Gender Mainstreaming 2.0

On Track with Gender – Moving Forward Phase

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Introduction

Gender mainstreaming – the incorporation of a gender perspective in all policies at all levels and at all stages – has been on the agenda of aid agencies and NGOs since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. As the results of gender mainstreaming seemed disappointing, the On Track with Gender Trajectory was initiated in 2008 to rethink and transform the current understanding and practice of gender mainstreaming. In 2010 the first policy brief on Gender Mainstreaming was published. This second policy brief aims to deepen our understanding and provide new insights in order to bring gender mainstreaming to the next level.

A key insight gleaned from Taking Stock's action-research and dialogues was the need to translate overall, rather abstract, gender objectives at the level of organisational principles or mission statements into more specific gender objectives at the programme level. Strengthening gender analysis can help to improve the link between gender equality and other development goals. By focussing specifically on the sector level, it is possible to make gender equality a programming goal. The commitment to gender equality often evaporates when moving through the different policy levels because gender mainstreaming policies tend to be insufficiently grounded in strategies and processes.

The On Track with Gender Trajectory is an initiative of CIDIN, Hivos, Oxfam Novib, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands in cooperation with Cordaid, ICCO, and KIT. The Trajectory started in 2008 with the support of the Development Policy Review Network. On Track with Gender occurs in two stages. The first stage was devoted to Taking Stock: a review of what had been done so far with regard to gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch development NGOs, and universities. The second phase, Moving Forward, built on the lessons learned from the Taking Stock phase and ran in 2010 and 2011. It aimed to continue improving the understanding of gender mainstreaming processes and to take current gender mainstreaming policies and practices in Dutch development cooperation to the next level.
For more details, see **www.ontrackwithgender.nl**.

The Gender Mainstreaming Policy Brief (2010) summarised the findings of the year-long Taking Stock exercise. Key recommendations are:
- Maintain dual approach;
- Involve and consult thematic women's organisations and feminist specialists;
- Define GM and make it a part of organisations' strategic, analytical, and administrative processes;
- Results and monitoring targets require a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects;
- Successful implementation requires a dual track of business case arguments and social justice arguments.
The Policy Brief is available via our website.

To ensure that policies are translated into strategies aimed at tangible results, the missing middle between policy and results needs to be bridged. The Moving Forward phase specifically analysed this missing middle in gender equality and women's empowerment in four policy areas. These range from violence against women (VAW) to micro-finance (MF), and from value chain development to the aid architecture. In this policy brief we present the experiences in these specific policy domains, share our key insights on gender mainstreaming (GM), and translate them into practical recommendations.

1. From dual approach to complementarity
Our earlier research confirmed the importance of maintaining a dual track to GM through both a stand-alone and a mainstreaming approach. The emphasis on the mainstreaming track, which integrates gender equality as an issue cross-cutting into all policy levels and areas, has been at the expense of the stand-alone one, which includes specific measures that target women's empowerment and gender equality. Our recent research confirms the importance of stand-alone interventions and, in addition to that, proposes to strengthen the complementarity between the two tracks.

The linking of stand-alone interventions with mainstream strategies has greater potential for effect. For instance, there are examples of broader, community-based programmes that have successfully addressed violence against women, originally a stand-alone issue. This success in addressing gender-based violence comes about exactly because the issue was linked to broader interventions and programmes, and this allowed for generating more support, scaling up of activities, and for broader effects (see details below).

Similarly, for more 'mainstream interventions', such as micro-finance or value chain development, it became clear that additional empowerment-focused initiatives/interventions were required in order to have a real empowerment effect. Our studies suggest that mainstream micro-finance organisations achieved significant outreach to women, but their interventions did not necessarily contribute to women's empowerment.

When mainstream organisations teamed up with women's organisations, they were able to go beyond outreach, and achieve empowerment impacts.

