Easy-to-use Guide for Mainstreaming Gender

The African Women's Development & Communication Network (FEMNET)

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The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) aims to strengthen the role and contribution of African NGO'S focusing on women's development equality and other human rights through communications, networking, training and advocacy.

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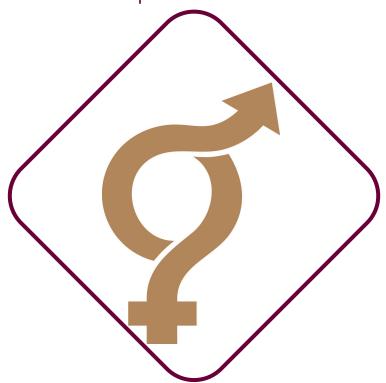FEMNET Secretariat

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Background

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) is a membership-based pan-African Network set up in 1988 to advance African women's development, equality and other human rights. Over the years FEMNET has played a central role in sharing information, experiences, ideas and strategies among African women's NGOs in order to strengthen women's capacity to participate effectively in the development processes on the continent. FEMNET has played a lead role in building the women's movement in Africa and has ensured that African women voices are amplified and influence decisions made at national, regional and global levels, which have direct and indirect impact on their lives.

Central to FEMNET'S vision is the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality which is also one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at alleviating world poverty by 2015. MDG 3 specifically looks at the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Gender equality is also entrenched in Article 2 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Gender mainstreaming was the overall strategy adopted in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women to support the goal of Gender Equality. The political rationale for this strategy follows on from what Feminist advocates had been struggling to establish, which is to ensure that gender is not at the margins of development practice, but rather gender should be brought into center stage of development (Razavi, 1997)

Starting in 2010, FEMNET has been participating in the Fredskorpset (FK) Exchange programme, which facilitates the exchange of personnel (ages 22 – 35 years) within participating organizations with an aim to transfer expertise/skills and promote networking for a period of ten to twelve months. The programme is supported by FK,   a government body under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway.

FEMNET selects fellows from our diverse membership and during the exchange programme, they work with partner organizations to heighten consciousness around the mainstreaming of gender in programme planning and implementation.

This simple guide was developed by fellows during the 2011/2012 exchange period, based on their experiences and expertise in South Africa and Zimbabwe. It aims at helping organizations mainstream gender in their organizations' policies and practices, programs and projects.

1. UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Training Manual (2007)
http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20Energy/Sustainable%20Energy/ Gender Mainstreaming Training Manual 2007.pdf

"Gender Equality does not imply that men and women are the same, but instead that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment."

What is Gender Equality?

Gender equality is the absence of discrimination - on the basis of a person's sex - in providing opportunities, in allocating resources, responsibilities and benefits or in access to services. It does not imply that men and women are the same, but instead that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment. Indeed, equality involves ensuring that the perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of women and men will be given equal weight in planning and decision-making. Gender equality is a matter of human rights and social justice and ultimately benefits everyone.

What is Gender Mainstreaming?

Gender Mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, 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 programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality. Therefore it does not mean specific programs directed at women be created. Nor does it mean that women specific activities should be stopped. It simply means women should be incorporated in existing programs and systems.

In any organization, effective gender mainstreaming requires deliberate plans, allocation of resources and dedicated staff to ensure that the commitments are translated into action and real change on the ground.

Why Mainstream Gender in an Organization?

- To ensure that the organization's culture, systems and activities allow for equal access and treatment of men and women based on the belief of equal value for all (such as maternity and paternity leave for parents). Gender is a cross-cutting issue and as such responsibility for gender integration should go beyond the gender units through the use of approaches such as gender training, gender guidelines and Terms of Reference (TORs), making it a routine check up for all members of the organization.

- To ensure that attention to the needs and perspectives of both women and men are central to all activities – policy development, legislation, resource allocation, research, advocacy, dialogue, planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

- To systematically think through and implement the strategies, approaches and tools required in the gender mainstreaming process.

