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The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality
and the empowerment of women: SADC experience

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1. Introduction

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an Inter-Governmental Organisation that coordinates 13 Member States in the Southern African region. These countries include: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All SADC Member States have ratified, or acceded to, signed and adopted gender equality instruments. Among such instruments include: The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), African and Beijing Platforms for Action and the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children.

All SADC Member States have established government structures which are responsible to facilitate, coordinate and monitor the implementation of national gender policies and other regional and global gender equality instruments which their countries are party to. The nature of the structures, positioning and location within the overall government machinery vary from one country to another, ranging from small desks or units, some of which have evolved with time into bigger structures such as departments or divisions and fully fledged ministries. In most cases, where fully fledged ministries are in place, they are also assigned additional mandates to coordinate and monitor issues which are thought to be close to women's issues, such as child welfare, family welfare, community development, youth affairs, home affairs, socially marginalized groups in society, and so forth. In few cases, for example in the case of South Africa, the definition of the National Machinery incorporate even structures outside government. NGO and civil society organizations also are seen as part of the national machinery.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action defines "National Machinery for the advancement of women or national mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment" as central policy-coordinating structures inside government machinery, whose main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas.

The definition of the "National machinery or National Institutional Mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment" as being the government structure within the government machinery" has led to different interpretations in different Member States. All countries acknowledge the fact that the government structure set up for this particular purpose should have a lead mandate to coordinate, facilitate and monitor policy formulation and implementation to ensure that gender equality and women empowerment perspectives permeate in all national policy formulation, reviews, and programme development. Whereas the components of the national machineries should be inclusive to include all institutions and structures that are key players in influencing policy changes and transformation processes to enable gender equality and women's empowerment to be realized. Some member states that have conceptualized the definition to incorporate the different structures, their national policies have categorically elaborated the components of the national machinery. South Africa

sets an example in this case. The national gender policy of South Africa defines and spells out the different components of the national machinery and the relationships that exist between them. The national machinery is a comprehensive structure which consists of structures in the executive, legislative, independent bodies set up by statutory law, non-governmental organizations. The role played by the NGOs and civil society institutions is also defined as part of the national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Most member States acknowledge the contribution made by the other non-governmental institutional structures, yet structured relationships on how they coordinate and link are not established. As a result coordination to involve such structures is on adhoc basis. And it is also not clear whether they are part of the components of the national machinery or not.

The study on the assessment of capacity needs of national machineries for gender equality in SADC region indicated that the definition of the “national machinery” was not clear to some of the professional staff working within Ministries of gender or women’s affairs, which have also been given to coordinate other broad policy issues. For example, is the entire Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation of Lesotho the national machinery? Or is it the Department of Gender the National machinery? What about the Gender Focal Points in all line ministries, Gender structures in other institutions such as Parliament, University, and other public and private institutions, NGOs and civil society institutions that are active and promote the gender equality agenda and women empowerment processes, how are they fitting into being components of the national machinery when there is lack of structured linkages between these structures and the Ministry or department of the Gender or women’s affairs? Many countries sighted this situation.¹ In some cases the definition is considered to be limited to the government structures, hence NGOs and civil society groups are not considered as components of the national machineries.

2. Types of National Mechanisms and Roles played in formulation, implementation, monitoring of national strategies for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, especially in mainstreaming gender in all national policy areas.

Between 1980s and 1990s government institutions of some member states implemented institutional reform policies, which had an impact on resources allocated to sectors responsible over social services and human resource development. In this regard, analysis of the national machineries is undertaken bearing in mind the context of the broader government machineries which have or are still implementing institutional reforms. Some of the impact of the reforms include an influx of skilled personnel from the government (including national machineries the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment) to private sector and non-governmental organizations. Secondly, under increased poverty, HIV and AIDS situation in the SADC region, and other competing priorities, most governments are faced with challenges in priority setting as regards to resource allocation. Thirdly, depending on the level of gender sensitivity of

¹ Regional Report on the assessment of capacity needs of SADC Gender unit and National Machineries for Gender equality in SADC region.

the leadership responsible for planning and resource allocation, gender sensitivity of such decision-makers influence resource allocation. Hence, these are some of the factors that influence on how resources are targeted and allocated to the national machineries for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

There are three types of national mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in SADC Member States:

a) National Machineries located at highest level of government machinery: President's office.