The lesson is therefore that the institutionalisation of gender equality requires not only a dual approach, but would also benefit from an exploration of the complementarity between the stand-alone and mainstreaming tracks. Future opportunities for strengthening GM lie in building more connections between the two.

Recommendations:
- Maintain the dual approach of, on the one hand, integrating gender equality as a cross-cutting issue (GM) and on the other hand targeting women with specific measures (stand-alone).
- Seek explicit complementarity between the two tracks for broader support and greater effect.
- Experiment with (and evaluate) stand-alone interventions that can be rolled out in mainstream organisations.

Example Violence against women
Violence against women (VAW) is a violation of women's human rights transcending the private relationships of perpetrators and victims. VAW is often perceived as a stand-alone issue, 'belonging' to the domain of women's rights organisations. Our study on VAW identifies successful mainstreaming strategies on this issue.

The African NGO Tostan succeeded in making some significant progress towards the eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM) through the broad grassroots/community-based activities they have carried out since the 1970s. Tostan operates in rural regions to provide basic education and increase community engagement in projects related to health and hygiene, child welfare, human rights and democracy, the environment, and economic development. The issue of eradicating FGM was not treated as a stand-alone women's issue but rather as a cross-cutting community issue affecting all Tostan's key objectives, including health and hygiene, and child welfare. By embedding FGM into Tostan's core thematic areas, the anti-FGM campaign reached out to an audience beyond 'mothers' or 'girls' and enabled men and community leaders to problematise the consequences of FGM and collectively renounce it. Further, highlighting female genital mutilation by a mainstream organisation such as Tostan allowed for another success: other structural forms of gender discrimination, such as under-representation of women in politics and low registration of girls in elementary and secondary school, were identified as requiring the community's attention.

2. Involve men
It is essential to increase men's participation in GM activities. The VAW and micro-finance case studies show that successful GM strategies seriously consider men's engagement and involvement. The case studies reveal different ways of involving men and the opportunities and challenges these bring. The South Asian We Can project, for instance, provides important evidence that men can be engaged as agents for change with impressive – and quantifiable – results.

The micro-finance case studies show the failure of not examining the gender dimensions of services for men, and examine how men's support for changes in gender inequality can best be promoted. All cases suggest that it is important not to frame men as 'the problem', but to explore how men can be part of the solution.

A second lesson is that this requires not so much an engagement with men, but more explicitly with ideas of masculinity. The framing of men as only perpetrators of VAW reifies men and masculinity as inherently violent or militarised. A gender perspective on men can identify how men suffer from violence against women (in terms of dominant masculinities, and because of what it does to their female relatives), or how men in micro-finance and value chain interventions can contribute to more opportunities for women and daughters. Engagement with ideas of masculinity and men serves to make men part of the solution, and to diversify the pool of change makers that can contribute to gender equality.

Recommendations:
- Develop a better understanding of how gender inequality affects men, and concerns notions of femininity and masculinity.
- When developing strategies think about how men can contribute to gender equality as change agents.

Example Micro-finance service delivery
The study on GM in micro-finance service delivery confirms that increasing women's access to MF services has the potential to strengthen women's economic empowerment. The cases suggest that MF enables individual women to diversify their economic activities and increase their incomes. In hardly any of the cases does the increased income seem to result in changes in decision-making patterns beyond small expenditures, however. A positive example comes from the Philippines, where women traditionally manage the household budget, their control is retained without reducing male contribution. The development organisation BRAC-Tanzania has noted of its own projects that 50% of the women interviewed reported that their increased contribution to the household budget leads to men withdrawing their own contribution. It also did not change the situation in the household itself: it only resulted in more spending by men.

Whereas MF has a strong record of outreach to women, outreach in itself cannot be equated with empowerment. Stand-alone interventions can strengthen the empowering effect of MF interventions. Examples of such stand-alone initiatives include health training, skills training (e.g., on nutrition, agriculture, and tailoring), leadership training for women, and gender strategy training. For changes to occur in decision-making at the household level, however, men need to be engaged, too. Apart from addressing social and economic inequalities between men and women, beyond the immediate sphere of the intervention itself, systemic, institutionalised inequalities need to be taken into account. This also includes a consideration of men's disempowerment, for instance in the context of unemployment or conflicts.

