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Mainstreaming Gender in Planning Cycles

Attempts to mainstream gender into the planning sector should be located within country-specific political and administrative contexts. Gender policy should be integrated into organisational planning instruments such as budget lines, project criteria, operational tools, and day-to-day practice and procedures. The belief system and culture of the organisation will only change if policy is translated into democratic decision-making and a gender-supportive work environment.

The leadership, culture and style of an organisation should support gender equality. If the leadership and management style discriminates against one gender or is insensitive to gender relations then implementation of policies and projects to address gender inequities will be hindered. The extent to which managers are able to change their own style and the culture of their organisations will depend on the success of gender training and a performance appraisal system that rewards gender awareness and the attainment of gender-related goals.

Gender-Aware Policy and Planning

Although women's contribution to social reproduction and unpaid work is a major contribution to national economies, they continue to have low status and limited opportunities to become part of or gain benefits from economic and political systems except at the lower ends. Gender-aware policy and planning are important tools to effect a positive change in women's conditions. They are more likely to respond to deep-seated patterns of discrimination against women when women themselves collectively analyse and contribute to policy-making and planning processes. In cases where men are not benefiting equally from development planning strategies, a gender-aware approach also enables interventions to correct these imbalances.

The absence of a clearly established gender policy is a major problem in development planning. The following paragraphs show how gender can be integrated into the major policy and planning cycles of government.

The Four Major Planning Cycles

There are usually four major planning cycles through which most developing countries seek to respond to national needs and issues. These are: the macro/sectoral policy cycle, the budget cycle, the aid cycle and the project cycles (see Figure 1). These cycles when brought together through a planning process usually reflect a government's medium-term (5-10 year period) expenditure plan, as in Figure 2. The inclusion of a gender perspective throughout all four planning cycles (Figure 1) and in the different stages of each will strengthen the possibility of change from gender-blind to gender-aware policies, plans and programmes within institutions and will act as an internal guide for changes in the macro process illustrated in Figure 2.

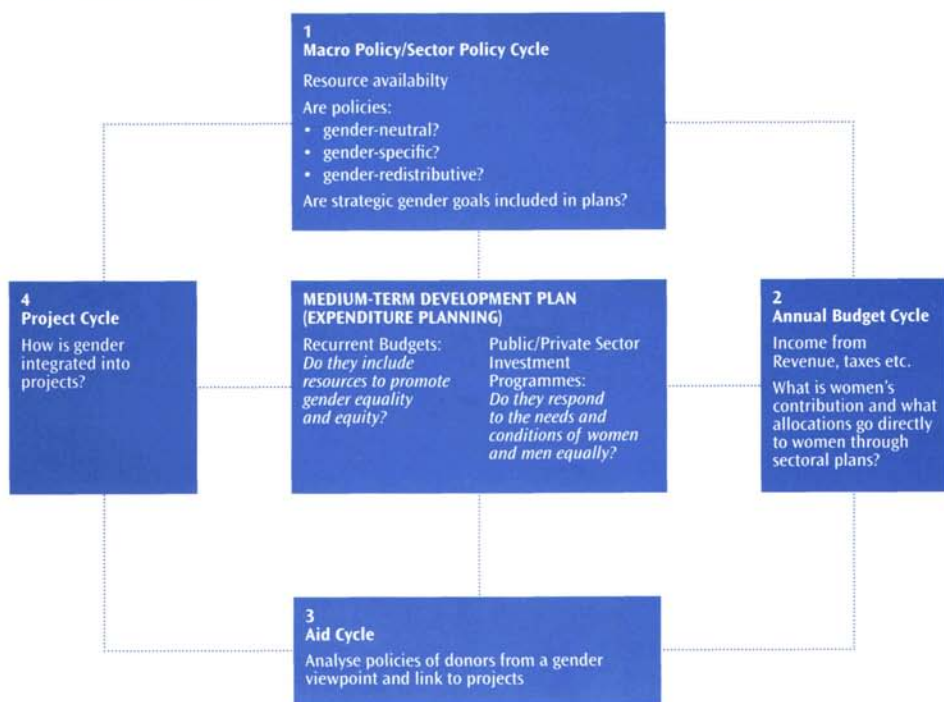
The macro and sector policy cycles and the medium-term development plan

