

UNIT 13: GENDER MAINSTREAMING: CONCEPT AND PRINCIPLES

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender Mainstreaming is a concept that crystallized in the mid 1990s as a strategy to achieve gender equality. It followed the preceding concepts of equal treatment and later women's empowerment. The approach of equal treatment treats men and women in the same way, thereby ignoring the differences between them. This has led to the continuous application of gender neutral approaches which do not seek to change relations but rather work within the current differences in society.

Gender is an issue because of the presence of fundamental differences and inequalities between women and men that may vary in degrees depending on regional, cultural and sectoral differences, but that nevertheless continue to exist: Inequalities in access to political power and decision-making; Inequalities within households; Differences in access to education; Difference in access to economic resources; Differences in legal status; Gender division of labour within the economy; Inequalities in the domestic/unpaid sector; Violence; Discriminatory attitudes etc.

Women's empowerment initiatives that followed the equal treatment approach, attempted to address these disadvantages women experience because of their differences to men. Initial efforts were focused on separate targeted activities for women. In the 1970s and 1980s, efforts were made to integrate a women's component in all initiatives, rather than keeping women on the sidelines or an afterthought, of development. However, in most cases, the integration efforts were taken at a late stage when all important decisions on goals, strategies and resources had already been taken, mostly by men. Another crucial weakness of

this approach is that the very systems and structures that produce and reproduce the discrimination against women remained unchallenged.

Gender Mainstreaming emerged as a strategy that not only recognized the fundamental differences between men and women, but aimed to bring the gender perspective into every policy and system at all levels right from inception. This does not mean that special initiatives targeted towards women need to be abandoned. These initiatives empower women, enabling them to enter and function in the mainstream on equitable terms; Gender Mainstreaming, on the other hand, modifies the mainstream by making it more gender-sensitive, and removing discriminatory policies, practices, attitudes etc. Both processes are important and need to operate in conjunction.

As the concept is discussed in more detail, it might be useful to think of Gender Mainstreaming, not merely as 'pushing in' a gender perspective into a policy or project; but to recognize that fundamentally it is a response to the inadequacies of the existing systems that in most cases fail to take into account the concerns, interests and well-being of women (as well as many other economically and socially disadvantaged groups). It is an acknowledgement that the prevailing 'norm' is faulty and needs to be transformed not only to achieve gender equality, but also for increasing productivity and promoting human development.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Describe in your own words the concept of Gender Mainstreaming;

- Explain the significance of Gender Mainstreaming;
- Discuss the basic principles of Gender Mainstreaming; and
- Describe application of these principles to real situation.

13.3 WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

13.3.1 Definitions

Gender mainstreaming was established as a global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and has been accepted by governments world wide.

The first idea to grasp is that **Gender Mainstreaming** is NOT a goal, but a STRATEGY to achieve gender equality. In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows:

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part 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 of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.”

This definition was supplemented at the UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) regional preparatory meeting for Beijing plus 5,

where in addition to assessing the implications, gender mainstreaming was also seen as a process that should lead to transformative changes.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities defines it as follows:

"Gender mainstreaming is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men – and taking responsibility to re-address them if necessary. This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men creating space for everyone within the organizations as well as in communities - to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality".

Another well known definition of Gender Mainstreaming comes from the Council of Europe (1998):

"Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking."

13.3.2 The Concept

Gender Mainstreaming is a broad strategy that aims to bring the perceptions, experiences, knowledge, priorities and interests of women as well as men into all aspects of policies, planning, implementation and monitoring of any social, political or economic action.

This may entail internal organizational changes; for example, staffing and personnel policies such as hiring more women, ensuring that at least a certain percentage of leadership positions are held by women etc. There may also be more fundamental structural changes necessary to promote a work culture and atmosphere that is more egalitarian. When the organization gets into the implementation of projects, the changes required are multiple. Steps are needed to mainstream gender into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These steps may include influencing goals, strategies and resource allocations at the start and providing specialized inputs such as gender analysis and technical assistance at various different stages of the project.

The Gender Mainstreaming strategy seeks to ensure that:

- the analysis of issues and the formulation of policies are informed by a consideration of gender differences and inequalities; and
- opportunities are sought to narrow gender gaps and promote greater equality between women and men.

It is crucial to recognize that decisions regarding allocations of development resources and opportunities are often dictated by ideas, development directions and organizations of the “mainstream”, the ideological and institutional structures both reinforcing each other. These structures decide who gets what and have an inbuilt and usually unquestioned rationale for the allocation of societal resources and opportunities. If we seek to achieve gender equality, it is essential to address these mainstream processes, structures and ideologies directly and incorporate the gender perspective into them.

The mainstreaming strategy can be utilized in areas where the principal objective is not promotion of gender equality, but promotion of other goals such as, poverty alleviation, environmentally sustainable development, improved healthcare, conflict resolution and economic development. Mainstreaming involves taking up gender equality perspectives as relevant in analysis, data collection, and other activities to ensure that all processes take into account the contributions, priorities and needs of all the stakeholders, women as well as men.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Define Gender Mainstreaming.

2. What do you understand by Gender Mainstreaming? Explain the concept.

13.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

As mentioned earlier in this Unit, the mainstreaming strategy emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with earlier approaches to attaining gender equality. These were specific targeted initiatives for women that gave them opportunities of empowering themselves through education, training, capacity building etc. While these projects had a limited impact, it was realized that the larger goal of gender equality across the board was not going to be achieved through marginal initiatives. For this profound changes are required at the policy and institutional levels. In the last few decades, women's movements have developed a critique of development models and institutions, arguing that it is not enough just to 'bring women in' to current institutions and processes. The major arguments are summarized as follows:

1. The answer was not greater participation in an unjust and unsustainable development process. Rather there was a need to rethink structures and practices that perpetuate inequalities of all kinds.
2. There was also recognition that inequality between women and men was a relational issue and that inequalities were not going to be resolved through a focus only on women. Gender Relations was identified as crucial, particularly with regard to the division of labour, access to and control over resources, and potential for decision-making.
3. There was increased understanding of the importance of seeking out male allies and in working with men to jointly redefine gender roles and relations. Thus, there was a

need to move away from 'women' as a target group, to gender equality as a development goal.

4. It was recognized that a concern for gender equality needs to be brought into the 'mainstream' of activities rather than dealt with as an 'add-on'.

Along with and apart from its goal of securing human rights and social justice for women as well as men, it is also increasingly recognized that incorporating gender perspectives in different areas of development ensures the effective achievement of other social and economic goals. However, mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes.

Benefits of Gender Mainstreaming

Some of the major benefits include:

- Good gender planning makes good economic sense so that women as well as men are active, using 100% of the productive labour force.
- Studies have shown that discrimination based on gender increases poverty, slows economic growth and weakens governance.
- promoting gender equality also promotes fundamental human rights.

13.5 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

At the ECOSOC meeting in 1997, the following were stated as the principles for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the United Nations system. The same can be modified to suit different governmental and non-governmental organizations.

- Issues across all areas of activity should be defined in such a manner that gender differences can be diagnosed, that is, an assumption of gender-neutrality should not be made.
- Responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and rests at the highest levels. Accountability for outcomes needs to be monitored constantly.
- Gender mainstreaming also requires that every effort be made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision-making.
- Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanisms and processes in all parts of the United Nations system.
- Gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes or positive legislation, nor does it substitute for gender units or focal points.
- Clear political will and the allocation of adequate and, if need be, additional human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming from all available funding sources are important for the successful translation of the concept into practice.

In the next section we will see how these basic principles are put into practice.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is the significance of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy? Compare it with previous efforts at achieving gender equality.

