



# Transforming *the Mainstream*

GENDER *in* UNDP

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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# Preface

**M**ainstreaming gender and bridging gender gaps in ways that are effective and measurable remains a challenge to the development community, North and South. The Millennium Development Goals remind us how far there is to go before we live in a world where poverty, disease, inequality and environmental degradation are ills of the past and women no longer suffer disproportionately from these problems.

Women are not a marginal group. They are workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs. They are peace-builders, voters, intellectuals and advocates for change. They are community and national leaders. They manage natural resources and form the backbone of the care economy. Their goals and aspirations are central goals and aspirations of humankind. How is it possible that their needs and rights are not adequately reflected in the mainstream development agenda?

This publication sets out key issues in gender mainstreaming, learning from the efforts of UNDP and its partners in government and civil society organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies. It takes as its premise that equality between women and men is central – not external – to the human development paradigm. Drawing on country experiences, the publication addresses questions such as:

- Why do the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming matter to development?
- How do we “do” gender mainstreaming? More specifically, what does it mean to have a gender-sensitive poverty strategy, governance programme?
- Is gender being mainstreamed right out of existence?
- Where are we falling short, and how can we do better?

Many organizations are struggling with the same issues. UNDP is particularly well placed to contribute to the debate, given its human development mandate, its global network of country offices and its broad range of partnerships within countries and regions. Keeping its finger on the pulse enables the organization to provide leadership to reduce the poverty of women – who constitute two-thirds of the world’s poorest people – whether it be by increasing women’s choices and voices, supporting their role in protecting and regenerating the environment or bringing gender to the centre of the HIV/AIDS issue. Some ground has been covered; but much remains to be done. We hope that this publication will help us move forward.



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# Gender Mainstreaming: Past, Present, and Future

In no area of international development is the gap between stated intentions and operational reality as wide as it is in the promotion of equality between women and men. Organizations have grappled with the relationship between women and development for decades, and both international and bilateral aid agencies have mandated gender mainstreaming for over a dozen years. But the needs and priorities, not of a minority or “marginalized” group but of half of humankind, have yet to make it to the centre of the development agenda.

Of the world’s 1 billion poorest people, three-fifths are women and girls. Of the 876 million adults in the world who cannot read, two-thirds are women. Women employed in industries and services typically earn 78 percent of what men earn in the same sector. Although women provide about 70 percent of the unpaid time spent caring for family members, their contribution to the global economy remains undervalued. Their plight is made even worse by the fact that between 10 and 50 percent of adult women have experienced violence at the hands of partners. Furthermore, women bear the brunt of physical and psychological suffering during and after armed conflict and other forms of crises: an estimated 80 percent of the world’s 35 million refugees and displaced people are women and children, particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. In sub-Saharan Africa, 55 percent of those living with HIV/AIDS are women, and new HIV infections are disproportionately concentrated among younger women who have little education.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, development impacts women differently than men. And yet, even today, it is difficult to find a

succinct, widely shared definition of the term “gender,” or to find a group of development practitioners other than “gender experts” with a shared understanding of what gender mainstreaming actually is and how it is done. The conceptual confusion does not stop these words from appearing in every policy or programme that development organizations produce. The result: uncertainty that serves as an excuse to do nothing, conceptual catch-alls that have no real meaning, and words that mask inaction.

Gender refers to the socially constructed rather than biologically determined roles of men and women as well as the relationships between men and women in a given society at a specific time and place. These roles and relationships are not fixed, but can and do change in the light of evolving needs and opportunities.

Gender mainstreaming was defined by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1997 as “a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.”<sup>2</sup>

Gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps through the use of gender-disaggregated data; it involves developing strategies to close those gaps, putting resources into implementing the strategies, monitoring the implementation and holding individuals and institutions accountable for the results. Despite much progress in many areas, the development community is falling short on all these issues.

<sup>1</sup> Data from the *Progress of the World’s Women 2000* UNIFEM, and UNDP’s Thematic Trust Fund on Gender.

<sup>2</sup> UN Economic and Social Council. E. 1997.L.10.Para.4



Many of the problem areas are identified in the Secretary-General's Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action prepared for the Beijing +5 Special Session: capacity for gender analysis; development of accountability mechanisms; allocation of sufficient resources; explicit, coherent and sustained attention to gender equality; targeting not just "soft" areas for gender mainstreaming (i.e., health and education), but also supposedly "gender neutral" areas, such as infrastructure development and economic policies; and strong political commitment and political will.<sup>3</sup>

#### A. AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The way in which national governments and international development agencies have understood and addressed the role of women in the development process has undergone a series of significant conceptual and operational shifts over the last 40 years. Policy approaches to women's involvement in development have generally fallen into one of five categories: welfare, anti-poverty, efficiency, equity and empowerment.<sup>4</sup> This gradual and still incomplete evolution from welfare to empowerment has brought important gains to both women and overall development, but it has stopped short of transforming the entrenched structures and practices that sustain inequality.

From the post-war era until the early 1970s, the welfare approach was dominant. Women were seen as passive beneficiaries of aid, not as agents of development. The approach focused on their reproductive responsibilities as wives, mothers and homemakers, and aimed to relieve suffering and meet women's practical needs within existing gender roles. Typical programmes included famine relief, nutrition, hygiene, and family planning.

The 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City gave voice to a new way of conceptualising women's actual and potential roles in the development process. The women in development (WID) movement that began to emerge in the early 1970s explicitly called for social justice and polit-

ical equality for women, improved education and employment opportunities, and increased health and welfare services.<sup>5</sup> WID saw women, not as needy beneficiaries sequestered in the domestic realm, but productive members of society, active contributors to the economy, and an untapped resource in the overall development process. WID's progressive position was influenced by a set of factors. Foremost is the pioneering work of Esther Boserup in highlighting the centrality of women farmers in agricultural production in Africa.<sup>6</sup> By this time, views and observations that the development process was, in some cases, actually worsening the position of women in the South, also started coming out. At the same time, feminist movements in the North were demanding equal opportunity in all spheres of life. One of the strongest messages to come out of the WID movement is that "development was not working for women; in fact, it had been bad for many of them."<sup>7</sup>

By challenging assumptions about the value of women's work and providing a rationale for reconfiguring development assistance to include women in a significant way, the WID movement is responsible for a sea change in the way the development community views women. It created space and provided impetus (as well as modest resources) for innovative strategies that put productive resources, such as revolving loan funds and micro-lending, into the hands of women.

