

**DAC SOURCE BOOK ON  
CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES LINKED TO  
GENDER EQUALITY**

## Introduction

The DAC Expert Group on Women in Development, (renamed the DAC Working Party on Gender Equality in 1998) has drawn together a set of practical guidelines for advancing the goals identified by the OECD Development Assistance Committee<sup>1</sup> and by the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The DAC *Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Co-operation* (1998) draw on lessons of experience and incorporate illustrations of improved efficiency, effectiveness and coherence in development co-operation. In the course of preparing those guidelines, the authors developed a valuable set of definitions of key concepts and approaches which guide and deepen the reader's understanding of gender equality issues and how to address them. These have been compiled into the *DAC Source Book on Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality*.

There are two basic sections in the document. The first contains a number of discussions by topic (in alphabetical order). Each entry is divided into three sections:

***Discussion:*** A brief presentation of key issues, questions and themes.

***See also:*** A list of other relevant topics in the source book.

***References:*** A list of documents is included to encourage readers to make use of the growing literature coming from gender equality advocates, academics and development co-operation agencies themselves. We've restricted the list of references to include only those available from DAC members and published sources.

The second section provides sample references by theme with no discussion.

*Please note that this Source Book is not comprehensive, and the lists of references are merely indicative. Documents may have been produced that are not listed here.*

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1. This publication is available at the following internet address: <http://www.oecd.org/dac>

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**SECTION I**  
**DISCUSSION AND REFERENCES**

# Accountability

## *Discussion*

### **Background**

The slow implementation of gender equality policies has raised questions about why and how staff in development co-operation organisations can regard some policies as important and other policies as optional. This apparent “hierarchy of policies” has prompted analysts to call for stronger accountability structures to ensure that staff actually implement policy and carry through on commitments their government and agencies have made to women’s equality.

Yet accountability is proving to be a complex and difficult concept. Although people generally agree on the need for accountability, it is often difficult to sort out precisely what that means in practice.

### **Issues**

In the ongoing discussion of accountability several issues emerge. First there are issues relating to accountability within development co-operation organisations:

- ◆ **Accountability is linked to the existence of institutional targets and objectives** relating to gender equality. In order for staff to be held accountable for policy implementation, a clear plan with measurable objectives is essential. Without this type of plan, it is unclear what people are being held accountable for.

At least one organisation has experimented with including progress on equality issues in annual staff performance appraisals. In practice, however, the experiment did not live up to its expected potential as it was difficult to assess progress and give equality issues a high profile in the broad staff evaluation process where many other issues were in play.

- ◆ **Leadership is a key factor in ensuring accountability.** Numerous analysts point to the clear need for leadership within agencies on gender equality issues. If leadership is clearly disinterested in progress on equality issues, it is highly unlikely that policy will go beyond a rhetorical stage.

Yet defining what type of leadership is effective can be difficult. It is not enough for senior management to state that equality is an important issue for the agency. They must demonstrate that it is important through allocating resources, raising equality issues in other policy discussions and demanding progress from senior staff. According to Kardam (1995: 20), “leadership is a matter of entrepreneurship; it involves a combination of imagination in inventing institutional options and skill in brokering the interest of numerous actors to line up support for such options.”

- ◆ **Accountability on equality issues will be difficult to establish if accountability is weak throughout the organisation.** It is unrealistic to expect staff to be “held accountable” for the implementation of a general equality policy, there are few other issues for which they are also accountable. There is hope that the movement toward “results” or performance-based management will assist in the process.

Second, there are issues relating to a broader discussion of accountability that asks who development co-operation agencies and other institutions are accountable to and why, to date, have they generally failed to be accountable to the needs and interests of women.

- ◆ Kardam (1995) and Ford-Smith (1989) have raised the issue of **uneven power between beneficiaries of development co-operation programmes and the agencies themselves.** They point out that in many cases, accountability is not generally directed toward the beneficiaries, but rather to the donors and their domestic political masters. Kardam points out the agency staff are rarely rewarded for being responsive to local conditions. In another example, Ford-Smith points to a specific example of the consequences of this power relationship for the Jamaican women’s theatre collective Sistren:

“Relations with international agencies helped us to survive a very difficult period. They helped us to expand and increase our contact with men and women in Jamaica and around the world. At the same time they had an enormous impact on both the kind of work we did and our own internal administration. Perhaps two of the most important aspects of what Sistren purported to be doing, namely providing a service for a constituency of Jamaican women and building a self-help organisation that would allow its members to improve their lives, were undermined by the structures and requirements of the relations with funders. The demands of the agencies withdrew energy from the group that could have been used in directly addressing the question of accountability both within Sistren and between Sistren and the women it served. It cushioned us from having to face the precariousness of our situation economically and the importance of defining and building our responsibility to our constituency through programming with clear and consistent goals. (68-9)”

- ◆ In the long-term, accountability of state structures to women’s demands and interests will only be ensured through a **strong, independent women’s movement that can hold elected politicians accountable** through the ballot box and that can articulate clear policy options. Despite numerous gains in this area in the past two decades, it has been pointed out that to date, the formal political process has not always recognised or supported women’s attempts to organise, articulate interests and advance new agendas. As Goetz (1995: 10) concludes: “what the unraveling of organisations shows is that there are many different points for positive interventions, but the social relations involved in public administration cannot be settled just by getting a structural blueprint right -- in the end, it is a matter of political struggle.”

## ***See Also***

Empowerment  
Participatory approaches

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# Empowerment

## *Discussion*

### **Background**

The term empowerment is found throughout development co-operation policies, documents and information publications. Yet, definitions are rare, and indicators to measure progress toward empowerment even rarer.

#### **Beijing Declaration**

Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace. (para 13)

Rather than attempt to develop the ultimate definition of empowerment that is agreeable to all and applicable in all situations, this note highlights aspects of the discussion on women's empowerment that are useful to those working in development co-operation.

### **Issues**

- ◆ Empowerment is not something that can be done by outsiders “to” people. Development co-operation initiatives are overly ambitious and doomed to fail if they seek to “empower women.” Instead, these programmes can help to create the conditions whereby women can become the agents of their own development and empowerment.
- ◆ A key aspect of empowerment is women's participation in formal political structures. This was recognised in one of the critical areas of concern in the *Beijing Platform for Action*, “women in power and decision-making”. When they signed this document, governments agreed to :
  - take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making; and
  - increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.
- ◆ According to one definition of an empowerment approach, it “questions some of the fundamental assumptions concerning the interrelationship between power and development... it seeks to identify power less in terms of domination over others (with its implicit assumption that a gain for women implies a loss for men), and more in terms of the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength.” (Moser, 1993:74). Other definitions of empowerment push further, arguing that empowerment for women implies the “radical alteration of the processes and structures which reproduce women's subordinate position as a gender.” (Young, 1993).
- ◆ NGOs and women's organisations also assume a prominent place in many discussions of empowerment. Given the emphasis on women's own awareness, capacity development

and collective articulation of interests, NGOs appear to offer more potential to support this process than do state institutions. However, as Moser (1993) argues, NGOs and women's organisations too have their weaknesses and it is important to differentiate between different organisations and understand their strengths and limitations in this process.

- ◆ A useful concept introduced into the discussion of empowerment by Kate Young (1993:157) is that of transformatory potential.

The crucial element in transformatory thinking is the need to transform women's position in such a way that the advance will be sustained. Equally important is that women should themselves feel that they have been the agents of the transformation, that they have won this new space for action themselves. But it is also important that they realise that each step taken in the direction of gaining greater control over their lives, will throw up other needs, other contradictions to be resolved in turn...

The assumption behind transformatory potential is that the process of women working together and solving problems on a trial and error basis, of learning by doing and also of learning to identify allies and forging alliances when needed, will lead to empowerment, both collective and individual.

- ◆ Although some definitions of empowerment tend to focus on strengthening women's economic independence (through increased income and greater individual self-reliance), a more useful approach appears to recognise the multiple roles and interests that women have and the interrelationships between them. Although there may be analytical gains to be made by dividing women's lives into different roles (for example: productive, reproductive and community managing - Moser, 1993), these pieces should always be put back together again to understand that women do not act and participate only as mothers or only as workers or only as activists mobilising to bring water infrastructure to their neighbourhood.

Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continuum of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components:

- Awareness building about women's situation, discrimination, and rights and opportunities as a step towards gender quality. Collective awareness of building provides a sense of group identity and the power of working as a group.
- Capacity building and skills development, especially the ability to plan, make decisions, organise, manage and carry out activities, to deal with people and institutions in the world around them.
- Participation and greater control and decision-making power in the home, community and society.
- Action to bring about greater equality between men and women.

In short, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action.

- Karl (1995: 14)

## ***See Also***

Men  
Participatory approaches  
Participatory development, democracy and good government  
Women's movement (international) (Section II)

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# Evolution of the Thinking and Approaches on Equality Issues

## *Discussion*

### **Evolution of thinking**

The evolution of thinking on equality issues in development co-operation was summarised in the OECD *Assessment of DAC Members' WID Policies and Programmes: Overall Report* as follows:

The experience gained since DAC Members first began to address women's participation in development has resulted in considerable evolution in thinking about how to conceptualise the issue and what might be required to achieve real change in the position of women. Initially analyses focused on women and their relation to the economy and development processes, and initiatives focused on compensatory measures to enable women to participate more fully. Theoretical and empirical research resulted in the development of another analytical framework that focused not on women but on the processes and relations that recreate and reinforce inequalities between women and men. Biological differences between women and men were distinguished from *gender differences*, that is, the different social meaning given to being either a man or a woman in a particular society. Emphasis was placed on the unequal *gender relations* that shape outcomes for both women and men. Questions were raised about the degree to which further integration into an unequal development process, without deeper questioning of the development agenda, would relieve the subordinate position of women. This resulted in increased emphasis on women's participation in *decision-making* and their *empowerment* to develop and pursue strategies to address their own situation and the direction of social change. (p. 29.)

It is now more widely recognised that:

- ◆ the problem is not women's integration in development, or their lack of skills, credit and resources, but the *social processes and institutions* that result in inequalities between women and men to the disadvantage of women;
- ◆ inequalities between women and men are not only a cost to women but to development as a whole, and thus must be conceived as societal and development issues rather than a "women's concern";
- ◆ there are political as well as technical aspects that must be taken into account in addressing inequalities: it is not only a matter of "adding women in" to existing processes and programmes, but of reshaping them to reflect the visions, interests and needs of women and to support gender equality.