2. What are the basic principles of Gender Mainstreaming?

13.6 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PRACTICE

When we want to apply the Gender Mainstreaming strategy, the following three aspects need to be kept in mind:

Technical dimension: Mainstreaming requires reliable data (sex disaggregated data, large sample size etc.), sound theoretical understanding, gender experts with the ability to spot

Gender Audit of Budgets

Within the technical dimension, gender auditing of budgets has a crucial role to play in paving the way for mainstreaming gender into government budgets. It provides a policy framework, methodology and set of tools to assist governments to integrate a gender perspective into the budget as the main national plan of public expenditure. It also aims to facilitate attention to gender analysis in review of macroeconomic performance, ministerial budget preparations, parliamentary debate, and mainstream media coverage. It does not mean separate budgets for women, but that all budgets (union, state and PRI) be analyzed and constructed from a gender perspective, and there is an analysis of revenue and government expenditure on women and girls as compared to men and boys. Gender audit of budgets helps governments to decide how policies need to be adjusted and reprioritized for protecting and promoting women's rights.

opportunities and interpret gender equality requirements to varied groups.

Political dimension: Promotion of women as decision makers and supporting women's collective efforts to redefine development agendas; in other words, not increased participation in an unjust and flawed development process, but creating an enabling environment for women that allows them to assess their situations and express their priorities and concerns.

Cultural dimension: It is important to realize that no initiative is operating in a cultural vacuum. The interpretation and implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives are significantly moulded by socio-cultural practices, and prevailing ideas and ideologies at the

local level. These can greatly impact the effectiveness of any project and must be taken into consideration when trying to implement the mainstreaming strategy.

Instruments of Gender Mainstreaming

Planning and Policy

- Policy coordination
- Legislation
- Engendering planning
- Engendering process of resource allocation
- Ensuring women's participation at all levels of decision-making
- Decentralization of decision-making processes
- Gender-sensitive plans and policies
- Adopting a human rights framework

Analysis

- Sex-disaggregation of data
- Gender analysis

Awareness and Capacity Building

- Training and sensitization
- Advocacy and awareness generation
- Building gender competence as a legitimate area of specialization
- Capacity development in gender analysis in different sectors
- Access to information at different levels

Monitoring

- Monitoring of policy and programmes
- Countering gender-based violence and engendering the justice systems
- Gender-sensitive enforcement and justice systems

13.6.1 Gender Mainstreaming in Policy Analysis

Gender mainstreaming in policy analysis and development requires studying the impact of policies on people and seeing how this impact could vary for women and men. For this, it is imperative to focus on real people. Many opportunities for addressing gender inequality may go unperceived because we might be looking at the issue from a perspective that precludes or subordinates the concerns and interests of people, both men and women. Therefore, a gender perspective essentially contributes to a more informed view of policy options and impacts, enabling policy makers to assess the potential to narrow gender gaps.

A gender perspective needs to be included at several points in the policy process:

- In the **formulation of the policy issue/question** to be addressed. If the issue is narrowly defined, the potential for considering gender issues may be reduced. For example, completely different discussions will result if a trade policy discussion focuses only on commodities, rather than examining who produces these commodities and how they are affected by policy choices.

- In the **definition of the information needs** to assess policy options. For example, how can information on both women's and men's situations be incorporated in the decision-making process? There may be a need to ask different kinds of questions and look for information that helps to reformulate or refocus the policy discussion.
- In the **assessment of the implications** of different options by gender. Various options could have different costs and benefits for women and men and different consequences for gender relations and gender equality.
- In the **determination of who will be consulted and how** on matters such as the formulation of the issue, the definition of information needs, and assessment of options. The involvement of civil society, public consultation, polling etc. can have different outcomes depending on who is consulted, what they are asked and how they are consulted or involved. It is important to seek meaningful inputs from both women and men.
- In the **formulation of recommendations** for policy choices. These should reflect the information and analyses on gender equality issues resulting from the previous steps.

Some points to keep in mind:

- Ensure that activities where women are numerically dominant (including domestic work) receive attention. Although there has been increased recognition of the productive input of domestic and 'caring' work in recent years, these activities are still often overlooked, unmeasured and undervalued. Similarly, women's agricultural tasks and crops have also

received less attention than those of men in policies and programmes to improve productivity.

- Avoid assuming that all women or all men share the same needs and perspectives. There are differences among women and among men that relate to class, religion, age, ethnicity and other factors. Women and men are not homogenous groups. It is important not to generalize across diverse populations, but rather to consider the ways that needs and perspectives of individuals are influenced by a range of factors, including gender.
- Analyze the problem or issue and proposed policy options for implications from a gender perspective and seek to identify means of formulating directions that support an equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities

13.6.2 Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination

Governments, NGOs and international bodies depend on statistical information to help them define and design policies and projects. Given the importance of data collection, analysis and dissemination, the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in statistics is crucial. Mainstreaming gender perspectives in statistics implies that all statistics are produced taking into consideration gender roles and gender differences and inequalities in society.

Often the emphasis in application of statistics in policy areas has presumed that gender issues are not relevant. In transport, data generally refer to available means of transport and overall use, while little is known on the different use of transport by women and men, and on the differentials in impact of transport policies and programmes.

All data—both those on individuals as well as those not directly related to individuals—should be collected, compiled and analyzed taking into account the gender-based factors that influence women's and men's roles, access to resources, and the way women and men benefit from access to resources, facilities and services.

Disaggregation of all statistics by sex is one of the means of ensuring attention to gender perspectives in statistics. However, disaggregation by itself is inadequate. Sex-disaggregated data are simply data collected and tabulated separately for women and men. In order to ensure that concepts, definitions and methods used in data production are conceived to reflect gender roles and relations in society, it is important to analyze and accordingly modify/expand the types of data being collected. Gender mainstreaming in statistics can involve collecting new types of data or expanding data collection in some areas to fill existing knowledge gaps. For example, there is a better basis for developing agricultural policy if there is information that goes beyond the number of “farmers” and what they produce. Disaggregating this data by sex, and asking questions about who produces what, would not only provide information on the number of women and men farmers, but would also allow for assessments of whether there are differences and inequalities between women and men in the crops they produce and the work they do. Attention also needs to be given to methods of presentation and dissemination to ensure the issues are presented in an adequate manner and reach all potential target groups.

13.6.3 Mainstreaming Gender into Every Stage of Implementation and Monitoring

During the implementation phase of the project, it is crucial to continue the mainstreaming strategy. Further, during monitoring, the effectiveness of the strategy should be studied, analyzed, and form part of the final report. This could be done by conducting gender analysis training for the staff of an organization, integrating gender issues as part of the curriculum in all training courses, striving towards equal representation of women and men in project management and meetings, and training activities (meeting the 30% UN target set in the Beijing Platform for Action as a minimum), devising and measuring gender indicators to differentiate male and female beneficiary outcomes etc.

Points to remember:

- Identify any anticipated negative impacts of the project on women and men (e.g. increased workload, loss of access to resources such as credit, water, land and technology);
- Identify any constraints to women's participation and make concrete recommendations for increasing women's involvement (e.g. ensure that meetings are not held outside work hours, or that childcare needs are considered);
- Budget for professional assistance from qualified gender specialists, don not assume that anyone can do the gender analysis;
- Projects succeed when they are planned for 100% of the population, not only 50%.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What are some of the key points to keep in mind when mainstreaming gender into policy analysis?

2. In what ways can a gender perspective be incorporated into data collection, analysis and dissemination?

13.7 CASE STUDIES

The above ideas will become clearer when we look at two case studies where gender mainstreaming has been applied fairly successfully. When we look at it in specific contexts, we can also see how different organizations interpret and modify the broad framework discussed earlier.

