

Gender and sustainability: can gender mainstreaming enhance sustainability?

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INTRODUCTION

- Gender Mainstreaming (GM)- strategy which brings together gender equality and advance women's rights by infusing gender analysis, gender sensitive research and gender equality goals into the MAINSTREAM policies, projects and institutions.
- Improving the situation of women and to provide greater equality between women's and men's access to the benefits of development- many phases and theories.
- Idea- Roles, responsibilities and situations of both women and men has to be integral to development policy and to political, economic and social structures vs previous focus on improving the situation of women in isolation.

INTRODUCTION

- Gender equality goals embedded at every level..
- Away from segregated and additional activities for women empowerment- but focuses on gender equality into all policy development , research, legislation, resource allocation, etc...
- GM intended to be transformative, changing the definition and discourse of development to include gender equality as a means and an end.
- Therefore, change the direction of “the STREAM”

GM History

- GM established by Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at UNWCW in 1995 (golden age)
- Radical socio-political concept- Unmubig
- Integrated into all political, policy and economic
- Strategy to address inequality and unequal access to resources
- Considered a remarkable achievement- to widen the gains. Gender issues everywhere....!!!
- Institutionalisation of women's and gender policies- central demand of international women's movement
- Women's organisation and gender equality depts- significantly reduced (resources)

GM so far...

- Results are mixed....!
- Only strategy that will keep gender and women's issues from being swept off- integration of gender equality and women's rights into the so called "hard issues" of macroeconomics and poverty eradication
- The loss/disappearance of attention of women's specific needs
- Questions- Has it worked? Can it bring about meaningful institutional and policy change that protect women's economic rights?

Potentials

- Conscientize citizens, technocrats, economic decision makers about the various dimensions of gender
- Developing national, regional and international approaches to deal with gender discrimination and inequality
- Interlocking gender responsive policy approaches for 'sustainable economic development'
- Grounding the cultural, economic and social rights for boys and girls, men and women- solid foundation for advancing economic empowerment of women

- Positive spin offs such as Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Gender Disaggregated Data collection tools
- Promising area of work- 1) greater transparency, participation and accountability in the budgeting process and 2) gendered analysis of gender differentiated impact of macroeconomic policies- provide new socio-political insights and perceptions of gender related consequences of policies
- Greater awareness of gender

- Despite the advances- power differentials and conditions of dominance have not been unraveled
- Discrimination, disadvantage, violence, exclusion from political decision making and socio-economic conditions have not improved- despite the increase in gainful employment

Critique of GM

- Conceptual understand of gender and GM
- Failure to recognise GM as a process of ensuring equity, equality and gender justice in all critical areas of development
- Lack of gender analysis of power relations btm men and women in terms of access to and ownership of resources and power dynamics.
- High rhetoric- seldom supported by adequate funding, commitment and understanding of the transformatory implications of GM process

Critique of GM

- Mainstreaming reduced to a technique and tool kits-technocratic fix and lost its moral and philosophical underpinnings
- Does not challenge the “mainstream”
- Transformatory aspect ignored-accepts the status quo of development
- The mainstream remains masculine- transforming the masculine mainstream will not be accomplished by the simple addition of women into decision-making bodies
- Gender injustice and GM- pervasive and differential treatment of men and women resulting in unfavorable burden sharing, maladministration of resources and imbalances in rights and entitlement – receiving lukewarm reception to GM

Way forward

- Useful strategy
- A central part of all institutions and operations of the vital organs of power and decision making
- Must be cornerstone of the process of development, poverty eradication, environmental protection policies, good governance and democracy
- Move the discussion beyond poverty reduction to look at structural issues of inequality and economic injustices that reinforce poverty and inequality
- Develop new alternatives and effective strategies about women's human rights and gender equality

- Transformation and change- need to go “upstream” and question development, poverty and inequality
- Embed gender equality and gender justice concerns into all aspects of social and economic life
- Develop strategies that facilitate change and break down and replace current structures of power and privileges

- Until we agree what gender mainstreaming is, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and how to implement it effectively
- Women- a proactive role in developing the mainstream agenda rather than merely reacting to it.
- The human rights approach- acknowledgement that women's human rights can only be realised through the transformation of gender power relations at all levels. This requires gender responsive decision making, and using gender responsive tools within gender responsive institutions.
- Definition for GM and the need for cultural sensitivity – Western feminists dominate the discourse

- Poverty, environment, economy- gender analysis frameworks
- Two approaches-
 - ‘add women and stir’ approach (1970s).
 - The agenda-setting masculinist power structures challenged - promotes women as decision makers, -supports women’s collective action in redefining development agendas.
- Transformative gender mainstreaming- challenge to implement- inherently political nature of the agenda and the scale of the nature of change required.

- Intersectionality - inclusion of faith in understanding gender inequality- faith integral to culture and value systems and the role of women.
- Power issues and ideological battles are still unchallenged-
- GM is political- faced with patriarchy and power

Gender mainstreaming

What do we need to do differently?