3. Ownership in GM

The Paris Declaration principles for aid effectiveness offer opportunities and challenges for GM. Who is intended to take ownership? How are agendas shaped? Whose agenda should determine alignment? Who is accountable, and to whom? When moving beyond the narrow understanding of ownership in terms of recipient country, the new aid architecture opens up space for ownership, with alignment and accountability to women's rights and organisations. But commitment to gender equality at the highest policy level is increasing, but at the implementation level, especially within line ministries and local authorities, commitment to gender equality is less evident. There are limited capacities and few incentives to implement gender policies.

The new aid architecture opens up a range of support strategies, including support to women's rights organisations and activists, and involvement of women at community level in setting priorities for interventions and designing strategies. In addition, support can be given to network building among women's rights organisations, and between women's rights organisations and mainstream NGOs and government institutions. Moreover, the capacity of NGOs and, importantly, ministries and local government bodies to conduct gender analysis and implement gender equality policies requires further strengthening.

Recommendations

- Seize the opportunities for inclusive ownership of women's rights organisations, and alignment and accountability to women's rights.
- Support women's rights organisations and networks, and strengthen their relationships with mainstream NGOs and governmental ministries and local bodies.
- Invest in the gender capacity of government ministries and local government bodies.

Example Aid architecture
Each of the five principles of the Paris Declaration – ownership, harmonisation, alignment, managing for results, and mutual accountability – offers opportunities and risks for integrating gender equality and women's empowerment. The case study of GM in the aid architecture in Tanzania showed that even when a relatively gender-sensitive legal and policy framework exists, general challenges embedded in the ownership principle remain. Support for country-owned and country-led policies and processes, including those related to gender equality and women's empowerment, increases the probability of effective implementation and results.

In Tanzania, neither the National Vision 2025 nor the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA) explicitly refer to the national Women and Gender Development Policy or the National Strategy for Gender Development; gender issues are incorporated in both documents, however, especially in the MKUKUTA. Gender actors were involved in consultations and in establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. A gap nevertheless exists between the planning and budgeting processes, as a result of which gender and women's issues are not adequately funded and not effectively implemented.

Bureaucratic commitment to gender equality at the implementation level, particularly within line ministries and local authorities, is less evident than at higher policy levels in Tanzania. Moreover, while many officials are aware of the importance of integrating gender equality into their work, they do not know how to do it. Specific gender structures are generally weak, staff involved in policy-making and budgeting do not (yet) have sufficient capacity to apply gender analysis to planning, budgeting, implementation, and M&E. There have been no incentives so far to implement gender (sensitive) policies and budget guidelines. When it comes to implementation by bureaucracies, GM is low-status and low-priority.

4. Gender policies

Organisational gender policies lead to better results in outreach and empowerment and to more productive and efficient organisations. Gender policies also enhance the performance of an organisation, as they enable the development and implementation of relevant strategies that cater for the different needs and interests of male and female beneficiaries. An explicit internal gender policy will pay for itself in diminishing transaction costs and by tapping the full potential of its workforce and human capital. Case studies showed that all organisations had some sort of internal gender policy, although not always elaborated or formulated in the form of a written document. Some actors refer to guidelines on corporate social responsibility, which generally include equal opportunities for female staff and/or non-discrimination policies.

Most studied MF organisations in our case studies had a majority of female staff, including at the highest levels. At the same time, a high turn over of female staff was reported in the MF case studies, with accompanying loss of expertise and high recruitment and training costs. The staff turn over could be contributed to pay differentials between women and men, and/or other unfavourable labour conditions. This needs to be further assessed, especially given the potential for indirect discrimination.