### **Implications for approaches**

Some of the implications of this evolution of thinking for approaches taken by development co-operation agencies are summarised below.

- ◆ ***Emphasis on reshaping the mainstream rather than adding activities at the margin.***  
The mainstreaming strategy emphasized in the Beijing *Platform for Action* reflects a recognition that efforts to improve the situation of women through women-specific initiatives and women's components of larger projects meant that women's interests were not reflected in the overall objectives and activities of development initiatives. As a result, women continued to be bypassed in the allocation of most development resources and opportunities and initiatives had little impact on the structure of inequalities between women and men. Thus mainstreaming strategies direct attention at ensuring that mainstream activities are structured to provide an equitable distribution of opportunities and benefits to women and men, and to reduce gender disparities. Mainstreaming strategies also seek to ensure that the visions, interests and needs of women are reflected in the definition of development policies and strategies.
- ◆ ***Focus on equality as an objective rather than on women as a target group.***  
Approaches that focused on women as a target group led to some innovative and catalytic initiatives. However, in other cases these focused on activities for women as an end in themselves and were not related to either the social context or broader development objectives. Many women-specific initiatives were criticised for marginalising women or relegating their participation to isolated activities. A shift in focus to equality as an objective promotes closer scrutiny of women-specific initiatives to assess whether they contribute to equality between women and men. It also provides a framework within which to identify initiatives targeted at men or at institutional change as a means to move toward equality between women and men. With equality as a development objective, all policies and initiatives must be scrutinised for their impacts on disparities between women and men in access to resources, opportunities and ability to shape their future.
- ◆ ***Focus on the broader policy and institutional context as well as project initiatives.***  
Discussions of development co-operation efforts often note that the benefits or impacts of particular projects can be overshadowed by problems or changes in the broader policy or institutional environment. This is also the case with respect to equality concerns. For example, if macroeconomic strategies reduce the number of jobs and opportunities in sectors in which women predominate, this will have a much broader impact than any number of credit or income-generating projects. If national and local institutions lack the capacity to identify and address equality issues in developing policies and projects, action by development co-operation agencies within particular projects will remain isolated initiatives with limited long-term impact.
- ◆ ***Moving beyond responding to gender differences, and increasing attention to reducing gender disparities.*** Agencies have made major steps in identifying differences between women and men through various techniques for gender analysis. This has been an important step toward identifying strategies that take account of the activities of women and men respectively and provide opportunities and benefits to both. A further step that is now receiving more attention with the recognition of gender equality as a

strategic objective of development is the identification of opportunities to reduce gender inequalities and support progress toward more equal relations between women and men.

- ◆ ***More attention to women's organisations and networks, and the forces for change in partner countries.*** The views of women in the South have had a major impact on rethinking strategies for development and the situation of women. Women's organisations and networks are growing in number and increasingly effective in articulating the needs and interests of women. Development co-operation organisations can benefit from consultation with these organisations when undertaking analyses and dialogue on issues and problems to be addressed in country programmes and in programme formulation. Given the continued under-representation of women in decision-making institutions and processes in partner countries, women's organisations and networks can also benefit from support to further develop their opportunities and skills for research, lobbying, advocacy, and broader networking.
- ◆ ***More attention to men.*** Clearly women and men do not live in isolation from each other. Male and female gender identities, their activities and behaviour in the family and the public sphere, are highly interdependent. Equality strategies also need to consider the ways in which the gender identities of men affect women and the achievement of development goals. Efforts are also required to involve more men as partners and allies in formulating and pursuing strategies for more equal societies.

### ***See also***

Agency evaluations of WID strategies/policies (Section II)  
Empowerment  
Mainstreaming as an institutional strategy  
Men  
UN Conferences (Section II)

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# Gender Equality and Culture

## Discussion

### Background

One of the primary arguments raised against working toward more equal gender relations is that this constitutes interference in the domestic culture of partner countries. Development co-operation agencies have tried to avoid the charge that they are “imposing western feminism.” Although equality between women and men has been firmly recognised as a priority issue by the world’s governments (as evidenced by the Beijing *Platform for Action*), concerns about cultural interference are still raised at different levels.

It is often interesting to ask who is raising this specific objection to gender equality and why they are framing the issue in this fashion. Why is this argument mobilised to defend unequal gender relations but not used to argue against other changes currently taking place?

Why is it that challenging gender inequalities is seen as tampering with traditions of culture, and thus taboo, while challenging inequalities in terms of wealth and class is not?  
- Mehta (1991)

### Issues<sup>2</sup>

In responding to the assertion that support for efforts to achieve equality between women and men is culturally inappropriate, five principle counter-arguments can be mobilised:

- ◆ First, almost all development co-operation is about change of one sort or another: changing economic structures, changing farming practices, changing access to media, changing human rights practices. These all have an impact on culture.
- ◆ Second, development co-operation focuses on helping governments implement international commitments to gender equality they have already made (such as the Beijing *Platform for Action* and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - CEDAW).
- ◆ Third, there are growing demands for change from women in developing countries. The last decade has seen an explosion of women’s organisations and gender equality advocates. These women are articulating clear demands for change. It is no longer possible to argue that calls for equality come only from northern countries. Unfortunately, their voices are not always heard, by representatives of development co-operation agencies who do not seek these women out, or by the mainstream media of their own countries or by officials and politicians.

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2. This discussion is based on draft materials prepared for Sida’s Gender Equality Unit (Draft Think Piece on Gender and Gender Methodologies) by Beth Woroniuk, Johanna Schalkwyk and Helen Thomas. (1997)

- ◆ Fourth, there are many influences on culture. With an increasingly global economy and the international flow of products, media images, and cultural images, almost all cultures are in a state of change. Images shaping changes in gender identities flow not just from development programmes but from other sources as well, such as imported soap operas, Hollywood movies, pop music, and Coca-Cola commercials. Cultural images are also manipulated by religious and political movements. Whose culture are people referring to? Who has defined these elements as the crucial elements to be protected?
- ◆ Finally, a basic principle of development co-operation strategies on gender equality is to broaden decision-making processes so that women, as well as men, have full input into the definition of what is important and what needs should have priority. All too often the “cultural argument” is mobilised by men (both northern and southern) who are opposed to that basic goal.

Some women choose to ignore gender injustice. For example, many Zimbabwean women will state that it is ‘cultural’ for women to be subordinate to men. What is ‘cultural’ about a woman earning all the food through her sweat in the fields, and preparing that food for her husband and children to sustain them when the man is drinking the day away? Is it ‘cultural’ to be beaten to pulp and protect the man who has done it? The questions can go on and on -- there is a vast world literature on what women suffer in the name of culture. Attitudes towards women as being inferior and lesser human beings at all levels, are reinforced directly or indirectly in many complex ways. People who oppress others tend to share a belief in the own ‘natural’ superiority; it is actually ‘culture’ which justifies this belief. Many men think because they are male they have the right to own women and oppress them in all kinds of ways -- from owning them as part of their estate, to battering and raping women to show their dominance and humiliate them. - Chitsike (1995:20-21)

### ***See Also***

Accountability  
Empowerment  
Men  
Resistance

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# Gender Training

## *Discussion*

### **Background**

Gender training has been used extensively by DAC Member agencies and by NGOs (from developed and developing countries), multilateral organisations, and women's machineries. To date, gender training has had multiple purposes:

- ◆ generate support for WID/gender policies;
- ◆ provide agency staff with a common framework and vocabulary to facilitate discussion and policy implementation;
- ◆ provide agency staff with specific skills to use in programme design and implementation.

Numerous training models (for example, Overholt *et al.*, 1985; Moser, 1993; Williams, 1994; and Parker, 1993) were developed. Agencies modified the basic frameworks and developed agency-specific case studies. Two international conferences were held to share experience and advances in gender training (Rao, et al. 1991 & 1994).

### **Issues**

- ◆ It has been difficult to assess the effectiveness of gender training. Although it has been widely implemented, it has not been easy to correlate agency changes with training. Furthermore, it is also difficult to assess which type of training has been more effective.
- ◆ Agency-wide courses were an important first step in building support for gender equality goals. In many cases, what is now needed is more tailored capacity development that addresses specific themes or types of work directly relevant to the needs and functions of specific staff. For one specific experience on bringing together economic planners with gender specialists, see Pearson (1995).
- ◆ Many training models attempted to turn staff into "gender experts" in a short period of time. Yet experience has demonstrated that people do not acquire all the necessary skills in a short workshop and in fact, this type of focus may have contributed to an underestimation of the skills required to work specifically on equality issues.

There is a need to analyse what skills different staff require. Analysts have also argued that the different attitudes of staff to equality issues will influence how they act (or fail to act) to implement equality policies (Lotherington & Flemmen, 1991). Therefore, the effectiveness of one course offered to all staff members is highly questionable.

- ◆ Training is most effective when it is viewed as one component in an institutional strategy. Many of the obstacles facing programming officers when they attempt to integrate gender equality objectives into their projects -- such as a lack of support from senior management or agencies practices that make it difficult to innovate -- cannot be remedied by training.
- ◆ Consistent with a mainstreaming strategy, agencies could look to strengthen the gender analysis in other agency training courses. For example, courses on human rights could integrate women's rights as human rights throughout the training session. If this strategy is used, it is important to present the gender analysis as an integral feature of the overall analysis, not as a separate module.

### *See Also*

Agency evaluations of WID strategies/policies (Section II)  
Mainstreaming as an institutional strategy

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# Institutional Analysis from a Gender Perspective

## Discussion

### Issues

The capacity of institutions (ministries, parastatals, NGOs, etc.) to incorporate an equality perspective in their work is a fundamental cornerstone of a mainstreaming strategy. Development co-operation initiatives, however, have either overlooked the ability of institutions to work with a gender analysis or been limited to increasing the number of women in decision-making positions. Although institutional strengthening is now a primary objective of many development co-operation projects, strengthening capacity that supports equality objectives is rarely a priority.

In recent years, analysts have focused attention on trying to understand institutions and organisations from a gender perspective (for example, Goetz (1995a) and Calás and Smircich (1996)). They have raised questions about how gender relations influence the very constitution of institutions and how institutions continue to produce policies and programmes that fail to recognise the needs of women. The full implications of these explorations for development co-operation initiatives have yet to be fully drawn out.

