

**Gender and Development: Exploring the Successes and Limitations of Gender
Mainstreaming as a Strategy**

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Abstract

Gender mainstreaming has been a fundamental in the Gender and Development discourse. This has necessitated simplifying concepts related to gender inequality which in turn has created unrealistic expectations as to the ways in which social change takes place. It has thus legitimized an approach of rolling out programs, getting a few “jobs for the girls” and making development cooperation ‘right’ for women as main instruments of change. The strategy, which was linked to dominant existing modernization paradigm of the 1960s and 1970s, was also only concerned with women-specific activities, where women were seen as passive recipients of development assistance like the provision of extension services, credit facilities and other income generation activities. There is still a long way to go before we have managed to significantly reduce inequalities between women and men globally. Equality between men and women constitutes an indicator of success in good governance. However women are not treated equally in governance institution and process. The gender issues become a core consideration not simply for specific departments or ministries dealing with women, but for all actors across a range of issue-areas and also at all stages in the policy process from conception and legislation to implementation and evaluation.

Introduction

Just like water takes the course of least resistance, marginalized gender issues that have "sidestreamed" need to be channeled through the mainstream of development processes. The sidestreaming and isolation of women's issues by creating separate institutional mechanisms for women through "Women in Development" (WID) strategies that came about in the 1960s and 1970s failed mainly because the "women's ghetto" did not have enough power or resources (Charlesworth 2005, p 1). The strategy, which was linked to the dominant existing modernization paradigm of the 1960s and 1970s, was also only concerned with women-specific activities, where women were seen as passive recipients of development assistance like the provision of extension services, credit facilities and other income generation activities. It did not consider the gender power dynamics (Rathgeber 1989). This integrationist approach was additive and non-confrontational, where women were included into the development framework as a marginalized group and male interests viewed as the norm, and it also did not challenge the existing policy paradigm (Porter and Sweetman 2005).

Another gender approach to development, Women and Development (WAD), arose during the 1970s as a reaction towards WID from theorists and activists in the South. Although there is not a clear distinction between the two approaches, WAD's main critique was that women specific activities did not consider the experiences of women in the developing countries. Their main critique was that even though women had always been integrated into development processes, they were integrated in an exploitative way that maintained international structures of inequality (Rathgeber 1989).

In the 1980s, an alternative approach developed in the form of Gender and Development (GAD). It took a more holistic approach by looking at the social construction of gender and its impact on the roles and responsibilities expected from men and women. It was not an integrative approach where women were just "added on" to the development processes. This approach challenged and sought to re-orient the existing social, political and economic structures and institutions, viewed women as a diverse category and not a homogenous group, while putting a greater emphasis on state involvement. Here, women were also viewed as active agents of change (Rathgeber 1989). One of the major strategies that came out of this line of thinking was Gender Mainstreaming.

The concept of Gender Mainstreaming was formally adopted by countries participating in an international forum when they signed the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) at the World Conference for Women in 1995 followed by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Conference of the General Assembly in 1997. Since there are many contesting definitions of the term, "gender mainstreaming", the most commonly used definition as provided by ECOSOC that defines it as *"a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres..."* with the *"ultimate goal"* of *achieving gender equality* ("ECOSOC session of 1997" 1997).

A popular method of looking at gender mainstreaming has been proposed by Rees (1998) which distinguishes between three different gender equality approaches – tinkering, tailoring and transformation. Tinkering refers to equality in terms of sameness such as equal treatment legislation and mechanisms. Since equal treatment does not naturally lead to equal outcomes, the tailoring approach attempts to tailor initiatives to the special needs of men and women such as providing child care for women. As opposed to the previous two strategies, the transformation strategy questions the status quo and suggests a transformation of existing structures in organizations and institutions to establish gender equality. Hence, in addition to tinkering, through the establishment of formal equality policies, and tailoring, through positive action, transformation through gender mainstreaming is crucial and necessary addition (Rees 1998).

