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Gender Management System Structures and Mechanisms

The structure of a Gender Management System is a network of various bodies and their interrelationships. The mechanisms of a GMS consist of the various roles, responsibilities and functioning of these bodies. These structure and mechanisms are sometimes collectively referred to as institutional arrangements. They are intended not as a rigid prescription, but rather as a flexible model which governments can adapt to particular national circumstances. The actual structures set up by governments implementing a GMS will reflect those circumstances and the strengths and opportunities that exist at the national level. In some countries, structures similar to these may already exist and be amenable to adaptation along the lines of the GMS.

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders in a Gender Management System are groups, organisations and institutions which have a stake or interest in or are affected by the National Gender Action Plan. The key stakeholders are responsible for, or can significantly influence, the successful implementation of the Plan. The GMS should ensure that stakeholders are identified and consulted on an ongoing basis.

Key state and non-state stakeholders include:

- ◆ the National Women's Machinery;
- ◆ all government ministries and departments, including but not limited to Finance, Development Planning, Public Service, Agriculture, Health, Education, Energy, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs, and Trade and Industry;
- ◆ development NGOs representing women's interests;
- ◆ university-based gender and development departments;
- ◆ inter-governmental organisations and donor agencies; and
- ◆ women, men and young people in the broader civil society.

Other stakeholders may include politicians, the judiciary, the media, law enforcement officials, trade unions, the private sector, professional organisations, religious organisations; and youth organisations.

The Gender Management System recognises the strategic importance of building partnerships with social actors at all levels. Key stakeholders should be allowed to articulate their perceptions, needs and priorities; gender balance in interest representation should be sought, taking into consideration that women and men may have unequal access to and control over appropriate resources to participate in decision-making structures.

Consultation with key stakeholders should take place not only at the project level, but also in connection with national level dialogues on government policies and programmes. Such partnerships are necessary to ensure the co-ordination of the various stakeholders' approaches to gender concerns, and the widest possible participation; to share skills, experience, expertise, responsibility and accountability; and to avoid duplication and wastage of resources. Partnerships increase the outreach of the Gender Action Plan, and capture the diversity that exists within society.

In addition to consultation with state and non-state actors within the country and Commonwealth contexts, co-operation and co-ordination with bilateral agencies, the UN system, and financial institutions should be increased. Such actors are potentially important partners in the support and promotion of gender equality, and efforts should be made to ensure that all collaborative initiatives are informed by gender analysis.

Further, partnerships and teamwork instil a shared commitment to change and ownership of outcomes among government, international organisations and non-state partners. Commonwealth governments need to inform development partners about the Gender Action Plan and the GMS and to update themselves on the policies and programmes of other agencies. There should be complementarity between the various partners at every stage of the policy development, planning and implementation process in order to co-ordinate efforts, expand resources, increase influence, and avoid duplication.

Lead Agency

Success in setting up and implementing a Gender Management System is contingent upon having an influential Lead Agency which can initiate dialogue with the key stakeholders on the need for a gender mainstreaming strategy to accelerate the achievement of gender equality. In most governments, gender issues fall within the purview of a National Women's Machinery (NWM). This can take the form of a ministry, a department, a bureau, a desk, or an individual. Whatever the case, the NWM is almost certain to be best placed to lead the setting up and operating of a Gender Management System.

Functions

The Lead Agency initiates and strengthens the institutional arrangements of the Gender Management System and is responsible for the overall co-ordination and monitoring of the GMS. It advocates for change and works to impact upon policy decision. It plays a strategic and catalytic role, introducing critical gender concerns into the policies, plans and programmes of the core and sectoral government agencies, ensuring that key targets and indicators on the status of women are agreed upon and met, managing the flow of information on gender issues and communicating policy changes and results.

The NWM is also best placed to spearhead programmes and activities at the cutting edge of the gender and development field, for example, increasing women's participation in political decision-making; exploring issues of democracy, human rights and sustainable development; holding government accountable for the implementation of international commitments; and monitoring the impact of these measures.

A strong National Women's Machinery is important for gender mainstreaming because it must be able to function as a strategic and co-ordinating unit with the required experience and expertise in the areas of gender integration, gender planning and project management. A strong and effective NWM will have personnel with technical expertise in gender issues, skilled in administration/co-ordination, project management, training, research, information management and dissemination, and evaluation. It will have a clear and achievable mandate, with sufficient scope and flexibility to address a broad range of issues. And it will have explicit political legitimacy, management scope and

authority, and a central and stable position within the structure of government such that it participates directly in mainstream policy and decision-making processes, and the allocation of resources. It will also have a broad internal structure, with strong linkages with other ministries (Ashworth, 1994: 5).

National Women's Machineries within the Commonwealth take a range of different forms and reflect varying levels of strength or weakness. The first step in setting up the institutional arrangements of a Gender Management System is therefore to assess the institutional capacity of the NWM. The second step may be the strengthening of the NWM, if necessary. The strengthening process focuses on analysing internal development and structure, and the scope for forming partnerships with other branches of government and with civil society.