The case studies pointed to the sex and the attitude of the field staff as an important factor affecting outreach to women – which is a first step towards the empowerment of women. With respect to women's participation, possible (in)direct discrimination may still limit access to specific products such as individual and larger loans. Exclusion of women has been reported in some combined or general interventions. Such practices point at the need for internal gender policies that include training about how to relate to female and male clients with respect and dignity and how to assess (and prevent) discriminatory practices.

Recommendations:

- Develop and implement internal gender policies to provide equal opportunities for female staff, and allocate resources to support female AND male staff balancing work and family.
- Ensure continuity of expertise by introducing or maintaining a qualified gender officer or gender team of women and men to assess and renew gender policies, gender strategies, and gender training.

- Include training in these gender policies about how to relate to female and male clients with respect and dignity and how to assess (and prevent) discriminatory practices.
- Integrate gender performance into all staff appraisal policies.

5. The role of business in promoting women's human rights

The papers point to the opportunities and challenges facing businesses in GM. There are different ideas about how to address gender equality and women's empowerment. These different ideas involve different interpretations of key concepts. Private companies have their own approach to gender in development, which is more often expressed in terms of efficiency.

It is worthwhile to explore the connections between business interests and women's rights discourses. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies or protocols, for instance, show how such perspectives can be combined with the human rights perspective. Given that women's human rights are part and parcel of the international human rights framework, whether in the form of the Decent Work Agenda (ILO), ILO Core Standards, the Millennium Development Goals (UN), the eight UN Human Rights Conventions (ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, etc.), or OECD-guidelines, specific CSR policies should be gender-sensitive. Sometimes the wording of the concepts may have to be changed: it is often more helpful to discuss 'women's human rights' than 'gender equality' or 'GM'.

While business interests and human rights arguments can be complementary, potential tensions between those different approaches should be acknowledged and explored. By making these tensions explicit, room is created explicitly to formulate and evaluate gender equality strategies. A critical exploration of when, how, and where they can be combined – and when not – is crucial to realise the potential of business in achieving GM.

Recommendations
- In development interventions where private sector is involved, combine a business perspective with the women's human rights perspective, for instance by employing CSR-wording rather than insisting on the wording of GM strategies.
- Emphasise arguments that can convince actors and turn them into allies, without silencing the aim to empower women and to strive for gender equality. Though a clear vision of gender justice is indispensable in the end, it is not always the emphasis on gender justice that will engage potential allies.
- Clarify the notions behind different arguments for gender equality, and explore complementarity, and how and when they can be connected.
- Engender CSR policies and protocols by elaborating specific gender issues and referring to the international human rights framework.

Example Value chains
Gender in value chain interventions operate on the links between gender, poverty, and business. Different approaches to GM in value chains stem from different ideas about why gender should be addressed in value chains. The UN's 1990s human development agenda emphasised the human being as the central subject of development, and focused on expanding capabilities to allow individuals to use opportunities. This perspective requires an equal distribution of the benefits of economic growth, and interventions are geared towards equal opportunities and equal access. The World Bank has posited that gender inequality has high economic costs and leads to wasted human resources and missed opportunities for innovation. From an economic perspective, unequal growth is 'inefficient'; interventions therefore focus on growth and making the economy more efficient and inclusive by ensuring the participation of both men and women.

In practice, value chain interventions are often gender blind, and employ a mixture of the above two approaches. Incorporating gender in value chain thinking requires convincing arguments for different target groups: rural entrepreneurs might be more interested in profit, while local NGOs might be willing to support change to benefit the wider community. For some, equality goals/non-discrimination are convincing; others will be more influenced by profit and trade relations.

The conventional chain empowerment framework depicts two dimensions: who does what in the chain, and who determines how things are done? The proposed gender in value chains framework adds two new dimensions, related to individual behaviour (agency) and to the role of institutions (structure). In order to achieve gender-equal outcomes in chain empowerment interventions, constraints need to be identified and addressed at both individual and institutional levels. This can be applied in three stages: first in a situational analysis, second in strategy selection and intervention design, and third in the monitoring of outcomes.

