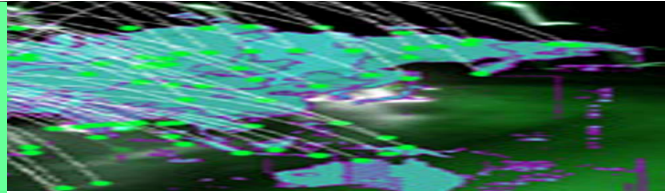


Gender Mainstreaming



What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is the systematic inclusion of both women's and men's concerns, experiences and needs throughout the lifespan of any initiative, including projects, policies or programs. This means that decision-making on policies and priorities must take account of the differences between men and women, boys and girls. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy towards the end goal of gender equality. It is therefore a long-term and transformative process, and not an end in itself.

What does gender equality mean?

Gender equality means that women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same status within a society. Gender equality recognizes that men and women, boys and girls have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, and are affected by policies and programs in different ways. Gender mainstreaming is about recognizing these differences and then designing public services, policies and interventions with these differences in mind. Gender equality can be measured in terms of equality of results. Promoting greater gender equality is about transforming women's and men's roles and power relations to create a fairer society for all.

The evolution of gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming was agreed upon as an international strategy at the Fourth International United Nations Conference on Women (in 1995, Beijing). Ever since, gender mainstreaming has been promoted as an integral part of government policies and programming in all areas of social and economic development. However, global progress on gender mainstreaming has been uneven; in many countries, there is still a long way to go to change both policies and institutions so that they actively promote gender equality.

Why is gender mainstreaming important to public service delivery?

Gender equality is integral to the achievement of both good governance and sustainable development. The pillars of good governance (such as accessibility, accountability, transparency and efficiency), fully representative of women's and men's, girls' and boys' interests, is essential for everyone to equally enjoy the benefits of development.

It is important to remember that the actions (and inaction) of the public sector can have different gender impacts. This is because the situations, roles, responsibilities and priorities of men and women differ in many ways that are relevant to the policy and programmatic choices of the public sector. A "gender-neutral" policy (one that assumes that all people are affected by policies/programs in the same way) can overlook the different physical, social and economic positions and life experiences of women and men. Gender mainstreaming requires gender-sensitive public policy. To be effective, gender mainstreaming must become a comprehensive process within all sectors of government.

Gender-blind: This is a term used to refer to policies and programs that have failed to take difference and inequality between men and women, boys and girls into account.

Gender-neutral: This is a term used to refer to policies and programs that are seen to affect women and men, girls and boys in the same way. In reality, no policy or program is ever gender-neutral.

Gender-sensitive: This is a term used to refer to policies and programs that take into account the differences and inequality between women and men, girls and boys.

Principles of gender mainstreaming

There is no uniform approach to gender mainstreaming; however, most gender mainstreaming strategies share common principles:

Political will: Gender mainstreaming in the public service requires political will at the highest level across all sectors. Political will can be evidenced by the financial and other resources committed to a policy-direction supportive of gender equality.



Accountability: These are mechanisms that determine the extent to which an institution is “walking the talk” in terms of mainstreaming gender equality within policies, programs and organizational structures. A formal gender equality policy, plan or statement that clearly articulates the institution’s commitment to gender equality is crucial. Effective accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress on gender mainstreaming need to be established and implemented.

Indonesia Presidential Instruction No. 9 on Gender Mainstreaming in All Government Establishments

In 2000, the Government of Indonesia legislated that all government institutions at central and regional levels are required to carry out gender mainstreaming in all policy and program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. Each planning unit is mandated to develop and implement the tasks and functions of gender mainstreaming, supported by appropriate human resources. All data must be sex-disaggregated, and gender analysis on all development policies, programs, projects, acts, regulations and budgets is required.

Technical capacity: This is the level of ability, qualifications and skills individuals in an institution need to carry out the practical aspects of gender mainstreaming. This includes capacity to undertake gender analysis and gender-data collection and to integrate gender equality within accountability mechanisms and performance appraisal systems. Cambodia’s Integrated Fiduciary Assessment and Public Expenditure Review (IFAPER) demonstrated how gender-disaggregated analysis can benefit programs on poverty reduction.

Organizational culture: Staff motivation is critical for gender mainstreaming, as is women’s equitable participation at all levels of decision-making. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development’s 2005 report, *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, concludes that “in most countries women are under-represented at decision-making levels in most areas of public administration.” The International Labour Organization (ILO) asserts that women average less than ten per cent of staff in “public administration” positions around the world.

Readings

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