Transforming Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming

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It is a great pleasure and honour for me to participate in this important symposium on a new vision for gender policy. I would like to congratulate the Korean Women's Development Institute on their important anniversary. The institute has a long history of innovative work on the promotion of gender equality. The Division for the Advancement of Women has previous positive experience of collaborating with the institute, in the organization of an expert group meeting on women and ICTs in Seoul last November. I wish to express my appreciation for the opportunity to speak today on empowerment and gender mainstreaming and their transformative potential for achieving the vision outlined in this symposium. Organizations such as the Korean Women's Development Institute have critical roles to play in the empowerment of women and promotion of gender mainstreaming.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 the empowerment of women was identified as critical for the achievement of the goals of equality, development and peace. Member States of the United Nations also endorsed gender mainstreaming as the major strategy for promoting women's empowerment and equality between women and men. Since 1995, much research, data collection and analysis, practical implementation, and monitoring and evaluation has given us a better understanding of empowerment and gender mainstreaming, how they are interconnected and the ways by which promotion of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming are transformative and can contribute to the achievement of equality, development and peace.

Empowerment of women

The Beijing Declaration from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women states clearly that*: "The Platform for Action is an agenda for women´s empowerment"* (United Nations, 1995:para 1). The concept of the empowerment of women emerged as the outcome of important critiques and debates generated by the women´s movement around the world on approaches to the promotion of gender equality. It is well established that women's social and political movements provide critical impetus for promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality at all levels.

Concept

Women´s empowerment can be understood as a process whereby women, individually and collectively, become aware of how power structures, processes and relationships operate in their lives and gain the self confidence and strength to challenge the resulting gender inequalities. The concept of empowerment arose from an understanding that increasing women´s participation in development processes, without fundamental changes to these processes themselves, would bring about little change. Linked to this was the recognition that provision of resources and services could not tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Women need to be able to assert their own agency to break out of gender discrimination. Empowerment involves awareness raising, building of self-confidence, expansion of choices, involvement in decision-making and increased access to and control over resources.

While empowerment is most often thought about in the context of the community it is also important to consider empowerment within the household or family. In addition, it has to be recognised that gender differences and inequalities, which give rise to women´s subordinate position and powerlessness in many societies, are experienced differently by specific groups of women, and that gender relations intersect with other forms of subordination, such as those based on class, race, ethnicity and age.

Empowerment challenges the perception that the problems women face stem from inadequacies in the women themselves. A considerable amount of the initial work on women and development took the starting point that women themselves must change and adapt. This approach failed to take into account the structural and systemic discrimination within societies which subordinates women. No amount of self-awareness and self-confidence training will be useful if the systemic and structural causes of gender inequalities, including the persistence of male norms and privileges in many areas, are not identified and addressed.

Empowerment is also much more than simply facilitating an increase in women´s participation. It must also include processes that lead women to perceive themselves as having rights and entitlements and to be able to voice their demands as well as provide improved access to decision-making opportunities. Empowerment should lead to concrete action to bring about changes in laws, in access to resources, and in public and private institutions that reinforce women's subordination. The process of empowerment involves changing consciousness, identifying areas needing change, developing strategies and action to be taken, and monitoring these actions and their outcomes.

Power lies at the heart of the empowerment approach. Power tends to accrue to those who control or able to influence the ideology (beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours) and resources that govern social relations at both public and private levels. Manifestations of the asymmetrical power relations between women and men continue to be found in all areas of life. In this context it is, however, important to note women have not been entirely without power. Women have always tried to strategically exercise the power they have – however limited - within the family; they have taken control over the

resources society permits them to access (evidenced in their management contributions in relation to household water in many parts of the world); and they have even demanded power, by advocating for change or seizing control of resources where the unequal distribution has created constraints for them, for example in relation to water supply.

While the need for increasing women´s access to power is recognized in the empowerment approach being promoted today there is a nuanced definition of power. Power is seen less in terms of domination over others - i.e., the dominance of men to be replaced by dominance of women - and more in terms of facilitating the increase of choice and voice and control and autonomy. Alternative ways of conceptualizing power focus more on processes of power - defining power as `*power to*´ - generative or productive power, which creates new possibilities and actions without domination; `*power with*´ - in the sense of groups tackling problems together; and `*power from within*´ - emphasizing the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each person. Empowerment of women processes tend to identify power in terms of the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength, and gain and use power in alternative, constructive ways.