In establishing macro policy frameworks, gender analysis and outputs need to be included to ensure effective policies which address the needs of all sectors of the population. Approaches to policy-making which influence gender outcomes can be categorised into three types: gender-neutral, gender-specific and gender-aware/redistributive or transformative (Kabeer, 1994: 80-97).

- ◆ **Gender-neutral policies** are those that are seen as having no significant gender dimension. However, government policies seldom if ever have the same effect on women as they do on men, even if at first sight they may appear to exist in a context where gender is irrelevant. In order to determine that a policy is genuinely gender-neutral, it is necessary to have complete and accurate information about the gender-based division of resources and responsibilities relating to the policy. Otherwise, policies which may appear to be gender-neutral may in fact be gender-blind, and biased in favour of males because they presuppose that those involved in and affected by the policy are males, with male needs and interests. *Example:* a policy to extend credit to small enterprises which does not address the constraints women face in obtaining such credit.
- ◆ **Gender-specific policies** take into account gender differentials, and target women or men specifically, but leave the current distribution of resources and responsibilities intact. *Example:* a micro-credit scheme that targets women.
- ◆ **Gender-aware/redistributive/transformational policies:** These are aimed at transforming existing gender relations to achieve

Figure 1

The Four Planning Cycles and the Medium-Term Development Plan



democracy by redistributing the division of resources, responsibilities and power between women and men more evenly. This policy approach is politically challenging since it seeks to redirect resources to women and requires men to give up certain privileges while taking on responsibilities which result in equity in development outcomes. But they also go the furthest towards addressing not only practical gender needs but also strategic gender interests (adapted from Kabeer, 1994).

Gender planning places particular attention on the unequal relations between men and women in development, and on how to address the needs of women. In the broader process of development planning it means that gender issues are recognised in the identification of the problems or needs, incorporated into the development goals and objectives and gender-aware policies, right through to implementation.

Generally policy and programme interventions could fall within a welfare, equity or transformation/empowerment approach. A welfare approach usually responds to meeting the practical needs of women, whereas a transformative approach responds to meeting strategic needs.

A participatory process

The potential of gender policy to transform gender relations and the gender-biased distribution of resources is greatly enhanced if that policy is developed through a participatory process involving key decision-makers within the department concerned and in other related sectors, as well as with the groups and communities the policy is intended to benefit. A gender policy formulated through such a participatory process is far more likely to gain wide-ranging acceptance, and sufficient commitment to its implementation for the attainment of its goals.

Gender policies and planning must ensure that poor women do not become a target for experiments or the dumping ground for technically conceived plans that do not respond to their specific needs. Experience has shown that when such experiments or plans do not produce the desired result, planners and donors tend to perceive the problem to be the apathy of poor women rather than ill-conceived project designs that have not involved such women from the beginning.

Policy planning that is engendered should ensure the following:

- ◆ clear goals and guidelines related to gender and development;
- ◆ consistency with the organisational goal of transformation of gender relations and employment equity;
- ◆ consultation at all levels and collective ownership of policy goals;
- ◆ baseline sex-disaggregated information;
- ◆ clearly outlined regional and national co-ordination functions and communication channels;
- ◆ gender-specific evaluation and monitoring criteria; and
- ◆ external evaluation at and between different levels of performance.

