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**FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:
UGANDA'S EXPERIENCE**

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** The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

Background

Gender mainstreaming in Uganda was taken up as a government policy in 1985 with the setting up of the Ministry of Women in Development that has since changed to Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. With a vibrant National machinery (till early 90s) Uganda was exceptionally pro-active in addressing many important gender issues; through affirmative action in the political sphere and higher education; through the abolition of user fees in health care and the introduction of Universal primary education; through impressive work to reduce HIV prevalence rates, and through its determination to focus on gender issues in the economic policy arena and in legal reform.

With change in paradigm¹, there was a shift from women focused Programmes to mainstreaming gender in the sector plans and the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)². Though there was an attempt to mainstream gender, it was not a priority and kept on fading away. This resulted in persistent gender inequalities in all spheres of life that was partly reflected by the increasing³ income inequality among socio-economic groups. Empirical research also indicated that the persistent gender inequality was partly responsible for the stagnated GDP growth rates that were below the desired target of 7% deemed necessary for sustainable poverty reduction.

It was within this context that the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness came into effect. The most important pillar for Uganda was “managing for results” as this was the opportunity to invigorate gender mainstreaming efforts. This was because without effective gender mainstreaming the performance in terms of outcomes would be less optimal.

The Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness and gender equality

As noted above the Declaration’s pillar of managing for results rekindled the flame for gender mainstreaming. However, two of the other pillars of the declaration advocating for harmonization and alignment fostered funding modalities of general budget support⁴; earmarked sector budget support⁵ and basket funding⁶. These funding modalities were double edged in that the targeted gender equality programmes that had been supported through project aid were threatened. This was particularly the case for programmes that were being executed by the National machinery. On the other hand, for sectors that had articulated the gender equality needs like in the sectors of health and education the earmarked sector support was used to address the concerns. For example under health funds were earmarked for maternal and child care

¹ This was a change from women in development to gender and development

² The PEAP doubles as Uganda’s PRSP

³ From 2000, income inequality as measured by the Gini Coefficient persistently increased and only slightly declined in 2005

⁴ General budget support is where aid is contributed to the general government budget with no formal limitation on where the funds may actually be spent. This funding modality fosters the pillar of **ownership** but also has its own risks

⁵ This donor support to a specific sector and can be used to develop the whole sector

⁶ This is a joint funding modality by several donors towards a programme or sector. This modality enhanced **harmonization** between stakeholders

programmes. However for the sectors where the gender equality needs were passed as being “crosscutting” there was a danger of evaporation. This was more of a problem for spending institutions that were not a part of well articulated functional⁷ sectors.

The new aid modalities therefore provide both an opportunity and a threat to gender equality and women’s empowerment depending on the level of development of the sectors. For the national machinery lacking a well articulated sector, it has suffered reduced funding because of the alignment and harmonized that has translated in reduced project aid. This is a big challenge for a ministry tasked with mainstreaming a complex crosscutting issue in all government policies and programmes.

With the realization that project aid was limited, the best option was to ensure effective mainstreaming of the gender issues into the budgeting processes. To hasten the institutionalization of gender and equity⁸ budgeting (GEB) it was put as an undertaking in the Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC)⁹ matrix. This type of action was aimed at pushing the government go an extra mile since gender budgeting has been dismissed in many countries on the pretext of its complexity. In this case the donors had a key role to play in agreeing to use the undertaking as a performance measure that would trigger additional funding to the government. However, since the Paris Declaration pushes for harmonization and alignment, the donors also had a role to play in ensuring that the undertaking was actually executed within the various sectors being supported. In fact failure to achieve the institutionalization would cost the government additional funds but would also be a sign of “failure” on the part of the donors since the performance results within Uganda are the same for all stakeholders! To this effect, the Donor Gender¹⁰ group was instrumental in availing funds as well as technical support for capacity building of officials in various sectors.

To ensure effective institutionalization, the gender and equity initiative is spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The implementers are the members of the sector working groups (SWGs¹¹). To-date the following activities have been undertaken namely:

1. Developing gender and equity guidelines and integrating them into the annual Budget Call Circular, since 2004. This was aimed at ensuring sector compliance when developing their Budget Framework Papers that are used as a basis for assessing past performance and justifying future funding needs

⁷ In Uganda there are now 18 functionally defined sectors but few have been developed. These are health, education; water and sanitation; justice, law and order; agriculture; roads and works. The social development sector that encompasses the general equality concerns is yet to be fully developed and this has implications for enhanced funding.

