DEFINING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming is defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as *"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 the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated."*[i]

With a mainstreaming strategy gender concerns are seen as important to all aspects of development, for all sectors and areas of activity, and are a fundamental part of the planning process. Responsibility for the implementation of gender policy is spread across organisational structures, rather than concentrated in small central units. [ii]

CHARACTERISTICS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Some of the characteristic of gender mainstreaming are:[iii]
- Gender mainstreaming is a **globally accepted strategy** for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.
- In gender mainstreaming the interdependent or complementary roles of men and women are recognised, so that one cannot be changed without also affecting the other; aiming at transforming not only unequal relationships between genders but also the structures that produce inequality.
- Gender issues are not confined to one sector but must be addressed across the board, gender needs to be addressed as part of mainstream, "normal" institutional activities and not simply left to specialist women's institutions. In this regard, this task is the responsibility of the entire organization and cannot be carried out by any single individual or sector.
- Gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities and need to take place in policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects (e.g. in all stages of the programming cycle).

THE BEGININGS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING – GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The concept of gender mainstreaming grew out of frustration with strategies for integrating women into development devised in the 1970s and 1980s that showed a little response towards improving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming term appeared for the first time after the Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985) and was explicitly adopted in the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) as a result of the low impact that different policies, programmes and actions were achieving in terms of equality for women in society. Since then, several international and national organisations have adopted a gender mainstreaming strategies.[iv]

The concept of gender mainstreaming aims to build upon the following two approaches of involving women in development – both of the approaches are still present in development practices today – **The women-in-Development (WID) and Gender-and-Development (GID) approach.**

The women-in-Development (WID)

The Women-in-Development (WID) approach aims to integrate women into existing development processes in order to address the exclusion of women. It often involves special women's projects, or women's components in integrated projects, designed to increase women's productivity or income, or to help ease their household tasks roles and responsibilities[v]. The movement emerged in 1970s following the documentation of women's key productive roles in

agriculture and industry. The previous exclusion of women in development projects and programmes led to an emphasis on women-specific projects. The rationale was that if women's productivity and income were improved, development would be more effective.

WID was strengthened by various international conferences on women. The United Nations decade for women between 1975 and 1985 focused on sensitising people to women's role in development, as well as concentrating on research and advocacy for women. However, WID approach has several limitations:

- It saw women as a group and not as individuals with a variety of needs and interests, »lumping« women into one category
- A focus on women-specific projects excludes men and treats women's problems in isolation to their relations with men, in both the private and the public sphere.[vi]

.
The Gender-and-Development (GAD)

As a consequence of the failure of many women-specific projects and programmes to address gender inequality, 1980s saw a gradual shift towards a Gender-and-Development (GAD) approach. This approach recognizes the greater value of gender as an analytical concept, as a lens that directs attention towards social and cultural processes and factors, as important in addressing subordinate position of women. GAD approach examines interventions in terms of their differential effects on women and men and the relationships between women and men. GAD approach does not look at women in isolation but enable differences between women and men, and between different groups of women to become visible. [vii]

In general, the Women-in-Development approach addresses women's 'practical needs', while the Gender-in-Development approach addresses gender-related "strategic needs".

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy emerged from the evolving experience gained from the "Women and Development" and "Gender and Development" approaches during the 1980s. It was recognised that a shift in approach to gender is required in policy levels and within development organizations themselves.

Many development organizations began to adopt the strategy of integrating women into "mainstream" projects and programmes, rather than establishing separate women's projects. Fundamentally, gender mainstreaming means, that men and women should benefit equally from all of the organization's policies and practices.