The WID movement also prompted legislation to safeguard women's rights, most significantly the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It fostered the creation of women and development organizations and networks, whose advocacy, lobbying, research, and outreach work have pushed governments and organizations to be more responsive to women's needs. It made more visible women's contributions to the informal sector, as well as their non-market labor (care-giving and other home-based work); spurred the collection of gender-disaggregated data and statistics; promoted the evaluation of development efforts (revealing considerable dis-

<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/ecn6-2000-pc2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*. Routledge, London, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Shahrashoub Razavi and Carol Miller, *From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shift in the Women and Development Discourse*, UNRISD and UNDP 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Esther Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, pp. 27

crimination against women); and encouraged the development of gender analysis as a methodology. By the 1990s, national women's machineries had been set up in many countries, and WID units had been established in multilateral and bilateral development agencies.<sup>8</sup>

How were the messages of the WID movement received in the development community? The response was mixed, ranging from formal acceptance to "...mere grumbling, to outright resistance." The resistance grew from several factors – some of which are still at play today. A fundamental source of resistance was basic prejudice toward women stemming from deep-seated beliefs that "women are not men's equals and societies and economies are rightly organized to reflect this inequality." Some men felt personally threatened by the attacks on a *status quo* from which they had long benefited. The belief that it is inappropriate to export a cultural ideology from a donor country to a recipient country led some to reject the WID approach as "neo-cultural colonialism." A last objection to WID was that there "appeared to be no clear or easy way to understand WID [issues]" and no "straightforward way to correct development programming."<sup>9</sup>

Despite its contributions, however, even those sympathetic to its aims eventually identified some serious shortcomings to the WID approach. First and foremost, "it became clear that specialised projects for women, or special women's components of larger projects, often did not succeed in making women's lives better. In many cases, the very act of separating women's programming from the central, mainstream programming which involved men, resulted in increased marginalization of women and their roles – precisely the opposite effect from that which was intended."<sup>10</sup> WID units were often understaffed and

underfunded, and thus were not able to make much of an impact.

The WID approach argued for women's inclusion in mainstream development processes based on what women could give to development rather than vice versa, or even how women themselves might define development. Efficiency approaches (especially when structural adjustment was in full swing) sought to shift the burden of social service provision from the state to the household, assuming an endless elasticity of women's time and capacity. There was overemphasis on promoting small-scale micro-enterprises for women, which sometimes failed because they were based on assumptions made about women's traditional roles, without much consideration of household or community power imbalances. And the WID approach sometimes neglected welfare concerns, failing to address links between productive and reproductive work that often characterize women's lives.

The experiences of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) made many WID advocates realize that demands for social justice and equity for women were more effective if strategically linked to mainstream development concerns.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the chief shortcoming of the WID approach was that it left out the critical issues of power, conflict and relationships that are at the root of women's subordination. This is the gap that the gender in development (GID) approach, which began to take hold in the early 1990s, sought to fill by advocating gender mainstreaming.<sup>12</sup> If the development mainstream is blind to the differences in the contributions, roles, and needs of different population groups, then clearly, mainstream decisions, policies, actions and resource allocations will fail to reach the excluded or disadvantaged groups, including the half of humanity that is female.

<sup>8</sup> Many of these activities took place in the context of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Peace and Development 1975-1985. Reviews and appraisals of the progress achieved and obstacles encountered during the decade led to the creation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, which reaffirmed the international concern regarding the status of women and provided a framework for renewed commitment by the international community to the advancement of women and the elimination of gender-based discrimination.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, pp. 27-29

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, pp. 32

<sup>11</sup> Razavi and Miller, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> The mainstream is the "set of dominant and widely-held development directions which shapes development choices and practices" - *UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Briefing Kit*. In other words, the mainstream is the prevailing thinking of the majority of people, men and women.

Currently, the term GID covers a range of approaches to equality between men and women and its implications for women and development. Overall, the different gender approaches share a focus on the analysis of the different roles of men and women and their respective access to and control over resources and decision-making. Two of the main GID approaches are: the “gender roles” framework developed by the Harvard Institute for International Development and USAID; and the “social relations analysis,” which is associated with the work of the Institute for Development Studies at Sussex.

The gender roles framework focuses on the household unit as a system for allocating resources among its members – rather than as a cohesive, cooperative group that shares a common production and consumption system. It emphasizes women’s individual access to and control over resources within the family and their productive contributions to the household, which provide the rationale for allocating resources to them. As in WID, the justification for directing resources to women is economic efficiency. Efficiency has “enormous rhetorical appeal”<sup>13</sup> and, because it focuses on redistributing discrete economic inputs, the gender roles framework sidesteps the potentially controversial and threatening issue of redistributing power.

Social relations analysis, on the other hand, addresses the issue of power head-on. Indeed, empowerment strategies are its logical outgrowth. The central problem here is not the lack of women’s integration in development, but rather, “the social structures, processes, and relations that give rise to women’s disadvantaged position in a given society. As such, ending women’s subordination is viewed as more than a matter of reallocating economic resources. It involves redistributing power...Proponents of social relations analysis recognize that the redistributive process is a zero sum game...and men will have to relinquish some of the economic, political and social power.”<sup>14</sup> Social relations analysis looks not just at gender, but also at other forms of social differentiation – class, ethnicity, race, age, and caste. This

approach is more threatening as it challenges the status quo in a fundamental way.