Twenty years have passed since the first BPFA and three follow up forums have taken place to assess its progress, limitations and future strategies. However the effectiveness of its implementation has been questioned by many practitioners and theorists all over the world. This paper tried to understand that- gender mainstreaming has merely been functioning as rhetoric for governments and development organizations or if this rhetoric has actually translated into action. Our theoretical assumption is that gender inequality hinders development and if gender mainstreaming is indeed a revolutionary strategy as it has been claimed, I would like to question how it has really affected the lives of men and women all over the world. The BPFA had identified twelve main critical areas of concern with suitable objectives for each sector. However, to narrow the scope of the paper three of the areas – Gender and Institutional

Mechanisms, Gender and Governance through Power and Decision Making and Gender and Human Rights has been explored.

Gender and Institutional Mechanisms

One of the twelve main strategic objectives of the BPFA is to "strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies" by including a gender perspective into legislation, public policies, programmes and projects and generating and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. In 2004, 165 Member States of the United Nations claimed to have established some sort of national machinery (Women Watch, 2005).

The national machinery is the central policy-coordinating unit within the government tasked to support government-wide mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives in all policy areas. For its effective functioning, it should be placed at the highest possible level in the Government and under the responsibility of a Cabinet minister so that it carries enough opportunity and power to influence the development of all government policies. Decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring should be advanced by also involving non-governmental and community organizations. In addition, financial and technical resources should be adequate (Rai 2003).

Although the BPFA laid out clear responsibilities for the governments to follow up, there have been many limitations in implementing these mandates at an institutional level. Firstly, many governments have faced problems in creating joint programmes among other ministries, departments, local government structures, development organizations and other entities, which makes the task of mainstreaming extremely difficult. The lack of inter-sectoral linkages through collaboration and coordination among stakeholders has diluted the efforts of isolated independent initiatives and in some instances, has led to be counter-productive. Kusakabe (2006), in an article on how gender has been mainstreamed in government activities in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, illustrates this well through the example of Laos, where Women's Weaving Activity, was initiated under the Integrated Rural Development Project by the Women's Union, an organization under the socialist government with a strong network from the national to the village level. Extended trainings were provided in rural areas and the project was successfully implemented which led a sizeable increase in the household cash income, mainly in the northern rural provinces. However, the success was short lived as the price of woven cloth fell.

Additionally, export tax on textiles was also introduced, which put women at the mercy of market forces and an overall worse off situation. This could have been avoided had there been better integration and coordination with relevant ministries and government agencies in sectors such as finance, commerce and agriculture (Kusakabe 2006). Hence, despite the strong political vision and mobilization in the part of the women's union, that did not automatically lead to gender mainstreaming.

Likewise, the lack of clear articulation of roles and responsibilities for Gender Focal Points (GFPs) assigned at different levels of implementation has also posed a problem in many countries. Kusakabe describes how many people at provincial levels in Cambodia are unaware that a GFP even exists. In Cambodia, it was found that there were no concrete and routine activities that lower and middle level government officials are assigned to complete. Neither were there any routine dialogues between technical staff from other sectors and GFPs. Upon confrontation by Kusakabe, a Cambodian GFP said:

"I don't do anything, because there is no budget. I am not instructed from above what I should do. The Provincial Department of Women's Affairs (PDWA) sometimes give me posters for domestic violence and trafficking. I went to the village to distribute these and now it is finished." (Kusakabe 2006, p 48)

Another problematic issue with GFPs that was found in Kusakabe's study was the incompetency of GFPs. Most GFPs were not selected for their expertise in gender issues but had undergone only a few trainings on gender. GFPs are usually lower-level officials in Cambodia for whom a budget is not normally allocated. Often times, their lack of knowledge and influence in the community makes it impossible to do anything further than noting and reporting on the number of women participants in meetings and commune activities. Low salaries and budget allocated are also further de-motivating factors for GFPs to become more proactive (Kusakabe 2006).