Organizations can be gendered in terms of practical, physical arrangements, in terms of management styles, organizational ideologies, and the expression of power. In practical terms, they may have come to be gendered according to the degree to which the interests and characteristics of the individual agents and social groups who originally peopled these organizations reflect gendered physical and social needs and capabilities. Men's literal, physical monopoly of public organizational spaces means that everyday work patterns come to be structured around their physical needs and capabilities. In particular, their capacity to achieve relative liberation from child care and domestic responsibilities. - Goetz (1995:5)

There are two basic questions arising from a concern with equality that can be asked about institutions:

- ◆ Does the institution have the capacity to assess all their programmes, policies and regulations from a gender perspective? (In other words, do they assess the differential impact of policies on women and men and attempt to reduce gender inequalities)?
- ◆ What is the profile of women and men in decision-making positions? (Are there equal opportunities for women and men in terms of employment, training, promotion and benefits? Are there specific measures to promote women and increase their involvement at senior decision-making levels?)

## Themes to Explore

In efforts to both understand the existing capacity of institutions to incorporate equality objectives into their work and to strengthen that capacity, the following issues are important.

- ◆ ***the institution's mandate and area of work:*** There is a need for clear and explicit links between the focus of the institution and the goal of equality between women and men. Many policy makers assume that their work is gender neutral and that it will have the same impact on all people. They do not see the overlap between their objectives (increasing crop yields, developing tax policy or building transportation infrastructure) and inequalities between women and men. People working in a specific institution need to be aware of how and why equality concerns are relevant in their area of specialisation.
- ◆ ***organisational history and culture:*** The informal and formal rules that guide the functioning of the institution are important. A policy that aims to change people's work priorities to incorporate equality considerations stands little chance of being effective if policy generally, is not respected. Factors that might increase the likelihood of the successful integration of equality considerations include:
  - flexibility and openness to new ideas in general;
  - willingness to change and incorporate input from diverse constituencies;
  - accountability structures within the institution to ensure that staff comply with policy directions;
  - recognition and value given the a wide-range of professional skills (for example, social analysis skills are present and seen as necessary -- as well as engineering or formal medical skills).
- ◆ ***current personnel:*** It is important to know at a general level who holds what position within the institution -- to both understand the current situation and facilitate changes. Are senior managers all of a similar age, background and perspective? What approach would be best to use to help them understand the equality issues relating to their work? Is there a potential pool of "innovators" who could champion efforts to raise the profile of equality issues? What new skills would be most useful to people in specific positions? Can these be acquired by the current staff or is there a need to bring in new staff?
- ◆ ***organisational routines and procedures:*** A key lesson from recent studies of equality initiatives within development co-operation agencies is that good general development practices such as clear planning, solid monitoring and reporting procedures, consultation with target groups will, at best, support the integration of equality objectives and, at least, create an environment where that integration is more likely. Thus it is important to understand the current organisation norms and procedures. It is also important to note

whether or not there is sufficient flexibility to modify routines so that equality objectives can be better met.

- ◆ ***external environment and pressures:*** Different institutions also have varying space to manoeuvre and independence from the general political environment. For example a central planning ministry or ministry of finance often has more ‘clout’ within the policy making structure than a ministry set up to work on environmental concerns. Some institutions have more flexibility to act while others are more susceptible to outside pressure.

Experience has shown that providing a short workshop for selected staff is not enough to advance equality concerns within institutions. Efforts to increase capacity in this area will require investments in understanding what the organisation does and how it functions to identify entry points and develop strategies to ensure that equality considerations become part of the normal routine.

### ***See Also***

Mainstreaming as an institutional strategy  
Mainstreaming paragraph in the Beijing *Platform for Action*

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# Mainstreaming as an Institutional Strategy

## *Discussion*

### **Background**

Mainstreaming strategies are being adopted by development co-operation agencies as a way of supporting efforts to achieve equality between women and men. In part, this responds to a dissatisfaction with the major emphasis of earlier strategies on separate projects for women. Although some of these projects were innovative and catalytic, most were small, isolated initiatives that made minimal contributions to changing gender inequalities. Thus equality advocates (both inside and outside development agencies) argued that gender disparities needed to be addressed at the level of policy, selection of priority areas and overall programme design. Rather than building women's components into larger projects, the objectives and priorities of these projects themselves should be informed by the overall goal of equality.

Despite an increasing use of the term mainstreaming, there is still confusion about what it means and organisations use the word in different ways. Some organisations are resisting the use of the term, as they find it confusing and difficult to translate into other languages. Other institutions, however, have found it a useful of summarizing what they are attempting to do.

Given both the high priority granted mainstreaming strategies in the Beijing *Platform for Action* and the 1995 statement of OECD-DAC High Level Meeting, it will be important to understanding both the challenges and the benefits of this approach.

### **Three Issues**

- ◆ **Distinguishing means and ends:** One way of understanding mainstreaming is to distinguish three different targets or areas for action (Schalkwyk, *et al.*, 1996). With this approach, an agency can strive to promote changes in:
  - the partner country (its institutions, laws, government policies and programmes -- all with the eventual goal of supporting equality between women and men);
  - the development co-operation programme (either with partner governments or multilateral organisations); and
  - the agency itself (its procedures and structures).

At times, organisations have tended to blur these three areas and have often lost sight of the fact that change in partner countries is the overall objective. Many development co-operation agencies have focused on their own internal mechanisms and processes. Although

this is important, changes in an agency and its programmes are primarily means to support equality in partner countries and not ends in themselves.

- ◆ **Challenging the development agenda:** Critics of mainstreaming strategies have pointed out that in some cases, mainstreaming may only involve bringing women into an unequal and unsustainable development process, when what was called for was a total rethinking of that process. This is a legitimate concern.

In order to avoid this happening, Rounaq Jahan (1995: 13) has argued that it is important to distinguish between two different types of mainstreaming strategies:

- the *integrationist approach*: this approach builds gender issues into existing development paradigms. “Widening women-and-gender concerns across a broad spectrum of sectors is the key strategy within this concept: the overall development agenda is not transformed, but each issue is adapted to take into account women-and-gender concerns.”
- the *agenda-setting approach*: this approach implies the transformation of the existing development agenda with a gender perspective. “The participation of women as decision makers in determining development priorities is the key strategy here: women participate in all development decisions, and through this process bring about a fundamental change in the existing development paradigm.”

The agenda-setting approach, with a focus on women’s empowerment and increased participation in decision-making at all levels, holds the greatest potential to support equality between women and men.

- ◆ **Specific initiatives to support equality objectives:** A mainstreaming strategy does not rule out funding specific projects that work toward equality. In fact, innovative, strategic, and catalytic initiatives play a vital role. These projects can be targeted at women, men or institutions. The crucial prerequisite is that they explicitly support equality between women and men. For example, projects could include funding for women’s organisations working to hold governments accountable for the commitments they made in Beijing; target men in information campaigns on their roles, responsibilities and rights relating to sexual and reproductive health; or strengthen the capacity of a Ministry of Justice to implement legal reform consistent with the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

One note of caution: projects that merely target women do not necessarily or automatically support equality objectives. For example, without careful consideration of gender dynamics and sound economic planning, ‘income generating’ projects may unintentionally add to women’s work burden without significant compensation.

### *See Also*

Evolution of the thinking and approaches to equality issues  
Mainstreaming Paragraph of the Beijing *Platform for Action*

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# Mainstreaming Paragraph of the Beijing *Platform for Action*

## Discussion

### What the mainstreaming paragraph does

In adopting the Beijing *Platform for Action*, governments have undertaken a commitment to a strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout policy and planning processes. The major component of the "mainstreaming paragraph" included in each major section of the *Platform for Action* is as follows:

...governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

#### Mainstreaming Paragraphs in the *Platform for Action*

para. 79	education
para. 105	health
para. 123	violence
para. 141	conflict
para. 164	economic activity
para. 189	power and decision-making
para. 202	institutional mechanisms for women's advancement
para. 229	human rights
para. 238	media
para. 252	management of natural resources and the environment
para. 273	children and youth

The emphasis on mainstreaming gender perspectives in **all** sectors reflects a recognition that the interests and needs of women (as well as those of men) must be systematically pursued in the formulation of all government policies and programmes. That is, attention to equality issues cannot be confined to a sector called "women's development" or addressed through isolated or marginal programmes within sectors. Instead, government agencies must recognise that women are a major part of the public they serve. If governments are to serve women as well as men appropriately, and to fulfill commitments to reducing inequalities between women and men, gender perspectives must become part of the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes.

With the adoption of the *Platform for Action*, the mainstreaming paragraph implies obligations at various levels. First and most directly, of course, is the obligation of governments to implement this approach. Second, in the context of development co-operation, development co-operation agencies must take account of this government commitment in programmes and technical assistance activities -- not only with ministries of women's affairs, but also with central planning and sectoral ministries and institutions. The intent of the mainstreaming paragraph is closely related to DAC Members' priorities of capacity building and good governance.

## **Issues related to capacity in partner governments**

For partner governments, a mainstreaming approach will require ministries and government institutions to review their decision-making mechanisms, the data and information available for making decisions, and the analytic and planning skills of personnel. The box entitled 'Components of capacity for mainstreaming' summarises major issues raised in a recent review of mainstreaming capacity of one partner government.

In summary, some of the difficulties in implementation that may be faced by partner governments include:

- ◆ slow dissemination of information on government commitments in the *Platform for Action* throughout ministries and to planning staff, and a general lack of understanding of what the mainstreaming commitment entails for the management and staff of these agencies;
- ◆ a tendency to view women as a "sector" -- that is, the belief that initiatives focused on women or equality are more properly dealt with by the ministry of women's affairs than by ministries of finance, education, agriculture, etc.;
- ◆ limited experience and skills in sectoral ministries to undertake analyses that compare how women and men would be affected by a policy or programme, or differences in their abilities to benefit from policies and programmes;
- ◆ inadequacies in the data available through central statistical services and sectoral data management systems for purposes of assessing policies and programmes by gender;
- ◆ weak links between government ministries and women's organisations, equality advocacy groups and women's studies centres;
- ◆ overly high demands and expectations of the ministry of women's affairs (the national machinery).