Many development agencies have fallen short of the more challenging – and potentially transformative – social relations analysis. They have not adopted approaches that are fundamentally and explicitly rooted in the protection and promotion of rights and equality, such as addressing women and development issues within a human rights framework. Rather, they have emphasized efficiency and opted for a more politically acceptable, integrationist approach, seeking to bring women and gender concerns into existing policies and programmes and focusing on adopting existing institutional procedures.<sup>15</sup> But the results of the integrationist approach have yet to transform the mainstream or redefine men’s and women’s positions within it. Given the difficulties encountered with the less controversial incremental approach, how close are we to a transformative agenda?

## B. TRANSFORMING THE MAINSTREAM DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Several key issues stand in the way of a transformative development agenda. First and foremost, capacity for gender mainstreaming is a critical issue, at both the national and international levels. In general, building national capacity has emerged as a particularly elusive goal in development cooperation, and initiatives have constantly faced a lack of necessary skill, inadequate resources, and weak institutions.<sup>16</sup> Yet capacity for gender mainstreaming is particularly weak. “In most countries, gender training for civil servants, where it exists at all, is fairly general. Participants are rarely required to look beyond the difference between sex and gender, the differing roles of men and women, and their own prejudices and stereotyping practices. Even those who emerge from such training convinced and committed are unsure how to translate their convictions into daily work, particularly in the more specialized sectors that seem remote from gender concerns.”<sup>17</sup>

The mechanisms established, from national women’s machineries to the “gender focal point sys-

<sup>13</sup> Razavi and Miller, op. cit., p.27

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 28

<sup>15</sup> See BRIDGE, issue 5.

<sup>16</sup> Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Carlos Lopes, Khalid Malik, *Capacity for Development: New Solutions to Old Problems*, UNDP 2002, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> “The South African Women’s Budget Initiative,” *Women’s Political Participation and Good Governance: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges*, UNDP 2000, p. 57



**Box 1: GENDER FOCAL POINTS AT THE UN: CREATIVE, DEDICATED, MARGINALIZED**

*Although gender focal points have made tremendous contributions to gender mainstreaming and women's equality, they have done so "despite of" rather than "because of" the support of their respective institutions. Lack of seniority, resources, and management commitment, as well as the multiple tasks assigned to them, hamstringing their efforts system-wide. More specifically:*

- *The role of gender focal points should be that of facilitator, catalyst and adviser.*
- *Responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming rests with senior managers. They must have the commitment and competencies to lead.*
- *Responsibility for gender training of staff, and recruitment to achieve an organization's gender balance goals must be located and institutionalised in the personnel, training or human resources units or divisions, not with gender focal points.*
- *Gender focal points and gender advisers often occupy junior levels. Consequently, the majority of gender advisers and gender focal points do not have access to decision-making processes.*
- *Diversity should be ensured by appointing more men as gender focal points.*
- *United Nations entities should strengthen the gender networks in the field and pool their resources.*
- *The earmarking of budgetary provisions for both women and gender activities has proven useful.*
- *Gender mainstreaming does not preclude or substitute for women-specific interventions and policies.*

Excerpted from ACC document ACC/2000/3, Recommendations on the Gender Focal Point system in the UN, prepared for the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (Task manager: UNFPA).

tem" in development institutions, face not just capacity but also resource and access constraints and tend to be marginalized. Within the UN itself, the way in which the gender focal point system is managed has been criticized in a recent study (see Box 1).

Gender mainstreaming demands expertise –and acquiring expertise requires resources. It is difficult to imagine an organization implementing a poverty reduction strategy without a budget to hire an economist. With women making up two-thirds of the world's poorest citizens, is it acceptable to manage poverty programmes that lack dedicated expertise in gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming? How realistic is it to run a programme on HIV/AIDS – which has very clear gender dimensions – with no money for gender experts? Until organizations back up their gender promises with money, inaction will continue.

A related problem is that gender is addressed in many organizations, including UNDP, as a "cross-cutting" issue. From an operational standpoint, making gender a cross-cutting issue renders it institutionally homeless. By making gender mainstreaming everybody's job, it can easily become nobody's job. The budget implications are significant: cross-cutting

issues seldom sit atop dedicated pots of money for hiring staff and experts. In bureaucracies, managers who control resources have significantly more power to push their agenda forward than those who may have a mandate, but no funds behind it. This could also mean that there would be no senior official sitting at the decision-making table with a mandate to hold his or her colleagues accountable for gender mainstreaming results.

Mainstreaming per se, not just of gender but also of other issues, such as the environment and HIV/AIDS, is difficult because of the compartmentalized way in which development organizations – whether ministries or agencies, national or international – are structured and the way in which development professionals work.

As referred to earlier, one problem that is specific to gender mainstreaming is the lack of conceptual clarity and consensus around terminology. For example, the term "gender equality" is often used when what is really meant is equality between women and men. Some documents now even refer to the "two genders" rather than the two sexes. Terms must be well defined, and then used only within that context. Another source of confusion is that when develop-

ment practitioners engage in gender mainstreaming, they are seldom seeking to address negative impacts of development on men or to empower men with capacities and resources in order to level the playing field; at least ninety-five percent of the time, gender mainstreaming efforts centre on empowering women, countering negative impacts on women, ensuring that policies and programmes benefit women, and so on. Thus, it is understandable that the term gender has come to be widely understood as just another word for women.

Meanwhile, some development practitioners seem almost reluctant to discuss women, women's rights, affirmative action or women-only initiatives lest they appear ignorant or politically incorrect. This raises the possibility that in the transition from WID to GID, women have lost their place altogether rather than gained a place in the mainstream. But women-only initiatives and gender mainstreaming are not at odds; they are, in fact, complementary. Without affirmative action today, the accumulated disadvantages of the past will cast their shadow long into the future.

