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Introduction and Overview

Gender Mainstreaming

Despite considerable progress in some areas of women's lives since the UN named 1975-1985 as the Decade for Women, gender inequality/inequity persists. The 1995 UN Human Development Report indicated that no country treats its women as well as its men, and in almost all countries of the world women are over-represented among the unemployed and those living in absolute poverty. The gaps between women and men have closed over the last 20 years in terms of educational enrolment, literacy and life expectancy. But women still lag behind in terms of political and economic participation. And gender inequality under the law and violence against women are stark indicators of "the low status accorded women in societies everywhere" (UNDP, 1995).

The proportion of women in decision-making positions in governments worldwide, although it has increased in some countries, still falls far short of the 53 per cent that would represent the female proportion of the world's population, and indeed the target of 30 per cent endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government and by the UN Economic and Social Council. In 1995, the proportion of women MPs in parliaments globally was estimated at 11.6 per cent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1997: 3), and in the Commonwealth the proportion was even lower – just 7.2 per cent (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995a: Appendix 9). Decisions on issues that affect women's lives, sometimes quite drastically, are still for the most part taken by men, without consultation with the women who often pay the price of such decisions through reduced economic circumstances, limited access to education, health and other services, inadequate access to resources, or infringements of their human rights.

The Commonwealth is committed to taking action to bring about gender equality. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development sets out a series of strategies and

measures for governments to work towards gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is one of the key strategies advanced in the Plan of Action. Gender mainstreaming involves a number of activities:

- ◆ forging and strengthening the political will to achieve gender equality and equity, at the local, national, regional and global levels;
- ◆ incorporating a gender perspective into the planning processes of all ministries and departments of government, particularly those concerned with macroeconomic and development planning, personnel policies and management, and legal affairs;
- ◆ integrating a gender perspective into all phases of sectoral planning cycles, including the analysis, development, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects;
- ◆ using sex-disaggregated data (see Appendix) in statistical analysis to reveal how policies impact differently on women and men;
- ◆ increasing the numbers of women in decision-making positions in government and the private and public sectors;
- ◆ providing tools and training in gender awareness, gender analysis and gender planning to decision-makers, senior managers and other key personnel; and
- ◆ forging linkages between governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to ensure a co-ordination of efforts and resources.

Because gender mainstreaming is a broad-spectrum strategy that cuts across government sectors and other social partners, it requires strong leadership and co-ordination. The Commonwealth approach to providing this is through the Gender Management System (GMS), which is designed to facilitate all aspects of gender mainstreaming.

Purpose and Scope of this Guide

This guide provides an overview of the essential steps in the establishment of a Gender Management System (GMS). It is primarily intended for use by governments at the national level, but may also be used by inter-governmental agencies, provincial and local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions, professional associations and the private sector. It is designed to be flexible, presenting a menu of options

that can be adapted to suit national circumstances.

National Women's Machineries

Strong leadership in gender mainstreaming should be provided by National Women's Machineries (NWMs), which are the structures set up by governments to promote the status of women. These can take the form of a Ministry of Gender or Women's Affairs, a Women's Bureau, or other ministry, department or agency within government. The NWM is usually the Lead Agency in the setting up and running of a Gender Management System.

Definition of a Gender Management System

A Gender Management System (GMS) is a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organisational framework, 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 equality and equity within the context of sustainable development. A GMS may be established at any level of government, or in institutions such as universities, inter-governmental or non-governmental organisations, private sector organisations or trade unions.

Mission, goal and objectives

The mission of a Gender Management System is to advance gender equality and equity, through promoting political will; forging a partnership of stakeholders including government, private sector and civil society; building capacity; and sharing good practice.

The goal of a Gender Management System is the mainstreaming of gender into all government policies, programmes and activities.

The objectives of a Gender Management System include the following:

- ◆ to assist government and non-state actors in implementing the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development;
- ◆ to strengthen National Women's Machineries (NWMs);
- ◆ to strengthen the capacity of NWMs, core and sectoral

- government ministries, development NGOs, the private sector and other non-state actors in civil society, to make gender-aware development policies, plans and programmes at all levels, and to facilitate partnership-building among these actors so as to create a broad-based national constituency committed to effecting gender equality and equity; and
- ◆ to create an enabling environment which enhances the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender-aware plans and programmes.