> **GENDER MAINSTREAMING vs. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT/WOMEN'S RIGHTS**
>
> The strategy of gender mainstreaming does not in any way preclude the need for specific targeted interventions to address women's empowerment and gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action calls for a dual strategy – gender mainstreaming complemented with projects and measures designed to address specific gaps or problems faced in the promotion of gender equality. Therefore, there is a need for a complementary "targeted interventions" that have as their primary goal the narrowing of gender gaps that disadvantage women (e.g. merging gender mainstreaming with GID approach). These types of targeted initiatives do not in any way contradict the mainstreaming strategy.[viii]

A BLUEPRINT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

There is no set formula or blueprint of gender mainstreaming that can be applied in every context. The mainstreaming strategy is implemented in somewhat different ways in relation to activities such as research, policy development, policy analysis, programme delivery, or technical assistance activities, and the opportunities and processes are different for each area of work. [ix]

In practice, gender mainstreaming methodology includes that we apply a gender lenses on every action, intervention, policy, programme, project we aim to carry out. The following initiatives are part of gender mainstreaming practices:

- Undertaking a **gender analysis** with a view of identifying inequalities between men and women which need to be addressed;
- Providing equal opportunities to all and carrying out gender specific action wherever inequalities are pronounced;

- Seeking the equal participation of men and women in setting priorities and in programme design, development, implementation, direction and monitoring, often giving girls and women a voice;
- Carrying out **gender budgeting**;
- Organisational training on enabling tools as a start of a process of institutional change;
- Undertaking participatory **gender audits.**
- ….

CHALLENGES WITH GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Nevertheless, since gender mainstreaming is relatively new, experience in implementing it is still limited. Below are some of the recognized challenges linked to the concept:[x]

- **Is the political will real or rhetorical**? Sometimes we see that lip service substitutes for practical action. In these cases, gender equality problems may not be understood, or perhaps human resources or funding allocations are insufficient.
- **What happens with specific projects/actions for women?** There is some fear that this strategy will supplant or interrupt specific gender equality policies and actions with the result of women becoming even more invisible and resources for affirmative actions would be cut back and reallocated to the mainstreaming strategy.
- **What are we changing?** The third concern is that the most powerful aspects of the strategy for achieving transformations — designing a new development agenda — may be watered down by incorporating "equality for women and men" without any critical consideration for current development models.
- **Is this a technical or political issue?** Finally, following on the above, some people see mainstreaming as a technical problem — the need to improve development process quality and efficiency. They regard it as yet another element of the "top-down" agenda of developing country governments and UN agency bureaucracies.
- **Lack of guidelines?** Other barriers are the lack of personal commitment, information, tools and best practices needed for implementing the strategy.

INSTITUTIONAL GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Institutional gender mainstreaming is a process for building organizational capacity and ownership to attain gender sensitive programming, organizational structures, and procedures.

Integrating gender in an organization's activities and structures has both an external and internal dimension.

- **Externally,** gender integration fosters the participation of and benefits to women and men in an organization's initiatives or services (e.g. development and humanitarian assistance programmes, municipality programmes, outsourced programmes)
- **Internally,** gender integration promotes women's leadership and equality in an organization's own policies and structures.

A sustainable gender integration process grows out of an organizational commitment of political will, staff time, and resources, and it involves: strengthening technical skills and systems; promoting a positive organizational culture; and instituting mechanisms for individual, programmatic, and organizational accountability.[xi]

GENDER INTEGRATION MODEL

There are many gender integration frameworks, each organisation using its own. For example, in 1999, InterAction's Commission on the Advancement of Women developed the framework which sees integration as an organic process, similar to a living tree.

At the root of the process is political will. An organization with strong political will, like a tree with strong roots, can support the development of three vital branches:

- technical capacity,
- accountability and a
- positive organizational culture.

All components are inter-related and activities can fall into multiple categories.

Political Will

Political will becomes evident when top-level leadership/managers (publicly) support the issue of gender equality and follow up its implementation, e.g. whether they commit staff time and financial resources, show public support in speeches and written communications, when organisation adopts and advocates a gender policy, and institutes needed policies and procedures, and ways to recognize progress in gender mainstreaming.