13.7.1 Indian Census 2001

Theoretically the Census has always emphasized individual characteristics, with questionnaires and instructions that are not marked by male bias and are by and large gender-neutral. However, in Indian Censuses prior to 2001, the fact that women were missed out in counting had been repeatedly brought out. It has also been argued that women's economic pursuits are not recorded/ reported adequately in certain parts of the country, resulting in low female work participation rate (FWPR). This problem is further perpetuated by rigid mind set about gender roles. Economic activities that women intermittently undertake and domestic chores are not treated as "work", as sometimes it is difficult to isolate non-economic activities from economic activities. Ignorance about definition of work also leads to non-reporting.

In the 2001 Indian Census, adequate attention for gender sensitization was undertaken in earnest. Possible causes for gender bias to creep up in the data collection and dissemination was explored. A special cell was established to oversee gender issues and sensitize census functionaries at different levels involved in supervision and conduct of the 2001 Census.

The gender sensitization primarily focused on three aspects:

- Sensitizing the Directors of Census Operations and other senior functionaries of the Directorates and the State Governments at every opportunity through discussions in depth on sex ratio, age, literacy and female work participation of their own State, which enabled them to understand and appreciate the problem in its proper perspective.
- Imparting thorough and appropriate training to all census functionaries right up

to the enumerators with the help of special modules and data sets relating to gender issues.

- Building up public awareness through a widespread publicity campaign specially focusing on the contribution of women in various economic activities.

The following are some of the specific tasks undertaken:

1. Making the Instruction Manual Gender Sensitive

In the Instruction Manual, special efforts were made to draw the enumerators' and supervisors' attention to the basic count of population, especially to better net the elderly and the unmarried woman as well as the girl child in the household. Instructions were given to record the names of members in a particular sequence so that no female member in the household is missed even inadvertently.

2. Making the Questionnaire Gender-Sensitive

The next step was to make the format of the household schedule, the questionnaire canvassed at the population enumeration, more gender sensitive. For instance a question on fertility specifically sought information by sex of the child (daughter and son) instead of children so that information on female children is not left out even inadvertently.

3. Focusing on Women's economic activity

Under reporting female work was identified as a major grey area. All efforts were made not to miss economic activity of women. During the training, the cultural bias of the respondents or proxy respondents or of the enumerators against recognizing and reporting the economic contribution women intermittently pursue and domestic chores was pragmatically addressed. In order to properly capture the part time work done by women, the enumerators were encouraged to ask probing questions. Further, to raise awareness that a number of different economic activities in which women are engaged as paid or unpaid workers are “work”, they were depicted in 32 illustrative sketches. These sketches present women working on a formal or informal basis within the precincts of the household or outside by lending helping hands to their male counterparts. They were part of the Instruction Manual published in 16 major regional languages and available to all the field functionaries right up to enumerators. In addition, emphasis was also laid on activities generally performed by women in particular areas or regions.

4. Targeted Initiatives in critical districts

In order to achieve the objective of complete and accurate coverage of women and their participation in economic activities, vigorous campaigns and focused attention were launched in districts that yielded very low female sex ratio, literacy and work participation rate in the 1991 Census. A total of 237 districts were identified based on the 1991 data, which had either FWPR of less than 20 per cent or a deficiency of more than 50 females per thousand males. They also included districts with significantly lower female literacy rate than male.

These were treated as critical districts, which required additional efforts in terms of sensitization, training and publicity. With help from United Nations agencies, **special Census Advisors** were engaged in almost all the critical districts to train and help the field functionaries on gender issues. Census Advisors also helped Master trainers in gender-specific questions with local examples to facilitate better comprehension. The training was also supplemented by audio and video cassettes in regional languages eliciting probing questions on gender-related issues.

5. Multi-pronged efforts to generate awareness

For the success of such a huge exercise as the 2001 Census, India, adequate publicity was necessary to create awareness. An important component of a publicity campaign was to sensitize and create awareness among the general public on gender-related issues, with extensive display of posters and banners illustrating female work, including the unpaid work done by women. A number of audio and video spots appealing to women come forward and report their economic activities were produced and relayed through radio and television networks. A special census postage stamp was also released using the census logo adopted for the Census of India, 2001. The logo represented both phases of census of house-listing and population enumeration. The four figures, two males and two females, signify ideal family size and its sex composition.

13.7.2 Gender Mainstreaming approaches to Domestic Violence

In 1996, the IDB launched a major initiative to address domestic violence, in response to demand from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to address a serious and growing problem in the region. Between 1998 and 2004, the IDB approved loans worth \$123

million for violence prevention in Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Jamaica, and Uruguay and leveraged substantial counterpart funds for this purpose in all five countries.

It mainstreamed the reduction of domestic violence against women into this broader initiative to enhance citizen security. Gender-based activities took different forms in each country and included, in Colombia, data collection on domestic violence and police training to handle cases of domestic violence; in Jamaica, training for judges and probation officers on intra-family violence; and in Honduras and Uruguay, components to prevent domestic violence and treat its victims. Buvinic (2004) identifies six key elements that contributed to success and can form the basis for replication: relevance, leadership, financing, expertise, research and innovation.

- **Relevance.** Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most violent region in the world (after Sub-Saharan Africa). Along with high rates of homicide, there are high rates of victimization of women and rising violence since the mid-1980s. As a result, reducing violence is a priority for citizens in the region, and there is growing awareness of violence against women, especially in the NGO sector.
- **Leadership.** Listening and responding to these citizen concerns, IDB President Enrique V. Iglesias, in a bold move for a development bank, launched work on violence reduction in 1996 and assigned resources to it. The IDB organized high-visibility seminars to catalyze interest in the region and undertook badly needed research. The region's response and interest were immediate.
- **Grant financing.** Modest but critical grant financing was made available to undertake the work (IDB and Nordic Trust Fund monies to the IDB).

- **Availability of expertise.** The IDB was able to tap into local expertise in the region on domestic violence, facilitating research and project interventions.
- **Research.** Research showed the intrinsic as well as the instrumental value of mainstreaming attention to domestic violence in lending for violence reduction operations. It made the case that violence is mostly a learned behaviour and that one of the earliest opportunities for learning violence is in the home. Thus, domestic violence is deserving of attention in its own right and as a key to preventing the transmission of violence. The research also provided a sound economic rationale for investing in domestic violence reduction operations (Morrison and Orlando in Morrison and Biehl, 1999).
- **Openness to innovation.** A new generation of IDB operations, citizen security lending, was launched in parallel with the mainstreaming efforts to emphasize violence prevention in all Bank loans. These new designs provided a unique opportunity for mainstreaming a gender perspective from the start, increasing the likelihood that this perspective would be incorporated in future designs. This last element is perhaps the most difficult to replicate because the very nature of the mainstreaming task calls for integrating new thinking into established practice.

13.8 SUMMING UP

This Unit has tried to present the what, why and how of Gender Mainstreaming.

Gender Mainstreaming is a concept that emerged as a strategy to achieve gender equality. It aims to bring about structural changes that will reduce gender-based inequalities, and at the same time contribute towards the fulfilment of development goals. The idea is to shift from

piecemeal interventions to a holistic one that works on the system, making it more just, inclusive and equitable. The origins of the concept and its applications will be dealt with in more detail in the following Units. As you look at various efforts at implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy, you will notice that it has been interpreted in very different ways (sometimes misinterpreted as well) depending on pre-existing ideas of gender equality, availability of expertise, as well as social, cultural and political predispositions. Using your understanding of the concept and principles of gender mainstreaming, you can try to analyze these efforts for their intent, methodologies and effectiveness.