6. Contextualisation of strategies and validation of concepts

There is no 'one size fits all' method for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Because the promotion of gender equality is a multifaceted and long-term process with obstacles, one needs to have 'many irons on the fire'. Opportunities both for combining the two tracks, and for linking approaches and addressing the tensions, need to take place within thematic areas (the missing middle). Our research revealed that it is important and powerful to define and redefine the meaning of gender equality and empowerment in relation to specific policy areas. Concepts mean different things to different people in different contexts. Constant and active validation of concepts is therefore needed, not so much to battle over language, but to deepen our understanding of what gender equality policies and practices are about.

This needs to be contextualised not only in relation to policy areas, but also to geographical (social/cultural) and institutional contexts. This process of validation also allows for management for results that are tangible, comprehensible, and valuable to the specific policy domain and the geographical and institutional contexts.

Recommendations

- Constant validation of concepts is needed to deepen understanding of what gender equality policies and practices are about.
- Introduce an analysis of the context on a regular basis and identify possibilities for new partnerships to promote gender justice goals – be it through mainstream organisations or women's rights organisations.
- Include women's rights organisations and gender experts in the dialogue with mainstream agencies and actors.

7. Managing for results

Too often, result orientation in the aid architecture is narrowed down to 'managing by results'. This encourages an emphasis on easy victories. Although these easy victories have in some cases led to interventions that addressed the root causes of inequalities, they may stress a misinterpretation of how gender relations shape and are being shaped by institutions and how interventions can change these. To contribute to achieving gender equality and empowerment, it is necessary to integrate results in a causal chain to clarify outputs, activities, inputs, and external assumptions. Empowerment results need to be part and parcel of that. Given the nature of empowerment and acknowledging that social change is not a predictable process, these result chains cannot be reduced to linear causal relations.

These challenges notwithstanding, managing for results can create accountability. This can be addressed from two angles: demands for empowerment results on the one hand; and an investment in evaluation based on a proper understanding of what we mean by women's empowerment and gender equality.

Recommendations:

- Address key gender equality questions before any intervention: Who gets what, has access to resources and benefits? Who does what? Who decides what, and who decides what's on the agenda?
- Generate sex-segregated data in all stages of the intervention, including for monitoring purposes.
- Do not confuse management for results with managing by results. In other words, do not settle for easy victories.
- Demand and support accountability mechanisms on empowerment results.

In conclusion

Synthesis papers and cases studies have been produced in four policy areas to learn more about the ways in which GM has been implemented. The cases were selected because of their serious efforts to implement GM. A synthesis analysis of such case studies has proven to be a valuable exercise, first because of the new insights which have been discussed above. Second, undertaking those case studies and synthesis analysis was in itself a valuable learning and sensitisation process. Discussing the outcomes with both thematic and gender experts offered room for deeper insights and inspiration for both gender and non-gender experts. This action-research approach has also acted as a mainstreaming exercise in itself. Bringing to the fore knowledge of GM efforts at micro-level contributes to a more robust understanding of the practice of GM policies.

We hope that this process and its results will lead to increased GM efforts, and a better understanding of what is needed to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. At least we have opened up possibilities for cross-continental inspiration and for deepening our understanding of development processes.

In the Moving Forward Phase, four papers have been written:

1. Nathalie Holvoet & Liesbeth Inberg Gender Equality and Changing Aid: Case study Tanzania.
2. Chiseche Salome Mibenge Violence Against Women in Mainstream Policy and Practice: A Study of Five Field Practices.
3. Linda Mayoux Mainstreaming Gender in Micro-finance Service Provision. Synthesis paper.
4. Anna Laven & Noortje Verhart Gender and Agricultural Value Chains.

The papers and the underlying case studies can be accessed via our website.