Levelling the playing field within a meaningful time frame requires direct action to address historical and present inequalities, alongside efforts to engender the development process through mainstreaming. UNDP's Policy Note on Gender Equality<sup>18</sup> states that:

*There are two complementary approaches to achieving gender equality: mainstreaming gender and promoting women's empowerment. Both are critical. (...) Women's empowerment is central to human development. Human development, as a process of enlarging people's choices, cannot occur when the choices of half of humanity are restricted. Targeted actions aimed at empowering women and righting gender inequities in the social and economic sphere, as well as in terms of civil and political rights, must be taken alongside efforts to engender the development process. Gender mainstreaming means being deliberate in giving visibility and support to women's contributions rather than making the assumption that women will benefit equally from gender-neutral*

*development interventions. Policies and programmes that ignore differential impact on gender groups are often gender-blind; potentially harmful for human development. Gender mainstreaming requires a focus on results to improve the well-being of poor women.*

Other UN organizations also practice this two-pronged approach:

- **ILO:** champions equality between men and women in its 1919 Constitution; advocates gender mainstreaming in the Plan of Action on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Men and Women in Employment (1987), and the Resolution concerning ILO Action for Women Workers (1991). Both provisions help "ensure that issues relating to equality of opportunity and treatment are systematically included at each stage of policy formulation, planning and implementation in all ILO programmes and projects." ILO also supports a continuation of measures focused on addressing inequalities through affirmative action.<sup>19</sup>
- **The WFP Gender Policy for 2003-2007:** recognizes the limitations of practicing only gender mainstreaming: "While fully striving for gender mainstreaming, WFP is aware that the application of this concept carries the risk that gender concerns and the need for special actions to close the gender gap can become invisible when included under the umbrella of 'having been mainstreamed.' WFP, therefore, continues to emphasize positive measures for women." The Policy envisages that the "positive measures" would be phased out as targets are reached, but that gender mainstreaming measures would continue.
- **UNIFEM:** sees work on women's human rights and gender mainstreaming as a continuum. "The experience of UNIFEM on the ground shows that many activities which concentrate on women's human rights achieve the goal of mainstreaming. For example, the regional campaigns to address violence against women resulted in the implementation of legal reforms and engendering the criminal justice system."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> This note can be found at <http://www.undp.org/policy/docs/policynotes/gender-9dec02.doc>

<sup>19</sup> For more information on ILO's gender policies, go to <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/pol-set/ind-pol.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM.

It is difficult for development organizations to promote structural change in power relationships between men and women. It is an inherently political process, one that is likely to be contentious and challenging to institutions and individuals. For these and other reasons, the focus has been on more visible, less provocative activities like policies, guidelines and data sets, rather than on more difficult, less visible processes to transform organizational culture and practice, as well as individual attitudes and behaviours.<sup>21</sup>

And, much as equality proponents argue that transformed gender relations will benefit men as well as women – in terms of overall family income, for instance, or men’s emancipation from imprisoning expectations and stereotypes around masculinity – in the short-term, at least, it appears to be a zero-sum game. There have been noteworthy attempts by men at the UN and in development organizations such as Oxfam Great Britain to understand what gender mainstreaming means from a male perspective so that they can engage in the issue. UNDP was a pioneer in this work.<sup>22</sup>

Concepts and methods only work if the organizations and institutions promoting them actually support them. This means that gender mainstreaming needs to be a stated organizational goal all the way through the system, and leadership is key. Without senior management support, results are difficult – if not impossible – to achieve. Performance systems have to be transformed so that gender mainstreaming is recognized and rewarded. Organizations like UNDP – whose performance appraisal system makes little use of rewards and incentives – face a particular challenge here. In the absence of directives, incentives, and specific mandates, the only people who will dedicate their scarce resources to gender mainstreaming are those who care about the issue on a personal level.

There is also a need to develop ways to measure success in mainstreaming. At present, it is too easy to

sprinkle the necessary references to women, gender, participation and equality through documents and then claim to have “done gender mainstreaming.” The shift in many development organizations to results-based management provides a way to address this problem – always providing that gender-related results are among the areas measured. Useful work on measuring mainstreaming has been done by CIDA and OECD/DAC, as well as by some UNDP Country Offices such as the database designed by UNDP Fiji. That development practitioners need support is clear. For example, while 119 UNDP Country Offices had highlighted gender considerations across all the goals in their Strategic Results Frameworks, an in-depth analysis of a 10 percent sample of the 2001 Country Office Results-Oriented Annual Reports found fewer progress statements for the goal of “advancement in the status of women and gender equality,” than for any other goal. Shifting gender equality from a focus area to a cross-cutting issue in the organization’s six practice areas may have led to confusion about how to measure work that promotes equality and empowerment.

Action on these and other critical issues will need capacity development, resources and commitment. This publication reviews experiences in mainstreaming gender in UNDP’s work, while also drawing on the experience of other organizations. It focuses on gender mainstreaming efforts in the critical areas of governance, poverty reduction, and environmental protection and regeneration; in tackling the threats posed by HIV/AIDS, violent conflicts and other crisis situations; and in opportunities provided by new information and communication technologies. The review is informed by the belief that, if development goals are to be achieved, it is necessary to transform the development agenda itself so that the rights and needs of all people, irrespective of their race, sex or creed, are taken into account.

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<sup>21</sup> From Bridge, issue 5

<sup>22</sup> Read “Gender Mainstreaming: A Men’s Perspective,” a paper prepared by the UN Working Group on Men and Gender Equality, an informal group of UN staff formed in early 1999; or, *Men, Masculinities and Development*, by Alan Greig, Michael Kimmel and James Lang, UNDP/GIDP Monograph #10 May 2000; and “Gender is Everyone’s Business,” report of workshop by the Gender Equality & Men team of Oxfam GB, an initiative funded by DfID and Oxfam, June 2002.



