

Gender mainstreaming in policy research programmes and schemes

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ABSTRACT

Gender mainstreaming both as a concept and strategy was adopted in the Fourth World Conference in Beijing with an aim of mainstreaming gender perspective in different areas of development and planning process. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy focuses at the paradigm shift from involving larger women in the development projects towards bringing gender equality to the core of all development works. This requires assessment of any planned project through its implication or both women and men so that both of them can be the equal beneficiaries. As a strategy, gender mainstreaming requires attention towards gender perspective, making women visible in the development planning and linking gender concerns with the achievement of the development project. The outcome can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative evaluation measures the number of women participation or number of women beneficiaries in the project. Similarly, qualitative evaluation deals with the fact that how far women are capable of questioning the existing power imbalances and promoting equitable gender relations within the development project and process. Gender mainstreaming is focusing to liberate women from subordination to promote gender equality. This expresses the core idea of liberal feminism of removing the existing discrimination at the societal level and transforming the mainstreaming by reordering the gender relations.

1. Introduction

Gender Mainstreaming is a concept that crystallized in the mid-1990s as a strategy to achieve gender equality. It followed the preceding concepts of equal treatment and later women's empowerment. The approach of equal treatment treats men and women in the same way, thereby ignoring the differences between them. This has led to the continuous application of gender neutral approaches which do not seek to change relations but rather work within the current differences in society.

Gender is an issue because of the presence of fundamental differences and inequalities between women and men that may vary in degrees depending on regional, cultural and sectoral differences, but that nevertheless continue to exist: Inequalities in access to political power and decision-making; Inequalities within households; Differences in access to education; Difference in access to economic resources; Differences in legal status; Gender division of labour within the economy; Inequalities in the domestic/unpaid sector; Violence; Discriminatory attitudes etc.

Women's empowerment initiatives that followed the equal treatment approach, attempted to address these disadvantages women experience because of their differences to men. Initial efforts were focused on separate targeted activities for women. In the 1970s and 1980s, efforts were made to integrate a woman's component in all initiatives, rather than keeping women on the side-lines or an afterthought, of development. However, in most cases, the integration efforts were taken at a late stage when all important decisions on goals, strategies and resources had already been taken, mostly by men. Another crucial weakness of this approach is that the very systems and

structures that produce and reproduce the discrimination against women remained unchallenged.

Gender Mainstreaming emerged as a strategy that not only recognized the fundamental differences between men and women, but aimed to bring the gender perspective into every policy and system at all levels right from inception. This does not mean that special initiatives targeted towards women need to be abandoned. These initiatives empower women, enabling them to enter and function in the mainstream on equitable terms; Gender Mainstreaming, on the other hand, modifies the mainstream by making it more gendersensitive, and removing discriminatory policies, practices, attitudes etc. Both processes are important and need to operate in conjunction. Piang et al. (2010), revealed some of the National Health Programmes and the gender component associated with programmes. The world has committed itself to the advancement of women to achieve gender equality through science and technology and gender equality in science and technology, to improve the quality of life of the humankind and sustainable development. This commitment has been expressed by the four World Conferences on Women' (Hording, Sandra and Elizabeth, 1996).

2. Objective of the study

- ✓ To describe the concept of gender mainstreaming in policy research.
- ✓ To discuss the activities carried out at the community level to bring gender equality by gender mainstreaming activities.
- ✓ To explain the activities to be carried out at different levels for future gender mainstreaming activities.
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3. Gender equity and gender mainstreaming

In the context of mainstreaming, gender equality conceptualized as;

- ✓ Men and women have equal opportunity to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political institutions to realize their potentials.
- ✓ It recognizes and accepts the similarities and differences with regard to specific needs and concerns of both men and women.
- ✓ Ensures both qualitative and quantitative participation of men and women in the process of development.