Gender mainstreaming has also been difficult at an institutional level because of the lack of national and local ownership of this concept because of its top-to-bottom approach whereby the government sector accept donor projects and whereby local bodies are given projects from the central government body. Standing (2007) describes a scene at a gender mainstreaming

workshop in a Ministry of Health (MoH) of a developing country. She is one of the three foreign consultants hired by the MoH present to draft gender equity strategies. Staffs from the different levels of the MoH, donor and international agency representatives and a few women's groups and civil society representatives are present. The workshop begins. However, most of the local staff with varying competencies in English and sensitization to "gender language, are already lost and the discussion is largely appropriated by donor representatives who speak fluent English and are familiar with technical gender terms and concepts. Their dominance in the discussion is so strong that they even scold some of the bureaucrats for "misunderstanding" gender by talking only of women's health and not gender relations, consequently silencing and confusing the very agents who are supposed to put the strategies into action. As such, bureaucrats are often resistant, hostile and lack ownership of concepts that come from external agencies and may promote it only as lip service.

Similarly at the local levels, little changes have been seen in gender activities where the focus is still on women and men feel largely excluded from development processes. Often times previous WID units have just been renamed as *Gender Units* (Woodgate 2004). An examination of gender mainstreaming initiatives undertaken by a sample of local NGOs in four African Countries: Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda and the Gambia, reveals how there exists a lot of hostility and bewilderment at the community level because gender equality work is viewed as being "foreign", "threatening" and a plan to "usurp men's power" and the gender mainstreaming approach is external and not relevant to their cultural context. This resistance mainly stems from the insecurity of manhood and male power which is challenged when externally imposed gender concepts challenge the existing cultural structure (Wendoh and Wallace 2005, p 72). As such, not only have gender concepts been poorly understood, the concepts have not been localized and introduced in culturally sensitive manners. As one male NGO director expresses:

"Beijing was not a good thing because it was not sensitive to African culture...It came at top speed and expected things to change overnight...When Beijing came, some women reacted and went quickly. This led to conflict and divorce in families...it threatened traditional structures, because "man is the chief and if you come with power, he resists." (Wendoh Wallace, 2005, p 74)

Similarly another respondent said the following about the Victim Support Unit (VSU):

"The Chief Inspector of the VSU is a woman...I fought back to her and said the VSU is there to victimize men. When a man goes there to report maybe he is being abused by his wife, he is told to go and call his wife when she comes to tell her story, she is the one listened to and the man is locked up in the cell instead. Gender is a reaction against men..." (Wendoh Wallace, 2005, p 74)

Another finding in gender mainstreaming activities is the over reliance on gender trainings as the magic bullet in bringing about change, which is a myth due to a number of reasons. A respondent in the aforementioned study done in Africa after a one day gender workshop conducted by the government reveals the effectiveness of gender trainings by saying:

‘...Gender Training brings theories people don’t believe in, but since there are some allowances for attending, people go only because they are interested in them. After that, life continues. After the workshop, people laugh and tease each other and say to the women when they ask for a lift, “we are gender here, look for your own cars.” (Wendoh Wallace, 2005, p 75)

Hence, gender trainings have become an attractive tool by organizers and beneficiaries alike mainly because of the monetary incentives and the freebies that come along with it like bags and stationary and free food. Meanwhile, the main goal of implementing these gender concepts is not achieved.

In addition to the problems explained above, other factors like biased organizational culture, lack of budget allocated to national machineries, gender disaggregated data and political will and the overburdening multiplicity of functions of the national machinery all play a role in the creating obstacles towards gender mainstreaming. While many governments have adopted gender mainstreaming policies and appointed gender focal points under relevant divisions, the sequencing of strategies and a long term vision is sorely lacking. Holding all stakeholders accountable for implementation in a coordinated and integrated process is also another challenge.