## **Issues related to approaches of development cooperation agencies**

The mainstreaming commitment encourages a shift in focus by development co-operation agencies. Many agencies have undertaken various initiatives to direct more resources to women and to promote greater attention to issues of equality between women and men in the programmes and projects they sponsor. However, if the skills and procedures for addressing equality issues do not exist within partner country institutions, the efforts made in the various development co-operation projects will remain isolated initiatives with limited long-term impact. Initiatives of development co-operation agencies to increase government capacity for gender-aware planning have generally focused on this issue or on ministries of women's affairs. That is, development co-operation agencies often fail to incorporate the concern with gender-aware planning into capacity-building initiatives for economic planning, or agricultural management, or the improvement of statistical databases. However, it is now being recognised that DAC Members must themselves *mainstream* their

attention to this issue by ensuring that it is integral to their initiatives in the area of good government and the reform of public administration.

Development co-operation agencies have many opportunities to assist partner governments in implementing the mainstreaming paragraph.

- ◆ Policy dialogue is an important means for maintaining a high profile for commitments made by partner governments to mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout policy and planning processes, and for demonstrating the relevance of this concern.
- ◆ The mainstreaming paragraph is relevant to all institution building and capacity building initiatives -- the institutional capacity of the development partner must be defined to include capacity to identify and address gender-based needs and to reduce disparities between women and men. An initiative to increase the planning capacity of the ministry of agriculture, for example, can include the analytic skills and information required to analyse differences between women and men in activities and resources in the agricultural sector, and how this may lead to differing needs to achieve objectives such as increased income and productivity. An initiative to increase the capacity of the judiciary to apply the rule of law can include components that increase the awareness of all judicial officers (both men and women) of international and national law on women's rights, and support the development of skills in interpretation of the law and evidence in a way that supports equality between women and men.
- ◆ Initiatives to strengthen the information base for planning also offer opportunities. Research studies, the development of policy independent advisory institutions, measures to cultivate and support the development of local expertise are all measures that can incorporate elements to build local expertise and resources for addressing equality issues in the policy and planning process.

Many DAC Members can draw on innovations in their own countries in mainstreaming gender perspectives into policy and planning processes. This might include, for example, the experience gained by their own national statistical agency in developing methodologies for sex-disaggregated or gender sensitive data; or approaches developed by different ministries or sectoral institutions for incorporating equality concerns in policy and programme analysis; or mechanisms for constructive dialogue between government and non-government organisations on equality issues. At the same time, development co-operation agencies should be aware of the value and need for the exchange of experience and lessons learned between DAC Members and development partners on mainstreaming equality issues into government policy and planning processes -- it is an area in which the achievements of many countries on both sides of the partnership have been modest to date.

## Components of capacity for mainstreaming

"The Institutional Review investigated various aspects of capacity for implementing [a mainstreaming] approach. The **main components of capacity** analysed in the various studies include:

- ◆ **understanding and commitment:** clarity about the goal of women's equality and development at both senior decision-making and working levels of government, and commitment to pursuing this goal on the part of both institutions and individuals;
- ◆ **structures and mechanisms:** to ensure that women's development issues are raised within government planning and decision-making processes, to make inter-sectoral linkages, to monitor progress, and to hold agencies accountable on issues of women's development;
- ◆ **information, data and research:** the availability of necessary inputs, such as research on women's situation and adequate gender-disaggregated data to support policy and programme formulation;
- ◆ **analytic, planning and management skills:** to identify and respond to issues of women's development relevant to the agency's mandate;
- ◆ **participatory mechanisms:** through which women and women's development advocates can participate in decision-making about policy and programme formulation and evaluation.

"Different types of agencies require a different mix or a different application of the above components, in accordance with their overall mandates. In the Institutional Review, therefore, **different questions about capacities were asked of different agencies**. For example:

- ◆ **national focal point for women's development:** is it able to provide effective leadership on women's development issues, and to motivate and support other agencies in fulfilling their responsibilities in integrating women's development issues into ongoing planning and programmes?
- ◆ **central planning authorities:** are they able to incorporate issues of women's development in the formulation of national policy frameworks and in their guidance to line ministries in planning sectoral strategies and projects?
- ◆ **line ministries:** are they able to take up issues of women's development at the sectoral level and ensure that sectoral strategies and programmes serve women and men equitably?
- ◆ **local government bodies:** are women equitably represented in local decision-making bodies? and are these bodies able to respond to the priorities and needs of women in programme planning?

- ◆ **training institutes:** are they able to support government officials in increasing their awareness and skill on women's development issues?"

Extract from: *Institutional Review of WID Capability of the Government of Bangladesh. Final Report: Mainstreaming Women's Development.* Completed under a joint project of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and several of its development partners (Denmark, Canada, United Kingdom, UNICEF, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden and UNDP), 1996.

### *See also*

National machinery for women's affairs  
Policy dialogue  
Programme assistance  
References on statistics

## Men

### *Discussion*

There has been a tendency to regard issues of women's participation in development and equality as being a "women's concern," in which initiatives are largely pursued by and for women. With experience and the more widespread adoption of the concept of "gender" there has been greater recognition of the need to consider men and their gender identities and to involve men in the pursuit of change. However, some confusion is frequently evident about how to think about men in relation to gender equality strategies.

- ◆ Some men (and women) have questioned the focus on women, saying that if the concern is "gender", should not equal attention be paid to women *and* men. This perspective overlooks the reason why gender has been identified as a issue for development co-operation -- the *inequalities* between women and men that result in *women* having less access to the development resources of a society and decision-making power at all levels of society. There is of course a need to consider the development needs of both women and men. Gender equality strategies exist to promote attention to the development needs of women that have largely been invisible, and to address the processes that continue to structure an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities to the disadvantage of women.
- ◆ However, a focus on women in isolation from their relationships with men can undermine strategies to achieve various development objectives, including the objective of reducing disparities between women and men. A gender analysis must consider not only differences between women and men, but inequalities in the relationship between them and what this means for the possibilities and action of different groups of women and men. For example, inequalities between women and men, and unequal relations between them, influence decision-making about fertility and sexuality. Thus men's gender identities and behaviour must be taken into account in order to develop effective strategies.
- ◆ The gender identities of women and men are closely interlinked. One way this is evident is in the division of labour by gender. Certain tasks and responsibilities are allocated to women and others to men -- the division of labour itself creates interdependence. Changes for women thus also mean changes for men. More broadly, equality between women and men cannot be achieved by changes in the roles and responsibilities carried by women. To date, too few men have been involved in considering what a more equal society would look like and in working as partners with women to define and pursue strategies for equality. In part, this can reflect resistance to the implications of change. However, it can also be argued that more efforts must be made by equality advocates to develop alliances with those men who support efforts to construct a more equal society.

- ◆ For some development workers, a measure of the success of gender equality strategies is that equal numbers of women and men participate in a programme or an initiative. Equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men is an important objective. However, a lesson learned from experience is that equal participation at this level is not always the most relevant or effective means of ensuring that a programme or initiative supports the achievement of equality between women and men. Equality strategies are incorporating this lesson in two related ways:
  - *focusing on impact rather than activities/inputs* -- looking at how the overall initiative will affect women and men and gender equality, either directly or indirectly;
  - *focusing on equality as an objective rather than on women as a target group* -- considering how to select and design initiatives that can support equality as an objective, which may include, for example, changes in institutional practices, legislation, and planning methodologies, and include both men and women.

### ***On men and gender equality strategies in development co-operation***

#### **Why do gender strategies focus on women?**

Development co-operation organisations and many partner countries have formulated gender equality policies and strategies precisely because gender equality does not exist. Since it is *women* who are now generally excluded or disadvantaged in relation to social and economic resources and decision-making, efforts to identify and redress imbalances have focused on women's situation and women's views. In addition, most of those working to change unequal gender relations are women. But it is increasingly recognised that strategies must focus on men as well as women, and on the relations between men and women, in order to achieve real change.

#### **Don't men have gender too?**

Gender is often overlooked as an aspect of men's social identity. This stems from a tendency to consider male characteristics and attributes as the norm, with those of women being a variation on the norm. But the lives and activities of men as well as women are strongly influenced by gender. In most societies, men tend to have broader options, more opportunities and greater access to society's resources than women. This is the result of a framework of legislation, policies, and institutions that incorporate attitudes and practices about what is appropriate to being male and female in a given society.

Cultural norms and practices about "masculinity" and expectations of men as leaders, husbands, sons and lovers -- in other words, gender -- are important in shaping the demands on men and their behaviour. In many societies, they mean that men are expected to bear arms and fight in defence of the nation or community. They shape the expectation that men will concentrate on the material needs of their families, rather than the nurturing and care relationship assigned to women. There are thus disadvantages and costs to men in patterns of gender difference.

## **What is the role of men in achieving gender equality?**

The achievement of equality implies changes for both men and women. More equal relationships will need to be based on a redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of women and men in all spheres, including in the family, the workplace and society at large. One of the challenges in moving forward will be to motivate more men to participate as partners in the process of defining the visions and strategies for a more gender-equal society.

*Adapted from draft materials prepared for Sida's Gender Equality Unit by Johanna Schalkwyk, Beth Woroniuk, and Helen Thomas, 1997.*

### ***See also***

Evolution of thinking and approaches to equality issues  
Participation

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## Monitoring and Evaluation

### *Discussion*

#### **Concerns about feedback on equality issues from monitoring and evaluation processes**

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation are critical processes for assessing and improving development practices and impacts. Concerns about the contribution of these processes to assessing progress and achievements in implementing equality strategies have been raised in recent studies.

- ◆ In monitoring, reporting and evaluation practices, the focus on processes and inputs rather than results and impacts means that there is limited learning from this process about the way that agencies or specific projects affects people's lives. This is a general concern about these processes, not only in relation to the ability to assess whether development co-operation is having a positive impact on women. However, the tendency to focus on process, inputs and activities does seem particularly pronounced in assessments of the implementation of WID and equality policies both at the agency level and project level.
- ◆ In the absence of specific objectives or goals concerning women's participation and gender equality (at either the agency or project level), there are few criteria against which to measure progress or achievements. Assessments are therefore rather subjective, and often based on the values and implicit assumptions about gender and equality on the part of the evaluator.
- ◆ Agency policy concerns with respect to women's participation and equality generally receive attention only if they are explicitly discussed in project documents. Such discussion is often omitted from project documents despite agency directives to integrate these issues throughout the entire project cycle. There is often a reluctance to undertake monitoring of elements not included in project objectives, as it is seen as going beyond what can be legitimately expected of implementing agencies or contractors. However, even if the latter are not assessed on performance with respect to concerns not specified in the project objectives, DAC Member agencies have a legitimate interest in assessing a project's conformity with agency policy goals and its problems or achievements in this area as an input into further planning.
- ◆ Issues of women's participation and equality between women and men are frequently considered an "add-on" in project monitoring and evaluation, and are often separate from the overall discussion of the initiative. This can result in conclusions about benefits to women even though only a minor part of project resources were directed to them and men received substantially greater benefits. (Such unequal distributions of benefits can mean that the overall impact on equality is negative despite some level of benefit by women.)