The GMS approach to mainstreaming

The GMS adopts a stakeholder approach, based on the recognition that the state is not the only player in efforts to achieve gender equality and equity, and must work in partnership with other social partners or stakeholders. The key stakeholders in a GMS are the National Women's Machinery, other government ministries and departments, inter-governmental organisations and donor agencies, NGOs, the media, academic institutions, professional associations, and women and men in the broader civil society. Within this framework, the GMS is based on three broad principles: empowerment, integration and accountability.

Empowerment

Empowerment means having control over the decisions and issues that affect one's life. In particular, it means having representation in decision-making bodies and control over the distribution of resources. Where women are underrepresented in decision-making fora, the GMS recommends action to redress the imbalance. Participation in planning and decision-making processes has the additional benefit of increasing a sense of commitment to and ownership of the plan's objectives.

Integration

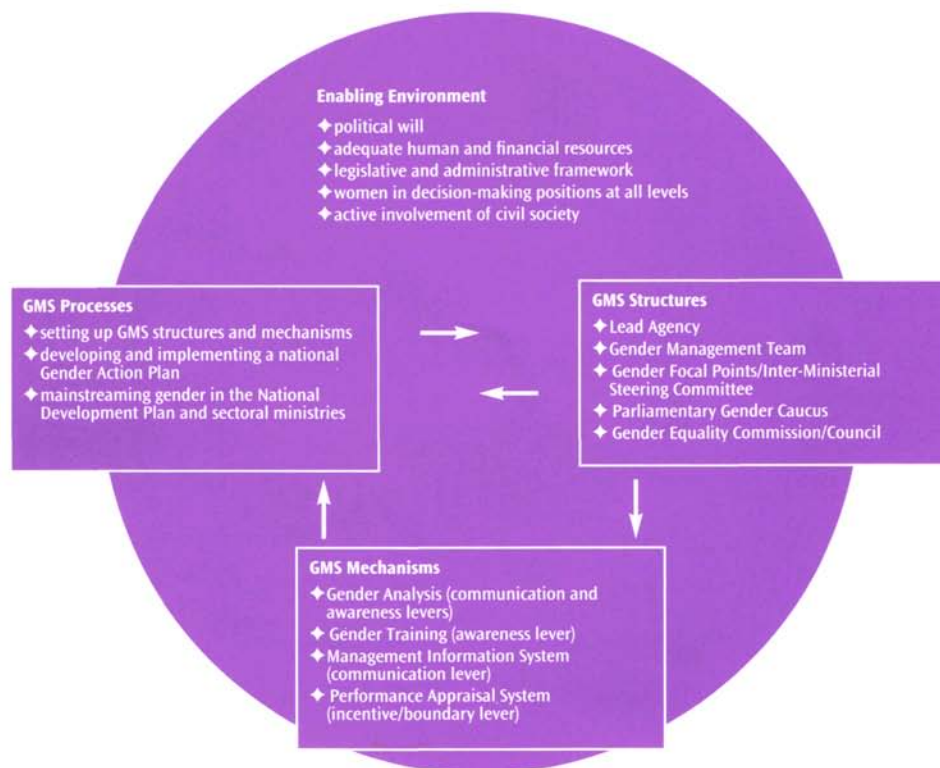
The GMS adopts a systemic, holistic approach to mainstreaming, aiming not merely at piecemeal interventions, but at the transformation of the structures that create and perpetuate gender inequalities. This entails a high degree of analysis, co-ordination and integration of effort. The GMS is structured to operate in a co-ordinated way at different levels and in different sectors of government and society. Such integration is necessary if the GMS

is to reflect the diversity in society; ‘women’ and ‘men’ are not homogeneous categories, but include other constructs such as race/ethnicity, class/caste and age. Gender inequalities cannot be addressed adequately unless the inequalities arising from these other variables are also addressed.

Accountability

Creating change within an organisation and within society requires action to motivate people to effect the necessary changes. The systems that motivate change can be of two kinds: incentive systems, which provide rewards for the achievement of specific goals; and boundary systems, which define what behaviour is unacceptable, set minimum standards of achievement and impose sanctions if these standards are not attained.

Figure 1 The Gender Management System



What Does a GMS Achieve?

A Gender Management System can have the following beneficial impacts:

- ◆ development policies and programmes that work because they take into account the realities of more than half of the world's population;
- ◆ a fair and equitable distribution of power, resources and decision-making between women and men;
- ◆ government ministries that are able to respond to the needs of both women and men within their respective sectors;
- ◆ staff who are trained and experienced in addressing issues from a gender perspective; and
- ◆ an efficient and effective mechanism for meeting reporting requirements under international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).