Power is exercised at the level of institutions, as well as at the level of individuals and groups. Examples of institutionalized power can be found in cultural attitudes and in internalized (and often unstated) beliefs and ideologies related to different areas of life, for example, in relation to education, family and sexuality, as well as in laws, procedures and practices. It is power at this level which is the most difficult to identify and tackle. Power relations are institutionalized, and internalized by both women and men and power inequalities come to be accepted as 'normal'. This perception, together with fears of negative consequences of any questioning of the existing power relations, can effectively silence women in situations of extreme inequalities and power violations.

Of prime importance for effective facilitation of the empowerment of women is an understanding of the role of men. Empowerment of women cannot occur in a vacuum; men must be also brought along in the process of change. Resistance from men can be strong when women compete with men for power in the public sphere, or when they question the power, rights, and privileges of men within the family. The fact that the empowerment of women requires change in men - particularly in the renegotiation of personal relationships - is recognized by many advocates of women´s empowerment. The consequences for men can be, for example, that they lose control over women´s mobility; they can no longer make unilateral decisions affecting the whole family; they cannot completely avoid responsibility for household work and child care; they are not able to physically abuse or violate women with impunity; or that they can no longer abandon or divorce their wives without providing maintenance.

Empowerment should, however, not be seen simply as a zero-sum game where gains by women automatically imply losses for men. There are gains from women´s empowerment for men, as well as for families, households and communities and society at large, which need to be identified and disseminated. Women´s empowerment can liberate and empower men since women working together with men can strengthen the

impact of men´s political movements; women can provide much-needed additional material resources through, for example, their income-generating activities; and men can be freed from the psychological burden of being perceived as the oppressor and exploiter, as well as from gender stereotyping which limits the potential for self-expression and personal development of men as well as women.

Implementation

Despite considerable conceptual confusion around empowerment, particularly in terms of its economic, social and political implications, many large-scale programmes have been launched over the past decade with the explicit objective of `empowering´ women. Empowerment is often seen as a panacea for the low status of women. A wide range of development organizations – bilateral and multilateral organizations and NGOS – have taken up empowerment of women as a distinct policy goal. Empowerment approaches are utilized in a variety of development initiatives, such as microcredit programmes, democratization programmes, leadership training and reproductive health programmes.

There is some evidence of a misuse, or at least a lack of understanding, of empowerment in development contexts. The question needs to be raised as to what actually constitutes empowerment. When is a credit programme empowering and when is it not? When is the provision of reproductive health services empowering? What difference does the existence of an empowerment policy framework make on the work of an organisation? The simple addition of the word `empowerment´ to existing processes or documents does not bring about any real change. The term may be used to merely communicate vague good intentions, and to imply some unspecified recognition of the need for changes in the distribution of power and resources, within the context of an approach where development agencies continue to `do things for´ people rather than to facilitate their ownership of processes and resources.

Empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves. `Outsiders´ such as development cooperation agencies or NGOs can, however, play an important facilitating role. Inputs to promote the empowerment of women should facilitate women´s articulation of their own needs and priorities, as well as a more active role in promoting their interests. Important instruments of empowerment include, therefore, information, capacity-building and networking.

Participation is often automatically assumed to be positive and empowering in and of itself. The benefits of participation are taken as self-evident and outweighing any costs to the women themselves. This can be seen, for example, in claims about the inherently empowering nature of increased women´s participation in local decision-making and management of natural resources, including water resources. Such participation in practice may be simply shifting the costs of development to women. In some cases there has been little evidence that participation on water committees, for example, is empowering to women or efficient in terms of management. Appointing women to committees (particularly if they have little real decision-making powers) may be reinforcing their `housekeeping´ roles in relation to the water resources rather than

enhancing their decision-making potential and political participation. It is important, at the very least, to have an adequate understanding of what women and men respectively perceive as the benefits and `costs´ of participation.