In **South Africa**, the concept "National Gender Machinery" refers to "an integrated package" of structures located at various levels of state, civil society and within the statutory bodies². Within the Executive Branch the national gender machinery comprises of Cabinet, Office on the Status of Women and Gender Focal Points within national departments. There are also OSW at the provincial level, in the offices of the Premiers. Similar offices have not yet been established at the Local government level.

Within the Legislature, the national gender machinery comprises of three structures created in Parliament to advance women's emancipation and gender equality namely the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women, the Parliamentary Women's Caucus and the Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU). The Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU) is located in the Speakers' Forum, a structure that brings together speakers from the national and provincial legislatures. The WEU identifies areas that hinder women's full participation in the law making process. Its main focus is training and skills development for women lawmakers.

The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), established in 1997 is an integral part of the National Gender Machinery. It is an independent, statutory, advisory, and research body. The Commission comprises a Secretariat and Commissioners, who are nominated by the public and appointed by the President following the recommendations from a Multiparty Parliamentary Committee. There are currently 11 Commissioners. The key functions of this body includes monitoring and evaluating of policies and practices of government, private sector and other organizations to ensure promotion and protection of gender equality, review of existing and proposed legislation from a gender perspective, providing public education, investigating inequality and complaints on gender related issues, as well as monitoring and reporting on compliance with international conventions.

The Cabinet is the supreme policy making body in the country that approves all national policies, including the Budget before submission to Parliament or implemented by various government departments the Cabinet Cluster Committee is responsible for ensuring the adoption and implementation of the National Gender Policy and guaranteeing that Cabinet discussions are engendered and that Ministers actively assert the implementation of the gender policy. The Committee is also required to provide

² The point to note is that the function of gender mainstreaming is that of all government, civil society and NGO bodies. The components of the gender machinery are facilitators of the gender programme, and primarily all have coordination and monitoring roles.

access to information, on budgetary measures with specific reference to its implication for gender; to ensure that the integrated coordination framework results in measurable sector specific outputs; and to make recommendations on policy and legislation with regard to gender for discussion and approval by Cabinet.

The OSW, in the Presidency, plays a vital role as the principal coordinating structure for the National Machinery on Gender Equality. It has been established as the nerve centre for developing and maintaining a national gender programme. It is responsible for developing National Action Plans or frameworks for mainstreaming gender within government structures; advancing women's empowerment and gender equality; as well as monitoring the implementation and progress in this regard. As part of its mandate, the Office of the Status of Women also plays a pivotal role in liaison with civil society organizations to advance the national gender programme.

The responsibility for facilitating efforts for advancing gender equality is placed on the coordinating structures in the National Machinery (the OSWs and GFPs). The main objective of the co-ordination mechanism is to assign clear roles and responsibilities for delivering gender programmes, within a framework that requires participation and collaboration. The integrated coordination framework pulls all role players together, provides guidelines, norms and standards, allowing flexibility for stakeholders to implement different mandates. It also decentralizes delivery. Such a coordination framework enables coordinated service delivery, communication and accountability, and the development of a management information system (MIS)³.

NGOs and civil society groups and organizations are also part of the national gender mechanisms.

The National Gender Machinery in **Zambia** consists of a three-tier structure: at national, provincial and district levels. At the national level, Gender In Development Division (GIDD) is the centre nerve of the National Gender Machinery. This structure is in the Cabinet Secretariat, in the President's Office. A Parliamentary Committee on Good Governance, Gender and Human Rights, Gender Focal Points in all line ministries, the Gender Consultative Forum forms an integral part of the national level structures. GIDD functions as the Secretariat of the Forum, whose members are drawn from the executive, legislature, judiciary, private sector, academic and research institutions, traditional authorities and NGOs. Its specific Terms of Reference include advising the government on emerging gender issues, and ensure that policies are gender sensitive.