# Women in Governance: More and Better

**G**overnance is a relatively recent area of intervention for development organizations. During the 1990s, there was growing understanding of the links between good governance and poverty reduction, culminating in the Millennium Declaration, which emphasized that member states “will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law” and “the capacity of all countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights.” The challenges that countries face in this arena include strengthening the rule of law, equity and fairness in access to and distribution of resources, crime and corruption, social and political exclusion, and weak public administrations.

Governance has emerged as the most strategic area for women’s empowerment and for gender mainstreaming. Full partnership between women and men in electoral and legislative systems, in the administration of justice, and in the equitable allocation and management of resources at national and local levels will truly transform the mainstream while mainstreaming gender. In light of this awareness, many development organizations are investing both in direct support to building women’s capacities to participate in government at national and local levels, as well as in mainstreaming gender in crucial areas such as legislation, the budget, and the civil service so as to overcome past discrimination and ensure present and future equality.

## A. DIRECT SUPPORT TO WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

There is no doubt that the institutions of government do not yet reflect the reality of women’s power,

contributions and influence. While women constitute half the population, they still account for only 15 percent of parliamentarians worldwide (though it should be noted that this proportion is, in fact, a big improvement over the 1990s).<sup>23</sup> There is agreement that a critical mass of women parliamentarians is needed for transformation, and many initiatives are underway to increase women’s political participation to reach the interim goal of 30 percent set in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Gains in parliament are rarely achieved without advocacy, lobbying, forging alliances, and, in many cases, the use of quotas. Indeed, the 11 countries that have achieved the 30 percent target have all used quotas.<sup>24</sup> In Morocco, for instance, an unprecedented number of women were elected to parliament in 2002 after years of work by the women’s movement, with the support of national and international partners (see Box 2). Their efforts underscored the importance of working across party lines, preparing a strategy grounded in national and international experience, forging alliances, and pushing for the use of quotas.

In addition to efforts to increase the number of women in parliament, there is also a push to promote women’s participation in local government, including community, city and state government. In Georgia, for example, UNDP and other partners invested in advocacy and capacity development both before and after the 2000 elections.<sup>25</sup> Pre-election workshops were held in all regions of Georgia to empower women both as voters and as candidates. This was followed up with a second round of workshops held for those elected to office. An additional component—

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<sup>23</sup> For details on global, regional and national representation, go to the Inter-Parliamentary Union site at: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

<sup>24</sup> *Progress of the World’s Women 2002 Volume 2: Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*, UNIFEM, 2003

<sup>25</sup> Based on reports by Louise Nylin, Gender Focal Point, UNDP Tbilisi.

## **Box 2: MOROCCAN WOMEN BREAK THROUGH**

*In September 2002, 35 women were elected members of parliament in Morocco, an unprecedented number in the country (there had been two women in the outgoing parliament). The success was due in great part to the women's movement, which, with the support of UNIFEM, had for three years been advocating affirmative action and preparing alternative approaches for the government when it revised the electoral code in early 2002.*

*The Association democratique de femmes mobilised women across party lines together with women's NGOs. They undertook a comparative study of methodologies used in different countries and held a series of workshops to prepare alternatives. They submitted their proposals in a memorandum to the Prime Minister, calling for the introduction of several affirmative measures in the electoral code, such as quotas, proportional representation, financial incentives, limits on mandates, and the establishment of a National Equality Observatory.*

*The Memorandum also called upon political parties, trade unions and professional organizations to adopt the quota system in their executive bodies, encourage male members to contribute to domestic chores, integrate women's needs into their terminology, establish day care centres, reserve a part of their budgets for women candidates, and provide training. A campaign promoting women's political participation was carried out in the media. Efforts were also devoted to convincing supporters of equal rights for women that affirmative action is not undemocratic and does not mean women are inferior to men.*

*The government adopted several of the proposals. The political parties accepted a proposed national list of 30 memberships reserved for women, thereby ensuring at least 10 percent representation for women (In neighbouring Algeria and Tunisia, the percentages are currently at 1.5 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively).*

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women in peace building – was facilitated by UNDP, in collaboration with UNIFEM, so that women could present experiences and advocate concerns to high-level officials and representatives from the international community.

India's allocation of one-third of local council seats to women, which brought some 800,000 women into active political life, is the most widely quoted initiative. So far, it has had mixed results due to constraints in women's capacities and the system's own weaknesses.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the very fact of women's presence in local councils in such numbers provides an opportunity for change, as well as an opening for capacity development, a challenge that is being taken by the Indian Ministry of Rural Development and the NGO RLEK (see Box 3).<sup>27</sup>

In Pakistan too, seats in local government are now reserved for women, providing an opening for capacity building. Women helping women is the

hallmark of the Women's Political Participation Project (W3P) implemented by the Ministry of Women and Development and supported by UNDP Pakistan and NORAD.<sup>28</sup> This aims to maximize the presence of about 40,000 women councillors in the district, in tehsil and union local councils — a critical mass reached through the reservation policy of 33 percent provided for in the Local Government Plan of 2000. Most of the elected women are less than 45 years old (57%); more than half are illiterate (53%); the majority are housewives (73.7%); few own any land; and an overwhelming majority have never contested elections (79%). The approach used is "mentoring and nurturing" where women learn from each other. W3P has trained 40 lead mentors from among the district councillors who, in turn, have "mentored" about 80 percent of their peers — 1,645 out of 1,995. By the end of 2003, W3P is expected to have reached the women councillors at all levels.

<sup>26</sup> See Poornima Vyasulu and Vinod Vyasulu, "Women in the Panchayati Raj: Grassroots Democracy in India," in *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges*, UNDP 2000.

<sup>27</sup> See also "Putting women in their place? Participation in Indian local governance" by Ajaya Kumar Mohapatra, IDS Visiting Fellow, with Samantha Hung, BRIDGE, *Gender In Brief*, No. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Report provided by Socorro Reyes.