The difficulties involved in achieving real empowerment can be illustrated with the example of credit programmes. Despite the common presumption that credit is empowering in and of itself, this is not always the case. If, for example, significant proportions of women´s loans are controlled by their male relatives, with women loan-takers bearing the responsibility for repayment, can this be called empowerment? The importance given to credit programmes is often based on an implicit assumption that power comes automatically through economic strength. However experience has shown that economic activities, including with the provision of credit, do not always improve women's economic situation, can often add extra burdens. And, even if successful according to normal criteria for credit programmes, such as repayment rates – such activities may not entail any real empowerment for women. The design and implementation of credit programmes are crucial for their empowering potential.

There is, however, also some positive experience from support to empowerment processes. Some of the experience from projects to promote the inclusion of gender perspectives in local budgets has shown that women can be considerably empowered in these processes. "Budget literacy" - basic understanding of what a budget is, how it is developed, what limits there are on the power of elected officials, and what rights citizens have in relation to resource allocations and budget processes - can lead women (and men) to make unprecedented demands for information and accountability - requiring local officials to answer to commitments made in elections for resource allocations to priority needs of women, such as health and education.

Experience suggests that there is still tension between the declared objective of empowerment within many agencies, and the way these same agencies operate in practice. Much development cooperation practice is still top-down rather than bottom-up, in spite of rhetoric on participation, consultation and developing enabling environments for human resource development and democratisation. The real challenge is for agencies to develop approaches which provide concrete opportunities for women to decide themselves about their needs and interests and how positive change can be achieved. This includes, importantly, what they can do themselves to improve their situation and position. Promoting empowerment also requires some fundamental changes *within* agencies in reviewing their structures and procedures to increase their accountability to the women whose empowerment they aim to support.

There is no blueprint for empowerment. What is essential is that empowerment strategies are designed to enable women to gain greater access to information, access to and control over resources and the ability to make decisions themselves. The importance of developing self-respect, a sense of agency and the building of organisational capacity through leadership development and strengthening of groups and networks has to be highlighted.

Constraints and challenges

Development processes can indeed be empowering for women but only if empowerment is an explicit goal and well defined strategies, adequate resources and commitment at top levels of organizations supporting these processes are in place. The empowerment approach calls for new forms of assistance, such as support to networking and improved access to information. It also demands new roles of development agencies since external agencies cannot `empower´ but can only support or facilitate. Priorities and initiatives must be decided on by the women themselves. The role of supporting organizations in empowerment processes cannot, by definition, be a directing one, but should focus on supporting locally-developed initiatives and on building alliances.

Empowerment is a process which requires considerable flexibility and takes time. Within a `project´ perspective, not having reached certain objectives within a fixed length of time can be perceived as a failure. Talk of `empowerment projects´ may indeed be a contradiction in terms. A `project´ is generally seen as a short specific cycle of activity with predetermined objectives and targets. Empowerment of women involves women themselves setting the agenda and managing the pace of change. This can involve quite drastic changes of direction in projects as self-awareness and understanding of the problems and their causes develops. The normal `project´ perspective might see these changes as signs of failure to live up to initial objectives, whereas in an empowerment perspective they would be seen as signs of an effective empowering process.

Time dimensions are of particular importance in developing effective monitoring and evaluation of empowerment. Indicators of empowerment will have to change over time because as empowerment progresses the challenges also change. For example, in the water sector, the major initial challenge for women may be attending public meetings and indicators would be required to measure such attendance. Once women's participation is established, the next challenge may be for women to be able to participate systematically and effectively and indicators are required to measure this. Women may then face the challenge of working to transform the agenda - introducing new agenda items or reassessing goals and strategies, and new indicators would be required to measure progress in this area. A similar situation has been noted with regard to women parliamentarians. While the initial challenge was getting women into parliaments and indicators measured the increase in numbers of women parliamentarians, the challenge today is to retain women in parliaments and to ensure that they are empowered to make an effective contribution. Measuring progress in this area requires different quantitative indicators as well as more qualitative indicators.