13.9 GLOSSARY

ECOSOC: ECOSOC was established under the United Nations Charter as the principle organ to coordinate economic, social, and related work of the 14 UN specialised agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions. ECOSOC serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system.

Census: An official periodic enumeration of population in a country which includes demographic information.

13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

1. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part 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 of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality

2. Women's empowerment initiatives that followed the equal treatment approach, attempted to address these disadvantages women experience because of their differences to men. Initial efforts were focused on separate targeted activities for women. In the 1970s and 1980s, efforts were made to integrate a women's component in all initiatives, rather than keeping women on the sidelines or an afterthought, of development. However, in most cases, the integration efforts were taken at a late stage when all important decisions on goals, strategies and resources had already been taken, mostly by men. Another crucial weakness of this approach is that the very systems and structures that produce and reproduce the discrimination against women remained unchallenged.

Gender Mainstreaming is a broad strategy that aims to bring the perceptions, experiences, knowledge, priorities and interests of women as well as men into all aspects of policies, planning, implementation and monitoring of any social, political or economic action. This may entail internal organizational changes

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. The mainstreaming strategy emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with earlier approaches to attaining gender equality. These were specific targeted initiatives for women that gave them opportunities of empowering themselves through education, training, capacity building etc. While these projects had a limited impact, it was realized that the larger goal of gender equality across the board was not going to be achieved through marginal initiatives.

2. Issues across all areas of activity should be defined in such a manner that gender differences can be diagnosed, that is, an assumption of gender-neutrality should not be made.

Responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and rests at the highest levels. Accountability for outcomes needs to be monitored constantly.

Gender mainstreaming also requires that every effort be made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision-making.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3:

1. Ensure that activities where women are numerically dominant; Avoid assuming that all women or all men share the same needs and perspectives; Analyze the problem or issue and proposed policy options for implications from a gender perspective and seek to identify means of formulating directions that support an equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities

2. Data Collection, Disaggregated data

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13.12 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. What is the need for gender mainstreaming? Explain its significance.
2. Examine the basic principles of gender mainstreaming.
3. How can the concept of gender mainstreaming be applied practically? Explain with suitable examples.
4. Evaluate gender mainstreaming approaches to address domestic violence.

UNIT: 14 IMPLEMENTING THE GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY

Structure

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Objectives

14.3 Gender Mainstreaming: As a Strategy

14.4 Guidelines for Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

14.5 Gender Mainstreaming: From Policy to Practice

14.5.1 Implementation within UN

14.5.2 Implementation at the Intergovernmental Level

14.6 Constraints and Weaknesses in Implementation

14.7 The Way Forward: Guidelines

14.8 Gender Mainstreaming: the Indian Experience

14.9 Summing Up

14.10 Glossary

14.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

14.12 References

14.13 Questions for Reflection and Practice

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming was established as a strategy for promoting the achievement of gender equality because of the failure of previous strategies. Lessons learned from implementation of special projects and activities for women in the 1970s and 1980s indicated that, while such projects remain essential, by themselves they cannot bring about the required changes in the status of women. Activities focused on women tended to be marginalized and women's access to resources and power remained minimal.

Awareness of these constraints led to the integration strategy, which attempted to address the issue of marginalization by incorporating "women's perspectives" into policy development and project design and implementation. However women's perspectives were still seen as "add-ons" and usually incorporated at the later stages of planning processes when all major decisions had been taken and little real impact could be achieved. Efforts to redress these failings led, in turn, to the **gender mainstreaming strategy**.

Gender mainstreaming was based on the need to move beyond trying to unquestioningly integrate women into the existing development agenda to **transforming the agenda** so that it more adequately responded to the realities and needs of both women and men.

This Unit provides a discussion on the origin and strategies of gender mainstreaming as well as the constraints and weaknesses in implementation. The Unit also discusses how gender empowerment has facilitated gender mainstreaming in India.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the concept and origin of Gender Mainstreaming;
- Describe how gender mainstreaming can become an element of any development strategy;
- Discuss the constraints and weaknesses in policy implementation; and
- Analyze how the constraints in policy formulation can be reduced.

14.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING: AS A STRATEGY

The key elements of any gender mainstreaming strategy are as follows:

One is the necessity to give attention to gender equality from the **initial** stages of processes so that there is scope to influence goals, strategies and resource allocations and thus bring about changes in policies, programmes and other activities and make a real difference to gender equality.

Secondly, the Platform for Action (Beijing 1995) made it very clear that **gender analysis** is the first essential step in the mainstreaming strategy. Before any decisions are taken in any area of societal development, an analysis should be made of the current responsibilities and contributions of women and men and the potential impact of planned processes and activities on women and men respectively.

Third, it is important to note that gender mainstreaming requires a focus on both **women and men**. It is not possible to adequately implement gender mainstreaming by focusing exclusively on women.

Fourth critical factor is that gender mainstreaming requires **explicit** attention to gender perspectives. Gender mainstreaming can never make gender perspectives invisible; in fact this strategy should make them very visible and show the links between gender perspectives and achievement of the overall goals of the policy or programme.

Fifth, gender mainstreaming is not about adding a women's component to existing programmes, and it involves much more than increasing the numbers of women participating. It should **situate gender equality issues at the centre** of policy decisions and resource allocations.

Finally, building on these factors, gender mainstreaming should involve a **transformative** process, which means that incorporation of gender perspectives would identify the need for changes in goals, policies, strategies and actions, as well as institutional changes – changes in structures, procedures and cultures. Once the perspectives of all stakeholders are fully incorporated through gender mainstreaming processes, it is rarely possible to do “business as usual”.

While gender mainstreaming is recognized as a critical strategy for gender equality, at the same time it is acknowledged that gender mainstreaming **does not eliminate the need for targeted activities** to promote the advancement of women and gender equality. Such activities are still required to address serious gender gaps; to support women's empowerment and develop women leaders; as well as to test new ideas and approaches. Gender mainstreaming does not do away with the need for gender specialists or experts.

14.4 GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

For the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the operational and programmatic levels certain guidelines can be suggested:

- ❑ *Specific strategies* need to be formulated for gender mainstreaming; and *priorities* should be established.
- ❑ *Long and medium-term plans and budgets* should be prepared in such a manner that gender perspectives and gender equality issues are clearly stated.
- ❑ The initial *definitions of issues/problems* across all areas of activity should be done in such a manner that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed – it should never be assumed that issues/problems are neutral from a gender equality point of view .
- ❑ *Analytical reports and recommendations* on both policy and operational issues within each area of responsibility should take gender differences and disparities fully into account.
- ❑ Systematic use of *gender analysis, sex-disaggregation* of data, and undertaking of *sector-specific gender studies* is required.
- ❑ Gender mainstreaming also requires that efforts are made to broaden women's *equitable participation at all levels of decision-making*.

At the **institutional level** the following obligations are required:

1. Clear *political will and allocation of resources* for mainstreaming, including if necessary, additional financial and human resources (gender units or focal points), are important for translation of the concept into reality.

2. *Responsibility* for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is *organization wide*, and rests at the *highest levels*; and adequate *accountability mechanisms* for monitoring progress need to be established.

3. *Training* should be provided to all personnel, with necessary follow-up.

Thus, mainstreaming involves taking up gender equality perspectives in data collection, research, analysis, advisory and other services, training, as well as projects and programmes, to ensure that all processes take into account the contributions, priorities and needs of the entire stakeholder group, women as well as men.

Check your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What do you understand by the term *gender mainstreaming*?