At the provincial level, the structure consists of provincial Gender Focal Points and Gender Committees of Provincial Coordinating Committees. At the District level, District developments Coordinating Committees address gender equality and women's empowerment issues. GIDD has been working in close collaboration with NGOs and Civil Society Organizations including the Non-Governmental Coordinating Committee (NGOCC),

³ South Africa Report on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, 2004. and Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003

The main responsibilities of GIDD are to facilitate the integration of regional and international instruments on gender, to which Zambia is signatory, into national laws, policies and programmes, to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Gender Policy, facilitate institutional capacity building to effectively deal with gender issues, to co-ordinate the mainstreaming of gender into macro and sectoral policies and programmes in order to attain gender responsive national development and to disseminate information in order to increase gender awareness⁴.

At independence, in March 1990, the national machinery for promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in **Namibia** was established in the office of the President, as a Department of Women's Affairs. In 2000, this department was promoted to a fully fledged Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare, and was moved out of the President's office.

b) Fully-Fledged Ministries responsible for gender or women's affairs, with additional responsibilities to coordinate other policy issues

In **Angola**, from the time of independence to 1991, the National Mechanism for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment was a Women's Organisation of the ruling party (OMA). This structure coordinated the participation of women in the social, economic and political activities in the country. In March 1991, the People's Assembly approved the establishment of a Secretariat of State for the Promotion and Development of Women (SEPDM).

In April 1997, the Secretariat of State was promoted to a fully-fledged Ministry for Women's Affairs. In September 1997, the Ministry was transformed into the Ministry for Family Affairs and Women's Promotion (MINFAMU). The structure of the Ministry is decentralized to the provincial level. Gender Focal Points have been appointed to coordinate gender or women's issues in all the Ministries. Programmes and activities coordinated by the Ministry are mainly funded by UNFPA and UNIFEM. The Ministry collaborates with NGOs, which work on gender or women's issues under the coordination of the women's NGO umbrella body, Rede Mulher⁵.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** established a Ministry of Women's Condition and the Family in 2003, which is responsible for coordinating and managing all issues relating to promotion and integration of gender. A National Council for Women, which is chaired by the Minister responsible for Women's Affairs, is a consultative organ on the empowerment of women. Its membership includes experts from Provincial Councils, public and private institutions, NGOs, women's and religious organizations and Commissioners. There is also a Commission which acts as a gender focal point within the

⁴ Zambia: Report on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, 2004. and Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Mechanisms for gender Equality, December 2003

⁵ Angola: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Mechanisms for gender Equality, December 2003.

transitional Parliament. Women's NGOs and religious organizations collaborate in addressing the 12 critical areas of concern.

The Ministry plays a central role in the formulation of the national gender policy; facilitation and the provision of technical support; and monitoring and evaluation of the diverse activities related to gender and development. The Ministry has also coordinated the formulation of a National Programme for the Empowerment of Congolese Women (PNPFC)⁶.

In **Lesotho**, the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation is the national machinery for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women of women. Gender Focal Points (GFP) which form an integral part of this mechanism have been established within all government departments. The University of Lesotho have established gender structures. The Ministry works in close collaboration with and NGOs. A Gender Management Forum (GMF) has also been established at central and district levels to facilitate engendering of organisational policies and programmes. A Basotho Women's Parliamentary Caucus (BWPC) has also been established.

The specific roles of the Ministry and the GFP are to propose appropriate and effective gender mainstreaming mechanisms; and to provide support and direction for gender mainstreaming in all aspects of planning and programming in their respective organizations. The role of the Basotho Women Parliamentary Caucus is to promote gender debates in parliament and ensure gender sensitive laws are enacted⁷.

In the **Malawi**, at national level, the Ministry of Gender and Community Services is the National Gender Machinery. It has established Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in all line ministries and stakeholder organizations. There is a Cabinet Committee on Gender issues, and a Technical Working Group of Principal Secretaries and a Gender Policy Advisory Committee. There is also a National Commission on Gender and Development Trust (NCGADT), which reports to a Technical Working Committee of Principal Secretaries in charge of the six critical areas of concern.

