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Introduction

Purpose and Scope of this Guide

This guide is intended for governments and other organisations that are seeking to advance gender equality and equity through the mainstreaming of gender in development planning. The Commonwealth is promoting gender mainstreaming by means of the Gender Management System (GMS), a comprehensive system of structures, process and mechanisms for advancing gender equality and equity, designed primarily for use by national governments in developing countries. This guide is intended for use in combination with other documents in the GMS series, especially the *Gender Management System Handbook* which provides a general introduction to the GMS and a guide for gender mainstreaming in national governments.

Gender mainstreaming is an approach to advancing gender equality that involves addressing gender inequalities in all aspects of development, across all sectors and programmes. Mainstreaming is not simply about ensuring that women's position is improved within existing frameworks which are dominated by men. Gender is mainstreamed when the development process and frameworks are transformed in ways which ensure the participation and empowerment of women as well as men in all aspects of life and especially in decision-making structures.

Changes in Approaches to Development Planning

The accelerated shift to market driven economies within a global system that determines terms of trade, foreign exchange controls and the boundaries within which local economies can develop has a significant impact on planning processes. An outcome of shifts in economic planning processes has been the appearance of new forms of exploitation, discrimination and domination – a result, many argue, of globalisation. While the imperatives of economic

growth have influenced terms of trade and foreign relations in most countries, women have raised their voices against economic growth models that have not included human development and women's development as a central element.

Governments recognise that current indicators of development in most regions reveal that women, who constitute more than 50 per cent of the population in most countries, remain the majority living in poverty (especially in rural areas), are victims of all types of violence, generally have lower literacy rates than men, and have experienced the least improvement in their quality of life. In some areas, male marginalisation, especially among young people, is also recognised as a significant problem of gender inequality.

But few concrete attempts have been made to address the root causes of gender injustice and the continued economic exploitation of women, even though women's paid and unpaid labour contributes significantly to the social economy and production processes. Governments' attempts to address gender inequalities have usually taken place in the context of an 'add on'¹ approach based on a particular understanding of women's position and of planning, rather than in the context of a critical analysis² of the political, social and institutional framework. Because of their inherent power imbalances, the dominant frameworks reinforce and promote existing gender hierarchies. Gender analysis and a gendered perspective are frequently missing in the development planning sector.

Comprehensive planning systems can take the form of long-range national development plans with a multi-sector approach through which countries attempt to promote accelerated economic growth and social development led usually by governments. They usually include an integrated public investment plan and a plan for the private sector. However, comprehensive planning systems with respect to government forecasts, estimates and private-sector interventions have tended to fall out of use because governments assume that market forces increasingly dictate the pace of growth and development in the private sector. Planning therefore tends to be partial in nature, with a focus limited to public investment plans and little attempt to complement these with a private sector plan. This has resulted in minimally regulated economic and social institutions and marginal state intervention in the market, with little benefit for those (usually women) who operate outside the formal markets.

Some economic planners have promoted the idea that minimal state intervention in economic and social planning is a necessary and desired condition for rapid economic growth. Many developing countries have moved away from traditional methods of development planning to an anti-cyclical planning process that is supply driven, technologically efficient and profit-oriented. This approach seeks to achieve the full use of a country's resources for social and economic progress through existing institutions and systems. The private sector is allowed to determine the direction and pace of growth, since this type of planning assumes that existing institutions operate at acceptable levels of efficiency. Anti-cyclical planning introduces minor changes to maintain existing levels of stability by using monetary and fiscal policies as instruments. This type of planning ignores the structural conditions and systemic crises in which most developing countries find themselves.

The anti-cyclical planning approach tends to have a negative impact on social development and gender relations, with increasing gender inequalities, joblessness for women and the 'feminisation of poverty'. So, while the rhetoric of planning remains, planning outcomes have failed to attain the type of growth that would promote sustainable human development.

Many Commonwealth governments are seeking to move away from the heritage of inefficient bureaucracies, inequities in social service delivery, and ever increasing gender disparities, and at the same time change technicist planning processes towards more participatory and engendered ones. For these and other reasons, development planning as a participatory process to promote integrated, holistic development which links economic, social and political goals is returning to the forefront in the search for a human development paradigm. Development planning is seen as a way of balancing the needs of people with the need for sustainable economic development.

Human Development

Development should be an integrated, holistic process that meets people's economic, social, political, cultural and environmental needs and improves the quality of life for all. This understanding of development includes the concept of human development, which

is measured not only according to economic indicators such as gross national product (GNP) but also according to health (life expectancy) and education (literacy and enrolment). This is the basis of the UNDP's Human Development Index, which ranks countries worldwide according to these three indicators. The importance of human development for women is the recognition that "if it is not engendered it is endangered" (UNDP, 1995). Human development cannot be equitable, sustainable or holistic unless it addresses gender inequalities and the needs of both women and men.

An important contribution to the advancement of gender equality has been the design of two new indices, the gender-related development index (GDI) and the gender empowerment measure (GEM). These indices are used to compare gender inequality in human capability (GDI) and inequalities in key areas of political and economic decision-making structures (GEM) (UNDP, 1995).

Gender Planning

While most current planning methods seek to promote economic growth, gender planning prioritises the conditions in which women live and work as a site for change. It involves a critical analysis of the gaps between women's and men's access to economic, social, political and cultural resources, which enables the development of policy initiatives to correct imbalances – including cases where men are not benefiting equally from the development planning approaches currently in use.

Traditional planning limits the type of interventions that could be made by planning authorities to address strategic gender concerns. In contrast, gender planning is socio-political and technical in nature, assumes conflict in the planning process, involves transformative processes, characterises planning as dialogue and critically examines the assumptions that a planning methodology can simply adopt a universally applicable set of technical procedures, and that the extent to which planners determine people's demands and prioritise needs reflects the situation on the ground.

Development and gender planning converge in respect of the goals of planning. It is logical to assume that, if women constitute the

poorest, are the most subordinate and are consistently denied access to the rights, services and benefits of society, then planning needs to be informed by a gender analysis which seeks to address the root causes of these gender-based inequalities. Gender planning should therefore not be seen as a separate, parallel process to mainstream development planning but should transform mainstream development planning to address the needs of women and poor people generally through an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable process.

Notes

- 1 'Add on' in this context means an incremental response to women's unequal position by creating new projects and including them in existing programmes without changing the existing programmes.
- 2 Gender analysis is the critical examination of a problem, issue or situation to understand the root causes of gender inequality or discrimination as it affects women and men in the development process.