The gender mainstreaming attempts at the institutional level have thus been superficial and patchy which is an outcome of policy evaporation whereby policies get watered down in bureaucracy and its implementation stage and has also led to some tradeoffs. One trade off is with previously existing targeted gender equality policies that have either been sidelined with the

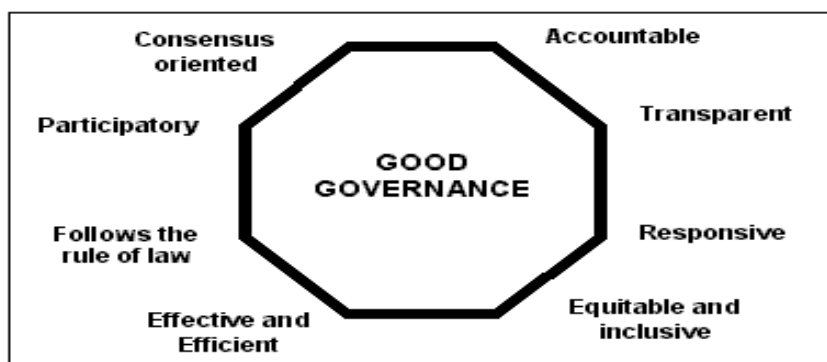
reduction of budget and attention towards them or have completely disappeared. For instance, the concept of gender equality being integrated "everywhere" led to the shutdown of all existing gender equality offices in the Netherlands because gender equality was now a "responsibility of everyone" (Verloo 2001, p 8). Secondly, gender equality policies but have also provided easy access to co-option by politicians and policy makers leading to the de-politicization of the issue. Therefore, the co-option of gender mainstreaming as a revolutionary strategy also walks on the thin ice of being a backlash to the feminist agenda rather than a promotion of it.

Gender and Governance

The concept of gender mainstreaming assures a revolutionary change in the international and domestic policy process. The gender issues become a core consideration not simply for the specific departments or ministries dealing with women, but for all actors across a range of issue-areas and also at all stages in the policy process from conception and legislation to implementation and evaluation (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2001). Women need to be much more fully incorporated into the legal system as lawyers, judges and scholars, and the substantive content of laws need to be re-thought with concerns of sex equality in view.

The concept of governance is not new. Governance institutions shape perceptions of the roles that women and men play in the society, as well as it also determines their access to rights and resources. The equal participation of women in governance is an important as women are often excluded from the decision-making, from the household up to the highest levels of government. "Governance" means: the process of decision-making and process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented) ("What is good" 2010). Good governance is about the equal participation of all citizens - men and women, young and old - in public and political life. Equality between men and women constitutes an indicator of success in good governance. It has eight major characteristics.

Figure 1: Characteristics of Good Governance



Source: UNESCAP (2010)

The Human Development Reports, 2000 suggests, for measuring the empowerment importance should be attached to the holding of political office at the local and national levels, and to the holding of administrative, managerial, professional, and technical positions which is also a part of governance in a broader sense.

There are some variable which measures the Good governance including Gender disaggregated information are:

1. Proportion of women elected and appointed to decision-making bodies such as parliament, municipal and local councils, cabinet, ministries and other governing bodies.
2. Level of existing measures addressing barriers to women running for elections, for example, legal, structural, social or financial.
3. Ratio of female to male candidates occupying political positions.
4. Level of women's equal participation with men as decision-makers, e.g. by occupying cabinet posts.
5. Establishment of affirmative action for female education, violence against women and attention to gender perspectives in national budgets.

One of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, 1995 was to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. The action to be taken as a strategy by the Government was:

1. To establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a

- view to achieving equal representation of women and men in all governmental and public administration positions.
2. In electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and levels as men.
 3. Protect and promote the equal rights of women and men to engage in political activities and to freedom of association, including membership in political parties and trade unions.

The action to be taken as a strategy by the Political parties was:

1. To examine party structures and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminates against the participation of women.
2. To develop initiatives that allows women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures and appointive and electoral nominating processes.
3. Take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision-making positions.

Women's equal participation in governance is therefore an important end in itself – recognition of their right to speak and be heard. More broadly, it is a means to social transformation, (Brody 2009a). Women and men do not have an equal level of political representation, freedom of association and expression ('voice') ("Gender equality in" 2008).

