

# Evaluating gender mainstreaming in development projects

*Maretha de Waal*

---

## Introduction

Gender mainstreaming, adopted at the Fourth World Conference in Beijing and captured in the resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations 1995), is a strategy that involves the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in all aspects of development. This means going beyond a focus on increasing the numbers of women in development projects to bringing gender perspectives to the fore in all aspects of development work. This requires 'assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action' in order to make their respective concerns and experiences 'an integral dimension' of the entire project cycle 'so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality by transforming the mainstream' (United Nations 1997).

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to the goal of gender equality. As a strategy, gender mainstreaming requires attention to gender perspectives, making them visible and showing the links between gender concerns and achievement of the goals of development. Moser et al. (1995) illustrated that indicators used to assess the gender impact of programmes and projects tend to measure progress in implementation rather than the actual outcomes. The outcome of gender mainstreaming can be reflected quantitatively (for example by the number of women participating in or benefiting from the project relative to men) or qualitatively (for example women benefiting equitably or being empowered to challenge gender imbalances and promote the transformation of gender relations).

This paper focuses on the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the project cycle, arguing that evaluation criteria should be considered in relation to the objectives of gender mainstreaming. A framework for evaluating gender mainstreaming in development projects is offered, together with suggestions for how to collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data to verify the evaluation.

## Conceptual clarification

Gender equality differs from gender parity. The latter denotes equal numbers of women and men participating or benefiting from a project or intervention. Gender equality, however, refers to women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere. It assumes that once the barriers to participation are removed, there is a level playing field. This expresses a liberal feminist idea that removing discrimination in opportunities for women allows them to achieve equal status to men. In effect, progress in women's

status is measured against a male norm (Reeves and Baden 2000:9). Formal equality, however, does not necessarily demand or ensure equality of outcomes. The World Bank (2000:2–3) defines gender equality in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity, rewards, and resources, and equality of voice to influence and contribute to the development process. It stops short of defining gender equality as equality of outcomes, citing various reasons for caution in interpreting gender equality as equality of outcomes. These include the fact that different cultures and societies may follow different paths in their pursuit of gender equality; and equality implies that women and men are free to choose different (or similar) outcomes in accordance with their preferences and goals.

Gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognising their different needs, preferences, and interests and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. It recognises that the achievement of equal outcomes may necessitate different treatment of women and men. The goal of gender equity, also called substantive equality, moves beyond equality of opportunity by requiring transformational change. Empowerment plays an essential role in transforming gender power relations, through individuals or groups developing awareness of women's subordination and building their capacity to challenge it (Reeves and Baden 2000:9).

The gender-mainstreaming project challenges the very notion of the fixed nature of 'gender arrangements' (Connell 2002:54) of a society, or of the 'gender regimes' of an organisation—referring to the socially constructed patterns of gender relations in any given setting. Gender mainstreaming is based on the principle that the gender order of a society can be changed through deliberate and focused interventions at every level. Therefore, gender mainstreaming can be described as seeking to remedy patterns of gender inequality as it focuses on the transformation of gender norms and values. Gender mainstreaming is the deliberate, planned, intended strategy to transform the gender order throughout society, including organisations, programmes, and projects.

Different approaches to gender mainstreaming have been popular at different periods. Even in the current 'post-development era' (Thomas 2000:20), there is more than one approach to gender mainstreaming.

## Approaches to gender mainstreaming

The focus on gender mainstreaming developed over several decades, with various development approaches preceding it. The development of the Women in Development (WID) approach called for greater attention to women in development policy and practice, and emphasised the need to integrate women into the development process. This perspective evolved in the early 1970s from a liberal feminist perspective (Reeves and Baden 2000:32). The so-called welfare approach of the 1950s–1970s focused on women's practical needs, and translated into attempts to meet women's material needs within the existing gender order based on the sexual division of labour, resources, and rewards. The poverty approach of the 1970s perceived underdevelopment as the main issue, rather than gender subordination. It aimed to improve the material conditions of women through women's participation in their own development, also within the existing gender order.

In contrast, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach to development policy and practice focused on the socially constructed basis of differences between women and men and emphasised the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations (Reeves and Baden 2000:32). The equity approach of 1975–1985 concentrated on women's strategic gender needs, while the efficiency approach of the 1990s harnessed women's labour to make development more efficient. The empowerment approach became popular in the 1990s, with a focus on strategic needs as identified by women themselves. The integration approach

developed in the 1990s and sought to integrate gender awareness and competence into ‘mainstream’ development.

The integration approach to gender and development differs in important ways from the agenda-setting approach to women and development (Jahan 1997:311–329; Reeves and Baden 2000:11). The former approach to mainstreaming seeks to transform the development agenda itself while prioritising women’s (gender) concerns. However, gender issues are identified and addressed within the existing development paradigms, strategies, and priorities; the overall development agenda is not transformed but each issue is adapted to take into account women as well as gender concerns. Hence, throughout the project cycle, gender concerns are integrated where possible.

