

**United Nations Gender Mainstreaming Strategy: Achievements and Challenges
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Background

I would like to begin by congratulating the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) on the organization of this symposium and its consistent support to gender mainstreaming in Korea. I hope that the sharing of information on the work of the United Nations will be useful in this context.

Gender mainstreaming was established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality because previous strategies had not been successful. Lessons learned from implementation of special projects for women in the 1970s and 1980s illustrated that, while such activities are essential for women's empowerment, by themselves they could not bring about the required changes in equality between women and men. Activities focused exclusively on women tended to be marginalized and did not always increase women's access to critical resources and decision-making processes. The integration strategy of the 1980s attempted to address these failings by incorporating women's perspectives into project design and implementation. However women's perspectives' were usually perceived as additional components or 'add-ons' and were incorporated too late in processes to have any real impact. The attention to women often came after major decisions on policies, strategies and resource allocations had already been made.

Awareness of these fundamental constraints led to the development of the gender mainstreaming strategy in the early 1990s. There was a shift from attempting to 'integrate' women into the existing development agenda to changing or transforming the agenda, so that it adequately responded to the priorities, needs and contributions of both women and men. The term 'gender mainstreaming' came from the objective to bring gender perspectives into the centre of attention or the mainstream of policy and programme development. The strategy was endorsed by Member States of the United Nations in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. Further principles and guidelines were developed in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) agreed conclusions 1997/2.

The strategy is defined by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as '*...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*'

Critical principles established for gender mainstreaming included that responsibility for implementing the strategy rests at the highest levels within organizations and adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established. It was also emphasized that the initial definitions of issues/problems across all areas of activity should be done in a manner which allowed for the identification of gender differences and inequalities. Assumptions that issues/problems are neutral from a gender equality perspective should never be made.

Gender analysis should always be carried out, separately or as part of existing analyses. The ECOSOC agreed conclusions called for clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including, if necessary, additional financial and

Apart from the mandates contained in the Platform for Action and the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women, there are also many specific mandates on gender mainstreaming in relation to different areas of the work of the United Nations - for example, on population, rural development, statistics, human rights, governance, poverty reduction, and crime and drugs - contained in the resolutions and agreed conclusions of different United Nations bodies, such as the General Assembly and ECOSOC and its functional commissions. The Security Council has, in recent years, also brought gender perspectives into discussions of peace and security. While gender mainstreaming is not systematic in any of these processes, it is important to recognize the gains that have been made, and to build on the awareness raised and the concrete actions agreed upon.

Systematic monitoring of implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy has also been established in the intergovernmental processes. Since 1996, annual reports on implementation have been submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women, the ECOSOC and the General Assembly. The focus of these reports has changed over the years. Currently, the report to the Commission on the Status of Women focuses on gender mainstreaming in Member States; the report to ECOSOC outlines the efforts of the United Nations system; and the report to the General Assembly provides information on gender mainstreaming in the intergovernmental processes. Since 2001, the Security Council has also encouraged relevant United Nations entities to report on implementation of gender mainstreaming through specific action plans focused on Security Council resolution 1325..

Last month, the Commission on the Status of Women included attention to resources for gender mainstreaming in its discussion on the theme 'Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women'. One key finding was that gender equality policies, strategies and action plans are all too often established without assessment of the resources required to ensure implementation or of potential funding sources. This was also true of the gender mainstreaming strategy. It was established that little effort has been made to assess allocation of resources to gender equality through the mainstreaming strategy. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission recommended that resources for gender mainstreaming be increased and that more effective and transparent methods be developed for monitoring the allocation and use of resources.

Within the United Nations system

Entities of the UN system have increasingly focused on implementation of gender mainstreaming at both policy and programme levels. This work has been supported by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality which promotes sharing of information on the strategy, including through the web-portal, WomenWatch. In addition, the network organizes seminars on gender mainstreaming methodologies at its annual meetings to encourage sharing of experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

Recent innovations have included the development of a system-wide policy and strategy on gender equality and empowerment of women which is expected to strengthen on gender mainstreaming. This policy and strategy was endorsed by senior managers through the High-level Committee on Programming and the Chief Executives Board. Building on this achievement, a results framework on the UN system-wide policy and strategy is being developed.

In addition, creative inte-ragency work on operational work of country teams has led to increased attention to gender analysis and consultation with national machineries for women and women's groups and networks. Capacity-building on gender mainstreaming for country teams has been developed and a score-car

effective manner; and the results of specific studies on gender equality issues do not always have the full intended impact on policies and programmes.

The work on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations over the past decade has highlighted many gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. Some of the critical challenges faced include: creating a better understanding among all professional staff of the strategy and the direct implications for their work; strengthening management commitment to ensure top-level support is explicit and highly visible; linking gender equality policies to the broader goals of organizations; using gender analysis more consistently and systematically; developing more effective approaches in competence development which lead to concrete changes in attitudes and practices; facilitating more strategic roles and increased resources for gender specialists; and developing effective accountability mechanisms.

Let me elaborate further on some of ways to address these gaps and challenges identified in the United Nations efforts on gender mainstreaming.

Gender equality policies

Experience within the United Nations – as in other international organizations and among Member States - has shown clearly that the existence of a specific policy on gender equality, which highlights the gender mainstreaming strategy and has built-in monitoring and reporting requirements, facilitates attention to gender perspectives throughout the work of organizations. Efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into programme budget processes has illustrated that the more explicit the commitment of the organization to gender equality, the greater the potential for including gender perspectives in policies, plans, budgets and operational activities. Gender equality policies need, however, to highlight goals and targets, give guidance on approaches and establish measures of good performance, thus providing critical impetus for professional staff to take on responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives in their day-to-day work.

A number of important lessons have been learned from past experience in developing policies on gender equality which facilitate effective gender mainstreaming. Gender equality policies and action plans can develop “separate lives” and become marginalized within organizations, with no clear relation to other important goals, policies and strategies. It is therefore important that the goal of gender equality is clearly placed in the context of the overall goals of the organization, outlining the linkages between gender perspectives and the work of the organization and highlighting the implications for policy and programme development. Priorities need to be established and the approach and methodology to be utilized in promoting gender equality as an integral part of the work of the organization explicitly outlined. The roles, responsibilities and accountability of management and other key categories of staff should be clearly described, as well as the institutional arrangements, including gender specialist resources and capacity building approaches. A concise “road-map” for gender equality should be further elaborated in an action plan which outlines clear measurable goals for all areas of activity with targets and time-frames, impact indicators for monitoring and evaluation and resource requirements and potential sources of funding.

An important element in the successful integration of a gender equality policy and action plan within an organization is the endorsement process by top management. Equally critical is the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation process, which actively involves top management. Some organizations have effectively utilized high-level gender equality

Some important lessons have, however, been learned within the United Nations. Recent reviews have noted the achievements made but pointed to the many remaining challenges. While there are now many good policies and strategies in place, there remains a huge gap between policy and practice which must be addressed through development of concrete action plans, with clear time frames and adequate resource allocations. The good practice examples that have been