Organisational Culture

Organizational culture involves progress toward a gender balanced staff and governance structure, equal valuing of women and men in the workplace, etc.

This also includes patterns of behaviour and codes of conduct within the organisation that help ensure gender equality, or undermine gender equality – how people relate, what are seen as acceptable ideas, how people are "expected to behave" and what behaviours are rewarded.

This field is also linked to climate of open communication, as well as if the culture of the organisation also reflects how it communicates gender equality and how gender equality is reflected in the internal and external documents of the organisation.

At the governance structure this means ensuring that women and men can participate at different levels of the organisation. It also requires ensuring that, once they are recruited and hired, they receive equitable treatment and opportunities to perform their duties to the best of their ability. In a gender-responsive working environment, all staff members, regardless of sex or position, perceive themselves to be stakeholders in effectively implementing organizational objectives, with policies and programmes that enhance their ability to do so. These could include instituting paid parental leave (for both sexes), establishing zero-tolerance policies on sexual harassment and adopting gender-responsive language in official communications.

A gender-responsive work environment also considers the different roles men and women play when balancing the dual responsibilities of professional and personal life. Women often have less time to engage in professional duties due to domestic roles. Equitable, needs-based flexible models of work such as telecommuting and flexitime can increase the satisfaction and productivity of both women and men, creating a supportive work environment. This may also require policies that account for the specific needs of women and men such as breastfeeding or accommodating child-care facility hours.[xii]

Technical Capacity / Gender Competences

Technical capacity, skills and gender competences needed to carry out the practical aspects of gender integration must be developed. This is the aspect that moves organisation beyond awareness to application.

This aspect includes staff skills in gender analysis, adoption of systems for gender disaggregated data, and development of gender sensitive tools and procedures. This part involves gender responsive organizational procedures as well as strengthen individual skills, including nurturing an ongoing community of learning amongst staff. Important part of technical capacity is linked to human management. For example, for organisations to take gender mainstreaming seriously, clear human resource plans and strategies must ensure that gender mainstreaming is fully integrated into work plans with the concrete human and financial resources allocated to it. An organisation can assign responsibility for gender mainstreaming in various ways: designate a gender focal point or gender unit; conclude specific activities in the terms of reference of certain staff members; and require gender competencies in recruitment procedures.

Accountability

Because gender integration ultimately involves organisational change, systems of accountability are also essential. Both incentives and requirements are necessary to encourage and reinforce new behaviours, within individuals and within an organisation as a whole. There are the mechanisms by which an organisation determines the extent to which it is "walking the talk" in terms of integrating gender equality in its programmes and organisational structures.

In this regard, the high leadership needs to demand accountability within their spheres of responsibility for how the strategy has been applied and make sure that consequences are drawn from the results of internal and external evaluations and appraisals. This shows that the organisation expressly wishes efforts to be made to promote gender equality and supports such efforts accordingly. Example of accountability would be to also set and assess annual targets for implementing a gender strategy.

Another opportunity to increase accountability in this field is to build gender equality into job descriptions, work plans, and performance assessments. A positive action in this field is also, for example, if organisation's documents and rewards progress in the field of gender equality (e.g. GIZ every two years, holds a company-wide Gender Competition, with awards for special approaches in this field).

HOW TO MAINSTREAM GENDER INTO YOUR ORGANISATION? [xiii]

Mainstreaming gender into your organisation has a two key prerequisite:
1. **Understand where you are** – Institutional gender assessment / gender organisational assessment! Knowing where we are starting from and how we stand at present will largely determine the direction of your voyage.
2. **Plan a journey further** – preparing gender action plan and gender strategy.

Understanding where you are - Institutional Gender Assessment!

Institutional Gender Assessment is the tool that enables us to get to know the gender mainstreaming situation in all areas and all levels of an organisation's work; that is, to what degree this process has penetrated the organisation's different levels and actions.