- ◆ Interesting initiatives taken within projects are often not reflected in the project reporting process, and thus opportunities to share experience within an agency are lost.

### **Lessons from experience**

Several lessons can be drawn from the OECD *Assessment of DAC Members' WID Policies and Programmes* about the monitoring and evaluation of specific initiatives:

- ◆ ***Terms of reference.*** Evaluation terms of reference must include explicit and feasible directions for the analysis of equality issues in order to produce a report that includes these and is helpful for future planning purposes. Standard clauses requiring attention to equality issues (e.g., "gender issues will be addressed throughout the evaluation") are insufficient. They are too vague to offer guidance and easily overlooked. Questions about equality and gender relations must be adapted to the specific project and what the agency and/or the partner government needs to learn from the evaluation for planning purposes.
- ◆ ***Expertise.*** Selecting an evaluation team that includes a member with expertise on equality issues who is specifically allocated the time to undertake this function results in evaluations that deal more effectively with these issues.
- ◆ ***Analysis and interpretation.*** More rigorous standards must be applied in the assessment of the analyses and conclusions of evaluators. Assessments that look at women's participation or benefits derived by women in isolation from the context are inadequate and misleading. Rather than a separate page or chapter on women, comparisons between women and men in the target group should be made throughout the assessment, and the conclusions about benefits or outcomes should be supported by data and analysis.

### **Issues for further attention**

- ◆ ***Specification of results and relevant indicators.*** Many agencies are seeking to focus more on the results and impacts of development co-operation through adopting results-based management practices. It will be important to ensure that the equality goal is reflected in the specification of results sought (at the agency and project level), in indicators for monitoring achievement of results, and in evaluation criteria.
- ◆ ***"Successes" and "best practices".*** There have been calls from both the management and programme staff of development co-operation agencies for more examples of "successes" and "best practices", both to demonstrate what has been achieved and to give a more concrete idea of what an initiative that incorporates a gender perspective would actually look like. A factor that has made the identification of such examples difficult is the absence of clear goals or criteria for success in this area either at the agency or project level. Another factor has been weaknesses in reporting and the lack of models or mechanisms for documenting, reporting or disseminating information on strategies and lessons learned.
- ◆ ***Comparative analyses of strategies to address specific problems.*** The information available on best practices and lessons learned often focuses on strategies and processes. While this is

valuable, it does not give much guidance on the selection of specific strategies to address specific sectoral problems. One good example of a comparative review in relation to a specific problem is by Bellew and King (1993), which sifts the evidence available about strategies to increase the participation of women in basic education that have been pursued in various different conditions. This study points out that the task was complicated by a lack of data on these initiatives and the lack of rigorous evaluation. It also stresses the importance of careful documentation and assessment to determine what works under what conditions in order to identify cost-effective strategies. More such reviews would be of benefit in taking equality strategies forward.

"Evaluation criteria for projects often appeared to be limited by the project's original rationale, and not guided by broader policy objectives such as WID commitments. Where issues concerning women's participation in the project or their participation in the community were not explicitly addressed in the project rationale and objectives, they generally did not arise in the evaluation. There was on occasion a good analysis of women's position and their roles in the community. However, a more frequent approach was to allude to cultural differences as unsurmountable barriers to implementation, with little or no analysis and without proposing alternatives.

Evaluators rarely raised questions about aspects of the project's rationale or assumptions that could affect women's ability to participate. Even where evaluators discussed successes or constraints in including women in a project, recommendations seldom resulted from this analysis; nor were these issues noted in executive summaries.

While the evaluation sample suggests that an increasing proportion of evaluations pay some attention to the position of women, it is not yet routine and is infrequently substantive, and the process is providing limited feedback into policy and project development.

The rather ad hoc approach to addressing WID in project evaluations is troublesome, as it reflects either that evaluators are not taking WID issues seriously or, more broadly, that evaluations in general (and not only with respect to WID) are not being designed and executed in ways that contribute to learning and better project strategies by development-assistance agencies."

– OECD, *Assessment of DAC Members' WID Policies and Programmes: Overall Report*, p.13-14.

### ***See also***

Best Practices: Development Co-operation and gender equality (Section II)  
Agency evaluations of WID strategies/policies (Section II)  
Participation

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# National Machinery for Women's Affairs

## Discussion

### Background

The term "national machinery" refers to the various types of offices or ministries for women's affairs established by governments in both the North and the South in the last two decades. The international statements adopted at all four UN conferences on women have urged governments to set up and strengthen the national machinery so that it can play an effective role within government. The Beijing *Platform for Action* emphasizes the role of the national machinery in supporting a mainstreaming strategy. It states that:

Para. 201. A national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy-co-ordinating unit inside government. its main task is to support the government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas.

The *Platform for Action* also outlines a number of actions to be taken by governments to strengthen national machineries. These include:

- Para. 203.
- (a) Ensure that responsibility for the advancement of women is vested in the highest possible level of government; in many cases, this could be at the level of Cabinet minister;
  - (b) Based on a strong political commitment, create a national machinery, where it does not exist, and strengthen, as appropriate, existing national machineries for the advancement of women at the highest level of government; it should have clearly defined mandates and authority; critical elements would be adequate resources and the ability and competence to influence policy and formulate and review legislation; among other things, it should perform policy analysis, undertake advocacy, communication, co-ordination and monitoring of implementation....

### Issues

The *Platform for Action* also recognises the problems facing national machineries:

National machineries are diverse in form and uneven in their effectiveness, and in some cases have declined. Often marginalised in national government structures, these mechanisms are often hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data and sufficient resources, and insufficient support from national political leadership (para. 196).

The complexity of the challenges facing national machineries is often under-estimated.

- ◆ The national machinery is generally the focal point for follow-up to the Beijing *Platform for Action* and the agency that is expected to provide leadership in implementing government policies on women and equality. To do this, it needs to act as a *catalyst* for action by other government ministries, and as the agency that *builds the capacity of other government ministries* to be more responsive to the needs and interests of women. It is expected to undertake this capacity-building function targeting other institutions and government personnel while simultaneously building its own capacity in an area in which there are few models and methodologies. Sophisticated political and bureaucratic skills are required to develop coherent strategies for such an agency and to manage the process of policy advocacy and relations with other institutions.
- ◆ The function of catalyst offers few political rewards. Working within the bureaucracy to ensure that other ministries adapt planning procedures, programmes and resource allocations to reflect the needs and interests of women is a long-term process in which the achievements are slow and incremental. This does not offer high visibility for either the minister or staff, and it is generally difficult to demonstrate progress, or attribute credit. Thus this ministry is often an unattractive assignment for politicians and experienced bureaucrats.

It also means that there is strong pressure on the agency to deliver programmes directly to the public in order to gain visibility and demonstrate concrete results. However, the identification of programmes to implement may be more influenced by the type of initiatives that donors are willing to fund than by a coherent strategy that links implementation and policy advocacy functions. Programme implementation also absorbs considerable administrative resources and diverts attention away from the more complex and less rewarding activities in policy advocacy.

The actual and perceived weaknesses of the ministries and offices serving as the national machinery for women's affairs has meant that some development co-operation agencies are reluctant to work with them. Investment in a national machinery may make more sense when this is viewed as an aspect of an agency's concerns with governance and good government objectives, rather than a means by which to reach women directly with programmes and services. If development co-operation agencies seek to strengthen national institutions and national capacity for effective and equitable policy development and programme delivery, then the national machinery for women cannot be ignored. The capacity of national institutions to develop coherent and manageable mandates, and to pursue them effectively, will be an important factor in achieving sustainable progress toward equality objectives that both national government and development co-operation agencies have committed themselves to.

### *See Also*

Mainstreaming paragraph of the Beijing *Platform for Action*

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# NGOs and Equality Issues

## *Discussion*<sup>3</sup>

### **Background**

Development co-operation agencies face challenges working with NGOs (non-governmental organisations) from their own countries. Many NGOs are fiercely independent, resent interference in their day-to-day affairs and keep their distance from the official state development organisation. In this complicated relationship, policy compliance (even on goals such as equality) can be a contentious issue.

Development co-operation agencies now generally fund NGOs through block grants or programme funds, rather than through a project-by-project approval system. Therefore a system to scrutinize individual projects makes little sense. Instead, agencies can work with NGOs (through dialogue, incentives, evaluations, formal guidelines...) to improve their institutional capacity to work with equality issues and develop strategies that suit the specific characteristics of each NGO.

### **Issues**

In discussions with NGOs, agency staff can consider issues relating to both the institutional organisation of the NGO and its programmes (Woroniuk, *et al*, 1996).

#### *Institutional Issues*

- ◆ Many NGOs have developed **gender equality policies** that set out their analysis of the situation, what they hope to achieve, and how. Yet experience has shown that the existence of a policy is not enough to ensure implementation. It is also important to know what progress the NGO has made to ensure that all its programmes and projects take gender equality considerations into account.
- ◆ Although there is not consensus on ‘the best’ **institutional structure** to support the implementation of gender equality policy, the need for a mechanism to act as both a catalyst and advocate for equality goals is now clear. Gender policies are not ‘self-implementing’. Resources are required.
- ◆ The integration of gender equality objectives into NGO programmes requires **specific skills** on the part of staff and volunteers. The need for these skills has been underestimated in the past as the responsibility for the gender equality policy was often delegated to a group of junior women to work on in their lunch hours. A basic

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3. This discussion draws heavily on Woroniuk, *et al*. (1996).

commitment to the issue is an important starting point, however, experience and technical skills are also required.

- ◆ As part of the process of strengthening their work on equality issues, some NGOs have turned to an examination of their own **structures and work cultures**. They have raised questions relating to power within their organisation and the relative position of women and men internally.