At the local level, the District Assembly, consisting of the Area and Village Development Committees is responsible for ensuring that gender is mainstreamed within District programmes. The Planning and Development or Finance and Human resource Directorates of the District Assembly also have GFPs. Several networks representing each of the six critical areas of concern have been formed. These include the public sector network, private sector network, the NGO Gender Coordination Network, Council for NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA) and civil society networks.

The Ministry of Gender and Community Services is mandated to spearhead the production, coordination, collaboration, implementation and monitoring of the National

⁶ DRC: National report on the Implementation of Beijing platform for action

⁷ Lesotho: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineryes for gender Equality, December 2003

Gender Policy. It also provides backstopping services on gender analysis and mainstreaming to all its stakeholders⁸.

In **Mauritius**, a Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare is the national mechanism for the advancement of women. A Women's Unit serves as a focal point for women's issues and a Family Welfare Unit (FWU), operates through a network of six Family Support Bureaux (FSB) scattered around the island and offers services for all member of the family through the Family Counseling Service activities relating to family. A system of Gender Focal Points has been established in all ministries to mainstream gender into policies, programmes and projects. An Act of Parliament set up a National Women's Council (NWC) in 1985.

The Mandate of the Ministry is to facilitate the creation of the right conditions for the development of women, men and children and ensure that women enjoy equal rights and opportunities within society⁹.

In **Mozambique**, the Ministry for the Coordination of Women and Social Action (MMCAS), which consist a National Directorate of Women, is the national machinery for gender equality and women's empowerment. National NGOs and the Women Parliamentary caucus form part of the national machinery.

The overall mandate of the ministry is to executes and coordinate policies towards women's emancipation, development and social welfare. And the specific functions of the National Directorate are to define and promote the implementation of support programs for the development of women and family. The government also established the National Council for the Advancement of Women, an inter-sectoral co-ordination body, which consists of government and civil society representatives. The functions of this structure are to supervise, direct and follow up the implementation of policies and approved gender programmes.¹⁰

In **Namibia**, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare (MWACW) is the national machinery for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gender Focal Points (GFPs) have been established in all ministries and they form an integral part of the national machinery for gender equality of the Government of Namibia. Some of the ministries have further strengthened these structures. For example, the Ministry of Defence has established a Gender Desk, which has developed a strategy and an Action Plan to mainstream gender in the Defence Forces. Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development has also established a Gender Desk. The Ministry of Home Affairs has successfully established a Gender Division with representatives in the Regions. Other Ministries have either developed strategies or policies to facilitate them to mainstream gender in their sectors.

The MWACW's functions is to mainstream gender programmes, advocate for law reforms and coordinate gender activities at the national and international levels. It is

⁸ Malawi: National Report on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action

⁹ Mauritius: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003

¹⁰ Mozambique: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003

mandated to develop, promote, facilitate, coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate the process of legal, political and socio-economic development of women, men and children equitably in all spheres and to ensure gender equality¹¹.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children in Mainland Tanzania and the Ministry of Youth, Employment, Women and Children Development (MYEWCD) in Zanzibar, are the national Gender Machineries for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. In addition to the two structures, Gender Focal Points (GFPs) have been institutionalised in all central ministries, government departments. At the regional and district levels, structures that are supposed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment are also assigned responsibilities on community development issues. Address. Parliament has established a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Community Development, which also oversees gender equality and women's empowerment issues. Women's and Gender NGOs play a critical role in the implementation of the gender policy.

Among the functions of the national gender machineries is to facilitate the promotion of gender mainstreaming, development and coordination of national programmes on gender equality and women's empowerment processes.

The establishment of the GFPs is a crucial entry strategy in achieving and accelerating the implementation of gender equality in the different Ministries. The GFPs coordinate and monitor, as well as ensuring that all sectoral policies and programmes are gender sensitive¹²

The Gender Management System in the **Republic of Zimbabwe** consists of the Gender Department, one of the four other departments in the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, Gender Focal Points (Gender Desks), which have been established in all ministries, District Gender Councils, and Provincial Gender Councils. The Councils are made up of representatives from local leadership, faith based organizations, traditional healers, local NGOs, government departments and local authorities. These structures constitute the National Gender Machinery.

The principle responsibilities of the national gender machinery include: co-ordination of activities of government ministries, departments, NGOs and other organizations within the field of gender; facilitating local level discussions on gender issues through community mobilization; identification of local practices, customs and beliefs that hinder gender equality and suggest local interventions; and developing local sanctions against perpetrators of gender based violence. The Councils also facilitate the planning and commemoration of national occasions such as International Women's Day and

¹¹ Namibia: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003

¹² Tanzania: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003

Family Week at local level; initiate projects for economic empowerment of women, and monitor the implementation of the Gender Policy¹³.

c) Departments or Units within a bigger Structure

In **Botswana**, the National Women's Unit was established in 1981. The Unit was upgraded to a Division headed by a Coordinator in 1991. It was promoted to a Women's Affairs Department (WAD) in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs in 1996. Since then, a Director has headed it. The department has three divisions with a total of 11 professionals and 34 support staff. Gender Focal Persons (GFPs) have been established in all line Ministries. A Gender Project Planning Committee (GPPC) has also been formed at the University of Botswana. Botswana National Council on Women (BNCW) established in 1999, is an advisory body to the Ministry on gender equality issues in the country. The Women's NGO Coalition coordinates a number of women's NGOs that address gender equality and women's empowerment programmes work in close collaboration with the national machinery, hence is part of the national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, the above-mentioned structures are more operational at national levels only. WAD has only two offices in the regions and do not have offices in all districts. Most of the NGOs are operational in Gaborone, and run some of their programmes in the regions and districts¹⁴.

The current institutional framework of **Swaziland** consists of a Gender Coordination Unit, in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Gender Focal Points in each sector, an NGO Gender Consortium and the gender focal points in the UN Agencies. The main objective of the Unit is to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender into all areas of national development. It also coordinates national, regional and international gender activities and works with partner NGOs and UN Agencies to implement sectoral activities to mainstream gender. The government also created the Swaziland Committee on Gender and Women's Affairs (SCOGWA) consisting of representatives from government, NGOs and the private sector. The Committee is responsible for developing a gender programme¹⁵.

All national machineries are involved in policy formulation and review processes of the national gender policy frameworks. They coordinate consultative processes to enable stakeholder participation, and ensure the finalization and approval of the national gender policy. They are involved in the capacity building and training to enable dissemination of the gender policy and its implementation at all levels. The national machineries and organizations that are promoting gender equality are spearheading gender mainstreaming

¹³ Zimbabwe: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003 and National report on the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action.

¹⁴ Botswana: Report on Needs Assessment study for Capacity Building of the National Gender Machineries for gender Equality, December 2003

¹⁵ Swaziland report on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action.

in planning and budgeting processes at national and sector levels. This processes is noticed in all Member States and countries are at different stages of mainstreaming gender into policy and programme formulation, development and implementation. Processes of mainstreaming gender in macro economic policy frameworks and sector policies and programmes are also supported by bilateral and multi-lateral organizations.

However in some cases, the mainstream macro-economic and sector policy development processes do not get the necessary gender expertise support that is required to influence gender sensitivity of the policies that are being developed. This is due to the fact that sometimes mainstream policy development processes do not involve the gender structures, sometimes it is due to limited gender expertise available at national level, sometimes it is due to limited coordination to know where and when gender expertise is available to support such mainstream processes.

3. Inter-relationships between different national mechanisms: Best practices in synergies and collaboration, constraints

The Botswana National Council on Women (BNCW) is an Advisory Body to the Minister responsible for Women's affairs. The council operates its activities through committees and sub-committees. Women's Affairs Department is the Secretariat to this body. The council has planned meetings of the sub-committees and the committees on quarterly basis.

The National Machineries of **South Africa** demonstrate the best practice in terms of inter-relationships between the different components of the national machinery. They have structured relationships between the Office of the Status of Women and the other structures. They have a clear calendar of events on when they convene planning and monitoring meetings, how they operate, when consultative meetings are held at the different levels. The role of the Office of the Status of Women in coordination and monitoring is clearly visible. This structure coordinates all stakeholders meeting, for example the quarterly National Gender Forum meetings, which they convene for planning and monitoring purposes. The Annual Gender Audits which this office undertakes as an exercise to monitor progress made by its stakeholders in addressing the assigned responsibilities, and tasks undertaken.

