approaches in terms of pedagogy

• Adopting a quota system in enrolments for study programs

• Introduction of ICT technologies to enable best practices knowledge transfer and adaptation

• Many argue that other more subtle factors that influence gender mainstreaming can also include drivers such as school organization on the basis of sex; the general content of ideas, values and knowledge suitable for transmission to students in school; the illustrations of men and women roles depicted in textbook manuals and tests; perceptions and attitudes from parents career counselling and employers; the inclusion of girls at risk (pregnant ladies)within a school curricula that meets their needs; and the informal interaction amongst students.