### *Programming Issues*

- ◆ Given that NGOs almost always work in **partnership** with southern NGOs, these relationships are an important focus in discussions on equality issues. The most fruitful approach appears to be one where all partners enter the discussion with an open mind and a willingness to learn from each other. It is also useful to broaden discussions to include women's organisations and equality advocates as they have often been marginalized in north-south NGO relationships.
- ◆ The recognition of **equality as a strategic objective of development** also challenges NGOs to ensure that there are clear connections between equality and other development priorities and themes. If equality is treated as an "add-on", then progress is unlikely. Many NGOs have treated 'women's projects' as a separate sector or area of activity. Moving beyond this type of approach and adopting it as a mainstreaming strategy can be difficult.
- ◆ Some NGOs have argued that their initiatives target women and that is sufficient. Although increased **participation** is important, it does not automatically lead to more equal gender relations. Involving more women as beneficiaries may not work to rectify gender disparities if questions of power are not addressed and women are not involved in the decision-making process as equal partners.
- ◆ NGOs play an important role in involving and informing citizens about development issues. Gender equality issues are also important in **public information activities and fundraising campaigns**. Education programmes can integrate a gender perspective in their discussion of all issues (conflict resolution, structural adjustment...) and care can be taken to avoid stereotypical images of women as victims in fundraising campaigns.

### *See Also*

Empowerment  
Institutional analysis from a gender perspective  
Mainstreaming as an institutional strategy  
Participatory approaches  
Women's movement (international) (Section II)

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# Participatory Approaches

## *Discussion*

Participatory development is now seen as a vital component of good development practice. “For some, it is a matter of principle; for others, a practice; and, for still others, an end in itself” (World Bank, 1995). There are now a number of techniques and methodologies to draw on, including participatory rural appraisal.

Participatory development that fails to incorporate an understanding of gender inequalities will not automatically lead to more equal gender relations. According to the World Bank (1995: 139):

We cannot assume that women will automatically benefit from efforts to involve poor people in project design and implementation. On the contrary, experience has made it clear that, unless specific steps are taken to ensure that women participate and benefit, they usually do not. A World Bank evaluation of 121 rural water supply projects found that even in a sector where women carried the greater share of responsibility, they benefited primarily from the 17% of water projects which had been specifically designed to involve them.

Participation and the involvement of women, however, are not unambiguous concepts. Participation can imply women and men’s involvement in project implementation (physical work in the construction of roads, for example). Yet most development planners would argue that there is a need to beyond involvement at that stage to involvement in the conception and design of initiatives. Several important tensions in participatory approaches emerge<sup>4</sup>:

- ◆ **There may not be consensus on ‘what should be done’ among those consulted:** Women and women’s organisations do not always share the same needs and interests. There can be serious disagreements about priorities and strategies. According to Mayoux

Participatory development is premised on the possibility of consensus between participants about needs and aims. In many cases this is likely to be problematic. Firstly, there are likely to be problems defining ‘needs’ and the degree to which immediately recognizable ‘practical’ needs can be met without also addressing underlying inequalities from which they arise. Secondly, different participants are likely to have different priorities and consensus may not be possible.

- ◆ **Consultation may involve a cost for those consulted:** Women often have little ‘spare time’ and women’s organisations are often understaffed and pressed to the limit with the

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4. Parts of this analysis draw heavily on Mayoux (1995) as adapted and used by Beth Woroniuk and Jane Fuller in work for OXFAM-CANADA.

multiple demands of their work. Involvement in participatory processes does have a price. This is also discussed by Mayoux:

Participatory development is premised on the assumption that the benefits of participation are self-evident, and outweigh any costs for participants. However, increasing participation often requires organisational skills, time and resources. The relationship between inputs and benefits is rarely direct and costs are often greatest for those most disadvantaged.

These costs are high for an organisation that has funding and other links with numerous NGOs or agencies from various countries. It is not entirely ludicrous to imagine an organisation that spends so much time providing input into the programmes of development agencies, that it has little time left over to pursue its original programme.

- ◆ **In order to fulfill its potential of better development programmes, participation should also be accompanied with a shift in power from funder to partners:** Participation is an empty process if it is not accompanied by changes in who makes decisions and how the decisions are made. Asking people “what they need” or what they would like to see as a focus of a programme, without actually handing over power to influence decisions, is an empty process. Consultation or participation in and of itself does not change the fact that it is still the northern agency which decides what to listen to within the consultative process or what is possible to actually do once the consultation is over.
- ◆ **In order to be effective, participation requires special skills and resources:** Given the complexities outlined above, it has become clear that participation requires specific facilitation skills. People co-ordinating the participatory process must know how to listen, how to facilitate debates without overly influencing them, and how to build consensus. These skills are often hard to find.
- ◆ An organisation has to have both the ability and willingness to respond to and incorporate the issues raised by the participatory process: Participation is not isolated from the organisational culture and flexibility of an organisation. Participation is an empty process if an organisation does not have the flexibility or the institutional capacity to respond to outcomes of the consultation (ie. lack of access to funds, an overly rigid programming cycle, or a decision-making structure that mitigates outside input).

These tensions suggest an even greater problem that underlies this approach -- that it is, in most cases, imposed by ‘outside agents’. As Mayoux argues, “outside agencies select or promote certain activities and not others, certain forms of organisation and not others. Implicit choices are inevitably being made about whom and what to fund...” (Mayoux, 1995). Often, the benefits that are expected to be gained by participants are not questioned, which suggests that there is little consideration of the resources that are required of the participants to be involved in this type of approach to undertaking a development initiative.

Thus participation is not as straightforward as it might first appear. Women will not automatically benefit from a participatory approach. Participatory methodologies raise numerous questions about authority, power, needs, and decision-making. This is not meant as an argument against participation, but rather a plea to do it with care and in a way that supports equality objectives.

### ***See Also***

Empowerment  
NGOs and equality issues

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# Policy Dialogue

## *Discussion*

### **What is policy dialogue?**

The statement on gender equality made by the 1995 High-Level Meeting of the DAC and the DAC *Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Co-operation* emphasize the importance of policy dialogue as a means of pursuing the goal of equality.

Policy dialogue between DAC Members and partners governments takes various forms:

- ◆ formal discussions between a DAC Member agency and a partner government on the overall policy environment and the themes and sectors of co-operation;
- ◆ formal discussions between agency staff and counterparts in government institutions in the process of setting priorities, negotiating specific programmes and projects, and reviewing progress;
- ◆ ongoing and less formal contacts between agency and project staff and their counterparts in government institutions;
- ◆ multilateral discussions between senior representatives of DAC Members and ministerial representatives at Consultative Group meetings.

### ***Demonstrating through policy dialogue that equality is a significant concern***

Policy dialogue is a means by which development co-operation agencies advance major policy concerns and assess the room for manoeuvre in addressing them. National partners participating in policy dialogue are generally doing the same thing. In the process of dialogue and negotiation, development co-operation agencies should be able to *demonstrate* that the equality between women and men is a significant issue in the way they pursue these issues in discussions. Important elements of this might include:

- ◆ developing the knowledge and skills to discuss issues of equality between women and men as relevant to the various items on the policy agenda, and not only agenda items that focus on women or equality (i.e., to discuss them in relation to macroeconomic policy, democratic development, good governance, education, etc.);
- ◆ ensuring the preparatory work for policy dialogue (such the preparation of background social, economic and political analyses) incorporates equality issues as an integral element;

- ◆ consistently addressing equality concerns in analyses of sectoral problems, policies, institutions and potential reforms;
- ◆ willingness to experiment and be flexible in implementing strategies, and to inject additional resources for research, evaluation and reflection on their success;
- ◆ some humility about the knowledge and achievements in DAC Member countries in addressing inequalities between women and men (that is, the governments in DAC Member countries are also in the process of formulating approaches to problems of inequality and are not necessarily models of success in this area).

### **Achieving successful policy dialogue**

Donors need to have an in-country presence if they wish to engage in successful policy dialogue as this is a long-term process. Before beginning policy dialogue with the government of a partner country, donors need to have worked together to agree concerns and cross-cutting priorities in that country and how best to proceed in the local context. Donor collaboration can provide strong leverage for focusing attention on specific areas. Donors should concern themselves with both relevant regional as well as national issues. Dialogue should take place at all levels -- with government (national and state), individual ministries, planning commissions, influential players, NGOs, public corporations, multilateral agencies, and the media and appropriate lobby groups. It is particularly valuable to raise issues at the highest possible level. When raising gender concerns, it is important to encourage a win-win approach so that local players can see the benefits to them of addressing gender inequalities.

#### *Practical suggestions:*

- ◆ Use national reports and implementation strategies and the speeches made in Beijing by the partner country as a basis for dialogue.
- ◆ Hold meetings with other donors prior to policy dialogue with partner governments to determine shared objectives and concerns.
- ◆ Ensure situational analyses have been carried out by donors, and the knowledge shared between them.

#### When encouraging national co-ordination:

- ◆ Provide a forum for co-ordination between government, bilaterals and multilaterals.
- ◆ Encourage consultation with NGOs and networks.
- ◆ Continue to meet as a local donor co-ordination group and agree on policy and strategies for working with government.

Extract from: OECD/DAC Expert Group on Women in Development (1996). Implications of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing for Development Co-operation in South Asia. Regional Seminar, Madras 23-25 April 1996. Summary Report produced by ODA for the Expert Group.

### **Resources for policy dialogue on equality between women and men**

Policy dialogue can assist in facilitating a policy environment conducive to equality between women and men and in establishing common ground for joint efforts. Resources that DAC Members can draw on to inform and support policy dialogue on equality issues include:

- ◆ ***International agreements.*** DAC Members and partner governments have undertaken broad commitments to equality between women and men in adopting the *Beijing Platform for Action* and in agreements reached at other recent international forums. Many DAC Members and partner governments have ratified the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. These commitments provide a broad framework for the discussion of equality issues, and a justification for raising them.
- ◆ ***National policies of partner governments.*** Many partner countries have also adopted national policies on the position of women or equality between women and men that state general principles as well as objectives in specific sectors. These national commitments are an important starting point for policy dialogue on how development co-operation can assist in furthering objectives already specified by partner governments.
- ◆ ***National machinery for women's affairs.*** Most partner countries have established a government ministry or office of women's affairs that acts as an advocate for equality between women and men and for a more consistent response by all government ministries and institutions to the needs and concerns of women. Consultations with the national machinery is a means of identifying national commitments and priorities. The national machinery can also serve as a useful partner in policy dialogue with sectoral counterparts such as agriculture, public works, environmental management. Broadening the policy dialogue to include the national machinery is also a means of giving greater legitimacy to this office and its mandate.
- ◆ ***Women's organisations, equality advocacy groups, and women's studies centres.*** These non-governmental organisations have increased in numbers and gained experience in the past two decades. Consultations with them can provide insights into the situation of women and the momentum for change that exists in the country, and can assist in identifying priorities for policy dialogue and programme development.