The medium-term development plan

Figure 2 shows the main stages in the preparation of a gender-aware medium-term development plan. It shows how the 'engendered' inputs from the macro and sectoral policy planning cycles can be

Figure 2

Main Stages in Preparing a Gender-Aware Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP)

- 1 Approval by Cabinet of initial approach and timetable for Development Planning Process. The need for promoting gender equality through the MTDP should be explicitly stated.
- 2 Preparation of initial macro framework: Using available sex-disaggregated data to assess recent performance and current status of the economy and social development in the country, prospects for the medium and longer term, and their implications for Government expenditure targets. This is viewed against social needs and pressure points that could cause political and economic turbulence. Gender status and analysis is critical in this framework, which should be developed in close consultation with NGOs, other civil society partners and the private sector.
- 3 Macro Issues Paper to be considered by Cabinet: A short paper to:
 - ◆ brief Cabinet (and senior officials) on the economic and social situation, and the comparative position of women and men;
 - ◆ present alternative scenarios for the country's economic performance over the MTDP, with corresponding scenarios for public expenditure to address gender inequality;
 - ◆ identify main macroeconomic and sector policy issues that the next MTDP needs to address. Mainstream strategic gender interests into these or prepare a paper on Gender and the Macro Framework.

Cabinet reactions to the macro issues paper are reflected in drafting gender-sensitive guidelines for sector papers.

- 4 Sector Issues Papers to be considered by Cabinet: To be prepared by the sector concerned including women's/gender sector. Papers should be very short, alerting Cabinet to the main sector issues and impact on gender relations and gender inequalities and the important trade-offs that must be considered.
- 5 Detailed Macro Framework Paper with expenditure guidelines: In the light of reactions to the initial macro paper and to the sector issues' papers, Cabinet is presented with a detailed macroeconomic and development paper which proposes overall economic and public expenditure projections for the MTDP period and also proposes a sectoral allocation of resources to serve as the framework for drafting of sectoral chapters and expenditure proposals for the MTDP. This paper should include a gender focus – addressing inequalities and promoting gendered planning in respect of resource allocations.
- 6 Preparation of draft chapters, expenditure proposals and proposed projects: Drafts to be prepared initially by the sector ministries. Development planning departments/agencies should assess objectives in terms of mainstreaming gender into all plans, policies and outcomes and refer back to sectors if gender analysis is missing.

- 7 Review of draft chapters, preparation of consolidated expenditure programmes: Co-ordination between central resource agencies (Planning, Finance, Personnel) in reviewing sector proposals and preparing consolidated expenditure programme. Expenditure programme and review process to be co-ordinated with annual budget preparation. Ensure that tools are built in at this stage to monitor and evaluate the impact of the programmes in promoting gender equality and equity.
- 8 Approval of full draft by Cabinet: Overall editing by planning agency and submission of full draft to Cabinet for final approval. Prioritise gender, class, race/ethnicity as criteria to assess relevance of proposals. Cabinet to have a set of guidelines to measure proposals within criteria.
- 9 Presentation to Parliament: MTDP submitted to Parliament for full debate and approval. Parliament to understand the criteria (gender, race/ethnicity, income inequalities) and guidelines used to approve policy/plan.

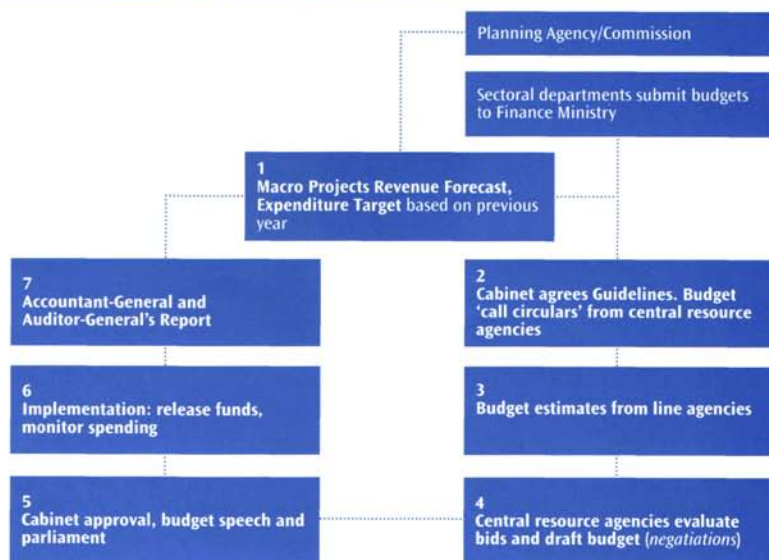
combined to produce a medium-term plan of expenditure which then informs the preparation of annual budget expenditures. These then feed into the project cycles in the various sectors.

The annual budget cycle

The general procedure in countries is one in which different government departments draw up their sectoral budget requirements in a 'year-on-year' basis and then go through a process of lobbying and negotiating with their Finance Ministries to secure the funds to implement departmental programmes. Most departments work hard to justify existing expenditure patterns and projections for the next year since they have a vested interest in these and do not introduce major changes or new priority areas. Links need to be strengthened between the goal of planned change with regard to gender inequalities and decisions made on annual public allocations to departments.

The annual budget cycle needs to be engendered because the budget is the key policy instrument through which resources are allocated to departments to promote development. Annual budget cycles should include criteria to measure how the budget responds to race, gender, caste/class and other disparities, and should be drawn up as the end result of a process of negotiations representing all interests. Clearly, budget outcomes and allocations, especially related to the promotion of equality, should be an indication of women's interests and needs.

Figure 3 The Annual Budget Cycle



Source: Taylor (1996)

'Gendered' allocations should be determined through a consultative procedure led by gender-aware officers. Parliamentary or political lobbying can influence government's responsiveness to such a process. The sectoral departments and Finance Ministries should negotiate budget priorities with reference to the government planning agency. In countries where there are planning commissions or units, these agencies have the potential to play a key role in ensuring budgetary allocations towards gender equity. Some countries have developed a Women's Budget to raise gender awareness within the budget process and identify the manner in which women's needs and interests are 'missing' in the National Budget.

Figure 3 shows the basic stages of the annual budget cycle. Concrete steps towards engendering each stage of the process are as follows:

- ◆ **Stage 1** is an outcome of the macro policy process in Figure 2. These projections and targets should include a gender analysis showing how practical and strategic gender needs are addressed.
- ◆ **Stage 2:** Ceilings should be set within which programmes targeting women or gender are reflected. Such programmes should not be 'added on' through donor aid and grants only but become a part of departments' normal work.

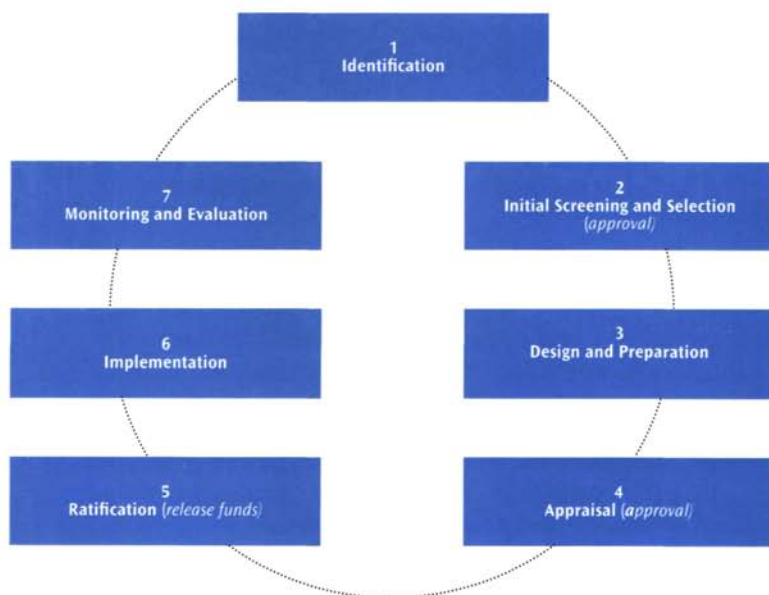
- ◆ **Stage 3:** Estimates for departmental programmes should be drawn up with a gender perspective.
- ◆ **Stage 4:** Budgets should be evaluated in terms of meeting both overall budget/debt targets and gender objectives.
- ◆ **Stage 5:** The budget speech should reflect line departments' gender priorities.
- ◆ **Stage 6** has been found to be one of the major obstacles to effective planning. Efforts should be made to decrease the time lapse between Cabinet approval [5] of sectoral budgets and release of funds [6].
- ◆ **Stage 7:** Accounting systems leading to this stage should be thorough and gender-aware. Government systems should be designed to ensure a reallocation of resources and a monitoring of the use of expenses. At this stage an analysis is made of the use of government money within global allocations.