In the mid 1990s, women constituted only 4% of elected representatives in Romania, 9% in Czechoslovakia, 7% in Hungary, and 14% in Poland. And with notable exceptions, such as Rwanda and the Nordic countries, women are noticeably absent from parliaments. Even in well-functioning democracies, the electoral process often creates serious barriers to the participation of women as candidates. In fact women only hold around 11% of parliamentary seats worldwide ("Gender equality in" 2008).

In the late 1990s, Morocco's women's movement advocated for affirmative action with support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); they called on the government to introduce measures such as quotas, proportional representation, financial incentives, and the establishment of a National Equality Observatory. At the same time, the

women's movement approached political parties, trade unions, and professional organizations to adopt quota systems in their governance structures, encourage male members to contribute to domestic chores, integrate women's needs into their policy platforms, establish day-care centers, and reserve a portion of their budgets for women candidates as well as providing training for them ("Gender equality in" 2008).

A media campaign promoting women's political participation was also launched. And the outcome of these efforts was a major increase in the number of women elected to parliament in the 2002 elections (35 women, representing an increase of 33). A number of developing countries have also introduced quota seats for women in parliament (e.g. Egypt, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh) and in local government councils (e.g. Bangladesh, India, and Nepal).

In 2002, women constitute 14% of legislative members worldwide. In the Nordic countries, their numbers are highest at 39%, while in the Arab states their representation is only 5% (Karam and Lovenduski 2002). The literature also suggests that the inequality between men and women is pronounced in Morocco. Prior to 2002, there were only two women among the 325 members of the Chamber of Representatives and only one woman in the 270 seat Chamber of Counsellors.

South Asia has seen the world's first women prime minister- Sriramavo Bandaranaike- come to power in Sri Lanka, which is also one of the longest- serving prime ministers anywhere in the world- Indira Gandhi – in India, and the youngest women prime minister –Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan (Bari *et al.*, 2008).In India, one of the most important forms of women's activism in the state is their participation in elections to the three tier panchayats (units of local self government). In 1978, the communist government of West Bengal overhauled the panchayat system by providing for direct elections and giving them additional resources and responsibilities but making no provisions for women's representation. Andhra Pradesh revived its panchayats in 1986, and reserved 22-25% of seats for women. Karnataka reserved 25% of panchayat seats for women in 1983, although it did not hold elections till 1987. The reforms called for reservations of 33% of the seats for women and for scheduled castes and tribes proportional to their population. Elections across the country brought over 700,000 women to power once the panchayat reforms were implemented in April 1993 (Nussbaum *et al.* 2003). With a few exceptions, most states met and some exceeded the 33% women's reservations at all three levels.

A majority of women were also elected to the two other panchayats. Other studies of north India conform to this general pattern.

Rwanda promotes the participation of women at all administrative levels, from the smallest cell to provincial and national levels. In March 2001, triple balloting system was introduced which guarantees the election of women to a percentage of seats at district level. Through this system, each voter uses three ballots: a general ballot, a women's ballot and a youth ballot. Through a subsequent indirect election, a district council is chosen from candidates who win at the sector level. This district council includes all those elected on the general ballot, one third of the women and one third of the youth. From this group, the district mayor and other executive committee officials are chosen. This system has been successful in putting women into office. It also provides room within the system for women who are not comfortable challenging men directly in elections. Instead, they can compete against other women and gain experience campaigning and serving in government (Seaforth 2008).

Making governance gender-sensitive requires more than 'adding women' in parliaments, but this is one place to start. Gender-sensitive reforms in national and local government – in the form of electoral quota systems and the establishment of women's ministries – have helped to achieve a better gender balance. Electoral quotas stipulate that women must constitute a certain percentage of the members of a governance body. For example, at 56.3 per cent, the Republic of Rwanda has one of the highest figures in the world. They are significantly involved in rebuilding a decimated society.

In India, after approval of the constitutional amendments, two elections in 1995 and 2000 have been held in all states and around one million women occupy positions as members or heads in the rural and urban local government bodies (Baviskar 2003). Other studies also suggest that elected women at the local level (*gram panchayat*) are making a difference in shifting the focus of the development policy by highlighting basic needs issues like water, food security, education and livelihood and are becoming the effective supporters of women's interests (Datta 1998, Mohanty 1999, Nussbaum 2003). Cattelya (2010) argues that the quota considers a temporary remedy and is not a sustainable strategy. However, it is recognized as one among ways to create radical measures to achieve the critical mass of women's representation needed to promote a new culture of balance representation of women in parliaments and political parties.