⁸ In Uganda equity is also included because of the other inequality concerns resulting from geographical location. There has been widespread and persistent regional inequality with the north lagging behind other regions and this is a source of political tensions.

⁹ The PRSC is a matrix of agreed targets between Government of Uganda, The World Bank and other Donors used to assess progress and triggers the release or withdrawal of funds

¹⁰ This is constituted by the social development advisors in the country donor offices

¹¹ A sector working group is constituted by institutions with related operations (different missions) but share the same vision. **It is within these groups that sector priorities and budgetary allocations are agreed upon.**

2. Prioritizing the sectors to focus on in terms of effective capacity building for GEB. The six sectors were selected on the basis of their possible contribution to attaining gender quality in Uganda and they include health, education, agriculture, roads and works, water and sanitation; and justice, law and order.
3. Developing Manuals for Users and Facilitators for GEB. The facilitators are a group of gender advocates from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development; Donor Gender Group; and Civil Society.
4. Training desk officers in the Budget Directorate, Ministry of Finance and some members of the priority sector working groups in GEB.

These activities have been undertaken since 2003 but it is still along way to attaining effective gender budgeting. This means that gender budgeting is a process that takes time and requires patience and commitment- particularly political commitment as results are long in coming. There is need to put in place a strategic long term plan for gender budgeting that is supported by a **critical mass of champions**. There is need for capacity building for all members of sector working groups, budget desk officers as well as support teams. The initiative itself therefore requires investment and a budget line that would ensure consistency and sustained operations.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Resource allocation for gender equality

As was noted resource allocations are made by the sector working groups, including those for gender equality within the sector. However there is no effective mechanism for allocating funds to the gender issues that may belong to no specific sector an intervention that ought to be taken by the Finance ministry. The civil society, influence allocations within sectors to the extent that they are active members of the sector working groups. At national level, they participate in the national budget conferences where they make an input. If their issues are properly articulated, they often influence budgetary allocations to sectors.

The monitoring of resource allocation for gender equality is currently undertaken by the Poverty Eradication Working Group (PEWG) that has membership of officials from the Ministry of Finance (also secretariat for the group); Ministry of Gender; Donors and Civil society. However, the sector working groups are also encouraged to carry out some monitoring and evaluation during their assessment of past performance (review both financial and physical performance) as they prepare the budget framework papers. The biggest challenge for this monitoring and evaluation is availability of adequate **gender disaggregated data (GDD)** at various levels of the analysis. For sustainability it is desirable that the National machinery has the requisite capacity to conduct this monitoring and evaluation. The challenge would be the ability of the national machinery to use such findings to call for punitive action against non performing sectors.

Impact of New Aid Modalities on integration of gender equality

In Uganda, gender mainstreaming in development programmes had taken root before the onset of the new aid modalities. The Government took the initiative to examine gender issues and thereafter made important steps towards redressing gender inequality by integrating gender in its

reform policies and programs. It was the persistent gender inequality that influenced government's resolve to enhance gender-mainstreaming efforts.

Between 2002 and 2004, a substantial amount of work was done to understand the extent and impacts of gender inequality in Uganda. The government established a PEAP Gender Team (PGT) in 2002 under the leadership of Ministry of Finance to take the lead in coordinating and managing the integration of gender as one of the key crosscutting issues in the PEAP. This team commissioned studies to inform the policy-making processes; conducted workshops and also designed guidelines to facilitate the mainstreaming processes.

These efforts resulted into the PEAP 2004-2008 being more gender responsive than the previous two (PEAP 1997, and PEAP 2000). This was illustrated by the detailed discussions of gender issues and inclusion of strategies to address some of the pertinent issues in all the PEAP pillars. The challenge was the translation of the policy objectives of gender mainstreaming into reality. This is where the new aid modalities were instrumental in fostering gender and equity budgeting.

However, it is too early to ascertain the impact of GEB on gender equality. This is because the initiative is yet to be fully institutionalized. However, in some sectors where gender budgeting has been given some consideration; there are some positive results already. For example, under health a key gender issue was the high maternal mortality that was partly a result of low deliveries in health units in attendance of skilled personnel. With improved funding and therefore provision of maternal services, there was a 4 percent increase in deliveries in health units between 2004 and 2006, which has translated into reduced maternal mortality.