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14.5 GENDER MAINSTREAMING: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

In order to make gender mainstreaming an important element of any development strategy, the following steps are required:

The first step required is ***an assessment of the linkages between gender equality and the issue or sector***, that is, to identify the gender implications of working on, for example, poverty elimination, agricultural development, energy programmes, peace and security, or enterprise development. This involves understanding why promotion of gender equality is important for achievement of all other development goals.

Secondly the ***opportunities for introducing gender perspectives need to be identified*** in the work-tasks undertaken. These opportunities or entry-points can be found in research and analysis, policy development, use of statistics, training events, as well as in planning, implementing and monitoring projects and programmes.

Thirdly an ***approach or methodology*** has to be identified for successfully incorporating gender perspectives into these work-tasks in a manne, which facilitates

influencing goals, strategies, resource allocation and concrete outcomes. Different work tasks require different approaches and methodologies.

Institutional development, in terms of developing guidelines, utilizing gender specialists, providing competence development for all personnel, is also required to support gender mainstreaming.

14.5.1 Implementation within the United Nations

There have been many achievements since consistent efforts to implement gender mainstreaming began in 1995 but huge gaps in implementation remain. It is important to be able to both identify and highlight the gains made as well as the obstacles and challenges remaining.

In recent years, a more positive policy environment for gender mainstreaming has developed. The greater recognition of the importance of social dimensions of development has resulted in increased attention to aspects such as community participation and ownership. This has facilitated a stronger focus on specific groups, including both women and men. The emergence of a more holistic framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development, with a strong focus on the empowerment of all stakeholders, also provides opportunities for greater responsiveness to the integration of gender perspectives. Much more needs to be done, however, to address the links between social and economic development.

14.5.2 Implementation at the Intergovernmental level

Considerable progress has been made at the intergovernmental level. There are at present very clear mandates on gender mainstreaming, including general overall mandates as well as very specific mandates for different areas, such as water, energy, entrepreneurship

and budgets. Commitments made at global level by Governments on integrating gender perspectives into different policy areas have supported the gender mainstreaming efforts at national and local levels. However, these commitments do help to ensure some change.

The Commission on the Status of Women is the principal policy-making body on gender equality at global level and gender mainstreaming is a standing item on the agenda of the Commission. Member States increasingly share experience and good practice on gender mainstreaming in their national statements to the Commission.

In the past, the Commission on the Status of Women was the only intergovernmental body, which systematically took up gender perspectives. At present, other bodies such as the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and some committees of the General Assembly regularly give attention to gender equality issues. The Security Council has in recent years also brought gender perspectives into discussions of peace and security.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Is Gender Mainstreaming important? If so why ?

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UNIVERSITY

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2. What does gender mainstreaming involve?

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14.6 CONSTRAINTS AND WEAKNESSES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the knowledge gained and the efforts made at research, data collection and policy development, several constraints remain:

1. Gender perspectives are still not seen as an integral routine part of development activities in all areas. The analysis of issues and policy formulation is not always informed by a consideration of gender differences and inequalities, and opportunities for narrowing gender gaps and supporting greater equality between women and men are not yet consistently identified.
2. Gender perspectives are not central to data collection, analyses, and budget allocations and planning processes; gender analysis is not utilized systematically and effectively; specific studies carried out on gender issues do not have the intended impact on policies and programmes to the extent anticipated.
3. At the institutional level, even where policies and strategies on gender equality are put in place, management commitment and political will are often not explicit; resource allocations have not been adequate; responsibilities are not spread evenly throughout organizations; there are no effective accountability mechanisms; and training has not proven to be effective, as implemented so far.
4. In addition, even where constructive efforts have been made, the process has not always been transformative. Efforts are still very much at the level of “adding on” gender perspectives. In this context, it needs to be stated of course that many organizations are starting from a very low level of knowledge, awareness and capacity. It is impossible to move from zero levels of competence to transformative processes.
5. Gender mainstreaming requires a process of change and there has to be constant monitoring of progress. Much of what is being called gender mainstreaming today is not, in fact, what was intended with the establishment of the strategy. Inappropriate use of the term gender mainstreaming does much disservice to the strategy and the original intentions. Misuse of the term is often due to misunderstanding of what

gender mainstreaming is. In other cases it stems from a lack of ability to effectively implement the strategy. It may, however, also be an attempt to discredit the strategy or to do away with special focuses on women or use of gender specialists. Gender advocates should more emphatically point out misuse of the concept of gender mainstreaming – especially clarifying that gender mainstreaming requires explicit attention to gender perspectives.

6. One of the reasons for lack of progress is the limited understanding among personnel in many organizations of the important linkages between gender perspectives and different sector areas. The knowledge produced through research on gender perspectives in different sectors and issues is not being disseminated and utilized as effectively as necessary. If the linkages between gender perspectives and all sector areas are made clear, effective action plans can be put in place and real changes made to the way work is carried out.
7. The challenges and constraints also include the fact that gender perspectives are not seen as essential for achieving the goals of all policy areas. Some organizations continue to base their work on the assumption that certain policy areas, for example macroeconomics and technical areas, are in principle “gender-neutral”. This makes efforts to incorporate gender perspectives very difficult. In areas where the gender perspectives are well known, such as in health, education and water sectors, the understanding of their importance to overall sector goals is not always clearly established. Even where analysis is relatively well developed, as in these same areas – health, education and water, there has been limited success in developing capacity for using this analysis in order to bring about needed changes at policy and programme levels.

8. Even some gender advocates often view gender mainstreaming as a purely technical process. There can be too much reliance on training and development of guidelines or other supportive materials, without adequate attention to the critical political aspects – including the need for top management commitment, resource allocation, supportive institutions, etc. There is increasing **practical experience that explicit and sustained senior management commitment can provide a powerful impetus to gender mainstreaming.**

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. State the problems involved in ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in policies and plans.

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14.7 THE WAY FORWARD: GUIDELINES

A number of key inter-linked constraints to gender mainstreaming can be identified which must be addressed in a more holistic framework, with strong support from senior management.

1. One of the most critical constraints is the fact that gender perspectives are not included as an integral part of initial analyses of issues and problems. If gender perspectives are not dealt with explicitly and adequately at this level, subsequent attempts to incorporate them can lead to resistance and to artificial “add-ons”. A presumable cause of this constraint is a second problem – the failure to recognize the value-added for achievement of all other goals of attention to gender perspectives.

More explicit policy links must be made in the critical guiding documents in organizations.

2. Developing a separate gender equality policy is not enough. This, in turn is linked to the lack of capacity to carry out and effectively utilize gender analyses. Even if the analyses prepared are sound, lack of willingness or capacity to apply them and to recognize and build on the policy and programmatic implications can hinder progress.

All of these constraints are in some way linked to the persistent false separation of economic and social development. Gender perspectives and the promotion of gender equality are still too often perceived as purely “social” or “soft” issues, and the critical importance of gender perspectives for macro-economic development is overlooked.

What can be done to meet some of the challenges and deal with the constraints? A number of important recommendations can be made to ensure more effective gender mainstreaming.

At operational or programmatic level, a number of conclusions can be drawn:

1. It is important to focus on the *goal of gender equality* and not simply to identify women as a "special group", and particularly not only as a vulnerable group.

2. There has to be greater understanding of the *linkages between gender equality and sector areas*; there remain some important sectors where the gender implications are not yet clearly defined. Perhaps the most important of these are macro-economics and technical areas.
3. There should be a stronger focus on the *gains for development* from increased gender equality, for example in the area of poverty eradication, democratic governance, or sustainable development. The value-added of working with gender perspectives should be made clear.
4. Greater attention has to be given to developing understanding of *how to effectively use gender analysis* to promote changes in policies and programmes; many training programmes include excellent gender analysis methodologies but neglect to assist participants in understanding how they can use these analysis methodologies on a day-to-day basis in their work.