Empowerment of women will remain a critical strategy in the coming decade. It is important therefore to identify the challenges and develop strategies for dealing with them. There is a need for increased support to the efforts of women´s groups and networks at local, national, regional and international levels. New innovative means of providing support, and developing effective partnerships with grassroots women's groups, should be developed. Support to promotion of gender equality through empowerment requires an openness to rethinking development models, and linking the promotion of women's empowerment directly to the achievement of other development goals. The

development of effective support to empowerment thus requires the more active development of knowledge and capacity - knowledge on what constitutes empowerment and the capacity to facilitate and support it.

Gender mainstreaming

I would like to begin my brief discussion of gender mainstreaming today by highlighting that gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. And, like any other strategy, gender mainstreaming can only be as good as it is implemented. A clear understanding of what gender mainstreaming should involve is an essential precondition for successful implementation. The definition of gender mainstreaming in the ECOSOC agreed conclusions from 1997 is an excellent starting point. Gender mainstreaming is defined as *"…the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is 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 policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."*

Concept

Gender mainstreaming was established as a strategy for promoting the achievement of gender equality because of the failure of previous strategies. Lessons learned from implementation of special projects and activities for women in the 1970s and 1980s indicated that, while such projects remain essential, by themselves they cannot bring about the required changes to the status of women. Activities focused on women tended to be marginalized and women's access to resources and power remained minimal. Awareness of these constraints led to the integration strategy which attempted to address the issue of marginalization by incorporating "women's perspectives" into policy development and project design and implementation. However women's perspectives were still seen as "add-ons" and usually incorporated at later stages of planning processes when all major decisions had been taken and little real impact could be achieved. Efforts to redress these failings led, in turn, to the gender mainstreaming strategy.

The term 'mainstreaming' thus came from the objective to bring attention to gender equality into the mainstream or core of development activities. An important element in the mainstreaming strategy is the ambition to give attention to gender equality from the *initial* stages of processes so that there is potential to influence goals, strategies and resource allocations and thus bring about changes in policies, programmes and other activities and make a real difference to gender equality. The Platform for Action (Beijing 1995) made it very clear that gender analysis is the first essential step in the mainstreaming strategy. Before any decisions are taken in any area of societal development an analysis should be made of the current responsibilities and contributions

of both women and men and the potential impact of planned processes and activities on women and men respectively.

It is important to note that gender mainstreaming does require a focus on both women and men – on the roles, responsibilities, access to and control over resources, participation in decision-making, contributions and needs and priorities, as well as on the potential impact of planned policies or programmes on women respective men. It is not possible to adequately implement gender mainstreaming by focusing exclusively on women.

Gender mainstreaming is not about adding a women's component to existing programmes, and it involves much more than increasing the numbers of women participating. It should situate gender equality issues at the centre of policy decisions and resource allocations. A critical element in gender mainstreaming is that it requires *explicit* attention to gender perspectives. Gender mainstreaming can never make gender perspectives invisible; on the contrary this strategy should make them very visible and show that links between gender perspectives and achievement of the overall goals of the policy or programme. Gender mainstreaming should involve a transformative process, which means that incorporation of gender perspectives would identify the need for changes in goals, policies, strategies and actions, as well as institutional changes – changes in structures, procedures and cultures.

While we know today that gender mainstreaming is a critical strategy for gender equality, at the same time we acknowledge that gender mainstreaming does not eliminate the need for targeted activities to promote the advancement of women and gender equality. Such activities are still required to address serious gender gaps; to support women's empowerment and develop women's leadership capacities; and to test ideas and approaches which may then be applied to mainstream development process.

Mainstreaming involves taking up gender equality perspectives in data collection, analysis and other activities, to ensure that all processes take into account the contributions, priorities and needs of the entire stakeholder group, women as well as men. The first step required is an assessment of the ***linkages between gender equality and the issue or sector*** being worked on, that is, to identify the gender implications of working on, for example, poverty elimination, agricultural development, energy programmes, peace and security, or enterprise development. This involves understanding why promotion of gender equality is important for achievement of all other development goals. Secondly the ***opportunities for introducing gender perspectives*** need to be identified in the work-tasks undertaken. These opportunities or entry-points can be found in research and analysis, policy development, use of statistics, training events, as well as in planning and implementing projects and programmes. Thirdly an ***approach or methodology*** has to be identified for successfully incorporating gender perspectives into these work-tasks in a manner which facilitates influencing goals, strategies, resource allocation and concrete outcomes. ***Institutional development***, in terms of developing guidelines, utilizing gender specialists, providing competence development for all personnel, is also required to support gender mainstreaming.