**Box 3: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN INDIA**

*The Indian Ministry of Rural Development is implementing a programme to strengthen people's participatory institutions such as the Panchayati Raj. Building women's leadership capacity is a specific programme thrust, together with promoting sustainable livelihoods and asset creation at the community level.*

*The Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK), an NGO based in Dehra Dun, has been training elected women members and chairpersons of the panchayats on rights and duties, ways to interact with officials, and basic planning for development and programme implementation.*

*Among other things, RLEK held a series of open fora where the women were encouraged to air their grievances. A session held in March 1999 was attended by 600 women leaders from the Garhwal region, who complained about the lack of cooperation by local officials. By June, sweeping amendments to Panchayati Raj laws in the whole of Uttar Pradesh made all village officials firmly answerable to the panchayat and its chairperson.*

*Of Dehra Dun's 119 women chairpersons, 34 are illiterate, while another 40 never got beyond the eighth grade. At the time this was written, one chairperson, Nathu Begum, who once worked as a farm labourer to bring up her seven children, was taking courses to complete her primary school. In Uttar Pradesh, chairpersons can approve schemes worth \$1,500 on their own. Nathu Begum has been successful in obtaining funds from various existing schemes to build a network of four-foot wide concrete roads and drains in Enfield Grant. She was also seeking a government salary for a teacher at the school she established.*

Extracted from *Choices* magazine,  
UNDP, March 2000

Direct support to women's participation in government is also being provided by initiatives at the global level. The Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening, a partnership between UNDP and the Government of Belgium, is being piloted in 12 countries with the help of UNDP Country Offices, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and other national and international partners. The training provided for over 200 members and staff of parliaments from over 30 countries in Asia and Africa on improving parliamentary oversight had gender equity as a special focus.

Women's participation in government not only enables them to address their own needs, but also transforms the mainstream. Studies have shown that increasing women's participation in government at all levels enhances transparency and draws attention to areas that men do not generally focus on, such as education, health, and water and sanitation. In India, for example, women parliamentarians succeeded in per-

suading their fellow parliamentarians to set a target of 30 percent of the total development funds to be earmarked for women. Their counterparts in the Philippines achieved an initial rate of five percent. In Uganda, women parliamentarians increased the government's budget allocations for nutrition and for childhood development projects.<sup>29</sup>

Increasing the number of women in various branches of government, however, is only half the battle — women must sustain and enhance their gains. This was well understood by Ugandan women, who benefited from affirmative action guaranteeing a minimum of 15 percent of seats to women in the Constituent Assembly in 1994 as well as in parliament.<sup>30</sup> To sustain their gains, the Women's Caucus set up the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) and registered it as an NGO. Since then, FOWODE has trained hundreds of women leaders for effective participation in political life, and several African countries are using its training package.

<sup>29</sup> Lina Hamadeh-Banerjee, "Women's Agency in Governance" in *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance*, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>30</sup> See The Hon. Benigna Mukibi's, "Alliances for Gender and Politics: the Uganda Women's Caucus" in *Women's Political Participation*, op. cit.

Women must also ensure that their participation translates into change in legislation, policies and resource allocation decisions by civil servants.<sup>31</sup> In other words, women and gender-sensitive men must ensure that gender is mainstreamed into the processes of government, alongside direct support to women's participation in the institutions of government.

## B. MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN GOVERNMENT

Mainstreaming women in government is taking place in several ways, including through the efforts of national machineries, the use of disaggregated data in policy dialogue and advocacy, and growing adoption of participatory methodologies in national development planning exercises. Perhaps the most exciting mainstreaming initiative is "gender budgeting," part of civil society efforts to push for "people-centred budgets."

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the national budget.

*Budgetary policy forms a crucial component of macroeconomic policy frameworks. Traditionally, national budgets have performed several central economic and social functions: they allocate resources, provide basic social services, ameliorate income and wealth disparities, stabilize prices, and generate economic growth and employment. Budgets reflect the vision of economic and social development of governments and more generally the values of a society. They also reflect the choices that governments have to make to realize their social and economic agenda. Underlying these choices is also the balance of power relations among different social groups.<sup>32</sup>*

Gender budgeting involves the analysis of national budgets from the perspective of their impact on women and men, boys and girls.<sup>33</sup> Budget analysis from a gender perspective requires not just an understanding of the complex design and content of the budget, but also the negotiation processes involved in budget preparation. Gender budget initiatives promote equity across the development

### Box 4: UNDP, UNIFEM AND GENDER BUDGETS

UNDP and UNIFEM, often working together, are supporting many gender budget exercises. For example:

- The UNIFEM Gender Responsive Budgets Programme, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, is supporting initiatives in 14 countries. Results are being achieved where there is an especially strong partnership with government ministries, including India, Uganda, and Tanzania.
- In Mauritius, UNDP is supporting the 3-year National Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Budgets and the High-Level Committee approved by the Cabinet in December 2001. UNDP, UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat worked with the Ministry of Finance as well as the Ministry of Women's Rights on a sub-regional workshop on engendering budgets.
- In Botswana, UNIFEM, UNDP, and SADC are supporting a gender budgeting process for Botswana parliamentarians.
- In New York, UNDP and UNIFEM convened a global workshop in November 2002 to share experiences from gender budget initiatives.

spectrum because they require an understanding of who is allocated what in different development fields, including education, health, and employment — areas that are crucial to building people's capabilities and reducing poverty. In addition, a gender budget initiative requires collaboration amongst many groups, on the premise that unless the understanding is broadly shared, then advocacy for change would not be effective.

The best-known initiative of this kind is the South African Women's Budget Initiative. In spite of its name, it does not propose a separate budget for women and indeed is an excellent example of gender mainstreaming. "It examines the whole of the government budget to determine its differential impacts on women and men, girls and boys. Furthermore, in South Africa, the exercise has emphasized differential impacts on differing groups of women and men, studying them along certain lines, such as race, geography and income."<sup>34</sup>

Following the lead of the South African initiative (which had been informed by the Australian experience, the first of such initiative), activists and development professionals in many countries worked on gender budget analysis to promote

<sup>31</sup> "Gender, Governance and the Feminisation of Poverty," in *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance*, op cit, p.31.

