



GENDER MAINSTREAMING: DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. This building block offers a definition and description of the main approach to gender equality in development cooperation and enlists the key steps that have to be taken in this process.

To illustrate the application of gender mainstreaming, a few concrete case studies are presented in order to illustrate the benefits of mainstreaming gender in development interventions.

Who can use this building block?

Every stakeholder involved in development cooperation.

The advancement of the Gender Mainstreaming strategy

The current approach to mainstreaming gender equality in development cooperation is the result of a gradual process of reflection in the international community, in both academic and development circles. In the past, development programmes tended to focus exclusively on women and had little success in enhancing women's positions in society. This approach did not question the status quo or the gender power relations, and solely targeted women as a vulnerable group outside the mainstream of development.

At the 3rd World Conference on Women in 1985, this way of addressing gender in development was criticized, and a request for a stronger integration of women into the mainstream was formulated. Although "gender mainstreaming" was not mentioned, this constituted an important step (GenderCompetenceCenter, 2010). The focus started shifting from women themselves, to the development practices and their inherent gender biases. The gender mainstreaming strategy focuses on gender relations and issues of power, and aims at tackling the structural constraints to gender equality (Hannan, 2001).

Beijing Platform for Action (1995)

It was at the 4th United Nations World conference on Women in Beijing that gender mainstreaming was at last introduced as a strategy in international gender equality policy. However, even the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) did not explicitly refer to the strategy as being "gender mainstreaming".



It did nevertheless describe the concept, as follows: *'[i]n addressing the issue of mechanisms for the promotion of the advancement of women, governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively'* (United Nations, 1995).

Definitions of Gender Mainstreaming

United Nations Economic and Social Council (1997)

In 1996, in the "Follow-up to the 4th World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action" the UN General Assembly called upon the United Nations to promote an 'active and visible policy' of mainstreaming of gender perspectives (United Nations, 1996). In 1997, the UN Economic and Social Council formally acknowledged that *'mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.'* (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1997).

Council of Europe (1998)

The Council of Europe describes gender mainstreaming as: *"the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policymaking"* (Council of Europe, 1998).

In 1999, the Treaty of Amsterdam formalised the gender mainstreaming concept at the EU level by explicitly emphasising the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of equality between women and men among the tasks and objectives of the Community (Articles 2 and 3). It established a binding legal basis for the strategy of gender mainstreaming at the EU level.

Since 1996, the European Commission has posited that the concept of gender mainstreaming *'involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them'* (European Commission, 1996). The documents of the European Commission and the European Parliament clearly state that gender mainstreaming should not be regarded as a replacement of direct equal opportunities policy but as an addition to it (European Commission, 1996).



The EU Gender Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation (2010-2015) proposes a three-pronged approach:

1. Political and policy dialogue on gender equality (placing gender equality as a systematic topic on the agenda of policy and political dialogue with partner countries);
2. Gender mainstreaming (designing policy in all areas – economic, health, education, environment, infrastructure, trade, science and research, agriculture, peace and security etc. – to address the specific concerns, needs and constraints of women and men); and
3. Specific actions (to catalyse or give added impetus to reduce gender inequality) (EU Council, 2010).

Key steps for gender mainstreaming in development cooperation

In order to mainstream gender equality in development cooperation programmes and related activities a number of steps are essential:

- **Statistics disaggregated by sex** and **qualitative information** on the situation of women and men must be obtained for the population in question. This information is required not only at project/programme beneficiary level, but also at the macro and meso levels.

For more information on gender statistics see [Building Block n. 4](#).

- A **gender analysis** should be conducted with regard to the gendered division of labour, access to and control over material and non-material resources, the legal basis for gender equality/inequality; political commitments with respect to gender equality; and the culture, attitudes and stereotypes which affect all preceding issues. Gender analysis should be conducted at the micro, meso and macro levels.

For more information on gender analysis frameworks see [Building Block n. 6](#).

- On the basis of a gender analysis, decisions should be taken as to whether gender mainstreaming should also foresee specific actions to redress gender inequalities.
- Gender analysis of a programme or project concept should reveal whether **gender equality objectives are articulated in the initial idea**, whether or not the planned activity will contribute to or challenge existing inequalities, and whether there are any gender issues that have not been addressed.
- During the **identification and formulation phases**, gender analysis contributes to the identification of **entry points for actions** that will be needed in order to meet gender equality objectives.
- A **gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation system** should also be in place from the design phase onwards, including the establishment of **indicators** to measure the extent to which gender equality objectives are met and changes in gender relations achieved

To know more about gender indicators consult [Building Block n. 4](#) on gender statistics and gender indicators.



More information on gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation is available in the Aid Modalities section of the Resource Package.

Source: Adapted from European Commission. 2009. Toolkit on mainstreaming gender equality in EC development cooperation.

Examples of Gender Mainstreaming

Case Study n. 1: Sustainable Gender Equality at Local Level

Gender mainstreaming is about rights, but also about the efficiency and quality of public services.

In this film, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions shows how both citizens, municipalities and regions can concretely benefit from gender mainstreaming. (such as local snow removal).