The impact of the new aid modalities therefore depend on level of gender mainstreaming already attained by the country.

Monitoring and Evaluating impacts of New Aid modalities

The impact of the new aid modalities as they relate to “managing for results” is measured and monitored by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) through an Annual PEAP Review Process. The OPM coordinates an exercise that reviews performance based on an agreed on set of indicators.

The PEAP has five pillars and under each¹² there are performance indicators giving total of 45. Unfortunately there are no gender relevant indicators in four pillars save for the human development component. Under this pillar gender disaggregated data is used to illustrate the gender differences. The outcome indicators include:

- Infant mortality rate
- Maternal mortality rate
- HIV/AIDS prevalence rate
- Literacy rate

¹² The five pillars are: Economic management; production, competitiveness and incomes; security, conflict resolution and disaster management; good governance and human development

For monitoring and evaluating the impact of new aid modalities relating to other aspects of alignment and harmonization, there is a peer review mechanism. There is an effort to alienate roles through a division of labour exercise that shall demarcate “roles and responsibilities” of donors in terms of being lead coordinators of sectoral activities. The performance of donors is through both a self assessment as well an assessment by government. The challenge is the authenticity of the results from self assessments because it is difficult for one to “fail” oneself. On the other hand the government may not be as honest as it should be in fear of “repercussions” of hurting the hand that feeds you!

For evaluation of particular aspects of the new aid modalities, for example impact of general budget support, independent studies have been commissioned by some donors¹³ following complaints from civil society. The arguments for civil society is that the new aid modalities are reducing funds that would otherwise be channeled through non governmental organizations – all in the name of country ownership and harmonization. The gender activists further argue that this will limit their operations in an area that is always marginalized by government.

Innovative approaches to financing for gender equality

Programmes for gender equality shall continue to be crosscutting and the best mechanism is through basket funding. This would ensure alignment and harmonization among donors. On the other hand the funding should be contingent upon meeting certain jointly agreed conditions for ownership and joint accountability. This is critical because history has shown that gender issues have a very high propensity of “evaporation” from government programmes. The conditions should be gender equality based performance indicators.

With joint assessments for performance government and donors should be more serious in addressing the gender issues. For example despite that the Millennium Development Goals have a list of gender relevant indicators very few donors if any have aligned their funding to the attainment of these goals.

Recommendations for future action

1. New aid modalities as an opportunity for enhanced gender equality should be exploited by aligning major global goals e.g the MDGs to its financing modalities. The arguments for harmonization and alignment towards management for results for example, should be used to push for enhanced funding of the MDG goals. This is because many poor governments are wary of the fact that the MDGs can only be attained if aid flows are greatly stepped up. The fact that the MDG goals are gender responsive would go along way in ensuring gender equality in various countries.
2. New aid modalities as a threat to project aid, for gender equality activities that are still likely to fall through the cracks should be minimized by using the modality of basket funding. However, the programmes that qualify for such funding should be agreed upon by all

¹³ Two such studies have been commissioned by DFID and Action Aid International- Uganda.

stakeholders basing on evidence from the national gender machineries in collaboration with other gender activists. This type of funding should hasten the development of social development sectors that are aimed at addressing issues of gender¹⁴ inequality.

3. Within countries efforts for gender budgeting should be supported irrespective of the application of new aid modalities. This shall entail the following:
 - Capacity building of budgeting officials at all levels of government in gender budgeting
 - Strengthened capacity of the National machineries to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives. In addition the machinery must have capacity for providing technical support to the budgeting institutions.
 - National monitoring and evaluation systems integrating gender responsive performance indicators at all levels
 - Provision of adequate gender disaggregated data to support decision making for gender budgeting
 - Through Division of Labour exercises, the donors to agree on the donor gender support team that has to support the country gender budgeting activities with both funding and technical expertise.
 - Political commitment at all levels to ensure implementation of activities
 - Civil society organizations being supported to play the “trouble shooting” role.

¹⁴ The notion of gender inequality should go beyond the sex differences in access to and control over resources; and access to and use of public services to issues of marginalization based on age, disability and orphan hood.