An increase in women's representation in decision making positions should translate into increased participation by women in all aspects of parliamentary life, including interventions in debate, the proposing and sponsoring of legislation, access to parliamentary resources and occupancy of leading positions (Karam and Lovenduski 2002). One criterion for determining success is that women's impact must be detectable in legislation on women's issues; this will become more prominent and frequent as women become more and more active and effective. Furthermore, with women's growing effectiveness, all legislation will increasingly take women's perspectives into account. An especially telling indication of women's impact will be an increase in men raising women's issues and exhibiting sensitivity to women's perspectives. An important facet of success will involve interaction between the different agents of change: governments, women MPs, women's organizations and other members of civil society, locally, regionally and internationally. Women MPs in Scandinavia, Dahlerup (1988) found that women politicians worked to recruit other women and developed new legislation and institutions to benefit women. As their numbers grew it became easier to be a woman politician and public perceptions of women politicians changed.

However, barriers to governance still exist, especially because of the lack of educated women. Education plays many valuable roles in women's lives, from opening up employment opportunities to giving women more control over their reproductive choices. In the context of gender and governance, however, the point most to be emphasized is that illiterate women are less likely to seek a role in government, and less likely to have influence if they do attain one.

However, the introduction of quotas does not necessarily increase the number of women in local government bodies. Additionally, a more complex question is if the increased representation of women has also led to an increase in their active participation in central and local government bodies. Women are not treated equally in governance institution and process. Even when women are included, they are frequently confined to "soft" policy areas such as health and education while the important decisions are made by men. Sometime family responsibilities and constraints on their mobility prevent women into the panchayats from attending the meetings. Those who attend were inhibited from expressing themselves because of several reasons. Some of these women have been backed by men who formed the real power behind the scenes. The village level panchayats, in which women are especially apt to be active, work under particularly severe constraints. On the same time, Bari *et al.* (2008) argue that there

is also lack of education, training and resources for women representatives. Their dependence on male members of the household and their inability to access economic resources also inhibit their performance.

Barriers to women in participating in parliament are enormous. Cattelya (2010) found that the political play in Indonesia is not conducive to women's participation. The political structure that is masculine, the electoral system that has not favorable to women candidates, lacking of financial supports for women candidates, and the absence of well-developed education and training system for women's leadership, has played a significant role in the recruitment of women parliamentarians. Structural barriers such as party regulation prevent women from entering political institutions and also the patriarchal values discouraged women from taking up public positions. Women's incentive to participate in politics and decision-making was inadequate as most policies and decisions made in the national and local politics were, in any case, insignificant to the improvement of quality of life of local communities.

The Human Rights of Women

Let's take the governance dimension one step further into the realm of human rights, the framing, structure and possibilities for action of which are very important for development. As late as the early 1990s feminist critiques maintained that the human rights system had effectively become a structure to protect men's rights. Inadequacies in the system were also documented and put on the international agenda by many NGOs. In 1993, the Second World Conference on Human Rights accepted that the human rights of women must be an integral part of human rights activities. This commitment was translated into the language of gender mainstreaming at Beijing (Charlesworth 2005).

The literature suggests that gender mainstreaming has resulted in some *important successes* when it comes to human rights. "Gendering of human rights discourse" represents a mainstream success according to many prominent researchers (Kelly 2005). Elements of this success are found in human rights vocabulary as well as in the deployment of the UN machinery and instruments of international law to eliminate discrimination against women. The most prominent example of this is the discourse on Violence against Women (VAW). Marginalized for years, VAW was one of the foundations for feminist action, and became a major innovation of human rights policy within the framework of international law. International norms and

standards have been created, setting the scene for holding governments accountable and providing a foundation for collective and individual claims to be made in diverse contexts across cultures (Kelly 2005).