4. Approaches to gender mainstreaming

1. *WID Approach*- Improving the material condition of women.
2. *GAD Approach*- Challenging the power relations and roles within the society.
3. *Equity Approach*- Focused on women 's strategic gender needs.
4. *Efficiency Approach*- Attempted to harness women 's labour for effective development.
5. *Empowerment Approach*- Focused on women 's need those are identified by the women themselves.
6. *Integration Approach*- Aims at integrating women 's awareness and efficiency into mainstream development.

5. Importance of gender mainstreaming in planning

Planning is a function which constitutes the important part of policy formulation process. Gender blind and gender neutral approaches to planning do not allow the adoption of appropriate policies which can serve to bridge inequalities between men and women. From the beginning the concept of gender did not gain legitimate place in the planning process. According to Little public policy formulation process are characterized by a lack of gender planning methodologies. According to Moser it is assumed that being a woman is a sufficient qualification or that woman will automatically be in a position to engage in gender planning. The policy makers are also not equipped technically and methodologically to formulate the policies in gender perspective. International conferences on women and the development of various approaches related to gender development give importance to incorporate gender issues in policy process. The mainstreaming process also talks about gender in planning process. The following points will briefly talk about the importance of gender mainstreaming in planning:

- ✓ Women and men experience life differently; therefore, their differential needs and priorities need a place in the policy and development.
- ✓ Women are more prone to violence due to their inaccessible to education, employment, and health care.
- ✓ To ensure equitable governance, it is necessary to focus on the concept of gender justice
- ✓ Women needs to claim share from general and women specific programmes as well

- ✓ Women specific programmes such as RCH policy, poverty eradication programme, and mother and child support programmes are not sufficient to question gender inequality at a larger scale.
- ✓ Issues and concerns relating to gender inequality affect the policies and developments at all the sectors, therefore, gender perspective is important to bring structural change.

The Gender Management System (GMS) of Commonwealth adopted a stakeholder approach to change all the structures which are promoting and perpetuating inequalities in the society. The stakeholder strategy believes that some transformation in the structures can be brought by the partnership or having collaboration between the state and other civil bodies. Waal proposed a gender mainstreaming evaluation framework of development programmes and suggested a few indicators like parity, equality, equity, empowerment, and transformation of gender mainstreaming. Within this gender mainstreaming framework, the project can be evaluated through criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and substantiality.

This evaluation framework was adopted in South Africa to evaluate the development projects from a gender perspective.

The Case of South Africa

The South African National Gender Machinery adopted GMS towards gender mainstreaming in the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. The Gender Policy Framework of South Africa aims at bringing change by ensuring gender equality at all the levels of structures, procedures, process, and programmes. The government has committed to include Gender and Development Indicators and Gender Empowerment Measure to evaluate the policies at national and regional level. Further, South Africa evaluates progress of the Nation through indicators like ensuring women's participation in political decision-making, women's access to professional opportunities, and women's contribution towards economy.

6. Increasing women's participation in public sphere

The Beijing Platform for Action played significant role to increase the percentage of women in decision making structure. A report by the UN Department of Public Information showed that by mid-1989 countries with highest number of women in cabinet and legislative assemblies were Norway, Sweden, Bhutan, Cuba and Romania. The goal of the Beijing platform was to reverse the situation of the women by creating strategies to ensure equal representation of women at all levels. In the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action formulated the activities in the areas including information collection and data base development, research and analysis, operational activities including advisory services, technical assistance and training and public outreach and information dissemination. These activities were planned as part of mainstream programmes. Increasing the women 's percentage in decision making position was the main priorities of the UN. The UN committed to ensure that 50 % of its decision-making positions would be taken up by the year 2000. The inter agency

committee for women and gender equality was created to ensure implementation by monitoring activities to ensure that the goals and objectives of women in power and decision making were fulfilled. Internally also UN system has increased the number of women in decision making position. There are number of initiatives taken at globally. The African National Congress has committed by reserving 30 % of Parliament seats and 50% of Local Government seats for women. The organizations like women's voice and the association of Malawian professional women working for women's empowerment work towards putting more women into electoral process.