This assessment helps to collectively identify the fundamental problems and challenges that organisation faces in terms of gender. The assessment is part of a broader, shared process and becomes an indispensable first step in realistically

planning the journey together. In this regard, it is a prerequisite step to preparing a Gender Strategy, enabling us to identify not only problems, but also solutions and to prioritize actions.

WHY PREFORMING GENDER ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT?

A Gender Organisational Assessment/Institutional Gender Assessment can be used to:
- improve an organisation's functioning, particularly in terms of integrating gender into processes and policies;
- identify existing gender capacities that the process can use in the future and mapping gaps in capacities, including by highlighting needs and opportunities for capacity building;
- provide a baseline for monitoring and measuring progress on the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in the organisation;
- promote gender equality within organisation, particularly if carried out in a participatory manner engaging the entire staff in a process of reflection and sensitisation;
- create greater ownership of the process by all the staff and increases collective responsibility for gender mainstreaming.

A key output of the Assessment is the establishment of processes and procedures to support gender mainstreaming in the organisation such as:

- a gender action plan and strategy,
- a gender structure (e.g. gender focal point, gender working group),
- an engendered monitoring and evaluation system,
- engendered reporting,
- gender training, technical training of women,
- key performance indicators for staff on gender mainstreaming,
- an engendered communication strategy, etc.

> A Gender Organisational Assessment involves creating a situation in which staff, including senior management, takes a step back from the task in hand and reflects on the functioning of an organisation in terms of its approaches to gender mainstreaming. [xiv]

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Before beginning, you must define the scope of the assessment, depending on your human resources, the size of the organisation, the needs, management priorities and other such factors. Organisational assessments vary in complexity which is reflected in required skills and cost.

All these factors will lead us to choose among the three possible types of assessment:
- General map of the current situation using the Institutional Gender Assessment Checklist
- Complete and comprehensive assessment
- Targeted assessment

General map of the current situation using the Institutional Gender Assessment Checklist
This approach captures an overview of the organisation, an initial assessment of the most strategic aspects of the gender status. The simplest form of assessment makes use of standardised assessment checklists that highlight key areas of organisational tasks and functions. There are numerous checklists available. This type of assessment can be done by an individual from within your organisation, or by a hired professional. If this is not possible due to lack of support, resources or other conditions, this type of assessment will help you at least identify some possible immediate actions and provide an initial look at alliances to build better conditions.

A complete and comprehensive assessment

A complete assessment will cover all areas and levels that constitute the organisation. It will take the following into account:

- Internal aspects: gender policy, office planning instruments, allocation of gender resources, gender equity in human resource management, capacity-building and internal knowledge management, organizational culture, communication and image (internal and external).
- External aspects: practice areas and programmatic areas (programmes and projects); other sets of strategic activities related to your mandates, commitments and experience as an organisation.

This type of assessment yields a detailed picture of the situation and helps you make a holistic analysis so that you can take integrated actions. It is essential for the whole staff to take part, so confidentiality of information sources must be clearly assured. This assessment is for internal use, although if it is considered strategic and has overall backing, it may be partially or wholly shared with partners or counterparts, especially since external dissemination legitimizes the institution's gender equity promotion work.

Targeted assessment

This third option consists of selecting a single aspect, which may be a Programmatic Area or a project in a strategic portfolio or some other area of the organisation, such as human resources. The targeted assessment enables you to expand the degree of detail for part of the overall snapshot. Regardless of the aspect chosen, we recommend that you take an integrated approach.

The assessment can be done for your own organisation or it could be of another organisation which might be considered as a partner organisation involved in developing or implementing policy.

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE TO GENDER ASSESMENT

> **POINT TO NOTICE!** Similarly to other types of assessment, engaging into the gender organisational assessment can be a threatening or at least uncomfortable for the staff or other stakeholders, as it might uncover conflict within the organisation, or between the assessed organisation and others. Furthermore, many people (women as well as men) find the concept of gender threatening, or may feel threatened if the status quo is asked to make changes involving values, identities or power relationships.