Implementation

Considerable progress has been made in promoting gender mainstreaming through intergovernmental processes within the United Nations. Commitments made by Governments on integrating gender perspectives into different policy areas at global and regional levels are essential for utilizing the gender mainstreaming strategy at national and local levels. These commitments in intergovernmental processes do not, however, in and of themselves ensure change. A lot of follow-up is required to ensure implementation. More effective methods and mechanisms for holding Governments accountable to these commitments need to be developed. The decision by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations to add a specific item to its annual agenda on gender mainstreaming, as well as the decision to undertake, before 2005, a comprehensive review of progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in its agreed conclusions from 1997, has created an opportunity for more regular evaluation and monitoring of progress in the application of the mainstreaming strategy.

Since 1995, some progress in implementation has been made by Governments, United Nations entities and NGOs. Explicit policies and strategies on gender equality have been developed, as well as gender policies and strategies on specific sector areas; to a lesser extent gender perspectives have also been incorporated into sectoral policies and strategies; and attention have been given to gender perspectives in operational activities such as research, data collection, and the design and implementation of projects on the ground. Institutional activities, such as capacity-building, methodology development, and development of monitoring and accountability mechanisms, have been undertaken. Progress has also been made in developing tools for gender mainstreaming, including guidelines, manuals, and checklists. Specialist expertise has been introduced in many organizations, including both in-house gender advisors and external consultants.

In recent years, a more positive policy environment for gender mainstreaming has developed. The greater recognition of the importance of social dimensions of development has resulted in increased attention to aspects such as community involvement, participation and ownership. This has facilitated a stronger focus on specific groups, including women. The emergence of a more holistic framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development, with a strong focus on the empowerment of all stakeholders, also provides opportunities for greater responsiveness to the integration of gender perspectives. Much more needs to be done, however, to address the links between social and economic development.

Despite the knowledge gained and the efforts made at research, data collection and policy development, gender perspectives are still not seen as an integral routine part of policy and programme development in any area. The analysis of problems and issues and policy formulation is not always informed by a consideration of gender differences and inequalities, and opportunities for narrowing gender gaps and supporting greater equality between women and men are not yet consistently identified. Gender perspectives

are not central to data collection, analyses, budget allocations and planning processes; gender analysis is not utilized systematically and effectively; specific studies carried out on gender issues do not have the full intended impact on policies and programmes. At institutional level, even where policies and strategies on gender equality are put in place, management commitment and political will are often not explicit; resource allocations have not been adequate; responsibilities are not spread evenly throughout organizations; there are no effective accountability mechanisms; and training has not proven to be effective, as it has been implemented to date.

Constraints and challenges

This analysis of progress in implementation of gender mainstreaming raises some key questions. Why – when we do have considerable knowledge about the contributions, needs and priorities of women as well as men – are gender perspectives not taken into account fully in the research, analysis and decision-making phases? Why is the incorporation of relevant and important gender perspectives not seen as essential for the achievement of the full range of goals pursued by Governments and United Nations bodies?

One of the reasons for lack of progress is the limited understanding among personnel in many organizations of the important linkages between gender perspectives and different sector areas. The knowledge produced through research on gender perspectives in different sectors and issues is not being disseminated and utilized. Critical questions on gender perspectives need to be raised in all areas. For example, in what way are gender perspectives relevant for the promotion and protection of human rights; what are the critical gender perspectives in water resources management; how do gender perspectives come into play in decentralization processes; what role do gender perspectives have in poverty eradication? If the linkages between gender perspectives and all sector areas are made clear, and there is an understanding that gender perspectives are important for achieving the goals in these different sector areas, effective action plans can be put in place and real changes made to the way work is carried out.

The challenges and constraints also include the fact that gender perspectives are not seen as essential for achieving the goals of all policy areas. Some organizations continue to base their work on the assumption that certain policy areas, for example macro-economics and technical areas, are in principle "gender-neutral". This makes all efforts to incorporate gender perspectives very difficult. In areas where the gender perspectives are well-known, the understanding of their importance to overall sector goals is not always clearly established. Even where analysis is relatively well developed, such as in health, education and water sectors, there has been limited success in developing capacity for using this analysis in order to bring about needed changes at policy and programme levels.