At **institutional level**, there are a number of critical recommendations that should be made:

1. Policies and strategies on gender equality should not be developed without explicit attention to *accountability mechanisms*- including individual contracts with management and reporting requirements, as well as *competencies* required for effective implementation, including attention to how these competencies should be acquired within the organization.
2. *Training programmes should be more action-oriented*, which implies more than simply tailoring to specific sectors. Capacity-building must be focused on what participants do on a day-to-day basis and assist them to understand how they need to work differently to give adequate attention to gender perspectives.

3. Greater attention has to be given to *monitoring* progress and documenting and disseminating *good practice* examples.
4. Ways to ensure that *both senior and middle-level management* take on responsibility for, and promote and facilitate, gender mainstreaming need to be developed, and accountability mechanisms put in place to ensure their active involvement.
5. Gender advocates and specialists must play *more catalytic roles* - not trying to do gender mainstreaming for others but promoting, supporting and monitoring the implementation of the strategy in other departments/divisions.

Gender mainstreaming in a national context

Gender mainstreaming in a national context requires many of the elements already discussed in the context of the United Nations:

- Development of an overall policy – with roles and responsibilities and accountabilities of all line ministries clearly outlined, capacities needed for implementation identified, resources allocated and explicit top level commitment and support secured;
- Integration of gender perspectives in the policies and strategies of line ministries;
- Incorporation of gender perspectives into planning and budget processes;
- Mandated gender analysis at the initial stages of all policy and programme development;
- Sex-disaggregation of all data and collection of data needed to adequately carry out gender analyses and develop action plans;
- Clear outlines of the value of including gender perspectives in all sector areas, in particular the relationships to overall goals.

Institutional development required to support gender mainstreaming can include:

- Executive briefings for senior levels, including ministers;
- Development and delivery of hands-on training programmes for all categories and levels of programme staff;
- Development of guidance materials – briefing notes, fact sheets, guides and manuals – particularly on the use of analyses and data;
- Development of accountability mechanisms – through individual contracts, reporting procedures and monitoring and evaluation procedures;
- Development of incentives and sanctions, if culturally necessary and acceptable;
- Attention to the environment in which gender mainstreaming is to be implemented, including if necessary through a consultative gender audit;
- Explicit and sustained senior management commitment and involvement;
- Systematic monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements;
- Documentation and dissemination of good practice examples; and
- Catalytic roles for national machineries.

Although the focus of the discussion has been on Governments, many women's NGOs and networks have emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming in the work of NGOs as well as Governments. This is important whether the NGOs are focused on advocacy, human rights monitoring, service delivery, social movements or monitoring the commitments made by Governments in different areas. Mainstream NGOs do not necessarily take gender perspectives into consideration adequately. Other stakeholders at national level, such as parliamentarians, trade unionists and employer groups, also need to be sensitized to the need for gender mainstreaming to ensure that all policies and programmes at national level are gender-sensitive.

A greater discussion on the need for gender mainstreaming including as well ECOSOC decisions and case studies will be provided in the next unit. However, a brief insight into the manner in which India has worked towards gender mainstreaming has been provided.

14.8 GENDER MAINSTREAMING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, which not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The Committee on the Status of Women was created in 1971 to comprehensively examine all questions relating to the rights and status of women.

The Committee pointed out that gender, class, and urban bias was marginalizing a large majority of women in the economy and leading to their neglect and devaluation by the society and the State, and that the Indian development plans had to adequately acknowledge the involvement of millions of women in the major sectors of the economy.

The Department of Women and Child Development was established in 1985 under a Minister accountable to Parliament. As the national machinery for the advancement of women and children, the Department formulates plans, policies and programmes; enacts and amends legislation; guides and coordinates the efforts of Governmental Organizations (GOs) and NGOs; and implements innovative programmes in such areas as welfare and support services, training for employment and income generation, and awareness generation and gender sensitization. It developed a *National Perspective Plan for Women* (1988-2000) for economic development and integration of women into the mainstream of the economy, equity

and social justice. These and other efforts led to identifying operational tools for gender mainstreaming, including:

- Gender Focal Points: Establishing cells within sectoral development planning agencies.
- Women's Component Plan: Earmarking a share (a minimum of 30 per cent of the development funds) for women in various sectoral allocations. 18 Ministries and Departments are obliged to identify and allocate a separate budget for women in all their programmes and to follow this up by monitoring and review.
- Promoting women's organizations at the grass-roots.

Those empowered women are agents for social change and development are recognized in the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), which incorporates these strategies, signifying a shift in perspective from women in development approach to a gender approach.

Although it is often argued that globalization would also cause a decline of the welfare state, social sector expenditure has not declined in India after structural adjustment programmes (SAP). Rather, India initiated several new India-based nationwide programmes during this period: such as, Universal Elementary Education, Integrated Child Development Services, Reproductive and Child Health, Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP), and National Nutrition Mission. These programmes have been initiated with substantive allocations of funds. With these allocations made in the budget, the basic problem is with the utilization of allocations. In another words, this is an issue of governance and implementation.

Among the new initiatives, three made really significant impacts:

- (1) Decentralization of power and resources to elected women representatives;
- (2) Voluntary sector involvement; and
- (3) Self Help Group (SHG) movement.

The 1993 Amendments to the Indian Constitution provide for reservation of one- third of elected seats for women at different levels of local governance in both rural and urban areas. In some states this has been increased to half of elected seats. Women have captured seats of power in local governance in large numbers, often exceeding the reserved quotas, with significant impacts. The SHG movement of women in India is a silent revolution that is slowly but steadily changing the landscapes of many parts of the country. Small SHGs have proven an effective strategy for empowering women, and are the principal and most successful strategy in poverty alleviation, driven by their realization that the initiative to utilize and seek State resources and services for their own progress is primarily their prerogative. Across the country, more than 700,000 groups work on a range of issues such as literacy, health, nutrition, agricultural extension services, forestry, in addition to undertaking income generation activities and accessing microcredit. IWEP mentioned above has 53,000 SHGs at the base of the structural pyramid, with 26,500 Village Societies and 650 Block Societies above, and benefits 930,000 women. As an important strategy of eradicating poverty among women, these groups are engaged in issues relating to health, education, employment, and others; network with each other and attain confidence and negotiation skills; learn to design activities for their own benefit; and monitor and evaluate activities through a participatory process. As the end result, we would like to see poor women empowered to access assets and resources.

Over the past five decades, multi - sectoral interventions have brought about perceptible improvement in the status of women and increasing awareness on gender issues.

However, certain grey areas remain: violence against women, the unfavourable sex ratio, and

a lack of attention to the contribution of women farm workers and homemakers. Developing and establishing systems to collect and analyze data, disaggregated by sex, age, and location is a priority concern. Resource mobilization in the national budget is crucial for sustaining and expanding the efforts for gender equality. Greater efforts will also be needed to sensitize policy makers so that gender impact analysis is incorporated into the development of economic and social policies.

14.9 SUMMING UP

In conclusion, ensuring that both women and men will be able to influence decisions and resource allocations requires going beyond simply increasing the number of women in different positions, to providing real opportunities to both women and men for influencing the agendas, institutions and processes of development in all areas.

Values, norms, rules, procedures and practices can effectively restrict women's potential to make real choices, and make efforts to give explicit attention to relevant gender perspectives very difficult. For this reason, institutional development is a critical element in successful gender mainstreaming. The mainstream agenda can only be transformed when the perspectives of both women and men inform the design, implementation and outcomes of policies and programmes. This requires analyzing the gender perspectives in each and every area of development and using this analysis as the basis for policy and programme development. Gender mainstreaming also requires attention to effective consultation with and participation of women as well as men in all phases of development activities. In essence,

gender mainstreaming is about ensuring that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from all development processes.

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. And, like any other strategy, it is only as good as its implemented. Gender mainstreaming will remain a critical strategy for this new Millennium. There is a need to invest greater resources for ensuring enhanced understanding of the strategy and the ways in which it should be implemented, as well as increased attention to monitoring progress, and most importantly, to clearly celebrating its successes.

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Specific strategies, long-medium plans and budget, gender disaggregated data, policy recommendations.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Yes, it is important. Gender Mainstreaming is a process. It concentrates the development of all but specific to disadvantaged, marginalized. It is both top down and bottom up approach.

2. It involves putting policy into practice.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Lack of sensitivity among planners, lack of disaggregated data, lack of political will and commitment, lack of understanding, lack of commitment, considering gender as an added component plan instead of considering as a part.

14.11 GLOSSARY

Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP): Programme for economic reforms aimed at improving or liberalizing an economy, which is advocated and imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on developing countries in exchange for new loans.

Gender Perspective: Gender perspective looks at the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions.

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14.13 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Why is there a need for gender mainstreaming?
2. What does gender mainstreaming involve?
3. Why is there a lack of will in mainstreaming gender in policies?
4. What has been India's approach to mainstreaming gender?

UNIT: 15 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN POLICY RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND SCHEMES

Structure

15.1 Introduction

15.2 Objectives

15.3 Concept Introduction

15.4 Gender Equity and Gender Mainstreaming

15.5 Importance of Gender Mainstreaming in Planning

15.6 Increasing Women's Participation in Public Sphere

15.7 Gender Mainstreaming: Indian Scenario

15.7.1 Steps involved in engendering programme and planning

15.8 Summing Up

15.9 Glossary

15.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

15.11 References

15.12 Questions for Reflection and Practice

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming both as a concept and strategy was adopted in the Fourth World Conference in Beijing with an aim of mainstreaming gender perspective in different

areas of development and planning process. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy focuses at the paradigm shift from involving larger women in the development projects towards bringing gender equality to the core of all development works. This requires assessment of any planned project through its implication for both women and men so that both women and men can be the equal beneficiaries. As a strategy, gender mainstreaming requires attention towards gender perspective, making women visible in the development planning and linking gender concerns with the achievement of the development project. The outcome of gender mainstreaming can be done both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative evaluation measures the number of women participation or number of women beneficiaries in the project. Similarly, qualitative evaluation deals with the fact that how far women are capable of questioning the existing power imbalances and promoting equitable gender relations within the development project and process. Gender mainstreaming is focusing to liberate women from subordination to promote gender equality. Gender equality refers to women having equal opportunity along with men in life including the public sphere. This expresses the core idea of liberal feminism of removing the existing discrimination at the societal level and transforming the mainstreaming by reordering the gender relations.

15.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Describe the concept of gender mainstreaming in policy research;
- Discuss the activities carried out at the community level to bring gender equality by gender mainstreaming activities; and

- Explain the activities to be carried out at different levels for future gender mainstreaming activities.

15.3 CONCEPT INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming as a strategy has developed over decades to achieve gender equality and equity in the policy planning. Mainstreaming can be developed by considering the particular position of men and women in the society and by incorporating their needs and concerns in the policy planning. Gender mainstreaming as a process to attain gender equity and parity by questioning the mainstream structures who perpetuate the centralization of power.

Box 1: What is mainstreaming?

Society consists of two groups of people, i.e., who controls the power and those who are marginalized by the powerful. The power relation between the dominants and subjugates is present across the state, caste, community, religion, and gender. The dominants occupy the key positions in the social structures including institutions, processes, procedures and relationships; and the aggregation of these structures is referred as mainstream.

Mainstreaming as a strategy emerged during the decade of women between 1976-1985 to include gender perspective in the policy planning and development process. Various approaches during this period argued for having gender as the central theme in the process of decision-making. Moser proposed a radical approach and demanded a new system of gender planning while putting women at the center of development. In the United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi (1985), mainstreaming was recognized as a global strategy for achieving the goal of gender equality. Further, it was highly appreciated by European Commission while defining mainstreaming as the systematic consideration of the differences

between the condition, situation, and needs of women and men in all Community policies, at the point of planning, implementing and evaluation. With European Commission's endorsement and advocacy, mainstreaming was seen as a way through which gender perspective can be brought in the policy framework of the country to benefit both women and men. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy was often questioned on the ground that to what extent this strategy will be able to question the existing patriarchy that perpetuates gender inequality.

Box 2: Look at what is gender mainstreaming!

It is a process of redefining women's and men's involvement in determining who does what, who has the ownership, who has access to education, employment, income, who controls resources and institutions and who makes decisions and who determines priorities.

As Connell points out gender mainstreaming project challenges the existence of gender ordering of the society and the gender arrangement in a group and an organization. The core principle of gender mainstreaming is that the gender order of the society needs transformational change and it can be occurred through deliberate interventions at every level. Therefore, gender mainstreaming aims at planned and structured strategies to bring transformation in the social constructed notion of gender relations at different levels of society, organization, projects, and development process. There are various approaches followed in the conceptualization of gender mainstreaming. The approach of Women in Development (WID) that was developed during 1970s from the perspective of liberal

feminism focused on women's needs and concerns while working towards real development. Further this approach called for inclusion of women in the development process and planning. The poverty approach of 1970s saw underdevelopment as the core issues and therefore, called for improving the material conditions of women by encouraging women's participation in their own development and within the existing gender order. In contrast, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach aimed to dismantle the socially constructed basis of gender differences between men and women, therefore, this approach in development policy challenged the fixed gender roles and relations in the society. GAD approach refers gender to be a relational term and change in the society can only be achieved through disowning the power relations and conflict that exist between men and women. Along with these approaches, there are approaches like empowerment and efficiency in bringing gender mainstreaming in development process and policy-making. However, International Development Agencies have adopted dual approaches like combining WID with above said other approaches. The integration approach brings gender concerns and perspectives in policy, programme, procedure, administration, and financial activities of the development plan. Gender mainstreaming comprises of gender equality, equity, and empowerment.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. When did mainstreaming strategy emerge?

2. What is the aim of gender mainstreaming?

15.4 GENDER EQUITY AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In the context of mainstreaming, gender equality conceptualized as;

- Men and women have equal opportunity to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political institutions to realize their potentials.
- It recognizes and accepts the similarities and differences with regard to specific needs and concerns of both men and women.
- Ensures both qualitative and quantitative participation of men and women in the process of development.

Box 3: Do you know the approaches of gender mainstreaming?

WID Approach- Improving the material condition of women

GAD Approach- Challenging the power relations and roles within the society

Equity Approach- Focused on women's strategic gender needs

Efficiency Approach- Attempted to harness women's labour for effective development

Empowerment Approach- Focused on women's need those are identified by the women

themselves

Integration Approach- Aims at integrating women's awareness and efficiency into mainstream development.

15.5 IMPORTANCE OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PLANNING

Planning is a function which constitutes the important part of policy formulation process. Gender blind and gender neutral approaches to planning do not allow the adoption of appropriate policies which can serve to bridge inequalities between men and women. From the beginning the concept of gender did not gain legitimate place in the planning process. According to Little public policy formulation process are characterized by a lack of gender planning methodologies. According to Moser it is assumed that being a woman is a sufficient qualification or that woman will automatically be in a position to engage in gender planning. The policy makers are also not equipped technically and methodologically to formulate the policies in gender perspective. International conferences on women and the development of various approaches related to gender development give importance to incorporate gender issues in policy process. The mainstreaming process also talks about gender in planning process. The following points will briefly talk about the importance of gender mainstreaming in planning:

- Women and men experience life differently; therefore their differential needs and priorities need a place in the policy and development.