Violence against women did, however, not feature in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979. The reason for this was that the private or social sphere was long regarded as outside the reach of state influence. The UN Decade for Women (1975-86) saw a change emerge in this respect and important incremental steps were made. At the UN sponsored Conference in Nairobi in 1985, VAW was referred to explicitly in the “Forward Looking Strategy”, but still remained in the periphery. The next and much more important step was the landmark decision which came out of the Vienna Conference in 1993. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is universally regarded as a milestone in recognizing VAW as a human rights issue. The following UN Declaration of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women clearly links VAW to the CEDAW, thus including the private and family sphere into the human rights domain, and this has “*changed the parameters of human rights forever*” (Kelly 2005, p 480).

VAW has since been further mainstreamed within the UN system. Gender based violence (GBV) has become a standard and explicit theme for UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and others in all their operations. It is also beyond doubt that the mainstreaming success in relation to the UN legal frameworks has had important implications for national legal frameworks, international NGO networks and grassroots activity. Significant and active actors from the south include the Asian Women’s Human Rights Council; Global Alliance on Trafficking in Women and Women in Law and Development in Africa.

One can also maintain that the CEDAW itself and its reporting mechanisms have led to a greater degree of equality between men and women, and hence is an example of at least some success in relation to gender mainstreaming. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The CEDAW has 186 parties as of 2010 - the number has risen steadily since it was adopted - and all governments must report to the UN on how they are implementing the principles of the convention. There is also room for what is called a Shadow reporting system, which allows for civil society in a

particular country to give its view on the implementation of the CEDAW to the UN and put discrepancies on the national and international agenda.

Success stories from developing countries include the Philippines, for example, where progressive national legal frameworks for GBV have been put in place and one result of a decentralized approach to implementation is that there has been a notable increase in the reporting of abuse cases. There is also much greater awareness of the problem among women and men in society (Victa-Labajo 2009). In Egypt, considerable success has been achieved in building capacity for CEDAW Shadow reporting, although barriers still remain to the effective implementation of the CEDAW. The Egyptian CEDAW Coalition has contributed to important changes in family law, such as removing legal obstacles to divorce and removing gender inequalities in citizenship legislation (Brody 2009b). East Timor, one of the latest signatories to the CEDAW, has also managed to submit both official as well as two shadow reports highlighting shortcomings in the government's response to end discrimination against women in the country.

Far from everyone agrees, however, that gender mainstreaming has been a success when it comes to human rights. Despite measureable success, challenges to the implementation of the CEDAW include states' reservations to particular articles on the grounds that national law, traditions, religions or cultures are not congruent with convention principles. Attempts to justify the reservation on that basis have given some states a window of opportunity to continue practices which are discriminatory against women and contradictory to the spirit of CEDAW and to gender equality and hence ultimately also to development¹.

Charlesworth (2005, p 7) notes that the "calls for gender mainstreaming in the UN human rights system has been *muted*". Some examples underlying her argumentation are the low representation of women in the UN system overall; the lack of willingness to look at how gender relates to the work of eliminating racial discrimination; the failure to apply a consistent approach to gender in the Human Rights Committee which monitors the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the general tendency to refer to the category of 'women and children',

¹ This paper does not discuss the topic of universality of human rights as this will be too broad for the scope of this paper

reinforcing women's identity and value as mothers as opposed to individuals with their own agency in society.

Charlesworth (2005) further maintains that the evidence for success in translating gender mainstreaming commitments into action is scarce. As a tool for progressive reform of the UN system, it has had limited success caused by lack of adequate training and support, thus creating what she calls "*gender mainstreaming fatigue*" instead. Gender mainstreaming has encountered resistance across the board. At the World Bank, meticulous evidence of efficiency gain must be provided before gender mainstreaming projects have been allowed to proceed. Other evidence of limitations (or failures) when it comes to gender mainstreaming is cited by Charlesworth (2005) to include the fact that across UN and development agencies, it has been almost impossible to translate "gender mainstreaming" into other languages thus creating confusion and resistance from many cultures forced to use the English term. In addition, especially created "gender units" within the UN have been poorly funded and overlooked such as in the case of East Timor's first UN mission, UNTAET².