- To assist an organization in identifying and prioritizing key gender issues.

2. Agreed conclusions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Coordination Segment, 1997 accessible online at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF

"**Organization's culture, systems and activities should allow for equal access and treatment of men and women based on the belief of equal value for all**"

Basic Steps in Gender Mainstreaming Process in Organizations

	Practical Planning Considerations
Step1: Policy planning stage	• A clear understanding by the management and other staff on the need to develop a gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming guidelines • Ensure that all members of the organization are conversant with basic gender principles. This can then be followed with discussions on the importance and relevance of gender mainstreaming within the organization. This can also be done online for example through an internal members mailing list to ensure full participation. • Recruit a Gender Expert to support the Gender Mainstreaming. Where this is not possible, identify a Gender Focal Point within the existing staff members with clear duties to for following the gender mainstreaming.
Step 2: Research and documentation stage	• Information to feed gender mainstreaming processes must be generated systematically. Select a specific team to head the research process and ensure members are kept abreast of every step. • This team can lead the drafting of the gender policy and the gender mainstreaming guidelines for the organization if it is non-existent. • The collection of sex/gender disaggregated data should be institutionalized

Basic Steps in Gender Mainstreaming Process in Organizations

	Practical Planning Considerations
Step 3: Programme and Project implementation Stage	• Translation of policies into initiatives. • Come up with clear and simple to do lists for staff members and project staff to implement. For example suggestions that projects should consider number of men and women represented at project meetings, checklist for types of venues chosen for activities, as well as the timing of activities. • Ensure that all other organizational policies (e.g. personnel or human resource policies, procurement etc) mainstream gender. • Decisions are made by management to prioritize and allocate resources for Gender Mainstreaming activities, such as Gender training, development of gender policy, recruitment of a Gender Expert able to carry out. • Gender analysis and to support the process of Gender mainstreaming, and allocation of resources to women only activities where necessary to bridge the gender gap.
Step 4: Monitoring and evaluation stage	• Assess the performance and impact of the gender policy (if in place) and gender mainstreaming in programme work as well as personally for each staff. • Application of gender analysis and gender mainstreaming framework tools and techniques. • The oval responsibility of ensuring that Gender mainstreaming is done should lie with the top leadership of the Organization (Executive Director/CEO etc).

Anticipated Challenges in Mainstreaming Gender and How to Tackle Them

Challenge	Possible Solution
Resistance in gender mainstreaming in programme/ development work – especially drawing the linkages between gender and the areas of work in different departments	● Presence and participation of women in decision-making organs ● Existence of civil society engaged in promoting gender equality and in particular a vibrant women's movement. ● Comprehensive knowledge of gender equality in Africa
The challenge in finding entry points within an organization for addressing gender issues	● The challenge in finding entry points within an organization for addressing gender issues
Limited resources and time to mainstream	● Make available time, financial and human resources, and particularly ensure that these are integrated in existing programs/ activities
Lack of real commitment by management, especially in the implementation stage	● The organization must have a specific gender (equality) policy ● Willingness within the organization (top-down management initiate and practice the mainstreaming process)

"Organizations must have a specific gender (equality) policy"

References:

FEMNET (2005) Gender Mainstreaming within the African Union (AU).

FEMNET (2007) Gender dimensions of PRSP Processes and the relationship to the National Budgets.

UN (1997) Agreed conclusions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Coordination Segment. www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF

UNDP (2007) Gender Mainstreaming Training Manual www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20Energy/Sustainable%20Energy/Gender_Mainstreaming_Training_Manual_2007.pdf

UNDP (2013) Gender Mainstreaming Made Easy: Handbook for Programme Staff www.so.undp.org/docs/Gender%20Mainstreaming%20Made%20Easy_Handbook%20for%20Programme%20Staff.pdf

Other Website links:
http://ippf.org/our-work/what-we-do/gender/what-gender-equality
www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/strategy/en/index.html
www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf