

**FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION:  
GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

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Gender mainstreaming was endorsed as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* in 1995. Mainstreaming was not a completely new strategy at that time. As an alternative to earlier strategies for promoting gender equality, the mainstreaming strategy had been under development for a number of years prior to the Beijing conference. The Beijing Conference was, however, an important landmark for mainstreaming in that governments, NGOs and international organizations gave political legitimacy to the strategy.

Over the years since 1995 a number of serious misconceptions around gender mainstreaming have developed which have hampered effective implementation of the strategy. These are sometimes linked to lack of understanding of basic concepts such as "gender" and "gender equality". It is important to begin this discussion with an introduction to these basic concepts.

In addition, there is still considerable uncertainty among staff in many organizations as to what mainstreaming actually entails in operational terms. The main question raised about mainstreaming today is "How can it be done?" This "*how*" question is often posed in a manner which implies that adequate implementation of the mainstreaming strategy is a purely technical question. In a similar vein are the calls for more checklists, guidelines, manuals and handbooks. The existence of large numbers of quite adequate checklists, guidelines, manuals and handbooks on gender mainstreaming in many sector areas is adequate testimony to the fact that improving the implementation of gender mainstreaming is not that simple. The political dimensions of promoting gender equality are largely ignored. There is still need for some considerable attention to the "*why*" question - to the goals, rationales and the linkages between gender perspectives / the goal of gender equality and different sector areas and issues in development. This presentation will therefore discuss the concept of gender mainstreaming - its evolution, practical implications and begin a discussion of a framework for its implementation.

## 1. Promotion of gender equality is the goal of gender mainstreaming

It is important to establish clearly from the start that gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself - but rather a means to an end. Mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality.<sup>1</sup> To understand gender mainstreaming it is therefore essential to understand what gender equality is.

Equally important is a clear understanding of the difference between giving attention to *gender perspectives* and to the *goal of promoting gender equality*. Gender mainstreaming requires incorporation of both gender perspectives (linkages between gender and the sector areas or issues being dealt with, as ascertained through gender analysis) and attention to the goal of promoting gender equality (actions to be taken, on the basis of the understanding of gender perspectives acquired through gender analysis, to develop policy and programming which supports gender equality).

Gender is a cross-cutting analytical category which should be applied to all areas of societal development - political, economic, environmental, social, cultural and institutional. It should be an integral part of any social or socio-cultural perspective on development. Gender analysis should investigate the differences and disparities between women and men, and between different groups of women and groups of men. It should go beyond analysis of difference and disparity in what women and men do to analysis of the relations between women and men, particularly in terms of access to and control over resources and decision-making, i.e. to aspects of power.

**GENDER** refers to the attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men, and girls and boys, as well as the relations between different groups of women and different groups of men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and learned through socialization processes. They are context-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman and a man in different contexts. In most societies there are differences and disparities (inequalities) between women and men in activities undertaken, access to and control over resources and decision-making (power) opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty-level or wellbeing, ethnic group, religious affiliation and age.

The carrying out of gender analysis and incorporation of information on the activities, responsibilities, contributions, priorities and needs of women and men into development processes will not, in and of itself, bring about change. There must also be clear political commitment to take steps to actively reduce disparities and promote equality between women and men. This

**EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN** (or gender equality) refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality is not a 'women's issue' but should concern and engage men as well as women. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken

<sup>1</sup> Some people do not like the term 'strategy' and prefer using the term 'approach'. Whatever term is utilized the important thing is the understanding that mainstreaming is the means utilized to achieve gender equality. The ECSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 uses the both the terms 'process' and 'strategy' to refer to mainstreaming.

needs to be made very explicit at both policy and programming levels.

The aim is not simply to produce documents which include information on both women and men, and provide evidence that a gender analysis has been undertaken, but to lead to concrete actions which will ensure greater potential for promoting gender equality. This might lead to changes in the way objectives are expressed, activities drawn up, and anticipated outcomes defined.

*and priorities of both women and men are taken into account, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Equality includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quantitative aspect refers to the equal representation of women and men in all areas of society. The qualitative aspects concerns the need to give equal weight to the values, knowledge, experience and priorities of both women and men, as a means of enriching and directing all areas of societal development. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights (social justice) issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development*

The difference between gender perspectives and the goal of promoting gender equality can be seen as the difference between goals and means. Identifying gender perspectives in different sector areas and issues through gender analysis is the means required to achieve the goal of gender equality. Implementation of gender mainstreaming requires therefore a clear understanding of what the gender perspectives / implications of different sector areas and issues are. For example, in the areas covered in this technical review - governance and poverty eradication - it is important to understand what the gender perspectives are, in order to be able to determine what actions need to be taken to ensure equality between women and men. (A preliminary discussion is given in the table below).

<b>Poverty</b>	<b>Governance</b>
<p><b><i>Identifying gender perspectives:</i></b> In carrying out gender analyses of poverty the differences and disparities between women and men need to be highlighted in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Causes of poverty</li> <li>▪ Effects of poverty</li> <li>▪ Strategies for coping with and overcoming poverty at household and community levels.</li> </ul> <p>All of these are affected by the general position and status of women relative to men in their communities and households. The causes and effects of poverty can also differ between different groups of women and between different groups of men.</p> <p>While there has been a strong focus on female-headed households in poverty discussions, particularly because of specific constraints related to lack of capital and lack of adult labour in such households, far too often the implications of poverty for women in households managed by men have been</p>	<p><b><i>Identifying gender perspectives:</i></b> The most visible gender aspect of governance is the need to ensure equitable representation and participation of women and men in all structures and processes at all levels. This has implications for structures and processes in government, parliament, civil society, NGOs, international organizations, political parties, and for processes such as electoral processes, appointments, promotions, etc. Issues of representation in terms of governance are related to ensuring a critical mass of women in structures with access to important processes, as well as to facilitating their potential to participate equitably and effectively and influence agendas and outcomes.</p> <p>It is important, however, to also move beyond numbers when assessing gender perspectives in relation to governance. There is need to consider the agendas of different bodies and the extent to which they represent and reflect the perceptions, priorities, and needs of all groups</p>

<p>neglected. The consequences of poverty for women in these household in terms of distribution of resources, including food, can impact severely on women's productive activities and thus on the well-being of the whole family.</p> <p>The specific vulnerability of women needs to be kept in mind. However, in analysing poverty from a gender perspective it is also important that women should not only be seen as victims. Women can be effective agents for change if empowered. Their situation, status, priorities, contributions and needs relative to men's, need to be analysed, and the relations between women and men highlighted, particularly in terms of access to and control over resources and decision-making potential.</p> <p><b><i>Identifying actions to promote gender equality:</i></b></p> <p>Once differences and disparities have been highlighted in relation to the causes and effects of poverty and the strategies for coping with and overcoming poverty, active steps for promoting greater equality between women and men need to be identified and incorporated explicitly into policies, research and all types of programmes.</p>	<p>in society, including women and men. This concerns processes of consultation in the defining of agendas and advancing strategies, and it concerns mechanisms for securing transparency and accountability.</p> <p>It is increasingly recognized that governance is concerned with more than women's political participation. Transparency and accountability in bodies, such as the civil service administrations, and processes such as development of national, regional and local budgets, are just as important for achieving gender equality. All interventions such as civil service reforms and public expenditure reviews must give consideration to gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality.</p> <p><b><i>Identifying actions to promote gender equality:</i></b></p> <p>Once differences and disparities have been highlighted in relation to the equitable representation and participation of women and men and gender perspectives in relation to issues of transparency and accountability have been identified, active steps for promoting gender equality in the context of policy and programme development need to be developed.</p>
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### *Both human rights/social justice and effective development rationales*

The mainstreaming strategy is motivated by both rationales of human rights and social justice. As roughly 50% of the population women should be involved in all areas of societal development. Equally important is the fact that effective development cannot be achieved if women are excluded, particularly because of the specific knowledge and experience women bring to development processes and because of the critical contributions they are already making. Effective development in the areas of health, water resource management, agriculture and education, for example, is not possible if a major stakeholder group - the women - is left out. In the areas being discussed today - poverty eradication and governance - effective achievement of goals, implementation of activities and attainment of anticipated outcomes will not be possible unless women as well as men are part of the whole process of decision-making, planning, implementation and monitoring.

### *Mainstreaming and targeted support for women*

Mainstreaming is not the only strategy available for promoting gender equality. An equally important complementary strategy is to develop and implement activities which specifically target women's priorities and needs, through, for example, legislation, policy

development, research and projects/programmes on the ground. Women-specific projects and gender equality initiatives continue to play an important role in promoting gender equality. They are still needed because gender equality has not yet been attained and gender mainstreaming processes are not well developed. Targeted initiatives focusing specifically on women or the promotion of gender equality are important for reducing existing disparities, serving as a catalyst for promotion of gender equality and creating a constituency for changing the mainstream. Women-specific initiatives can create an empowering space for women and act as an important incubator for ideas and strategies that can be transferred to mainstream interventions. Initiatives focused on men support promotion of gender equality by developing male allies.

It is crucial to understand that these two strategies - gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment - are in no way in competition with each other. The endorsement of gender mainstreaming within an organization does not imply that targeted activities are no longer needed. The two strategies are complementary in a very real sense as gender mainstreaming must be carried out in a manner which is empowering for women.

## **2. Mainstreaming focuses on the substantive work of an organization**

Gender mainstreaming does not focus on the gender equality situation within an organization. Gender equality issues within an organization, such as equal opportunities in terms of recruitment, advancement, conditions of work, etc, and issues such as norms, attitudes, values, organizational culture, and management styles, naturally impact both directly and indirectly on whether and how adequately attention can be given to gender equality issues in the substantive work of an organization. The ways in which organizational factors such as management styles, work styles and organizational culture can impact on potential for mainstreaming will be raised later on in this presentation.

It is important to emphasize that gender mainstreaming as a strategy is, however, not concerned with increasing equal opportunities and gender balance within an organization. These aspects should be taken care of with other strategies. Gender mainstreaming is concerned with incorporating attention to gender perspectives and the goal of promoting gender equality in the substantive work of an organization.

The official UN definition of gender mainstreaming is the definition included in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, where 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."

Mainstreaming involves bringing gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality to the centre of attention in order that these perspectives can influence the goals, direction

and outcomes of development. Gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that both women and men can influence the development of goals, activities and outcomes, and can participate and benefit equitably. This is the transformatory aspect of mainstreaming. In the context of adequate implementation of mainstreaming "business as usual" should not be possible.

Mainstreaming as a strategy can be applied in any area of development. It is not intrinsically linked to gender equality. It is possible - and probably very necessary - to mainstream attention to other overall development goals such as poverty eradication, sustainable development and governance and human rights, as well as cross-cutting issues such as children, disability, and capacity development, throughout all areas of societal development.

### **3. The evolution of the mainstreaming strategy**

It is very enlightening to apply a historical perspective to the strategies utilized for promoting gender equality. In the 1950s and 1960s *women's need for development* was the centre of focus. Not surprisingly the initial interventions were targeted directly to women and focused on identified needs of women. These activities were often in areas traditionally related to women such as health, child-care, domestic water supply and education. These did not threaten the status quo or power relations in any manner at all and targeted women as a vulnerable group outside the mainstream of development. While many of these interventions produced positive results, particularly for the limited numbers of women who could benefit directly, this approach did not tackle the structural constraints to gender equality.

By the 1970s *women's contributions to development* had been recognized and new ways of incorporating women effectively into development processes were sought, particularly in the era of economic crisis and resulting structural adjustment in the 1980s. Efforts in the 1970s shifted instead to integrating attention to women into all activities rather than keeping women on the sidelines of development. However the gains made through the integration strategy were limited by the fact that most efforts were undertaken too late in processes when all important decisions on goals, strategies and resources had already been taken. Equally constraining was the fact that integration was often taken to mean only increasing women's participation in development agendas already decided upon by others. Women's perceptions and priorities were not given much attention, and in some cases were even seriously neglected as more instrumental approaches developed where the integration of women was promoted more for the sake of projects than for women themselves. The potential for bringing about the types of structural changes required for achieving gender equality was therefore reduced.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s there was considerable awareness that many of the inputs made to promote gender equality were largely cosmetic and dealt with the symptoms of the problems rather than coming to terms with the causes. They did not touch the basic *structures and processes which perpetuated existing inequalities and thus*

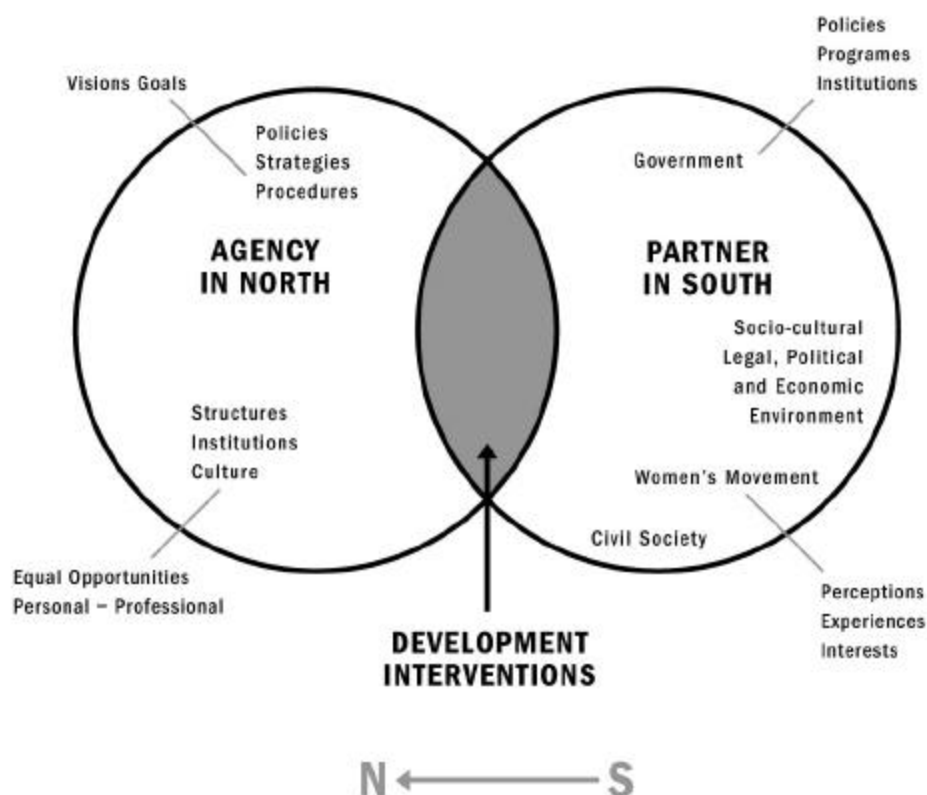
*constituted severe constraints to gender equality.* A strategy was needed which came to grips with structural and systemic issues. The new approach which evolved in the 1980s, the mainstreaming strategy, aimed to make the goal of gender equality central to all development interventions rather than an "add-on". The term mainstreaming came from the objective to bring attention to gender equality into the mainstream of development activities. An important element in the mainstreaming strategy is the ambition to give attention to gender equality from initial stages of interventions so that there is potential to influence goals, strategies, resource allocations and institutional arrangements, and thus to make a real difference to gender equality.

#### *Important shifts implied in the mainstreaming strategy*

The evolution of the mainstreaming strategy involved an awareness of the need for a number of *critical shifts of approach* if promotion of gender equality was to be achieved. The integration strategy was very much concerned with getting women involved but rarely questioning the conditions of that involvement. A key element in the mainstreaming strategy is that there should be a shift from quantitative aspects of participation of women to more transformatory aspects - bringing the perceptions of women as well as men to bear on the development process itself, rather than simply trying to integrate women into existing development agendas formulated by others. This required a further shift from focussing on women themselves - their contributions and the impact of specific interventions on them - to a focus on development interventions which uncovers the gender biases inherent in them. Sectors such as the health sector, agricultural sector, or the water sector, contain specific gender biases. The water sector, for example, tends to prioritize men as stakeholders and clients in consultation and participation, despite considerable evidence on the crucial contributions of women in this sector. Women are perceived mainly as dependents of men and their contributions are largely seen as secondary and supplementary rather than essential to successful sector development. In this context it is not constructive to focus solely on creating increased awareness of women's contributions or ways in which interventions impact on them. There must rather be more adequate analysis of the values, attitudes, norms, rules and regulations operating within the sector which are hindering the promotion of gender equality. Gender analysis must thus not only be applied at community and household levels but also within organizations. Gender analysis must also shift from focussing on roles and cataloguing difference, to highlighting inequalities through a focus on relations and power - uncovering and tackling conflict and confrontation.

Another important element in the mainstreaming strategy is a broad development focus which goes beyond the project/programme level to include the broader national context in partner countries and the internal context of the development organizations themselves. The integration strategy tended to focus solely on the intersection between the national context and development agency context - the cooperation on specific interventions, projects and programmes. The impact of the broader national context - government policies and strategies, the legal, political, economic and environmental contexts, and the priorities and initiatives of civil society, including the importance of the women's movement was not well understood. Nor was the importance of the development agency

context fully appreciated - the impact of overall visions, policies and strategies and organizational structure, procedures, institutions and culture. The interrelationship with equal opportunities policies and strategies within the agencies was also neglected in the integration strategy. The mainstreaming strategy attempts, therefore, to provide a more holistic approach, bringing into play all these important elements. This is well illustrated in the following diagram.



Implementation of the integration strategy was taken to be largely a technical issue - successful implementation requiring only the development of adequate methods, instruments and technical skills. The broader approach taken in the mainstreaming strategy - incorporating the national context and the internal organizational context - by its very nature requires a different focus, one which highlights and tackles the political aspects of promoting gender equality and the need to shift the center of impetus from the external support agencies themselves to partner countries.

The shifts outlined above are summarized in the following table.

**Table: Shifts of focus implied in the move from the integration strategy to the mainstreaming strategy in a development cooperation context**

<i>Integration strategy of the 1980s</i>	<i>SHIFT TO</i>	<i>Mainstreaming strategy of the 1990s</i>
A focus on women's <i>involvement</i> (participation, representation, parity, 'numbers') usually into a development agenda already decided upon by others.		Going 'beyond numbers' - bringing <i>the perceptions, experience, interests of women as well as men to bear on the development agenda</i>
A focus on <i>women themselves</i> - their contributions (and how to increase them), and impact of interventions on women. (With clear risks of seeing women only as the problem or as victims).		A focus on <i>development interventions</i> - sectors, policies, etc. - uncovering the gender biases inherent in these.
Gender analysis focused largely at <i>household</i> level - and to a lesser extent at community level.		Gender analysis focused also on <i>organizations</i> .
Use of <i>analysis focused on roles</i> - cataloguing differences between women and men		Use of <i>analysis to focus on relations/power</i> - uncovering inequality, conflict, and confrontation.
A focus on <i>technical aspects</i> - the perception that development of methods, tools and technical skills will bring about necessary change.		A focus on <i>political aspects of promoting gender equality</i> - relations, power, transforming the development agenda, and changing organizations and institutions.
A <i>project-orientation</i> - focusing exclusively on the project itself and ignoring the context in which the project operates		A <i>broader development focus</i> - including the national partner context and the bilateral agency context
A focus on <i>external support agencies</i> based on the assumption that the impetus will come from these agencies.		A focus on <i>partner countries</i> based on the assumption that the impetus <u>must</u> come from the partner countries

#### **4. The intergovernmental mandate on gender mainstreaming**

The mandate on gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system is very clear. It is outlined in the following documents. The importance of the mainstreaming strategy for all areas of societal development and the need for gender analysis to be carried out before any decisions are taken is outlined in the *Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action*. The *ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2* and *Secretary General's letter of October 1997* outline the practical implications of gender mainstreaming. Specific implications for important processes such as medium-term plans, programme budgets and

performance evaluation are outlined in *General Assembly Resolutions 152/100 of 1997 and 53/120 of 1998* and *ECOSOC Resolution 1998/26*.

<p><b>ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2</b></p> <p>The Agreed Conclusions established some basic overall principles of mainstreaming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Responsibility</b> for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system wide, and rests at the highest levels within agencies, departments, funds, and commissions; and adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established.</li> <li>▪ The initial <b>definitions of issues/problems</b> across all areas of activity should be done in such a manner that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed – assumptions that issues/problems are neutral from a gender equality perspective should never be made. Gender analysis should always be carried out.</li> <li>▪ Clear <b>political will and allocation of adequate resources</b> for mainstreaming, including if necessary additional financial and human resources, are important for translation of the concept into reality.</li> <li>▪ Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts are made to broaden <b>women’s equitable participation</b> at all levels of decision-making.</li> <li>▪ Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, <b>women-specific policies and programmes</b>, and positive legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Letter of the Secretary General October 1997</b></p> <p>More concrete directives were provided with the Secretary General’s communication in October 1997, with the following guidance to heads of departments, programmes, funds and regional commissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Analytical reports and recommendations</b> on policy or operational issues within each area of responsibility should take gender differences and disparities fully into account.</li> <li>▪ <b>Specific strategies</b> should be formulated for gender mainstreaming; priorities should be established.</li> <li>▪ Systematic use of <b>gender analysis, sex-disaggregation of data</b>, and the commissioning of sector-specific gender studies and surveys is required.</li> <li>▪ <b>Medium-term plans and budgets</b> should be prepared in such a manner that gender equality issues are explicit.</li> </ul>
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## 5. Mainstreaming: practical implications

A number of key elements for successful mainstreaming have been identified.

- Firstly, that there has to be a *clear goal* to mainstream gender perspectives and attention to gender equality. Mainstreaming will not occur automatically. It is not enough to make this goal clear in overall policy documents - it must be made clear in the context of specific processes and activities and explicitly expressed in all important documents.

- Secondly, there must be a *consistent approach* to mainstreaming - gender equality must be systematically mainstreamed throughout processes and interventions. It should not be attempted 'here and there' or 'now and then'. It is not enough to include attention to gender equality in the so-called 'soft' sectors or in areas where it is traditionally accepted that women are involved or affected. Nor is it adequate to mainstream gender equality in one 'token' component of a programme while ignoring it in all others.
- Thirdly, attention to gender equality should be *explicit* - the mainstreaming strategy should make gender equality aspects visible. There is a misconception that mainstreaming makes gender equality aspects invisible - that mainstreaming means not making issues explicit but presuming that they are an inherent part of processes and interventions without needing to be given special attention. The not uncommon statement "You can't see gender perspectives or track them because they are mainstreamed" is a completely incorrect standpoint. It is very important to understand that the mainstreaming strategy implies that special attention should be given to gender perspectives and the goal of promoting gender equality, and that these aspects must be explicitly treated and made very visible.

#### *Gender analysis: the starting point*

The Beijing conference established clearly that *gender analysis* was the basis for implementation of mainstreaming. It is stated that for all areas of societal development "...before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men, respectively". As pointed out earlier, it is important that gender analysis moves from a preoccupation with roles and cataloguing difference to looking at relations and power and uncovering inequalities. There is also need for further development of methodologies for gender analysis of organizations and institutions, and to work more on how the results of gender analysis are utilized. It is not difficult to learn how to do gender analysis; it is much more difficult to know how to apply the findings from the analysis to everyday work.

Gender analysis must focus on analysing the current situation and position of women and men respectively in a given context, the potential impact of planned interventions or activities on the situation and position of women and men, and the potential impact of the situation and position of women and men on the planned intervention. To give an example of the importance of understanding potential impact of the situation and position of women and men on planned development interventions, well-meant efforts to promote more equitable participation of women may be thwarted by opposition from men who have not been adequately informed and motivated. There may even arise situations where the subordinate position of women may constitute severe hindrances to plans to involve them more adequately, even situations where women have internalized their subordinate position to the extent that they themselves oppose changes to the status quo. Intentions to promote gender equality through the mainstreaming strategy may fail if gender analysis has not given adequate attention to all three aspects.

*Both issues of representation and content*

Equitable representation and participation of women in all areas and at all levels of societal development is one important aspect of gender mainstreaming. However, in working with the mainstreaming strategy it is necessary to move beyond issues of representation, parity and numbers. Equally important are the gender perspectives or implications in the content of activities being undertaken - policies, legislation, research and projects or programmes. Steps need to be taken to include gender perspectives in formulation of goals, activities and outcomes.

The difference between representation and content can be illustrated by countries where near parity between women and men has been achieved in both parliaments and governments. In these countries questions now have to be raised whether having almost 50% women (i.e. taking care of the representation issues) has made a difference to the content of politics from a gender perspective - to the type of policies and programmes being developed. Getting the numbers right is clearly not automatically enough.

*Work-tasks provide opportunities / entrypoints for gender mainstreaming*

Having understood the important of equitable representation and participation of women and men in all areas and at all levels, and with increased awareness of the linkages between gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality in areas of work such as poverty eradication and good governance, what then needs to be done to ensure impact on the goals, direction and outcomes of development processes?

An important aspect is understanding that different work-tasks undertaken provide different 'entry-points' for actions to promote gender equality. Within the UN system there are many different types of work undertaken: for example, servicing intergovernmental bodies; organizing meetings, seminars and workshops; developing training programmes; providing advice to governments on request - including at both policy and programme levels; providing technical assistance; collecting and analysing statistics; and carrying out and supporting research. These different work-tasks provide a variety of opportunities for working with gender equality. These can include advocating for inclusion of more women as participants in meetings, seminars, etc as well as ensuring that gender perspectives are included in the agendas; including clear instructions in terms of reference and job descriptions for different processes; demanding competence on gender equality of all consultants; disaggregating all statistics and ensuring that data is collected, analysed and used effectively in all key areas for gender equality; making gender perspectives an integral part of all research carried out, etc. In all worktasks it is key to consider both aspects of *equitable representation* and adequate attention to gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality in the *content* of the work carried out.

Gender mainstreaming implies that the development of objectives, identification of activities to be undertaken, and definition of anticipated outcomes (including the indicators for measuring progress) should be influenced by the need to promote greater equality between women and men. In this context it is clear that the most important step

must be incorporating greater attention to gender perspectives and the goal of promoting gender equality in policy development and in the planning, programming, budgeting and monitoring processes of an organization. For this to become a reality the directives from top management on these processes (instructions, manuals, guidelines) must highlight the need for attention to the goal of promoting gender equality.

Six clear steps can be outlined for operationalizing the mainstreaming strategy.

- Identify the **gender perspectives of the sector area/issue**, through, for example, use of gender analysis, focusing on both issues of representation and content.
- Identify what is required for more **actively promoting gender equality** in the sector area/issue.
- Identify the **opportunities existing** in different work-tasks, and **additional actions** which might also need to be taken.
- Develop a clear **plan of action**, with objectives, activities and expected outcomes, including indicators for measuring progress.
- Include this plan of action in **overall planning documents** – medium-term plans, programme budgets and performance evaluations.
- Implement a system for **regular and systematic follow-up and recording** of results and lessons learned which feeds back into regular planning, programming and follow-up systems.

It is obvious that considerable awareness, commitment, knowledge and capacity (skills) are required if all staff are to work effectively with gender mainstreaming. Development of effective, practically-oriented competence development programmes is an essential ingredient for successful implementation of gender mainstreaming.

## **6. Responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming in organizations**

Responsibility for promoting gender equality rests with management within the United Nations system. This was clearly pointed out in both the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 and the letter of the Secretary General to all heads of departments, agencies and funds in October 1997. The Secretary General emphasized that "Senior managers will be fully accountable for the implementation of these agreed conclusions (ECOSOC 1997/2)". Management must develop clear policies and approaches and demand competence and accountability from staff. Gender specialists in organizations are not responsible for the promotion of gender equality, but should be seen as resources to the organization, particularly to the management. It should not be up to gender specialists and gender focal points to demand much-needed changes in mandates, status, and resources to allow them to function more effectively. It should be in the interests of

managers to take this initiative themselves. Managers should consider what specialist resources are required to support them in carrying out their important responsibilities for promoting gender equality and rethink, as necessary, mandates, status (including location and access to decision-making processes) and resources of specialists and focal points.

Effective accountability mechanisms must also be utilized for ensuring that all staff give adequate attention to promotion of gender equality in their work. Ensuring adequate attention to gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality in medium-term plans, programme budgets and performance assessments (monitoring) is one important means of ensuring accountability. Clear directives and instructions from management is a precondition for effective use of these processes, as well as adequate follow-up. Another accountability mechanism could be to develop simple annual 'contracts' between top management and middle-level management - outlining clearly what concrete actions will be taken in the annual work programme to promote gender equality. These should, in turn, be translated into annual contracts between middle-level management and staff. A formal process of follow-up of these contracts could be established which would feed into the staff performance assessment (PAS).

## **7. Gender mainstreaming within UNDP: the context of the change management process**

Given the increased awareness of the importance of organizational aspects for achievement of the goal of promoting gender equality during the latter part of the 1990s, the organizational change processes currently underway in UNDP should ideally provide a unique opportunity for improving the potential for UNDP to implement the gender mainstreaming mandate and provide a role model for the rest of the UN system. This would, however, only be possible to achieve with the full commitment of top management.

Organizational change processes such as those underway in UNDP are important as organizational structures, processes and cultures can support or hinder implementation of the mainstreaming strategy. It is important to keep in mind that successful implementation of the mainstreaming strategy requires the following organizational elements:

- A cross-cutting, multi-sectoral approach, collaborative mechanisms and channels for encouraging consultation and participation. Vertically oriented organizations which offer few possibilities for horizontal exchange, present a challenge to gender mainstreaming.
- Organizational cultures which are participatory, based on shared information, team-building, cooperative and integrative working methodologies, and innovative, flexible and democratic management processes, in particular with transparent decision-making and accountability mechanisms.

## **8. Doing away with the misconceptions on gender mainstreaming**

This presentation aimed to provide some clarity on the mainstreaming strategy, including through discussion of what is required for its implementation, as well as do away with some of the most troublesome misconceptions about gender mainstreaming. In summary the main conclusions on these misconceptions are the following:

- Gender mainstreaming is motivated as essential for effective, sustainable development - not solely on the grounds of social justice or human rights;
- Gender mainstreaming is focused on the substantive work of organizations - it is not about achieving gender balance in these organizations;
- Gender mainstreaming is about identifying concrete actions to promote gender equality - it is not just about doing gender analysis;
- Gender mainstreaming makes gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality very explicit in all processes and all documents - it does not and cannot make these invisible;
- Gender mainstreaming is a complementary strategy to women's empowerment - it does not eliminate the need for targeted activities for women and activities targeted to promote gender equality;
- Gender mainstreaming requires specialist / catalyst resources to support management in the fulfillment of their responsibilities - it does not eliminate the need for gender units and gender focal points.