It can be said that gender mainstreaming is an example of a policy development which will take many forms and complex hybrids in different locations despite the relatively universal character of human rights. Another aspect of gender mainstreaming is that it has always been *international* in character and not centered in nationally based processes and is as "developed" in the south as it is in the north. The human rights discourse may therefore still claim the possibility of universally relevant standards at the same time as it allows for the expression of equality to take different forms (Walby 2005).

In our view, the successes in gender mainstreaming in relation to human rights can be categorized as fitting the category of equality of sameness and equality of tailoring to the differences between men and women. There are very few examples of success in gender mainstreaming in terms of *transformation*. Transformation can take place when there is important change in the *power relations* between men and women. One example of such transformative change can be observed by the actions initiated by men to end violence against women across India. Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) in India is an

² United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor

alliance of men and organizations working on gender issues and specifically violence against women³.

As a concluding remark, it seems that despite the important successes in gendering human rights and the human rights discourse, there seems to be significant challenges remaining before we can speak about a general picture of success in creating real, transformative and sustained change.

Conclusions

Gender mainstreaming has been a fundamental buzzword in the Gender and Development (GAD) discourse. The enormous agenda of change and transformation which was agreed upon and proclaimed at Beijing in 1995 gave an important impetus to a process which started as the UN Decade for Women came to a close. As we take stock in 2010 within three sectors identified for change, we have found that even if important change has occurred, gender mainstreaming seems to have more characteristics of being a *quick technical fix*.

There can be several reasons for this. One of the main features of gender mainstreaming as a strategy has been engaging the *state* as a key partner for change. This includes, as we have seen in this paper, working for change within institutional mechanisms, structures of governance as well as the human rights machinery. The “mainstreaming machinery” seems to look the same irrespective of country, is located at the national level and does often not reach the sub-state levels where development change is both more manageable and tangible. Gender mainstreaming also seems to be concentrated within the development “industry” and has not changed enough for people on the ground. Are we therefore conflating particular institutional strategies with much larger processes of social change? Subrahmanian (2007) seems to think that this is the case and maintains that it is not possible to expect bureaucracies to effectuate miraculous change in the power relations between women and men with a strategy which mainly has a *political reform* agenda.

Subrahmanian (2007) continues that another factor, which could explain the lack of success, is the *narrowness* of the strategy, despite the complexity of gender relations and the contextual variations in the processes and outcomes related to gender inequalities. Gender

³ The video "Changing the Course" on MASVAW can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZRaZsQgQ04.

mainstreaming has necessitated simplifying concepts related to gender inequality, which in turn has created unrealistic expectations as to the ways in which social change takes place. It has thus legitimized an approach of rolling out programs, getting a few “jobs for the girls” and making development cooperation ‘right’ for women as main instruments of change.

Another related criticism of gender mainstreaming is its failure to specify what gender equality actually means. Is it equality of *sameness*, equality in terms of *tailoring to differences* or are we talking about *transformation* in power relations? This confusion has naturally given rise to highly varied approaches to mainstreaming. We have demonstrated in this paper that most of the successes in gender mainstreaming can be classified as achieving equality of sameness (as in the governance dimension) or are examples of tailoring to differences (as in the dimension of institutional mechanisms). One exception is from the area of human rights where we have examples of transformation and change in power relations, such as extending the influence of the state into the private sphere of family life and the possibility of dealing with violence in the private sphere using national and international legal frameworks.

Judging from the examples illustrated in this paper, we can therefore conclude that there is still a long way to go before we have managed to significantly reduce inequalities between women and men globally. Gender mainstreaming as we know it today may have to be given a new impetus forward, a different arena or otherwise not be the best tool to foster and support gender equality and hence development. Although success often has to take side-tracks via short-term failure and will take time to achieve, we must never lose track of the goal of putting equality at the forefront as a foundation for development and the good society.

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