

## Executive Summary

Despite major efforts and some progress over the last two decades, women continue to be disadvantaged in comparison with men in many aspects of life, in most countries. The UNDP's Human Development Report, which records progress in human development according to indicators of health, education and income, has since 1995 included a Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which reveals that while in some countries women are well represented among professional and technical staff, there are fewer women than men working as parliamentarians, administrators and managers in all Commonwealth countries for which figures are available. And in terms of earned income share, the picture in most areas is of significant bias in favour of men.

The Commonwealth is committed to advancing gender equality and equity. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development adopts as its central strategy the mainstreaming of gender equality considerations into all government policies, programmes and projects. It includes 15 action points for governments, of which several are of specific relevance to the public service. As key players in the public service personnel management, public service commissions and central personnel offices are strategically placed to carry out these action points.

Gender mainstreaming is the central strategy of the Plan of Action for advancing gender equality and equity. It refers to the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In terms of the public service, this would include the activities of the public service commission, the central personnel office of government, as well as personnel departments in core and sectoral ministries.

The purpose of this publication is to provide guidelines for mainstreaming gender in the public service of national governments. It presents the main elements of the Gender Management System (GMS), which has been developed by the Commonwealth as an effective means of mainstreaming gender in national governments and in the broader civil society. The GMS is defined as "a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organisational framework [such as a national government], to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organisation's work, in order to achieve greater gender equity within the context of sustainable development" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999a).

The Plan of Action and other international mandates reflect a shift in the theoretical basis for actions to advance gender equality. The Women in Development approach, based on the rationale that women were an untapped resource that could provide an economic contribution to development, tended to add on women-specific activities to existing programmes without dealing with the systemic causes of gender inequalities. This approach was not always successful because it tended to focus on women in isolation. With the shift in focus from women in development to gender and development has come the recognition that gender considerations, rather than being added on as an afterthought, need to be incorporated into all activities of government at the outset.

The *structures* of the GMS include:

- ◆ a Lead Agency. This is normally the National Women's Machinery (Women's Bureau or Ministry of Women/Gender Affairs);

- ✦ a Gender Management Team, which includes representatives of the Lead Agency, other key government ministries, and civil society;
- ✦ Gender Focal Points – two or more designated senior staff members in each ministry, whose role is to promote gender mainstreaming within their ministries;
- ✦ an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee whose members are the Gender Focal Points from each ministry;
- ✦ a Commission or Council for Gender Equality; and
- ✦ a Parliamentary Gender Caucus consisting of gender-aware parliamentarians.

The *mechanisms* of the GMS include:

- ✦ gender analysis, which reveals how policies, plans and programmes impact differently on women and men;
- ✦ a Management Information System, which communicates critical information throughout the GMS;
- ✦ gender training, which promotes gender awareness and sensitivity and provides gender analysis/planning skills;
- ✦ a gender-aware Performance Appraisal System which rewards the advancement of gender equality and equity and provides sanctions against gender discrimination.

The *processes* of the GMS include:

- ✦ setting up GMS structures and mechanisms;
- ✦ developing and implementing a national Gender Action Plan;
- ✦ mainstreaming gender in the National Development Plan and sectoral ministries.

Public service commissions and central personnel agencies can work with the Lead Agency to build the structures and mechanisms of the GMS and co-ordinate and supervise their functioning. Public service commissions and central personnel offices also have a key role in instituting a gender-aware performance appraisal system and providing gender training to members of the public service, and are among the ministries affected by the national Gender Action Plan and by mainstreaming gender within their own ongoing activities.

Historically, in most Commonwealth countries, the major institution for the management of public service personnel has been the public service commission, an important function of which is to uphold and protect the public service's traditional values, namely, neutrality, selection by merit, and probity and integrity.

Public service commissions usually work in collaboration with a government ministry, variously referred to as the ministry of the public service or central personnel office. The central personnel office is part of the executive and fully accountable to the government. A third set of players in public service personnel management is made up of line ministries and departments, to whom some decisions relating to staff appointments, promotions, training and discipline are delegated. Between them, these three players are responsible for appointments and promotions, setting terms and conditions of employment, discipline, and staff training.

Many Commonwealth governments are reforming their public services. This involves, amongst other things, a shifting of emphasis from a regulative to a performance-oriented approach, and the delegation of decision-making from the public service commission to other agencies. A performance management approach to public service management is premised on four key elements: timely and accurate flows of *information*, clear *standards* of performance, clearly defined areas of *responsibility*, and systems of *accountability*, such that good work is recognised and rewarded, and unacceptable performance sanctioned. The adoption of a performance management approach provides a point of entry for gender mainstreaming through the integration of a gender awareness into each of these four elements.