<http://vimeo.com/77692813>

One of the cases presented in the video concerns a gender-analysis of the attitudes and norms towards education. At the School in the Swedish town of Gnesta, boys tend to get lower grades than girls in almost all school subjects. Researchers looked into the way boys thought they should be and behave. They found that boys expected from each other not to study hard. They are inclined to see school as unimportant. Instead, boys maintain their “status” by shoving each other in the corridors, by being noisy in class and taking up a lot of space. Also teachers didn’t expect the boys to put as much effort into their schoolwork as girls.

Additionally, a health survey found that girls felt more stress at school, that they enjoyed less leisure time and felt less safe outdoors at night.

To improve the boys’ school performance and reduce the girls’ feelings of stress and insecurity, the school started a systematic campaign to change norms and attitudes by:

- Increasing teachers’ knowledge about norms that inhibit boys and girls in their schoolwork.
- Zero tolerance of boys fighting, even when it is for fun.
- Implementing norm-critical pedagogy among students.
- Integrating sex and relationships education into subjects, such as Swedish and civics.

Especially the work around norms has produced good results. Previously, boys at the school in Gnesta performed below national average. But from 2012, almost 80% of the boys finishing the 9th grade had achieved the targets for all subjects, which is the same rate as the girls. Nevertheless, efforts must continue, and new teachers should continue to be educated about norms, in order to change the behaviour of boys towards school and reduce girls’ stress and feelings about insecurity.



Case Study n. 2: UN-Habitat: gender mainstreaming in Rural Landless Programme in Pakistan

Project objective and target beneficiaries

The “Rural Landless Programme - Component of Facilitating Access to Land for Earthquake-affected Families in Pakistan” supports the Government of Pakistan in facilitating access to land for people in rehabilitation communities, who were made landless or virtually landless by the 2005 earthquake. The project targeted completely landless people who lost their houses and land due to land slides, soil erosion and flash floods triggered by the earthquake, as well as virtually landless people whose homes fall under “highly hazardous zones”, living under direct life threatening situations and waiting for relocation to safer locations (UN-Habitat, 2012).

Gender issue and strategy

Women’s land and property rights and the role of women in decision-making are very limited in Pakistan. Often women are deprived of financial and material resources. The earthquake multiplied their existing vulnerabilities. Under the Authority’s Landless Programme, UN-Habitat helped the women of beneficiary families own land.

A joint land-titling scheme was introduced, with support by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority, which granted women equal ownership of their land and house. Male heads of household were not allowed to sell the newly obtained land without the approval of their wives, mother, daughters or other female members of the family (UN-Habitat, 2012). Women were involved in organizing the materials and labour for the reconstruction of their homes. They had access to financing, training and technical assistance. Village reconstruction committees included women representatives. Sanitation and rain-water management were designed and implemented consulting and involving women. Training programmes on these themes, had a 23% of female attendees (UN-Habitat, 2012).

Achievements and benefits

Of the 14,355 families that were provided with home lots, 14% were female-headed households. In all households, female members were made equal owners of the land, which were not subject to sale for at least 5 years. After this period, land can only be sold with the consent of the women, who will acknowledge receiving their share in either money or land elsewhere.

Approximately 55,000 homes were rebuilt by female-headed households, including those of male members who had migrated to work. Over 200,000 women participated in training, awareness and community mobilization activities. Women were represented in more than 1,300 village reconstruction committees. Over 300 were employed as trainers and community organizers in the home rebuilding programme.

Of the total beneficiaries of the project, 55% were females. Being equal owners of land, they have been given authority for safe shelter and this enhanced their socioeconomic status.

Lessons learnt

The UN-Habitat project is a good example of how a gender perspective can improve outcomes and benefits. Women were at risk of being particularly disadvantaged in post-earthquake reconstruction and land reallocation. By finding solutions to address an unequal system of property rights and addressing it, women were made equal owners of land. The targeted involvement of women in training activities, in decision making and policy formulation had an empowering effect.



This model of joint land titling was considered to be suitable for replication.

Other examples of gender mainstreaming can be found in UN-Habitat's compendium:

- UN-Habitat. (2012). A Compendium of Case Studies on Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in UN-Habitat, 2008 – 2012. UN-Habitat: Nairobi.

Case Study n. 3: Peru: Second Phase of the Rural Roads Project (World Bank and IADB)

The following summary of a case study is borrowed from the Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, published by FAO, IFAD and the World Bank in 2009, where a full description of the project can be found.

Project objectives and description

The case study presents how a gender perspective can be mainstreamed in a project in the infrastructure sector (road rehabilitation). The Rural Roads Project in Peru was the second phase of a larger project funded by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). The phase we present here was implemented in the period 2001-6, and focused on 12 departments that ranked highest in rural poverty, primarily in the highlands and in one jungle area in Peru. The project emphasized creating development opportunities with particular attention to inclusion and equity, particularly for indigenous women.

The project development objective was to “improve the access of rural poor to basic social services, market integrating infrastructure, and income-generating activities with gender equity to help alleviate rural poverty and raise the living standards of rural communities” (World Bank 2001: 2). The specific objectives were:

- integrate poorly accessible zones to social services and regional economic centers
- generate employment in rural areas
- strengthen local institutional capacity to manage rural roads on a sustainable basis
- launch community-based development objectives.