Reeves and Baden (2000:11) argue that a combined strategy of agenda-setting and integration can be particularly powerful. International development agencies, such as UNDP, the European Commission, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, often follow the dual approach. UNDP, for instance, defines gender mainstreaming in terms of *transformation* reflected in all policy, programme, administrative, and financial activities, and in its organisational procedures, thereby contributing to organisational transformation.

The European Council defines gender mainstreaming in development cooperation as the systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities, and needs of women and men into all policies, with a view to promoting equality between women and men; and mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account, at the planning stage, the respective situations of women and men in implementing and monitoring (European Council Regulation (EC) No 2836/98, 22 December 1998).

The Commonwealth, through its Gender Management System (GMS) (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002) adopts a stakeholder approach to integrating the gender perspective to transform structures that create and perpetuate gender inequalities through gender mainstreaming. This approach is based on the recognition that the state is not the only player in efforts to achieve gender equality and equity, and must work in partnership with other social partners or stakeholders. The key stakeholders in a GMS are the National Women’s Machinery, other government ministries and departments, inter-governmental organisations and donor agencies, NGOs, the media, academic institutions, professional bodies, and women and men in the broader society.

## Evaluating gender mainstreaming

The framework summarised in Table 1 suggests an integrated way of evaluating development interventions from a gender-mainstreaming perspective. The framework is based on squaring gender mainstreaming indicators (parity, equality, equity, empowerment, and transformation)

**Table 1:** Framework for gender mainstreaming evaluation

Project evaluation criteria	Gender mainstreaming objectives				
	Gender parity	Gender equality	Gender equity	Empowerment	Transformation
Relevance	<b>Verification</b> Quantitative and qualitative gender analysis to provide sex-disaggregated data and interpretation at different levels, including input (policy and organisational) and output variables (project outcomes)				
Efficiency					
Effectiveness					
Impact					
Sustainability					

with gender-sensitive project evaluation criteria and the use of gender analysis tools and sex-disaggregated data to provide the required verification, as often included in the Logframe project management tool, applicable to different levels (macro, meso and micro).

### *Objectives*

In relation to its objectives, gender mainstreaming can be evaluated in terms of parity (equal representation and participation of women and men); equality (equal access, control, opportunities, rewards, and benefits for women and men); equity (the ratio of participation, access, opportunities, rewards, and benefits according to needs/concerns of women and men, women's empowerment and transformation of gender relations); empowerment (cognitive, behavioural, and affective changes to increase levels of equality and empowerment of women in relation to men); and transformation (transforming the gender order; changing existing distribution of resources and responsibilities to create balanced gender relations).

Transformation involves meeting gendered needs in such a way as to challenge unequal gender power relations and to contribute to empowerment of non-dominant individuals or groups of women and men. Transformed gender relations reflect parity, equality, equity, and empowerment, benefiting both men and women, or women and men separately.

### *Project evaluation criteria*

The project evaluation criteria included in the framework are generic.

*Relevance* reflects on whether the project objectives with respect to the issues of gender equality issues that have been identified are appropriate to the problems and to the physical and social environment within which the project operated.

*Effectiveness* includes an assessment of the contribution made by its results to the achievement of the project's purpose, and the way in which assumptions have affected the project's achievements. This also includes a specific assessment of the benefits accruing to particular stakeholders and target groups (women and/or men; whether the planned benefits have been delivered and received, as perceived by all key stakeholders; whether any shortcomings at this level were due to failure to take account of cross-cutting or overarching issues such as gender, environment, and poverty during implementation).

*Efficiency* addresses the question of whether project results for women and/or men have been achieved at a reasonable cost, and whether the benefits have costs and/or have been allocated and received in an equitable manner.

*Impact* relates to the broad social environment, and its contribution to wider gender policy or sectoral gender objectives with reference to the project.

*Sustainability* refers to the likelihood that achievements relevant to gender will be sustained after the funding period, including ownership by beneficiaries, the extent to which their strategic needs have been met through the project, and the extent to which capacity has been built to sustain the impact of the project.

### *Verification*

Evaluation requires the collection and analysis of information on how far gender has been addressed across the entire programme, or to reflect quantitative and/or qualitative information specific to each project within a wider programme according to the chosen criteria. Information should reflect gender initiatives, interventions, and/or outcomes at different levels. At the macro level, it needs to reflect a gender analysis of the political and economic context, policy, budgeting, strategy, structures, systems, and linkages with lower levels. At the meso/

intermediate level, it must reflect a gender analysis of institutional capacity, human and financial resources, management systems, and linkages with other levels. Finally, at the micro/field level the data should reflect a gender analysis of project implementation, personal and interpersonal experiences, and linkages with other levels.

The data for verification can be obtained in a number of ways. In the case of South Africa, the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (OSW 2000) provides useful guidelines for evaluating gender mainstreaming in development projects.

