

Basic Knowledge for Gender Mainstreaming

These eleven points outline essential concepts that people working for gender equality using a gender mainstreaming approach must understand and apply.

Policies and programmes have a *differential impact* on women as a social group than on men, and in turn *gender differentials* will affect the outcome of policies and programmes in complex ways that must be understood.

1. Because gender differentials exist, providing the same treatment for men and women is unlikely to produce equality of outcome. “Equal” treatment should not imply the “same” treatment.
2. *Gender analysis* helps make these realities more visible. Several gender analysis methods and tools are available. A grasp of basic gender analysis principles is important, however, there is already a vast amount of information available, and most programme officers can or should call on experts to select the right analytic approach, and do a tailor-made analysis if needed. Therefore programme officers usually need only sufficient understanding of gender analysis to select relevant information, to guide consultants productively, and to understand the implications of their findings.
3. No matter what combination of gender analysis methods are used, some foundation concepts are essential to explain *gender relations*, as an input to accurate decision-making.
 - The *sexual division of labour* underlies all human relationships and productive processes.
 - The *sexual division of labour* is constantly changing, usually slowly, but often quite fast, especially in times of crisis. Typically the rate of change of the division of labour in different sectors of the same economy varies (the division of labour within the household, for example, is notoriously inelastic). Often the actual division of labour changes more quickly than beliefs about what is appropriate for men and women to do, causing both stress to people forced to change their behaviours but unable to change their beliefs, and denial about the real character of the division of labour.
 - Differential *access to and control over resources, assets and benefits* are integral aspects of the division of labour, and are managed through structures of governance at all levels..
 - Resources, assets and benefits are of two kinds (a) *tangible*, such as property or education, and (b) *intangible*, such as status, influence and, above all, time.
 - A critical aspect of the sexual division of labour is that significant amounts of *economically important work is unpaid*, hence not reflected in instruments of governance, such as national accounts, or in the assumptions underlying legislation, national plans and other mechanisms through which the distribution of resources, assets and benefits is managed. The people doing this work are similarly ignored.
 - Nevertheless, like all economic activity, this labour, often undertaken within the household, requires energy, inputs and time, which have costs. These costs are generally born by those doing the work. Much of this kind of unpaid work has been described as the “care economy” and is derogatively defined as “women’s work”. It plays a central role in

- the maintenance and reproduction of current and future wage-earners and tax-payers, at a cost to the economy (both private and public sectors) that is highly subsidized.
- The distinction between women's *practical gender needs* within the existing division of labour, and their *strategic gender interests* for social change is therefore critical, not only for the women concerned, but also for the economy as a whole.
 - *Formal equality* refers to equality enshrined in law, an essential first step. *Substantive equality* refers to the actual experience of equality in real life – the extent to which the law is enforced, and/or can counteract belief, custom and tradition. Full substantive equality between women and men is the goal.
4. Just as gender analysis is a means to ensure that gender relations and their implications are clarified, so *gender mainstreaming* is an approach to ensure that these differentials are addressed, with the objective of greater gender equality in policy and programme outcome. It is not enough to know about gender relations, this knowledge must be incorporated into organizational action, especially decision-making processes.
 5. As it is logically and practically impossible for an organization to sustain a programme that is at variance with its own practices and culture, and these practices typically reflect the inequalities of society at large, gender mainstreaming is likely to require internal scrutiny, a challenge to standard practices, and *organizational change*.

Gender Mainstreaming Competencies

All of which can be developed, once identified

6. Gender mainstreaming addresses issues of power that are not susceptible to purely technical solutions. Political savvy, an adroit grasp of contingency, and considerable resilience are needed
7. Effective gender mainstreaming requires the ability to plan and act strategically, and to identify and seize ad hoc opportunities at all stages of policymaking, and the full programme planning and implementation cycle. It requires conscious facilitative leadership from all involved, in forms appropriate to their position.
8. Policy-making and programme design and implementation occur through sequences of decision-making. An essential set of skills for gender mainstreaming is therefore the ability to influence decision-making productively, through networking, advocacy and sound information and knowledge management.
9. Mindful, careful leadership, team membership and communication skills are central
10. Gender mainstreaming is a process, so it requires strong process management skills.

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