The relevant departments and even some of the private sector firms are taking the processes of mainstreaming gender seriously. Most government departments have developed gender policies to enable gender mainstreaming to happen within their respective departments. The Gender Focal Points are appointed at very senior level, at Director, Deputy Director or Assistant Director Levels. In some of the Departments, they have established structures that are provided with more than one staff member to coordinate gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment programmes.

A practical example is how the campaign on the prevention and eradication of violence against women and children: 16 days of activism on violence against women, and similar events are coordinated by the Department of Justice. This department pulls in all relevant

stakeholders, the Department takes leadership in the coordination processes and there is clear division of responsibilities between all actors. Whereby in most of SADC Member States, the national machineries are the structures which take leadership in coordination of this event, or in some cases Women's NGOs addressing issues of Violence against women and children take the lead.

Due to better coordination, the National Machinery of South Africa is able to firstly influence policy decision making processes at all levels, in cabinet, national parliament and provincial levels. Gender mainstreaming and women empowerment programmes in the various sectors of the economy is a living example. Secondly, South Africa is able to present comprehensive and detailed national progress reports on the implementation of the various gender equality instruments which their country is party to compared to other Member States, which in most cases their national reports omit a lot of information which could have been added in their national reports.

The **United Republic of Tanzania** while there is lack of structured relationship between the national machinery and NGOs that are promoting the gender equality and women's empowerment processes, the Ministries of Finance and Planning Commission and NGOs have been able to establish working relationship in promoting gender sensitive planning and budgeting processes that were initiated through a Gender Budgeting Initiative (GBI). These processes resulted in the establishment of a Gender Macro policy-working group, that is coordinated by the National Machinery and convenes regular meetings to facilitate mainstreaming gender in macro economic policy frameworks, such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), Medium Term Expenditure Review Frameworks (MTERF).

Among the constraint, most member states have limited capacity for coordination. This is partly due to limited human and other resources allocated to these structures. Limited clarity on the role and mandate of the national machinery in terms of coordination and monitoring as opposed to implementation of programmes, which most national machineries are involved into.

4. Achievements, gaps and challenges of national Mechanisms.

Achievements:

- a) All member states have continued to strengthen the National Machineries for Gender Equality. Most of these structures have evolved from small structures to the current state. Also their mandate has been changing an indication that more focus is being given to mainstreaming gender into policy and programme development and implementation.
- b) In few Member States, the mandate, role and responsibilities of the gender structures are clearly defined to include: facilitation, coordination and monitoring. They facilitate exchange and sharing of experiences, information and best practices amongst stakeholders. Facilitate development of gender competency of stakeholders to influence engendering of policies, programmes and projects.

- Monitor progress made by all stakeholders in meeting targets on gender equality and equity. Lobby for increased measures to address gender equality agenda
- c) Most countries have national gender policies, which guide the implementation of the gender equality agenda. Few countries are in the process of finalizing their national Gender Policies
 - d) All Member States are implementing programmes, projects, and various initiatives, which address gender issues. These include mainstreaming gender in macro-economic policy frameworks, (such as PRSP) and in sector policies; review of national constitutions and some laws; enactment of new laws to address equality between women and men in a number of areas. Programmes on training and capacity development, which facilitate gender mainstreaming. Specific programmes and projects targeted to empower women mainly in the areas of economic and political development are also being implemented. Some Member States are undertaking national planning and budgeting processes using gender perspective approaches (Gender Budgeting Initiatives/women Budgeting Initiatives).
 - e) Availability of sex-disaggregated data in few sectors of the economy. For example in the Ministries or Departments of Education, Health and National Statistical Bureaus: social and demographic. However, the data does not necessary inform the causes and reasons behind the available figures, (that is there is a gap on qualitative information).