Mainstreaming in public service personnel management involves making a gender-based analysis of the existing situation. This has several dimensions:

- ◆ The first step is to obtain comprehensive sex-disaggregated data on the personnel of the public service at all levels including senior management, middle management, and professional, technical and support staff. This will reveal whether, and where, there are gender inequities and will assist the identification of strategies to correct the imbalances. It is necessary to be aware of country-specific circumstances in determining appropriate strategies. Data should also be disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, class and disability in order to reveal the differential impact on women's lives of these characteristics.
- ◆ The next step is to identify who the decision-makers are in public service management, ensure that women are well represented among their number, and that all, women and men, are experienced and/or trained in gender issues. Targets should be set to achieve this within a specified time frame.
- ◆ It is also important to undertake a sex-disaggregated survey of the status of women and men in the broader society over an extended period of time, according to basic indicators of health, education, income, and political and economic participation. From this it is possible to identify the major areas of gender inequality, the historical reasons for these, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the advancement of gender equality. Data should again be disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, class and disability.
- ◆ Existing personnel policies should be examined from a gender perspective – including those of the public service commission, the central personnel agency and core and line ministries – to determine whether they are conducive to advancing gender equality.
- ◆ A process of gender analysis should be initiated or supported on the part of each of the core and line ministries in terms of their broader sectoral policies, and how these impact on men and women in different ways.

Gender-sensitive indicators derived from sex-disaggregated data are necessary tools for gender analysis and for measuring progress towards attaining the objective of gender equality and equity and ensuring that the benefits of development are shared equitably. It is important to ensure that government collectors of statistics, both in a central statistical agency and in specific sectors, develop and gather indicators on a gender-aware basis. Appropriate indicators from sex-disaggregated data can be utilised to highlight where gender has been ignored and where it has been integrated correctly. However, statistics are only part of what is necessary to understand of the gender situation in a given country; in order to gain a true picture it is also necessary to identify broader cultural and historical trends that affect gender balances and imbalances in the particular country.

Once these gender analyses have been carried out, new personnel policies need to be developed to address existing gender imbalances. And the policy development processes of core and line ministries need to be carried out with an awareness of the gender implications of specific sectoral policy options. The public service can take a role in encouraging other related ministries to incorporate gender dimensions in their structures, policies and programmes. It is particularly important that this is done in such core ministries as finance, development planning and justice.

The legal framework that affects personnel management in the public service should be examined to determine to what extent it is, or is not, conducive to gender equality. Where it is found to be wanting, efforts should be made towards constitutional reform or to a change in existing legislation.

Macroeconomic policies are often seen as gender-neutral, but in fact they impact on women and men in sometimes significantly different ways. Gender mainstreaming ensures the participation of women in macroeconomic planning. Initiatives are under

way in a number of Commonwealth countries to integrate gender into the national budgetary process.

In mainstreaming gender into public service personnel management, there are a number of policy issues that impinge upon the activities of the public service commission, the central personnel office and the personnel divisions of core and line ministries. These include:

- ◆ eliminating gender-based discrimination as regards pay;
- ◆ ensuring an adequate gender balance in decision-making roles;
- ◆ determining equitable conditions of employment;
- ◆ ensuring that disciplinary measures are gender-aware, and are applied equitably;
- ◆ eliminating sexual harassment;
- ◆ providing gender awareness training;
- ◆ ensuring equity in the availability of all training options;
- ◆ establishing partnerships with NGOs and the academic community;
- ◆ providing incentives for good performance and sanctions for practising discrimination;
- ◆ adopting, where possible, a broad-based multi-pronged equal employment opportunities policy to address these issues.

Policy appraisal is the analysis of proposed or existing policy before implementation.

Questions that can be asked in a gender-based policy appraisal include the following:

- ◆ How many and which women and men have been consulted about this policy and at what levels?
- ◆ How many and which women and men are included in its implementation?
- ◆ How many and which women and men will benefit from this policy, and by how much?
- ◆ Does this policy have deleterious effects on women or men?
- ◆ How should this policy be changed to correct any imbalances?
- ◆ How does this policy advance the government's overall objectives and international commitments regarding equality between women and men?
- ◆ What obstacles might prevent women's equitable participation in the policy and an equitable outcome for women? How can these obstacles be overcome?

The outcome of a gender-based appraisal of personnel management policies should be a plan of action to mainstream gender within the public service. The plan should include the following:

- ◆ action to realise established targets for numbers of women in decision-making positions in the public service;
- ◆ action to eliminate gender-based discrimination in matters of appointments, promotions, pay, conditions of employment and disciplinary procedures;
- ◆ action to provide gender awareness training where needed, especially for heads of department in the core ministries, line department heads, managers and decision-makers throughout the public service;
- ◆ action to set up institutional structures for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in all core and line ministries and to supervise and monitor the functioning of these structures;
- ◆ action to ensure that a gender-aware perspective is integrated in the development of core and sectoral work plans and budget allocations;
- ◆ action to establish or strengthen working partnerships between the public service, representatives of gender studies at tertiary education institutions, and women's non-governmental organisations;
- ◆ action to establish or improve monitoring and reporting systems, to ensure that information on gender issues is timely and accurate; and
- ◆ action to provide incentives to, and/or impose sanctions on, government departments to encourage a full implementation of plans for gender equality.

Once the plan has been implemented, it is necessary to determine how successful it has been and draw lessons for the next planning cycle. Monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of policies offers opportunities for further improving policy through feedback using statistical and economic analyses. These analyses can take various forms: cost/benefit analysis, impact assessment, and mechanisms for quantitative and qualitative progress measurement.

An efficient and reliable communications system is of vital importance in undertaking a process of gender mainstreaming. It provides a means of obtaining accurate data on current circumstances, which is necessary for the development of effective policy options for the future, as well as a means of communicating changes in policy, both internally within government and externally to the broader civil society.