### ***See also***

Mainstreaming paragraph of the Beijing *Platform for Action*  
National machinery for women's affairs  
UN conferences and agreements (Section II)

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## Policy "Evaporation" during the Planning and Implementation Cycle

### *Discussion*

#### **What is "policy evaporation"?**

In the past two decades, DAC Members have all adopted policies on women's participation in development or equality between women and men. Most partner governments have also undertaken policy commitments in the form of specific national statements on women's position or equality, ratification of the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), and the adoption of international statements such as the *Beijing Platform for Action*.

However, in the words of Longwe (1995), these policy commitments often "evaporate" or fade in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes.

- ◆ In development co-operation agencies, attention to policy commitments on women's participation or gender equality is not systematic in the planning and implementation cycle. Thematic and sectoral statements on concerns such as good governance, basic needs or the environment, may include passing reference to women or equality as an area of concern. Analyses prepared for the formulation of country and sectoral strategies or in support of project formulation may include references to these commitments, but often in a separate section rather than as an integral part of the analysis. The policy commitment becomes increasingly less visible in the process of specifying project objectives, anticipated results, implementation strategies and evaluation. A broad commitment to improving the relative position of women and reducing gender disparities is often reduced to a "women's component" that has a very small claim on project resources, or a focus on counting the number of women in various project activities.
- ◆ In partner countries, a similar process occurs. High-level commitments made by governments are often not reflected in sectoral policies. Attention to concerns about women and equality is often confined to a "women's development sector" and not reflected in the standard processes for sectoral analysis, programme formulation and monitoring of implementation. In many countries, the national machinery for women's affairs has limited influence and faces constraints to gaining greater attention for policy commitments.

#### **Issues for attention:**

- ◆ ***Consistent leadership and demands on staff.*** Senior management provides signals about the relative priority assigned to various issues through the demands on staff for analysis, information and updates on progress. When such demands are not made and

when staff are not held accountable for action on issue of equality, there is little incentive for staff to act.

- ◆ ***Organisational culture and attitudes.*** It has become increasingly clear that issues of women's participation in development and equality between women and men is not simply a matter of technique or skills -- their pursuit is also influenced by the organisational culture of development co-operation agencies and the personal attitudes of staff. Conflicting perspectives on equality and gender relations exist within DAC countries and influence DAC Member agencies and their staff. Evaluations of WID and equality strategies have noted that indifference, ambivalence and resistance are a constraint on implementation and that to date progress has depended on the personal commitment to the issue of a relatively small number of staff.
- ◆ ***Focus on human dimensions and the interaction between economic, cultural and social dimensions.*** There is a strong tendency in many development co-operation organisations to define strategies and projects in technical and sectoral terms. But unless human dimensions are at the forefront, it is not possible to consider the interests and needs of women or the implications of inequality between women and men. Economic analyses at the macro-level have become increasingly important. However, these are often approached as technical analyses concerned with institutions and aggregate variables, and it has been difficult to gain attention for the way in which economic factors interact with social and cultural ones. More people-centered and holistic approaches will be needed to deal adequately with equality concerns as well as other policy themes on the development co-operation agenda.
- ◆ ***Separate processes.*** In many cases, institutional processes for incorporating equality issues run parallel to existing processes. For example, in addition to a general procedural manual, an agency may have manuals, guidelines and checklists on the inclusion of gender issues at various stages of the project cycle. It may require that a gender analysis be done and attached to programme or project documents. It may offer a separate course in gender analysis. These separate steps and processes may be necessary to gain sufficient attention to gender concerns, but there is a danger of marginalising the issue if it is not also part of the "mainstream" organisational processes.
- ◆ ***Issue simplification.*** There are multiple demands on staff dealing with policy, programme and project formulation and those involved in implementation. The complexity of their work is augmented by the increasing number of development themes and cross-sectoral concerns that need to be taken into account. Staff thus tend to simplify. This is seen in the frequently reiterated demand for "tools" and specific "how-to" guides that will identify what needs to be looked at or done in a particular situation. It is also evident in the tendency to focus on women's projects or women's components, which are discrete, concrete and manageable. However, gender disparities and inequality between women and men are complex issues that cannot be dealt with through ready-made "tools" and in isolation from other development issues and approaches.

- ◆ ***Use of consultants.*** The tendency to use consultants to support work on equality is arguably more pronounced than in other policy and thematic concerns. Consultants are used to provide advice in policy development, undertake analyses to support country and sectoral strategies, do the gender analysis for project formulation, provide advice on project gender strategies, etc. This could be interpreted positively, as a means by which staff ensure expert input where a need has been identified, or negatively, as an indicator that staff do not regard the work on gender issues as an aspect of their own professional responsibility. The frequent use of junior consultants would seem to support the latter. A general result of the reliance on consultants is a lack of continuity in the programme or project cycle (to ensure that issues and strategies identified at one point are followed-up at later stages) and the absence of a solid "institutional memory" about what works and why.
- ◆ ***Requirements of contractors and implementors.*** A lesson from experience is that contractors and implementors are unlikely to follow-up on equality issues if these are not reflected in the stated objectives of the initiative or negotiated agreement. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation processes pay little attention to equality issues if this not explicitly part of project objectives or the terms of reference for ongoing monitoring or the evaluation process. Contractors and implementors are generally not selected on the basis of their understanding, skills or demonstrated experience to pursuing equality objectives. This suggests the need to ensure that equality objectives are reflected in official project documents, to develop criteria to assess the capacity of contractors on equality issues, and to ensure that contracts and terms of reference state performance expectations clearly.
- ◆ ***Acceding to "policy evaporation" at the national level.*** Officials of development co-operation agencies are often reluctant to raise or pursue equality issues when these are not put on the agenda by partners, particularly when an agency values "responsiveness" and local leadership in setting the agenda. However, this undervalues the policy commitments made by both DAC Member countries and their partners in agreements on the *Platform for Action* as well as the commitments each have made separately. Efforts by DAC Members to raise equality issues in dialogue and programme planning can give greater legitimacy and impetus to the momentum for change that already exists in partner countries. The commitments made by partner governments provide a firm ground for dialogue on joint strategies and programmes and for exploring opportunities in various sectors of co-operation. Ensuring that dialogue processes include the national machinery for women's affairs, non-governmental women's organisations, and equality advocates can also assist in identifying priorities and strategies.

## *See also*

Gender equality and culture  
Institutional analysis from a gender perspective  
Mainstreaming as an institutional strategy  
Monitoring and evaluation  
Policy dialogue  
Resistance

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# Programme Assistance

## *Discussion*

### **DAC Definition of programme assistance**

Programme assistance is defined by the DAC in the *Principles for Programme Assistance* as follows<sup>5</sup>:

The general characteristic of programme assistance is that it is not linked to specific project activities. Four major sub-categories of programme assistance have been identified:

1. General programme assistance. Programme assistance made available to a developing country, without specific sector allocation, for general development purposes, i.e., balance-of-payments financing, general budget support and commodity assistance.
2. Sector programme assistance. Programme assistance directed to a specific economic or social sector, such as agriculture, education, community development and educations.
3. Programme food aid.
4. Debt relief.

### **DAC initiatives to reflect the equality objective in programme assistance**

The DAC *Principles for Programme Assistance* make a number of references to the relation between this type of assistance and policy concerns with respect to the situation of women (see paragraphs 247(h), 258 and 263), but do not give any guidance about how this issue could be pursued in the design and implementation of programme assistance.

The DAC *Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Co-operation* outline the following approach to programme assistance.

27. Policy dialogue between DAC Members and partner countries includes both formal processes of discussion resulting in a jointly-agreed programme of co-operation and less-structured, on-going contacts. Policy dialogue is increasingly used to advance major policy concerns in development co-operation. It is an important means by which DAC Members can demonstrate their commitment to the goal of equality and foster

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5. See OECD, **Development Assistance Manual. DAC Principles for Effective Aid**, 1992, p.84

constructive partnerships promoting equality throughout the programme of co-operation. In pursuing policy dialogue, DAC Members will:

- ◆ use policy dialogue to actively promote equality;
- ◆ prepare for policy dialogue by working with partners to analyse the impact of proposed initiatives on both women and men and to identify the opportunities to promote equality;
- ◆ ensure that all agenda items incorporate equality considerations, rather than treating equality as a separate agenda item unrelated to other discussion;
- ◆ encourage national governments to include women's organisations and equality advocates in the process of policy dialogue and ensure their input into the overall programme of collaboration as well as specific initiatives.

Approaches to incorporating gender issues into programme assistance are being examined by a Task Force of the DAC Expert Group on Women in Development. The issues being addressed by this Task Force and the follow-up contemplated are summarised concisely in the article by Elson and McGee (1995) listed in the References.

Under the guidance of the DAC Expert Group on Women in Development, a number of working papers are being prepared on gender-aware country economic reports, including one on concepts and sources, and three country case studies that apply the framework.

### **Related initiatives at the national level in partner countries**

Under the direction of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, the Commonwealth Secretariat is co-ordinating an initiative to develop:

specific methodologies and analytic tools to engender national budgets in the first instance, and to pilot them in specific countries before finalising them. These tools will comprise a set of *Policy Options for Integrating Gender into National Budgetary Policies and Procedures*.

Methodologies and analytic tools will be concerned with: gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessment; gender-disaggregated public expenditure incidence analysis; gender-aware policy evaluation of public expenditure; gender-aware budget statement; gender-disaggregated analysis of financial budget and time survey interactions; gender-aware medium-term economic policies.

The initiative will also include policy dialogue among ministries of finance, economic planning, women's affairs, key spending ministries, and other stakeholders. The outcome will be considered by Commonwealth Ministers of Finance. (From a statement by the Gender and Youth Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK.)