Many staff members – including some gender advocates – see gender mainstreaming as a purely technical process. A little training is provided; some guidelines are developed and effective gender mainstreaming is presumed to be in place.

The critical political aspects – including the need for top management commitment, resource allocation, supportive institutions, etc, - are neglected.

Another reason for the slow and uneven progress in gender mainstreaming is that many development agencies - whether Government, United Nations or NGO bodies - have not had enough active dialogue with women´s groups and networks on what their priorities are and what the key strategies should be. Consultation and participation strategies in development programmes have not included a focus on gender perspectives. Women, and the groups and networks in which they organize themselves, still tend to be left out completely, or inadequately involved. Further consultation with men on these issues would also be useful.

A number of other key constraints and challenges to effective gender mainstreaming have been identified, many of which are long-standing problems. Ways of addressing these constraints and challenges must be developed if gender mainstreaming is to become the transformative strategy it was originally intended to be. Establishing responsibilities and accountability will be critical to this process, particularly since we know today that much of what is being called gender mainstreaming is not, in fact, mainstreaming at all, and is certainly far from being transformative. The failure to adequately implement gender mainstreaming is caused by misunderstanding of what gender mainstreaming is; a lack of ability to effectively implement the strategy; and sometimes even attempts to misuse the strategy to do away with special attention to women and/or question the necessity of having gender specialists in organizations, or even to cut resources to the promotion of gender equality.

What can be done to meet some of these challenges and deal with the constraints?

At *operational or programmatic* level, a number of conclusions can be drawn:
a) It is important to focus on the *goal of gender equality* and not simply to identify women as a "special group", and particularly not only as a vulnerable group.
b) While there is greater understanding of the *linkages between gender equality and sector areas*, there remain some important sectors where the gender implications are not yet clearly defined. Perhaps the most important of these is macro-economics.
c) There should be a stronger focus on the *gains for development* from increased gender equality, for example in the area of poverty eradiciation, democratic governance, or sustainable development. The value-added of working with gender perspectives should be made clear.
d) Greater attention has to be given to developing understanding of *how to effectively use gender analysis* to promote changes in policies and programmes; many training programmes include excellent gender analysis methodologies but neglect to assist participants in understanding how they can use these analysis methodologies on a day-to-day basis in their work.

At *institutional level*, there are a number of critical recommendations that should be made:

a) Policies and strategies on gender equality should not be developed without explicit attention to *accountability mechanisms and competencies* required for effective implementation, including attention to how these competencies should be acquired within the organization.

b) *Training programmes should be more action-oriented*, which implies more than simply tailoring to specific sectors. Capacity-building must be focused on what participants do on a day-to-day basis and assist them to understand how they need to work differently to give adequate attention to gender perspectives.

c) Greater attention has to be given to *monitoring* progress and documenting and disseminating *good practice* examples.

d) Ways to ensure that *senior and middle-level management* take on responsibility for, and promote and facilitate, gender mainstreaming need to be developed, and accountability mechanisms put in place to ensure their active involvement.

e) Gender advocates and specialists must play *more catalytic roles* - not trying to do gender mainstreaming for others but promoting, supporting and monitoring the implementation of the strategy in other departments/divisions.

Empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming: complementary transformative processes

Change to bring about gender equality can be initiated both from above and from below. Neither impetus through `top-down´ interventions from the Government or other bodies wielding formal power and influence, nor impetus through `bottom-up´ mobilization of groups and networks in civil society, is adequate in and of itself to produce transformation of structures, procedures and cultures required for the promotion of gender equality.There is a need to work both at the grassroots and policy levels. A range of grassroots initiatives from below can create pressure but support is needed from the top as well.

The notion of change from above and below can also be effectively used to illustrate the compatibility between the mainstreaming and empowerment approaches - mainstreaming can be seen as efforts from above, attempting to transform both organizations and their actions while empowerment provides impetus and pressure from below. The two approaches reinforce each other and should not be seen as two separate competing strategies. Empowerment is an essential part of mainstreaming; the mainstreaming strategy should always be implemented in a manner which facilitates the empowerment of women.

Both empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming should be transformative processes. This is not, however, automatic. Ensuring that both women and men will be able to influence decisions and resource allocations requires going beyond simply increasing the number of women in different positions, to providing real opportunities for influencing the agendas, institutions and processes. Values, norms, rules, procedures and practices can effectively restrict women's potential to make real choices, and make efforts to give explicit attention to relevant gender perspectives very difficult. The mainstream agenda can only be transformed when the perspectives of both

women and men inform the design, implementation and outcomes of policies and programmes. This requires analysing the gender perspectives in each and every area of development.

Many gender mainstreaming efforts today are still, however, often at the level of "adding on" gender perspectives without focusing on necessary changes to goals, strategies and actions, and they still come in far too late in the process. Many policies and programmes which are focused on the empowerment of women are not truely empowering. It is true that it is impossible to move from zero (or near-zero) levels of knowledge, awareness and capacity, which still exist in many organizations today, to transformative processes. Gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women require change processes which will take time. To move towards transformative change there has to be an explicit focus on gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women, clear strategies and action plans put in place and systematic monitoring of progress established.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming will continue to be important strategies for the achievement of equality between women and men in this new millennium. It is clear that the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations cannot be achieved unless all stakeholders- women as well as men - can influence, participate in and benefit from development activities in all areas and unless gender equality is pursued, not only as a goal in its own right, but also as a means to achieve all other development goals.

This symposium is working for a new vision for equality, development and peace. Global goals of equality will not be achieved as long as inequality between women and men persists. Equality between women and men is critical for development and peace. There can be no effective development in any area where women do not play a central role alongside men. Research and practical experience has shown that when women are fully involved and their needs taken into consideration, there are huge benefits for women themselves, for their families and communities and for countries as a whole. It is also increasingly clear that gender equality, including through women's empowerment, is critical to global peace and security goals. Women play a key role in informal peace processes but this role is not always recognized and utilized. Women must be empowered to take their place in formal negotiations. The gender perspectives in relation to armed conflict and its aftermath are now increasingly well documented with the Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security (2002) and the steps needed to fully integrate gender perspectives into peace-building, peace-keeping and rehabilitation and reconstruction are laid out in the Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the Security Council Presidential Statements of 2002.

At a time when the international community and national Governments focus on the achievement of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, the link between the legal framework and the policy process of the United Nations

Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly becomes even more important to ensure that gender equality remains a critical priority. The Convention on the Elimination Against All Forms of Violence Against Women provides a key accountability mechanism to support the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of its review in the General Assembly in 2000.

The Convention adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, is the international human rights treaty that most comprehensively addresses women's equality with men and non-discrimination in civil, political, economic, social and cultural fields. It requires States parties to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, and to take all appropriate measures to eliminate such discrimination, whether committed by public authoriries or by any person or organization. Upon ratification of the Convention, States parties assume specific obligations to the full implementation of the Convention at the national level. States parties are expected to embody the principle of equality of women and men in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation, and ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle. States parties also commit to adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination, to establish legal protection for women on an equal basis with men, as well as to provide effective remedies against acts of discrimination against women. As of March 2003, 171 countries have ratified this treaty, this commiting themselves to an agenda for national action to end discrimination against women.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women - the body of experts established by the Convention to monitor its implementation in ratifying States - has taken a consistent interest in the steps taken by States parties to implement the Platform for Action, as well as of the outcome document of the 23rd special session, held in June 2000. This attests to an understanding of the Platform and the outcome document as further elaboration of the rights contained in the Convention and the means to achieve them through both legislation and and policy and programme action. The Committee also pays particular attention to the empowerment of women and the implementation of gender mainstreaming as critical means to ensure the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women.

The new vision for gender policy being discussed in this symposium, based on the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming approaches, must focus strongly on practical implementation - both of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of its review in 2000, and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The forthcoming review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action, ten years after its adoption, will focus strongly on the progress made and remaining challenges. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Declaration Goals provide a holistic framework for integrating the implementation of the goal of gender equality with all other development goals and ensuring the achievement of equality, development and peace for all.

Thank you.