Gaps and Challenges:

- a) Most national gender structures experience limited human capacity. In most cases, the experts who are assigned to work in these institutions are not necessarily equipped with the necessary gender competence skills to enable them to influence the engendering of macro-economic and sector policy frameworks. The structures experience high staff turn over of experts with gender competence, as such it has been difficult to maintain and sustain staff with the necessary expertise and experience in the government structures. Limited financial budgetary allocations, technical and material resources to enhance the implementation of the mandates, roles and responsibilities.
- b) In most Member States, the mandates of the gender structures are quite broad. Compared to the resources allocated to fulfill the roles responsibilities and functions assigned to them. Most of the gender structures are called upon by all ministries most of the time, planned or unplanned. They are involved in all advocacy and awareness raising campaigns on almost all issues. They are involved in implementation of programmes and projects at community levels.
- c) Limited collection and utilization of gender disaggregated statistical data by most sectors of the economy. While it is appreciated that sex-disaggregated data is

available at the national level, in some of the departments, ministries, and national statistical bureaus, to a greater extent, gender disaggregated information and data is neither collected nor utilized in the national and local government planning and budgetary allocation processes.

- d) Limited linkage and coordination between gender structures and national planning and budgetary allocation processes, to influence gender responsive planning and budgeting at national and local government levels.
- e) Limited coordination between national gender structures and women's / Gender NGOs. There is duplication and competition for limited resources which if well coordinated would add positive achievements to the gender equality.
- f) Gender equality outputs and outcomes are not among the key performance outputs which individuals and organizations in the public, private, civil society sectors can be assessed upon. There is need to include these variables to assess organizations.

Strategies for building on achievements to address gaps and challenges and Potential for enhancing the roles of each mechanism in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in coming decade

- a) Strengthen National gender machineries by allocating adequate resources to enable implementation of roles and responsibilities assigned to these structures;
- b) Review mandates of the National Gender structures to enable them focus on engendering macro and sector policies.
- c) As a temporarily measure, Identify gender experts outside the national machineries to support the work of mainstreaming gender into the macro policy frameworks.
- d) As a long-term strategy, allocate resources for capacity building and sustainability of gender skills in structures that are involved in the development, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of macro-economic and sector policy frameworks, and national and local government planning and budgeting.
- e) Strengthen to enable processes on engendering policy frameworks to happen. Facilitate all public, private and civil society sectors to implement the Gender Policy. Strengthen coordination and monitoring roles
- f) Improve coordination to ensure linkage and collaboration between and among stakeholders on gender equality issues; facilitate better utilization of resources and avoid duplication and competition over the limited resources.

- g) Establish and strengthen ICT (Local Area Network & Wide Area Network) in National Machineries to enable linkage and communication between these structures and their stakeholders at national level (Gender Focal Points, NGOs, etc.) and outside the country to facilitate communication, collection, dissemination and sharing of information; coordination and monitoring between gender structures and its stakeholders, across board within and outside the country.
- h) Improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; enable processes in compiling national reports to be inclusive. Also, reports should be comprehensive, reflecting what is happening in the public, private and civil society sectors. Ensure regular reporting at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels.

5. Priorities and Strategies for increased collaboration between mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment at national and regional levels.

- a) Facilitate Member states to review mandates of the National Gender structures to enable them to focus on engendering macro and sector policies.
- b) Provide adequate human, financial, and other resources including gender skills competence development;
- c) Strengthen the capacity of these structures to engender policy frameworks and programme development processes, in order to fast track gender mainstreaming processes, promote pro-poverty reduction and gender equality mainstream policy development.
- d) Facilitate improved coordination and establishment of structured linkages between all components of the national machineries and strengthen coordination mechanisms.
- e) At regional level, improve coordination to ensure linkage and collaboration between and among stakeholders on gender equality issues; facilitate better utilization of resources and avoid duplication of processes, enable a coordinated approach even at national level, sharing of best practices. Establishing Memorandum of Understanding between regional organizations and how to structure the working relationships could be one of the mechanisms to improve coordination.
- f) Improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, harmonization of reporting tools and frameworks to enable national machineries to use uniform tools which will be acceptable to all regional and global organizations

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