Gender Management Team

The core government ministries which are of strategic importance to achieving gender equality and equity are the Executive Office of the President or Prime Minister and the ministries of finance, planning, public service, and legal affairs. Their strategic importance justifies their membership on the Gender Management Team. Sectoral ministries that are of particular importance in the national context, or that are strategically placed to effect change, may also be included on the GMS team for the same reason.

The Gender Management Team could therefore comprise the Permanent Secretaries of the National Women's Machinery and the ministries of finance, planning, public service, justice/legal affairs, and any other ministries that are considered to be of key strategic importance. The Team should also include a representative of civil society, such as the Chair of the National Gender Equality Commission or similar body.

The identification of individuals to serve on the Gender Management Team needs to be done strategically. Where possible individuals should be selected who:

- ◆ believe in and care about the advancement of gender equality and equity;
- ◆ understand the power and gender dynamics within society and within government;

- ◆ have access to sound, high-quality empirical data; and
- ◆ have sufficient political clout and influence to produce real change.

Members of the Gender Management Team should receive training in gender sensitivity, analysis and planning as appropriate.

Functions

The Gender Management Team's responsibilities include developing the GMS concept in the national context, thus providing the Gender Management System with broad operational policies, indicators of effectiveness and timeframes for implementation. The Team should seek to expand the scope of gender mainstreaming throughout the various sectors of government. Consensus regarding conflict resolution and problem-solving procedures, mechanisms and ethics should also be determined by the Team.

Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee

The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee comprises senior staff from the National Women's Machinery and the Gender Focal Points (see below) of all other ministries. Chaired by a representative of the core government ministries, the committee reports to the Gender Management Team. This committee represents a broad-based, second level management team.

Functions

The role of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee is to ensure that the goal of gender equality and equity is taken up in all ministerial programmes. Its responsibilities include setting sector goals and reviewing sector performance regarding gender mainstreaming. All sectoral ministries should be represented on the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee.

Gender Focal Points

Gender Focal Points are designated senior members of staff within each ministry/department, who are directly involved in or able to influence their sector's planning process.

Functions

The responsibilities of Gender Focal Points include the following:

- ◆ sitting on the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee ;
- ◆ provide support for the development of gender-sensitive policies and programmes;
- ◆ serve as in-house gender experts or resource persons, sharing information, advocating the implementation of the Gender Action Plan within their ministry/department;
- ◆ conduct sector-specific analyses of gender disparities;
- ◆ collect and disseminate information and best practices;
- ◆ support the functioning of the Management Information System; and
- ◆ in collaboration with the Gender Management Team, assist in monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

The Gender Focal Point is often the main agent for facilitating gender mainstreaming on a day-to-day basis. Supported by the structures and mechanisms of the GMS, and the political commitment to gender equality represented by the Gender Action Plan, the Gender Focal Point plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the GMS. In order to strengthen the capacity of the Gender Focal Points, efforts need to be made to:

- ◆ ensure that Gender Focal Points in all ministries/departments are senior staff;
- ◆ provide Gender Focal Points with gender training to increase their competence in gender analysis and to provide the analytical tools necessary to engender their ministry/department's policy and planning processes and programme implementation;
- ◆ provide Gender Focal Points with expertise in the area of monitoring and evaluation;
- ◆ support Gender Focal Points by either employing additional gender experts with sector-specific skills or engaging qualified external gender experts; and
- ◆ ensure that the work of Gender Focal Points is written into their terms of reference (job descriptions) and reflected in resource allocation.

An important aspect of the work of Gender Focal Points is the socialisation of gender knowledge and experience, which should be

seen not as static but continually advancing. It should therefore be communicated through regular meetings and other means such as newsletters as part of the ongoing process of promoting gender awareness. Thus a key feature of the methodology of training and development of Gender Focal Points is the sharing and documentation of experiences.

In some countries, it may be appropriate to group Gender Focal Points in the larger ministries into a Gender Unit for that ministry. For example, the Ministry of Public Works in a particular government may consist of several thousand staff members. The process of mainstreaming gender in such a ministry and addressing the gender needs of its staff cannot be achieved by one individual alone, but requires the resources of a fully staffed Gender Unit.

Gender Caucus in National Parliament and Local Government

A Gender Caucus is a useful structure if a good number of gender-sensitive women and men are in parliament or local government. In parliament, the Caucus serves to introduce a gender perspective on issues being debated. Members of the Caucus can lobby support among their colleagues, articulate issues in parliamentary debates and generate public support through the media, political parties, NGOs and other entities.

The Caucus may act as a catalyst for affirmative action in the political arena by: reviewing laws that discriminate against women or that are insensitive to gender interests; lobbying to bring about action on specific issues of concern to female constituents; and campaigning to have 'safe' seats allocated to women.