There is a need for multiple entry points and strategies in order to attain the mainstreaming goal in the organisation. The UNDP has proposed the following strategies and steps:

STEP 1: **Identify and map interests, positions, empathies, relationships, etc.**
   - What are the position, sensitivity, and level of resistance towards gender in organisation?
   - Who can be your potential alliance? Who will be most challenging to deal with?

To incorporate the gender approach, it is fundamental to identify each person's interests, emotions and position regarding gender. It is also essential to measure degrees of resistance, sensitivity and commitment to gender by those we deal with or in other areas of the office. This will enable us to draw the first map of alliances.

STEP 2: **Prioritize strategic points of entry, according to goals.**
   - What and who is the best entry point to approach? What are the opportunities you might explore?
   - Which level of section might be strategic to enter the first (programming, human resource policy, internal training policy, people's mental models, etc.)?

The next step is to see what strategic settings and opportunities you can find among the organisation's people and areas. Points of entry vary, according to the attitudes of individuals and the type of areas. Therefore, it is important to take time to learn about specific features. A perceptive reading of office staff and the choice of appropriate strategies will earn you allies for your work. The process of incorporating the gender approach is not just a question of focusing on a program or project. There are other issues and areas where it is important to work, such as human resource policy, internal training policy, people's mental models and those of the institution, organisational change, and others. Therefore, when starting out, take all these possibilities into account and try to intervene at more than one level.

STEP 3: **Seek support, in-house and outside**
   - Can you find a person to make a team (e.g. intern, consultant, or start a group of alliance within organisation, partner organisation equipped in that, etc.)?

It is hard for a single person to carry a process of this kind forward. Therefore, it is advisable to seek support at three levels:
   - Try to find someone to join forces with and begin team-building. This person could be an intern, someone hired for the purpose or a volunteer.
   - If there are no possibilities for hiring or otherwise getting someone in from outside, try to set up a gender group with your allies inside the office to help you address the challenges.
   - Another possibility is to elicit help from an outside group of persons, such as colleagues from other agencies or from the women's movement, or gender-sensitive friends you can discuss and share with on an ongoing basis.

STEP 4: **Develop your negotiating and advocacy capacity**
   - Adopt attitude of proactive advocacy – attend meetings, discuss issue with clear, concrete proposals in hand.
   - Define maximum and minimum levels for negotiation – outline, what is the least and the most acceptable level of negotiation for you.

[i] *United Nations Development Programme. Guide to using the manual on "How to Prepare a Gender Strategy. San Salvador, 2004*

[ii] *Ibdn.*

[iii] *Partly adopted fom Human Rights Education Association. Course on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. September – November, 2014*

[iv] *United Nations Development Programme. Guide to using the manual on "How to Prepare a Gender Strategy. San Salvador, 2004*

[v] *Ibdn*

[vi] *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Gender Training Pack of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Geneva, July 200*

[vii] *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Gender Training Pack of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Geneva, July 2003*

[viii] *United Nations. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Gender Mainstreain. An Overview.New York, 2002.*

[ix] *Ibdn*

[x] *Adapted from United Nations Development Programme. Guide to using the manual on "How to Prepare a Gender Strategy. San Salvador, 2004*

[xi] *Human Rights Education Association. Course on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. September – November, 2014*

[xii] *World Health Organisation. Gender Mainstreaming Manual for Health Managers: A Practical Approach. Geneva, 2011*

[xiii] *Adjusted from United Nations Development Programme. Guide to using the manual on "How to Prepare a Gender Strategy. San Salvador, 2004; United Nations Development Programme. Gender Mainstreaming a Key Driver of Development in Environment & Energy. New York, 2007*

[xiv] *United Nations Development Programme. Gender Mainstreaming a Key Driver of Development in Environment & Energy. New York, 2007*