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The State of Development Planning

This section examines the major issues in development planning, identifies some gender-related problems that can arise, and points to possible solutions by way of suggested action points that governments may wish to adapt to national circumstances.

Political Will and Adequate Financial and Other Resources

Some governments do not have an overarching policy or framework which could be used to guide the promotion of gender equality. Many others take a Women in Development approach which fails to address the root causes of gender inequalities. Where gender policies do exist, they are often hampered by a lack of political will and authority to guide their implementation. An explicit gender policy is required, providing guidelines on how government departments should institutionalise gender internally and respond to women's needs in society, such that planning agencies are obliged to implement, monitor and evaluate gendered development goals.

Advocate for political commitment at the highest levels

A strong political commitment to gender equality is demonstrated by the location of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, women's bureau or similar body in a high-profile, central sector of government, such as the Office of the Prime Minister or President, and by the availability of sufficient human and financial resources to mainstream gender across all sectors of government.

Promote participatory democracy and decentralise planning processes

From a gender perspective, participatory democracy can only result from the wide-ranging involvement of women in all spheres of public life and decision-making. Planning as a process should begin

at the local level with representatives of both civil society and government involved. However, for women's representation in local government structures to result in their informed and effective participation in these structures, a critical gender analysis of the roots of women's oppression and the strategic interventions that are possible through their participation is required. This can only result from gender awareness, training and organisational change.

Local government decision-making structures which have more women on them than ever before are a political advance, but will only produce results in development planning if the functions and powers of these structures are clarified and if devolving power to the local level does not mean devolving financial responsibility for the delivery of services and development projects without the necessary resource allocations. Decentralisation of development planning should include a restructuring of the system, devolving functions and powers from state/provincial governments and ensuring a sound resource base and resource allocations from central and state governments. Most importantly, it should lead to a planning process that promotes strategic gender goals from the bottom up through a co-ordinated system.

Development Planning and Macroeconomic Policy

Traditional methods of development planning tend to be based on efficiency and control and to be driven by a focus on growth. It is now accepted that economic growth on its own is not a sufficient condition for development (UNDP, 1995).

Many governments introduced development planning structures and systems as a means of ensuring that macroeconomic goals were attained. The development plan became the economic policy instrument to ensure a process of setting ceilings for public expenditure, allocations for public sector investment and incentives for private sector investments. Infrastructural development and services within the plan were driven by economic goals rather than the need to advance human development. In the process of attaining economic growth, the social development of people and particularly of women has often been neglected.

Set women's economic empowerment as part of macroeconomic goals

Women's integration into the economic system of developing countries is mainly at the lower end, because generally women and men are allotted different work roles. Women dominate in unpaid domestic work and subsistence food production while men dominate in waged employment and cash crop production. Women need to be afforded opportunities through education and training programmes, access to credit and land and other opportunities so that they can become equal participants in mainstream economic activity at all levels.

Women's position should also be considered as a critical part of the labour market when macroeconomic targets are set for economic growth. The manner in which capital intensive and technologically advanced industry affects labour mobility and conditions should be assessed from a gender perspective so that women do not become a cheap alternative within competitive markets. The economic and social wage (social security benefits, training, etc.) should be reviewed to ensure equity between male and female workers. The negative effects of globalisation on labour markets should be examined to prevent new forms of women's exploitation in the workplace and other economic activities.

Accord value to women's work

The general opinion is that it is difficult to place a value on the time women spend in social reproduction¹ and to translate this value into quantifiable data to measure their contribution to the economy. This should not prevent planners and statisticians from formally recognising and acknowledging the social value of women's work and its economic contribution. The way in which national accounting systems assess and monitor the value of women's work within the household, in the formal economy and at community levels, is critical. Until women's contribution to the economy is recognised and valued, allocations made to address women's positions will be seen as contributing to social consumption and not to growth and economic development.

Use appropriate sex-disaggregated data

Sex-disaggregated data and the building-up of an accurate database of gender indices of development is vital to effective planning.

This type of data is crucial to development planning, especially in ensuring that gender development indices are linked to gender empowerment measures.

Analyse the impact of economic structural adjustment programmes

Economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAPs) have contributed to increasing poverty among women and a social crisis in terms of health, education, social services and food security in many developing countries. This has led to a distrust of foreign intervention in domestic policy developments. The social costs of (ESAPs) need to be analysed and measures taken to reverse their negative impact.