<sup>32</sup> *Budgets as If People Mattered: Democratizing Macroeconomic Policies*, Nilufer Cagatay, Mumtaz Keklik, Radhika Lal, and James Lang, UNDP 2000.

<sup>33</sup> See the August 2002 note prepared by Kathmandu-based UNDP Sub-Regional Resource Facility (SURF), which provides useful definitions, summary of approaches and tools [surf-ktm@undp.org](mailto:surf-ktm@undp.org)

<sup>34</sup> *Women's Political Participation*, op cit. See also the recently published *Gender Budgets Make More Cents: Country Studies and Good Practice*, by Debbie Budlender and Guy Hewitt, the Commonwealth Secretariat [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

more equitable and efficient expenditure on human development. By the year 2000, there were gender budget initiatives in more than 18 countries, including nations as diverse as France, Uganda, Canada, Bangladesh, Switzerland, Mauritius, Norway, India, the United Kingdom, and Nepal.

Work on the budget is a long-term investment in a complex area that is usually a closed book even to parliamentarians, and it will take time before results can be seen. Patient investment in the process is needed, not just in analysis but also in advocating the message at the national and local levels.

The experience of FOWODE, the NGO established by Ugandan women parliamentarians in the 1990s, is a good example. When FOWODE embarked on its gender budget initiative, they used research on gender gaps in the agriculture, health and education sectors to train 40 women legislators and local planners in gender budget analysis techniques and to advocate for a gender approach to national budgets. They also worked on local-level budgets, where resistance was hard to overcome. In the Kabale district, for example, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer admitted that at the beginning of the project, "I told them to stop wasting my time."<sup>35</sup>

Despite such barriers, FOWODE persisted with its advocacy, training, and research in the district and succeeded in obtaining the commitment of the District Council to the project objectives. Concrete results in the Kabale district included a 30 percent increase in contracts awarded to women's groups or women-owned firms — women are now maintaining most road contracts. Health policies for the district are now being analysed with gender considerations, since research had shown that health policies impacted mostly women and children.

At the national level, the exercise resulted in important shifts in thinking. The Ministry of Finance has mandated that National Agricultural Development Strategies include gender budgeting, and gender awareness marked ministerial discussions during the preparation of the health budget framework paper. FOWODE and the Gender Ministry now sit on the

committee monitoring implementation of Uganda's Poverty Alleviation Framework.

In Nepal, which is facing a deteriorating security situation, there is commitment to address social inequity, considered to be one of the causes of the insurgency.<sup>36</sup> As in Uganda, health, agriculture and education were the areas selected for a gender budget audit of the Finance Ministry.<sup>37</sup> Among other things, the audit found that the Ministry of Finance considers all its policies and tax measures to be gender neutral. In fact, new guidelines that require ministries to state the effects of their programme on women and poverty reduction are not yet fully operational. Other findings included:

- Donor-supported programmes are more focused on equity and better linked with local government, but they have limited coverage and impact.
- Nepal's tax system has become more regressive with adverse impact on poor households, and women's income is effectively taxed at a higher rate when added to their husbands' salaries.
- As in other countries, budgetary allocation to women-only programs is very low.
- Most women's programmes provide credit or training on sewing and are neither geared to market opportunities nor to women's empowerment.

The authors of the budget audit recommended greater allocation to strategic, women-specific initiatives in education, health, training, credit and technology, as women did not benefit equally from gender-neutral programmes.

The Nepal Government is certainly making efforts to support women's mainstreaming. For example, it has made women's representation mandatory in District Development Committees, a key plank of its decentralization policy (see also Box 5). It is clear, however, that capacity development is needed for women to participate. There are very few women's groups which have a long history of intensive social mobilization and effective training that would enable them to analyse

<sup>35</sup> UNDP-Belgium "Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening." Assessment Report for Uganda. Field Mission March 25 – 29, 2002. Unpublished report.

<sup>36</sup> Information on the Nepal budget audit exercise provided by Bharati Silawal-Giri of UNDP Nepal.

<sup>37</sup> Debbie Budlender, who shared the South Africa experience with Nepal, recommends starting with a few areas.



#### Box 5: SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN NEPAL

*The UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) is supporting local governance in eight of Nepal's 75 districts. District Development Committees agreed to allocate a minimum of 20 percent of capital development grants for micro-projects that provide special benefits for women and disadvantaged groups. Since the overall principle of the programme is to develop the capacity of the local governments, rather than to dictate to them, the initial guidelines in this respect were limited. In evaluating progress, lessons learned included:*

- *Most of the projects selected benefited women, while few supported other disadvantaged groups. The definition of disadvantaged groups varied based on local conditions.*
- *The interpretation of projects benefiting women was sometimes changed by the Committees to projects proposed by women's groups. Hence, a number of projects benefiting the whole community, but proposed and implemented by women, were approved. Several social development projects were considered to be women-specific, when in fact, the benefits provided to women or other disadvantaged groups were not clear.*
- *Project implementation modalities were revised based on these findings. One example is the breakdown of projects, specifying that of the 20 percent of capital development grants, 10 percent is to benefit women while the other 10 percent goes to other disadvantaged groups. A list was also prepared giving examples of projects that could be considered targeted and those that were not targeted.*

Henrik Fredborg Larsen  
UNCDF Nepal

their own needs in a broader perspective and demand budget allocations accordingly.

Gender budget analysis is an important breakthrough in the governance arena. It reinforces ongoing efforts to mainstream gender in government, with much of it carried out by the women's ministries, departments, or national committees ("national machineries") that began to emerge after the Third World Conference for Women in Nairobi.