At the local government level, the Caucus may consider such steps as: undertaking gender audits of local government structures and programmes; promoting mentoring programmes for women who are active in the political arena; and ensuring a gender balance in committees and community meetings.

Gender Equality Commission/Council

The building of effective partnerships between the National Women's Machinery and non-state actors in civil society is essential

to the functioning of a Gender Management System. This partnership with civil society's key stakeholders can take a number of forms, one of the most useful of which is a national Gender Equality Commission or Council.

The Gender Equality Council provides a direct link between the National Women's Machinery and the constituency representing the interests of gender equality in the wider civil society, through its representative on the Gender Management Team.

The Council should include representatives of a cross-section of organisations which support the goals of the Gender Management System:

- ◆ development NGOs representing women's/gender interests;
- ◆ university-based gender and development centres;
- ◆ labour unions and professional associations;
- ◆ political parties and groups;
- ◆ national private sector organisations, (e.g., Chambers of Commerce); the media (including the government information service);
- ◆ other key organisations within civil society; and
- ◆ inter-governmental organisations.

This membership reflects the need for critical advisory support for the GMS, the exchange of experiences and the sharing of skills, expertise and other resources in order to facilitate the process of mainstreaming. It will also help promote the interests of non-state actors in the policies, plans and programmes of government ministries.

GMS Mechanisms

The Lead Agency, the Gender Management Team and the Gender Focal Points are responsible for ensuring that the GMS applies the appropriate mechanisms to achieve its goals.

Gender analysis

Gender analysis is the process by which the differential impact on women and men of development policies can be discerned. It involves the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data which reveals the different status, conditions, roles and responsibilities of

women and men. This data is fed into the policy process, to enable assessments of the impact of existing policies and programmes on gender inequalities. Gender analysis also involves assessing how gender-inequitable power relations may impact on the achievement of development goals including the goal of gender equality.

Gender analysis needs to be both quantitative and qualitative. The use of gender-sensitive indicators in such areas as demographics, patterns of human settlement, households and families, education, health, economic activity, access to land and credit, legal rights, gender-based violence, and macroeconomics can provide useful quantitative data which should be complemented by qualitative data including historical and socio-cultural analyses that help to clarify the 'why' as well as the 'what' of gender differences in a given society.

Gender training

Gender training is necessary in order to build capacity in gender analysis and gender planning, to raise levels of gender awareness and to increase gender sensitivity.

A number of measures should be taken to improve the quality and scope of gender training:

- ◆ capacity-building in gender awareness and gender analysis should be undertaken throughout government structures, not only in the social sectors;
- ◆ gender training should include both more general gender sensitisation exercises and substantive, sector-specific training exercises directly related to knowledge gaps identified by policy-makers themselves;
- ◆ gender training should be regular and ongoing;
- ◆ gender training should include briefing on the GMS, explaining its mainstreaming aim and its component parts; and
- ◆ since the promotion of gender awareness is a cumulative process, gender training should not be seen as a 'one-off' exercise but should be provided at regular intervals in an ongoing programme.

Management Information System

The Management Information System is the repository and clearing house for all information relating to the establishment and

functioning of the GMS. Its function is to gather, synthesise and disseminate information on the goals, activities and achievements of the GMS and on other topics relating to gender mainstreaming and the advancement of gender equality and equity.

The Management Information System is normally the responsibility of the National Women's Machinery, which sets it up and maintains it in collaboration with the Gender Focal Points. However, in cases where the NWM is not strong enough to develop and maintain a Management Information System, support should be provided from the Gender Management Team. The Management Information System works closely with the government statistical agency or census bureau. It promotes and develops the use of sex-disaggregated data based on gender-sensitive indicators to provide material for gender impact analysis, policy appraisal, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Management Information System also works closely with the government information agency and with media contacts to disseminate information regarding gender mainstreaming and the GMS. This may be achieved through a periodical information sheet, bulletin or newsletter. Information that should be made available includes:

- ◆ relevant gender analysis methodologies;
- ◆ gender checklists and tools;
- ◆ best practices and relevant research findings;
- ◆ gender training materials;
- ◆ information and guidelines on gender-sensitive indicators and data collection;
- ◆ sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data;
- ◆ information on project management and monitoring; and
- ◆ regularly updated information on staff arrangements for and functioning of the GMS.

Performance Appraisal System

In collaboration with the government's central personnel office (Ministry of Public Service or Public Service Commission) and sectoral ministries, a gender-sensitive performance appraisal system should be set up to measure changes in individual and departmental standards of achievement of the goals of the Gender Management System. In particular, it should measure the extent to which individual staff members have acquired gender awareness

(e.g., through training) and have applied such awareness in their work (e.g., through the achievement of gender goals or the institution of gender-specific programmes). This information should form part of the criteria for career advancement.

Incentives do not necessarily have to be financial; for example, gender awareness awards of merit, publicised through the Management Information System, could help transform the institutional culture to one that is more gender-aware and supportive of gender equity goals.