A critical gender analysis of the root causes of social problems is essential

Gender roles, responsibilities and the gender division of labour are seldom analysed within the development planning process. Planners tend to assume that issues of poverty, race, ethnicity, class, and urban/rural disparities should be addressed before gender inequalities. This problem arises from a lack of analysis on the extent to which gender inequalities are embedded in other structural inequalities in society. Analyses of poverty and race/ethnicity should include a gender perspective.

Institutional Concerns

Planning tends to have a sectoral bias which results in a fragmented, compartmentalised approach and ignores cross-cutting gender needs and concerns. The problem is compounded when no single authority or agency takes responsibility for implementing the country's overall development programme. As a result, the failure to meet the needs of women in the various sectors is often not evaluated.

Integrate strategic gender needs through effective co-ordination of planning cycles

Development planning should ensure that there is a link between sectoral budgetary processes and goals and national budgetary processes so that gender objectives can be integrated throughout the process. The timing and sequencing of planning and implementation processes from the local to the national level is of

key importance to the coherence and achievement of development goals. It is not just a technical process but requires sensitivity to the need for democratic decision-making, as well as the recognition that bringing women and other marginalised interest groups into planning is essential but takes longer to achieve.

Establish structures and mechanisms to advance gender equality/equity

A difficulty within policy and decision-making structures is that promoting a gender perspective is generally the concern of a few committed individuals in a department or agency. These individuals often introduce a gender component to their projects and programmes without it being seen as a mainstream task within the entire department or agency. This is a barrier to the institutionalisation of gender. Departments and agencies need to ensure that gender policies are as much a cornerstone of planning as are macroeconomic policies and in fact should inform the macroeconomic policy framework.

Establishing effective national mechanisms for advancing gender equality and mainstreaming gender concerns into government planning requires a commitment from governments to undertake public service reform and to work in partnership with civil society organisations. Unless line departments/sectors establish structures and mechanisms to integrate gender into their policies, programmes and objectives, gender inequalities and women's needs are unlikely to be addressed, except in a welfarist, project-specific manner.

The establishment of national mechanisms such as an Office on the Status of Women within governments, or a National Council of Women, needs to go hand-in-hand with civil service reform. Government departments will need to review their staffing, programmes and impact to determine whether these create the space and leverage for advancing gender equality. The Commonwealth is promoting the Gender Management System as a means of creating and maintaining the institutional arrangements required for effective gender mainstreaming.

Independent constitutionally created organs such as a Commission on Gender Equality will need to monitor the public, private and civil society sectors to ensure that gender equality is promoted. Monitoring all sectors requires the development of effective partnerships with key organisations.

Recruit women as well as men into the planning field

Most departments and agencies have staff with knowledge and expertise related to their sector but without a gender-aware perspective. In development planning agencies most staff are usually male, and training is orientated to technical and administrative aspects of work and fits the traditional planning mode. There is a shortage of professional women in the planning sector who have a gender analysis capability. Planning agencies and departments need to analyse the roles, rights and responsibilities of women and men in government, and to prevent women's exclusion from development planning.

Introduce gender policy/planning training into planning agencies

Gender inequality is shaped by a specific set of circumstances and derives from particular historical and social contexts and emerges in different forms at different periods. Planning must be located within its own social, economic and historical context to be relevant. Training is required to raise awareness of these contexts.

Ensure that systems of governance and planning are accountable, transparent and accessible

Discussions with policy-makers and technical planners in some Commonwealth countries reflect the need for development planning to be accountable, transparent and accessible. Accountability can be effected within and outside of government. In addition, ways must be found to promote partnerships with civil society to address development needs, particularly of marginalised groups.

Promote participant involvement in monitoring and evaluation

Evaluation is usually measured in terms of output, such as in relation to numbers of people who have been served through budget allocations. The effect of programmes and the impact they have had on the extent of the problem of gender inequality is seldom evaluated. Projects and programmes will only become culturally relevant and appropriate if the people targeted are a part of the planning process, and inform programme planners about what is culturally acceptable, gender-sensitive and likely to succeed. Poor women's perspectives need to be included in the conceptualisation of plans, as well as their monitoring and evaluation.

Public and Private Spheres

Where an attempt is made to improve the position of women, this is usually in the public sphere and does not necessarily result in changes in gender relations within the home. Power relations in the private sphere are among a number of factors contributing to women's failure to make effective use of changes in the public sphere to advance gender equality. It is important to create conditions which ensure that the spaces opening up for women to participate more actively at higher levels of decision-making are matched by men taking on more of the work at the household/family and community levels. This can be facilitated through gender-aware primary, secondary, tertiary and continuing education curricula and processes.

Notes

- 1 Social reproduction means all the tasks women generally carry out in the care of children, the elderly, within the household and in the community and for which they are usually not paid.