## *See also*

Economic policy-making (Section II)

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6. There are three other working papers in this set: *Working Paper Number 2 - Uganda* (by Diane Elson and Barbara Evers), *Working Paper Number 3 - Pakistan* (by Diane Elson and Barbara Evers) and *Working Paper Number 4 - Nicaragua* (by Diane Elson and Jasmine Gideon).

# Rationale Arguments

## *Discussion*

### **Background**

Advocates for equality between women and men have used various arguments to convince politicians, fellow agency staff members, agency leadership and others that equality is not only important but vital.

Generally there have been two different types of arguments:

- ◆ Efficiency arguments: although these arguments have taken different forms, the primary line of reasoning is that “supporting equality is good for development as it will assist in the achievement of broad development goals such as reduced population growth and improved economic growth.”
- ◆ Equity arguments: with these arguments the primary line of reasoning is that equality objectives should be supported because a failure to do so is a vital injustice. Active measures must be taken to rectify disparities as an inherent part any development agenda.

One study of the implementation of equality policies in three different international development organisations (Kardam, 1991) points out that policy advocates took care to frame their arguments in favour of the consideration of gender issues in accordance with the organisation’s goals:

For example, the World Bank’s goals are to promote economic growth for developing countries (with reliance on market mechanisms). To the extent that women in development (WID) issues were presented and justified as instrumental to these goals, they have been acceptable (Kardam 1995: 13).

### **Issues**

- ◆ Equality advocates working inside development co-operation agencies face the challenge of making gender equality issues relevant to a wide range of fellow staff members. Thus they may seek to use different arguments in different situations, linking equality concerns to the concerns of the specific sector or area of expertise of the person they are dealing with. In this case, it makes sense to have a range of arguments that can be mobilised at different moments and develop a sense of tactics based on when it is best to use what argument.
- ◆ That said, it is important to point out that efficiency arguments should be made with care. They have potential pitfalls that need to be avoided.

Care must be taken to ensure that the phrasing of the argument does not 'backfire' and have negative impacts on women. According to economist Diane Elson (1995: 203):

Much the easiest way to persuade policy-makers to consider gender-based planning and programming is to present women as an overlooked and underutilised resource which can be mobilised to make implementation of existing policy easier... However, the problem for all but small numbers of well-off women, is not that they are an under-utilised resource but that they are an over-utilised resource.

There is a danger that the focus moves from equality, to maximising the utilization of women's time and work.

- ◆ If the justification for equality objectives is based solely on efficiency arguments, then the argument falls if contrary evidence is presented:

... Counter-evidence can defeat quantitative arguments for women's efficiency and merit - if women's productivity can be shown to be consistently lower than men's, then, following the logic of the market, they deserve fewer resources. (Goetz, 1994:32)

- ◆ Concerns have also been raised about arguments for the consideration of equality issues in environmental policy and programmes that are based on an assumed "special relationship" between women and nature. Leach (1992) and others have pointed out that "there are traps in conceiving of women's roles in relation to the environment in a partial, narrow, or static way; of isolating them from men's roles; and of assuming a close link between women and 'nature'." They argue that a preferred approach would bring a gender analysis to each situation to examine gender-differentiated activities, rights and responsibilities in natural resource management.
- ◆ Recent analysts have also cast doubts on the viability of attempting to secure support for gender equality objectives through "synergy" arguments -- that supporting gender equality will always lead to a 'win-win' situation with other policy options. In one example, Jackson (1996) argues that it is necessary to "rescue gender from the poverty trap." She argues that women's subordination will not be resolved through a focus on poor women and there is a need to explicitly consider equality issues in development programming. "Poverty policies are not necessarily appropriate to tackling gender issues because the subordination of women is not caused by poverty."
- ◆ It is important to be realistic about what rational arguments can achieve. There are many obstacles to gender equality and many different forms of resistance. Not all of these will be overcome by solid reasoning. To quote Diane Elson (1995:203) again:

... it would be utopian to put all one's faith in rational argument as the means of overcoming male bias in the policy process. Policy-makers have other goals besides policy implementation -- and preserving male privilege may well be among the more important.

## *See Also*

Policy Evaporation  
Resistance

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## **Regional Programming in Support of Gender Equality Goals**

### ***Discussion***

Regional programming can play an important role in strategies for equality between women and men, particularly when equality issues are difficult to raise locally.

This point was made in a post-Beijing seminar in South Asia organised under the auspices of the DAC Expert Group on Women in Development (see citation below). In the discussion, representatives of donor organisations were joined by gender experts from regional organisations (including for example ESCAP, IWRAW, the South Asia Association for Women's Studies and DAWN). A summary of the concerns emphasized by the regional experts included the following:

Regional issues. Regional issues are increasingly important. Donors should think of ways of supporting regional networks, even if only by funding national activities in a regional context. Regionally, co-funding can achieve a high impact. Donors need to consider creative funding for important regional issues. For example, HIV-AIDS has simultaneous implications for health, education, poverty and cross-border migration.

Human rights issues. Donors can often best assist women in "difficult" countries, as well as women from marginalised minority groups, through regional networks rather than on a government-to-government basis. Donors can raise awareness amongst themselves of situations where women are discriminated against (as in Afghanistan), and share information on issues such as the increased impact on women of all forms of religious fundamentalism.

The report of the seminar also encouraged further consideration of national initiatives in a regional context:

Donors need to consider national initiatives in a more regional context and share information on issues with gender implications. They could work together on common issues of regional concern (such as trafficking, drugs and women in situations of conflict).

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# Resistance

## *Discussion*

### **Background**

Building more equal gender relations is a slow process. There is a need to understand and come to terms with the numerous forms of resistance that are mobilised against change. Resistance can be conscious or unconscious, it can take place at various levels (personal and bureaucratic) and can come from women as well as men.

### **Forms of Resistance**

As part of the effort to deal with different forms of resistance and develop ways to overcome them, Sara Longwe (1990, 1995) started the process of identifying specific resistance strategies. This list of strategies builds on her work.

#### *Denial*

This strategy can be used at different levels. For example, at a broad level people argue that gender equality is not a concern for their country (or region, or community). Or the denial might be more limited, saying that a particular programme does not discriminate against women.

#### *Selection of a Token Action*

The users of this strategy acknowledge that something should be done about equality issues but they are unwilling to think about significant change. So they select a specific project (or component within a project). This project is often based on a limited assessment of gender disparities and may view women as a 'vulnerable group'. Thus when asked about what they are doing on gender equality issues, people point to this specific project to demonstrate that they are doing "something". In reality, however, equality has not been taken up in a serious fashion.

#### *Lip Service*

This familiar strategy involves acknowledging the issue at the level of rhetoric, but failing to take meaningful action.

#### *Commissioning a Study*

Instead of action, the users of this strategy hope to delay decisions by setting up a study to provide more information. They often hope that the issue will have gone away by the time the study is completed.

*Speaking on behalf of  
“Women”*

With this strategy, the user assumes that women are a homogeneous group who have one position and one set of interests. One or two experiences are generalised into a broad statement intended to cover all women:

*“I met with a women’s group yesterday and they told me that their primary concern was building a school for their children. Therefore this should be the major focus of our co-operation programme.”*

*Shelving*

With this strategy, action on equality issues is postponed or delayed pending a broader process or planning decisions.

*“Thank you for your comments. We are currently in the process of developing a master plan for development in this region. We will take this report into consideration, along with all the other reports on other important themes.”*

*Compartmentalisation*

Users of this strategy do not recognise equality issues as cross-cutting and delegate all actions to the person officially responsible for ‘women’s development’. This, in effect, turns a concern with equality into a sector.

*Misconstrued Mainstreaming*

In this case, mainstreaming as a strategy is misunderstood. Instead of a focus on equality between women and men as the **goal** of a mainstreaming strategy, the main emphasis is on the process of involving women, often in activities and programmes in which they have had little input. Officials argue that there are no specific programmes for women as women participate (or are welcome to participate) in all the activities of the programme.

*“Women in this region already work very hard - in agriculture and with their family responsibilities. It would be irresponsible of us to ask them to participate in more project activities.”*

*Tokenism*

One or two women are appointed to committees or invited to participate in a decision-making process. Women with little interest in gender equality issues may be selected for precisely that reason or even if a woman with a commitment to equality is invited to participate, she may carry little weight in the overall process.

### **Countering Resistance**

In her work for UNICEF (1994), Longwe went on to discuss basic strategies to counter resistance:

<i>Countering Denial</i>	Present sound empirical evidence (statistics, oral histories, solid research) that documents gender disparities and discriminatory practices.
<i>Countering Selection</i>	Ensure that equality issues are given a high profile at all stages of the planning process (not just problem identification). Ask questions about the eventual impact and results of the initiative and who will benefit (which women and which men).
<i>Countering Lip- Service</i>	Push for systems that monitor and evaluate impacts on equality between women and men in all programmes.
<i>Countering Investigatory Diversions</i>	The need for further research can be acknowledged without postponing all action until the research has been completed. A pilot project could be developed to explore the issue and there are significant data bases and source of information that are currently not being used.
<i>Countering 'Speaking on behalf of all women'</i>	Look for research that has been done that attempts to analyse both women's common interests and diversity. Make the case that an understanding of each situation is required and urge the use of gender-sensitive participatory methods.
<i>Countering Shelving</i>	If this project is a priority, take it to another institution or another level in the system. Seek out allies who will argue on behalf of the project.
<i>Countering Compartmentalisation</i>	Push for overall attention to gender issues in programme planning, implementation and evaluation. Make a concrete case of how and why gender equality issues are relevant to the work of this specific ministry or in this specific project.
<i>Countering Misconstrued Mainstreaming</i>	Try to shift attention to the impact of the initiative and ask questions about who will benefit. Does the project widen gender disparities? Does it have the potential to contribute to more equal gender relations.
<i>Countering Tokenism</i>	Push for greater transparency of the decision-making process and, in general, more input into decisions by those affected by them. If you are the token woman, look for allies (both inside and outside the formal structure).

## ***See Also***

Mainstreaming as an institutional strategy  
Men  
Participatory approaches  
Policy evaporation

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Paragraphs 209-212 of the *Platform for Action* detail the actions to be taken by national governments, the United Nations and development co-operation agencies in support of the overall strategic objective to: "Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluations."

Other elements of the PFA are concerned with specific needs in relation to the development of methodologies, data collection and analysis:

- para. 69, 70            methodologies and research in relation to poverty
- para. 130             violence against women
- para. 167             work and employment
- para. 192, 195       participation in decision-making

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