Some of these bodies have been marginalized due to lack of funds, influence, and capacity, and political will. In other cases, however, they have been able to move the mainstreaming agenda forward. An instructive example comes from Chile (see Box 6), where the National Women's Institution has both resources and political support to promote women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

There are examples from other regions, too. In Egypt, the National Council for Women adopted the National Framework for the Advancement of Women, and then set to work on mainstreaming gender in the Fifth National Five-year Plan (2002-2007).<sup>38</sup> It organized several sensitisation sessions with planners in the

21 line ministries; partnered with national research institutions to develop manuals and conduct training on gender planning, strategic planning, gender responsive budgeting and auditing, designated Equal Opportunity Units/Focal Points in different line ministries; and organized one-on-one meetings with planners to discuss specific projects and programmes in sectoral plans.

The Council attributes its ability to work at the highest levels to two main factors, among others: strong political backing (it is headed by the First Lady), and the investments made in strengthening its own capacity to mainstream gender.

In Turkey, programmes sponsored by the General Directorate for the Status and Problems of Women, created in 1993, have generated positive results. They paved the way for gender-sensitive legislation and policies covering domestic violence, job discrimination, entrepreneurship and women's human rights. With support from many other partners, including UNDP, UNIFEM, the European Union, and the World Bank, the Directorate has also helped launch a gender studies programme at three major

<sup>38</sup> The programme was supported by UNDP, with inputs from UNIFEM. Information provided by Naglaa Arafa, Programme Officer, UNDP Cairo.

#### Box 6: GENDER DEALS IN CHILE

**SERNAM – the Chilean National Women’s Institution, established by law in 1991, is working to mainstream gender both at the policy level and throughout the civil service, assisted by the fact that its director is a member of the cabinet. SERNAM established an equal opportunity committee with different ministers, and according to a presidential decree every ministry and agency has to adopt some goals related to gender.**

**Things are moving further this year in the context of an innovative programme to modernize the state. Within this programme, a bargain is struck between the ministry of finance and the line ministries, regarding the size of the work force, introduction of new technology and other areas. If the ministries need additional funding during the year, they have to reduce their budget accordingly – however, they cannot reduce an area on which a bargain has been struck.**

**Gender is one of the bargains struck by the 184 ministries and government agencies. The first stage of this bargain, which was introduced this year, involves a diagnosis of the services and products offered by the agencies to the people, and the beneficiaries receiving the products and services. This will map the impact on women and men of the agency offerings. Each body that has “done its homework” at the end of this stage receives funding from the ministry of finance. During the second stage, the government bodies will have to strike bargains to deal with those areas where there is inequality between women and men.**

**The Ministry of Finance has also established an Innovation Fund, and ministries and agencies present innovative projects to access the pot. As of this year, the projects presented must be gender sensitive.**

**SERNAM, which has 13 regional offices throughout Chile, is also working on other areas. For instance, a programme is now underway to work with women and households to put land in women’s names. In 2001, SERNAM launched a budget initiative, supported by UNDP and UNIFEM.**

Interview with Valeria Ambrosio, UNDP Chile Gender Focal Point

universities, as well as set up an Advisory Council for Gender Policy Development.

An important arena for mainstreaming gender in governance is legislative reform. UNDP is working with partners in several countries to reform laws from a gender perspective. Seven countries in Africa alone (Angola, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, and Senegal) are reviewing laws and introducing legislation promoting the advancement of women. However, reform of existing legislation is not enough. New legislation, together with mechanisms to oversee application of the law, is also needed to overcome the accumulation of age-old barriers to participation.

A model for such action comes from Bulgaria, where a bill was recently passed to promote women’s human rights. The bill complements existing legislation by curbing gender-based discrimination in the political and socio-economic spheres. The process of drafting the bill involved several government agencies, more than 30 NGOs, many experts and the media, and was informed by

experience from other parts of the world.<sup>39</sup> The Bulgarian bill places special emphasis on countering negative stereotypes of the roles women and men play in society, and prohibits the dissemination of advertisements or announcements that contain discriminatory contents. It bans sexual harassment in the workplace and provides women equal access to job recruitment, career development and promotion opportunities, as well as a pay-scale system commensurate to their output.

The bill also stipulates that a minimum of 40 percent of the appointments in the executive branch should be allocated to women, a provision consistent with European Union practices. It foresees the creation of a Gender Equality Ombudsman to monitor the application of the law.

The area of access to justice appears to be the focus of few gender mainstreaming initiatives. For example, a review of papers presented to a UNDP-sponsored workshop on access to justice in 2000 found just one programme that specifically referred to gender.<sup>40</sup> This was the access to justice pro-

<sup>39</sup> Based on reports provided by UNDP Bulgaria.

<sup>40</sup> Information in presentation to March 2002 “Access to Justice” workshop convened by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre <http://www.undp.org/governance/cd/>



gramme in Guatemala, which highlights the needs of different population sectors and sensitivity to indigenous population traditions. One of its objectives is to support indigenous women studying the law. More efforts are needed to promote women in the judicial system and enhance its capacity to understand the gender dimensions of existing laws, as well as incoming laws that may be passed to deal with such issues as violence against women, or to end discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

As is clear from the above presentation, different approaches are used to increase women's participation in government and mainstream gender in governance. The examples from Uganda, Egypt, Turkey, Bulgaria and Chile underscore the importance of alliances, resources and the political will to move forward. The example from Nepal illustrates the importance of monitoring and evaluation to ensure

that government commitments are being translated into action. The important new work on gender budgets is likely to have a transformative effect down the road. While there are many initiatives to engender governance at the country level, more work is needed to strengthen the capacity of women to participate in the different branches of government.

Moreover, it would appear that gender issues do not sufficiently inform the design and management of global programmes. Development practitioners interviewed for this publication believe that staff – not only in government, or at UNDP – lack the capacity to mainstream gender when it comes to project design and management in specific programme areas. This underscores the need for tools to help staff develop technical skills to mainstream gender in specific areas. This should be considered a high impact area for capacity development, given its transformative potential.