7. Gender Mainstreaming: Indian Scenario

In Indian context, the development of gender studies has added much thought to bringing gender perspective in policy planning by challenging the structure of patriarchy and the structured gender relations and gender roles. However, the development of gender sensitive policy planning had addressed two major problems of women, i.e., poverty and the violation of human rights. On the contrary, decentralization of political processes and reservation for women and marginalized communities at the grassroots level has opened way towards their larger participation in the political process. The passing of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act paved the way for women to enter decision making bodies at the Rural and Urban Local bodies. The constitutional Amendment Act reserved 33.3 % of the seats at all levels for women. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act mandated the local bodies to plan for socio-economic development in their respective constituencies. The efforts of Civil Society Organizations made women in Local Bodies to allocate certain percentage of resources for women related activities. To some extent, the participation of women in the political process has impacted the distribution and allocation of government resources and programmes for benefiting women and the marginalized communities. As argued, there are barriers such as economic disempowerment of women, male resistance to women's participation in political process, upper caste's resistance to Dalits occupying position in the public domain, women's lack of accessibility to knowledge, literacy, and other skills towards bringing transformation and change in the mainstream policy planning and process. These existing socio-economic and political aspects of gender oppression called for political, economic, and social empowerment of women from marginalized communities. The study carried out by Murthy on the impact of women in local bodies has given the following suggestions for strengthening gender perspective in all activities of local bodies. According to her the gender transformative capacity building that requires a combination of three strategies such as advocacy, capacity, and organizational to bring change in the gender order. The change needs to be brought with regard to following factors:

- Improving women's access to and control over productive units
- Increasing the productivity of women's labour by expanding their access to knowledge, information, and training

- Increasing women's returns by expanding their access to labour market and establishing right over their produce and commodity
- Increasing women's control over their income and their ability to use the income for their substance and the survival of the family
- Increasing women's control over their body and fertility
- Enhancing women's capacity to exercise political power and ascertain their rights against the state

In India, gender transformative capacity building has started with the spread of liberal discourse on gender. The decade of 1990s saw the increasing use of gender training programmes towards capacity building efforts at the grass-root level. The widespread adoption of gender neutral and gender ameliorative training by aid agencies, government, and non-governmental organizations made efforts to strengthen the skills of women in specific areas which are defined by the gender based division of labour. In this process of gender transformative training, various programmes were initiated by women activists having its root in socialist feminist ideology. Various programmes such as Women's Development Programme and Mahila Samakhya in 1980s and 1990s respectively were carried out towards capacity-building for women and to some extent were capable to wide out women's subordination by improving the existing conditions of economy and power relations.

8. Steps involved in engendering programme and planning

The following steps are involved in engendering the programme and planning process;

- Ensuring vision, mission, constituency and geographical area reflect a gender perspective.
- Examine the gender disaggregated statistical data and qualitative profile for the geographical area where the organization is working.
- Encourage programme staff at all levels of organization to examine and evaluate gender-specific constraints and opportunities at the level of household, community, village, market, and the state.
- Encourage developing gender-specific programme which can enable the constituency to move from present to desired state.
- Ensure that the programme strategies in relation to welfare, anti-poverty, equality of opportunity need to be combined with empowerment and equity approach

9. Summing Up

The above discussion and the case studies have shown us Gender-positive approach in gender mainstreaming initiatives can bring gender equality and substantive equality in the society. Successful mainstreaming at different level requires leadership and commitment. The case studies have taught us invaluable lessons. The gender mainstreaming initiative at the community level highlighted the importance of sensitizing and generating awareness among all community members—female and male. It is also important to involve community members

from the beginning in all kinds of gender related interventions. This will bring sense of ownership among community members. The organizations working at the community level

adopted different strategies to achieve gender equality and it is a process and not an end by itself.

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