## **Evaluating gender mainstreaming in South Africa**

The South African National Gender Machinery has adopted the Commonwealth Secretariat's GMS as a holistic and system-wide approach to gender mainstreaming to be used by the government in partnership with other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. This approach is detailed in South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (OSW 2000). The Gender Policy Framework (GPF) comprises guidelines for South Africa to take action to remedy the country's historical legacy. It also attempts to ensure that the process of achieving gender equality is at the very centre of the transformation process in South Africa and that it is embedded within all structures, institutions, policies, procedures, practices, and programmes of government, its agencies and para-statals, civil society, and the private sector.

National, regional, and international indicators guide the monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in South Africa. National indicators are derived from national legislation and policy documents. At the global level, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), both developed by UNDP, are important internationally comparable indicators. In addition, the government has committed itself to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as the Beijing Platform for Action, which has already been translated into priorities for national action. South Africa must also report on its progress with regard to women's participation in political decision making; women's access to professional opportunities; and women's earning power and participation in the economy.

Short-term measures for gender mainstreaming, derived from the GPF, demonstrate the extent to which the state is incorporating a gender perspective within the process of internal transformation. Among other things, this includes the effectiveness of structures put in place to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the national policy for gender equality; and the gender sensitivity of the policies, procedures, practices, and structures of government as well as private and non-governmental institutions. Long-term measures for gender mainstreaming reflect the degree to which women have achieved equal access to the means of developing basic human capabilities and also to basic needs and services; equality of opportunity to participate in all aspects of economic, social, and political decision making; and equality of rewards and benefits.

A further level of assessment measures how far women and men have changed those cultural beliefs, values, norms, and practices which subordinate, exclude, and prevent women from defending their basic rights and realising their full potential.

## **Conclusions and research recommendations**

The gender-mainstreaming evaluation framework presented in this paper offers an integrated framework for the project staff charged with putting development policy into practice. It seeks to enable them to move beyond the convenient 'head counting' of the women and men

participating in a given activity, and to increase the depth and breadth of the integration of a gender perspective in development projects.

While numerical targets provide focus and indicate priorities, they can also hide as much as they reveal. A more differentiated approach (as opposed to women as a designated group and men as the norm) involves distinguishing needs and interests, as well as access, benefits, and rewards between sub-groups of women and men in relation to research and capacity building in order to inform the process of selecting monitoring and evaluation tools and mechanisms. Project evaluators should be encouraged to include methodologies that elicit more information about beneficiary categories and outcomes rather than just putting a tick in a box. This would deepen the type of information gathered, which would eventually inform subsequent programming cycles and gender mainstreaming in development projects.

## Acknowledgements

The project on gender mainstreaming on which this paper is based is being undertaken under the auspices of the Institute for Women's and Gender Studies of the University of Pretoria.

## References

- Commonwealth Secretariat** (2002) *Gender Mainstreaming in the Health Sector*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Connell, R.W.** (2002) *Gender*, Cambridge: Polity.
- European Commission of the European Communities** (2001) *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament*, Brussels, 21 June, COM 295 (final).
- European Commission of the European Communities** (2003) *South Africa - European Community Country Strategy Paper and Multi-Indicative Programme for the period 2003–2005*, Brussels: European Commission.
- European Council/Europeaid** (2004) *Project cycle management guidelines*, Brussels: EC.
- European Council Regulation** (1998) (EC) No 2836/98, 22 December, Brussels: EC.
- Jahan, R.** (1997) 'Mainstreaming women in development: four agency approaches', in K. Staudt (ed.) *Women, International Development, and Politics: The Bureaucratic Mire*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Moser, C.O.N., A. Binnendijk, and J. Murphy** (1995) 'Evaluating gender impacts', in R. Picciotto and R.C. Rist (eds.) *Evaluation and development: proceedings of 1994 World Bank Conference*, Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Office on the Status of Women (OSW)** (2000) 'South Africa's National Policy Framework for women's Empowerment and Gender Equality', Pretoria: Government of South Africa.
- Reeves, H. and S. Baden** (2000) *Gender and development: concepts and definitions*, Bridge Report No 55, Brighton: Institute for Development Studies.
- Thomas, A.** (2000) 'Poverty and the 'end of development'', in T. Allen and A. Thomas (eds.) *Poverty and Development: Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Oxford: OUP.
- United Nations** (1996) *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 4–15 September 1995, New York, NY: United Nations.
- United Nations** (1997) *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997, General Assembly: Fifty-second session 18 September 1997*, New York, NY: United Nations.
- World Bank** (2001) *Engendering Development*, New York, NY: OUP.

## The author

Maretha de Waal coordinates degree programmes in Gender Studies at the University of Pretoria. Contact details: Department of Sociology, University of Pretoria, Lynwood Road, Pretoria 0001, South Africa. <mdewaal@postino.up.ac.za>

Copyright of *Development in Practice* is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.