Chapter 2
Gender Mainstreaming in Development

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ABSTRACT

Gender mainstreaming means the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes, and projects. Mainstreaming gender differs from previous efforts to integrate women’s concerns into government activities in that, rather than ‘adding on’ a women’s component to existing policies, plans, programmes, and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages and in every aspect of the decision-making process. Gender mainstreaming starts by analyzing the everyday life situation of women and men. It makes their differing needs and problems visible and examines what this means for specific policy areas. In this way, it ensures policies and practices are not based on incorrect assumptions and stereotypes. It recognizes that gender is one of the most fundamental organizing features in society and affects our lives from the moment we are born.

INTRODUCTION

A very important strategy and instrument of the Gender and Development (GAD) concept is gender mainstreaming. It is also referred to as gender awareness. It is aimed at increasing gender awareness in all areas and all levels of public life. Gender mainstreaming, as a new concept, appeared for the first time in international texts after the United Nations Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985), in relation to the debate within the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
on the role of women in development. It was seen as a means of promoting the role of women in the field of development and of integrating women’s values into development work. Actually, it has developed out of necessity: a governmental commitment to implement the ideas of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women had as a precondition that the UN organizations dealt with these strategies in their ordinary work (Schalkwijk, Thomas, & Woroniuk, 1996).

Therefore, a Resolution on the future work of the Commission on the Status of Women was adopted in 1986, which decided to integrate fully the Forward-Looking Strategies into both economic and social development programmes. In 1987 the CSW, on the basis of the decisions taken in 1986, urged all bodies in the UN system which had not yet done so, including regional Commissions and specialised agencies, to formulate and put into effect a comprehensive policy on women’s equality and to incorporate it into their medium-term plans, statements, objectives, programmes and other important policy documents (Moser, 1993).

At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the strategy of gender mainstreaming was explicitly endorsed by the Platform for Action which was adopted at the end of the Conference. The Platform for Action called for the promotion of the policy of gender mainstreaming, repeatedly stating that ‘governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The calls for increased gender mainstreaming in the Economic and Social Council (ESCSOC) Agreed Conclusions (1997/2) are not for increased gender balance within the United Nations but for increased attention to gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality in the work of the United Nations. Gender mainstreaming does not only entail developing separate women’s projects within work programmes, or even women’s components within existing activities in the work programmes, it requires that attention is given to gender perspectives as an integral part of all activities across all programmes. This involves making gender perspectives – what women and men do and what resources and decision-making processes they have access to – more central to all policy development, research, advocacy, development, implementation and monitoring of norms and standards, and planning, implementation and monitoring of projects (Beck, 1999).

It is important to see the linkages between gender mainstreaming in the substantive work of the United Nations and the promotion of equal opportunities and gender balance within the United Nations itself. Organizational culture and organizational values are important in terms of creating work environments which are conducive to gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is easiest to implement in organizational environments which support approaches such as multi-disciplinary focuses, teamwork,
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