The project used local labour for road and nonmotorized transport track rehabilitation and established local microenterprises for road maintenance, with oversight by community-based road committees. A local development window (LDW) assisted communities in planning, skill development, and seeking funding to support local development projects once road or track access was established. The project design responded to the **important economic roles played by rural women** and the need to help them overcome **constraints on their productivity and mobility, including heavy domestic and time burdens (accessing fuel and water), low literacy, language barriers, cultural barriers to their use of public transport, limited control of household resources, and limited voice in planning of previous transport initiatives, as well as isolation due to lack of adequate transport infrastructure.**

A gender focus was adopted in this phase of the project after **a study of the gender-differentiated impacts of road rehabilitation** was carried out. A **gender training workshop for staff of the implementing agency** used the study findings to illustrate how gender issues cut across road rehabilitation activities in the project. The social assessment for phase two addressed gender issues; the stakeholder analysis and outreach strategy



identified women as a vulnerable group and called attention to the risk of low participation of women in road maintenance microenterprises and rural road committees.

Technical assistance missions from the World Bank assisted the project implementation unit in developing a matrix defining specific gender targets and follow-up actions for the implementation phase. Assistance was also provided to conduct a gender analysis of the project's operational procedures and develop a gender action plan. The gender action plan included **equal opportunities for a selection of women and men as microenterprise workers (revision of selection criteria to avoid exclusion of women), promoting gender equity in operational procedures (revision of the operational handbook), creation of rural committees that included women's group representatives, definition and monitoring of gender indicators and gender focal points in central and field staff, and gender training.**

Community consultation workshops were organized in villages affected by the project. Separate sessions for women and men were convened to ensure that women were able to talk freely about transport needs and constraints. In response to local needs, particularly women's, the project rehabilitated 3,465 kilometers of nonmotorized transport tracks. The nonmotorized track rehabilitation involved the most vulnerable and excluded parts of the rural population in the planning process. These tracks proved to have a greater impact on economic growth and the roads, in part because they connected previously isolated communities with markets.

Gender approach of the project

- Road maintenance activities: Gender was mainstreamed in the operations and manuals of the contracting microenterprises. While the participation of women in road maintenance was resisted at first, the project prompted social change. After five years of women's participation, they proved to be efficient and able to overcome the initial prejudices.
- Local Development Window: the LDW enhanced social capital and fostered community participation. By establishing a bottom-up decision-making mechanism it stimulated the empowerment of men and women.
- Inclusive strengthening of local governance: The Local Road Institutes worked together with the municipalities to develop strategies for road rehabilitation. A requirement was adopted that wanted at least 20% of the members of road committees to be women.
- Monitoring and evaluation: A social and impact monitoring system clarified expected gender-differentiated outcomes. Gender-related indicators were developed.
- Manual requirements that recognized women's agricultural experience and roles as household managers and leaders of women's organizations as qualifying criteria and that dropped the literacy requirement. Gender awareness and quality of work were incorporated into the training.

Benefits and impacts

The project has increased income and household food security from roadwork and other microenterprise initiatives for women and men. It reduced travel time for women and men by up to one-half; rehabilitation of nonmotorized tracks significantly reduced the multitask burden of women, which reduced the opportunity cost of their time and increased their productivity and mobility choices.



Cleaner, safer tracks encouraged them to travel to sell agricultural products, obtain name registration, deliver their babies in health centers, and participate in community meetings. Girl's access to primary education increased by 7 percent. As a result of the project, 100 community organizations engaged in local development activities, and 500 microenterprises performed routine maintenance on roads. This created 6,000 one-year-equivalent unskilled jobs, 24 percent of which were held by women, which exceeded the 10 percent quota established in the gender action plan.

Women's increased productivity contributed to overall economic growth. Women's income improved nutrition and education of children. The participation of women also had a positive impact on the efficiency of entrepreneurship activities generated through the local development window.

Lessons learned

- Including gender equity within the project development objective was the single most important element to justify the allocation of human and financial resources for gender activities.
- Institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in the implementing agency is important.
- Institutional support for gender from donor agencies and the project implementation unit was crucial.
- Gender champions are crucial for raising awareness of gender issues over time and contributing to sustained gender work.
- Coordination of road rehabilitation with local productive activities can stimulate development and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the rural roads project.
- Participation of the local population at all stages of the project is key to increase impacts and ensure the sustainability of investments.
- Management capacity building is crucial to guarantee a long-term impact on gender equity and the sustainability of gender know-how.
- Local women's organizations can be excellent allies in fostering rural development and women's empowerment.
- Selecting a good partner is essential. Building partnerships is not an easy task.
- The local development window requires systematization to expand and replicate it elsewhere in Peru.
- Gender-sensitive monitoring is very important to ensure that the gender action plan is implemented and to inform and improve the next phase of the project.

Source: FAO, World Bank and IFAD. (2009). Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook. Pp.159-161. Rome: FAO.



References and further reading

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