The aid cycle

Development goals and planning priorities are usually determined through a political process and negotiated on the basis of many factors which do not always include the needs or concerns of the majority of people and often excludes women. One of these factors is that plan implementation depends not only on national budget priorities and allocations but also on donor aid.

A critical aspect of the complex relationship between donor organisations and the government and non-governmental sectors is the type of bilateral agreement made between governments and international agencies, which can lead to donors prescribing inappropriate policy and development directions. Governments' capacity to utilise donor aid in accordance with the implementation and delivery schedule is also limited. This results in a lag in the delivery of services on the ground.

A further complication is that donors, be they inter-governmental organisations, bilateral governmental agencies or non-governmental organisations, have their own development agendas, reflect their own interests and have conditions that often do not converge with the recipient country's priorities. The political aspects of development aid and countries' dependency on aid in the form of finance, knowledge and technology need to be examined in terms of their impact on the material and cultural aspects of women's and men's lives.

Figure 4 **The Project Cycle**

Source: Taylor (1996)

The project cycle

The project cycle describes the process whereby projects are chosen, designed, implemented and evaluated as a technical process, as shown in Figure 4.

Mainstreaming gender at the project level has the limitation that while projects may address specific practical gender needs of women, they are unlikely to address the broader strategic gender interests which will ensure the transformation of unequal gender relations in society.

The project cycle may be engendered using the checklist of current interventions indicated in Table 2 to respond to practical gender needs. These interventions are more likely to facilitate systemic change if clear linkages are established between organisations and departments and within and outside of government to promote gender planning across sectors and interests.

Table 2 Checklist of Interventions to 'Engender' the Project Cycle

	Stage	Important Interventions
1	Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ policy direction ◆ targeted or mainstream intervention
2	Initial Screening and Selection (a) definition of target group (b) identification of gender objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ gender diagnosis ◆ gender roles identification ◆ gender needs assessment
3	Design and Preparation (a) personnel (b) socioeconomic feasibility studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ staff gender training ◆ gendered terms of reference for staff consultants ◆ mechanisms to ensure women and gender-aware organisations are included in planning process ◆ gender needs assessment ◆ gender-disaggregated data on allocation and control of resources
4	Appraisal (a) mission personnel (b) appraisal studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ gendered terms of reference for consultants ◆ inclusion of gender expert ◆ staff gender training ◆ gendered cost-benefit analysis to include women's 'invisible work' i.e., the unpaid work they do as part of their reproductive role ◆ inclusion of women in staff gender training
5	Ratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ entry point for gender dialogue ◆ staff gender-awareness training
6	Implementation (a) agency and staff (b) target population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ staff gender planning training ◆ gendered terms of reference for staff ◆ gendered composition of agency ◆ clarification of women's role in participatory projects
7	Monitoring/Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ gendered terms of reference for consultants ◆ staff gender training ◆ team composition

Source: Moser (1993: 157), based on Antrobus's guidelines (1989: 13-16)