- Women are more prone to violence due to their inaccessible to education, employment, and health care.
- To ensure equitable governance, it is necessary to focus on the concept of gender justice
- Women needs to claim share from general and women specific programmes as well
- Women specific programmes such as RCH policy, poverty eradication programme, and mother and child support programmes are not sufficient to question gender inequality at a larger scale.
- Issues and concerns relating to gender inequality affect the policies and developments at all the sectors, therefore, gender perspective is important to bring structural change.

The Gender Management System (GMS) of Commonwealth adopted a stakeholder approach to change all the structures which are promoting and perpetuating inequalities in the society. The stakeholder strategy believes that some transformation in the structures can be brought by the partnership or having collaboration between the state and other civil bodies.

Waal proposed a gender mainstreaming evaluation framework of development programmes and suggested a few indicators like parity, equality, equity, empowerment, and transformation of gender mainstreaming. Within this gender mainstreaming framework, the project can be evaluated through criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and substantiality. This evaluation framework was adopted in South Africa to evaluate the development projects from a gender perspective.

Box 4: The Case of South Africa

The South African National Gender Machinery adopted GMS towards gender mainstreaming in the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and

Gender Equality. The Gender Policy Framework of South Africa aims at bringing change by ensuring gender equality at all the levels of structures, procedures, process, and programmes. The government has committed to include Gender and Development Indicators and Gender Empowerment Measure to evaluate the policies at national and regional level. Further, South Africa evaluates progress of the Nation through indicators like ensuring women's participation in political decision-making, women's access to professional opportunities, and women's contribution towards economy.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Explain how gender equality is conceptualized?

15.6 INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SPHERE

The Beijing Platform for Action played significant role to increase the percentage of women in decision making structure. A report by the UN Department of Public Information showed that by mid 1989 countries with highest number of women in cabinet and legislative assemblies were Norway, Sweden, Bhutan, Cuba and Romania. The goal of the Beijing platform was to reverse the situation of the women by creating strategies to ensure equal representation of women at all levels. In the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action

formulated the activities in the areas including information collection and data base development, research and analysis, operational activities including advisory services, technical assistance and training and public outreach and information dissemination. These activities were planned as part of mainstream programmes. Increasing the women's percentage in decision making position was the main priorities of the UN. The UN committed to ensure that 50 % of its decision making positions would be taken up by the year 2000. The inter agency committee for women and gender equality was created to ensure implementation by monitoring activities to ensure that the goals and objectives of women in power and decision making were fulfilled. Internally also UN system has increased the number of women in decision making position. There are number of initiatives taken at globally. The African National Congress has committed by reserving 30 % of Parliament seats and 50% of Local Government seats for women. The organizations like women's voice and the association of Malawian professional women working for women's empowerment work towards putting more women into electoral process.

15.7 GENDER MAINSTREAMING: INDIAN SCENARIO

In Indian context, the development of gender studies have added much thought to bringing gender perspective in policy planning by challenging the structure of patriarchy and the structured gender relations and gender roles. However, the development of gender sensitive policy planning had addressed two major problems of women, i.e., poverty and the violation of human rights. On the contrary, decentralization of political processes and reservation for women and marginalized communities at the grassroots level has opened way towards their larger participation in the political process. The passing of 73rd and 74th

Constitutional Amendment Act paved the way for women to enter into decision making bodies at the Rural and Urban Local bodies. The constitutional Amendment Act reserved 33.3 % of the seats at all levels for women. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act mandated the local bodies to plan for socio-economic development in their respective constituencies. The efforts of Civil Society Organizations made women in Local Bodies to allocate certain percentage of resources for women related activities. To some extent, the participation of women in the political process has impacted the distribution and allocation of government resources and programmes for benefiting women and the marginalized communities. As argued, there are barriers such as economic disempowerment of women, male resistance to women's participation in political process, upper caste's resistance to Dalits occupying position in the public domain, women's lack of accessibility to knowledge, literacy, and other skills towards bringing transformation and change in the mainstream policy planning and process. These existing socio-economic and political aspects of gender oppression called for political, economic, and social empowerment of women from marginalized communities. The study carried out by Murthy on the impact of women in local bodies has given the following suggestions for strengthening gender perspective in all activities of local bodies. According to her the gender transformative capacity building that requires a combination of three strategies such as advocacy, capacity, and organizational to bring change in the gender order. The change needs to be brought with regard to following factors;

- Improving women's access to and control over productive units
- Increasing the productivity of women's labour by expanding their access to knowledge, information, and training
- Increasing women's returns by expanding their access to labour market and establishing right over their produce and commodity

- Increasing women's control over their income and their ability to use the income for their substance and the survival of the family
- Increasing women's control over their body and fertility
- Enhancing women's capacity to exercise political power and ascertain their rights against the state

In India, gender transformative capacity building has started with the spread of liberal discourse on gender. The decade of 1990s saw the increasing use of gender training programmes towards capacity building efforts at the grass-root level. The widespread adoption of gender neutral and gender ameliorative training by aid agencies, government, and non-governmental organizations made efforts to strengthen the skills of women in specific areas which are defined by the gender based division of labour. In this process of gender transformative training, various programmes were initiated by women activists having its root in socialist feminist ideology. Various programmes such as Women's Development Programme and Mahila Samakhya in 1980s and 1990s respectively were carried out towards capacity-building for women and to some extent were capable to wide out women's subordination by improving the existing conditions of economy and power relations.

Box 5: Training by Women's Development Programme (WDP)

The Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj of Government of Rajasthan launched WDP to empower women through dissemination of information, education, and training at the community level and to enable them to improve their socio-economic conditions. The selection of village level workers and block level workers, programme

planning, evaluation procedures were done through training. The central philosophy behind this training programme was to build up the climate of questioning, understanding, discovering, and sharing experiences of people with regard to the social perception of women. This training programme was facilitated through various continuous communications between women village level workers with women folk of the village and other centers. The programme helped in exploring the existing problems and different forms of oppression faced by women at the village level.

Self-help Training Programmes

Women centered health care centers are evolved in the process of providing self-help training programme in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. The self-help workshops on women centred health care tried to understand 'health' from women's perspective by looking at their social and economic conditions. They question women's subordination to patriarchy and the economic development paradigm and identify women's specific health needs. In this context, self-help was adopted as a methodology, in which the participants of the workshop share their experiences, conflict, and struggles to bring a collective strategy for empowerment. The discussions surrounded around various thematic areas such as body politics, fertility and sexuality, and the mental health of women. Similarly, self-help skills were introduced and taught to women participants to identify their basic reproductive needs. For example, physical examination of the body, breast examination, inserting diaphragm and so on are being taught to women as part of this training programme. The impact of the training programme has been visible in bringing attitudinal change at the level of family and community and started women's resource centres at the village to share women's problem and providing sex education .

Gender mainstreaming as a concept has gained attention amongst the academicians, policy analysts, and development planners in the past decades. Gender mainstreaming as a concept aims at analyzing the ways in which women have been marginalized from the development process and planning. In an important paper that analyses how women can be incorporated in the development planning, Kabeer argues that several decades of development has experienced the exclusion of women from the development planning and policies, in turn it has highlighted the flaws in the planning process and given various insights to formulate alternative framework for thinking about development from a gender perspective. There are some biased procedures involved while carrying out field research and partly it occurred due to the social and conceptual gap between the policy – makers and the people for who the planning have been made. Chamber identified three types of procedural biases such as seasonal bias, people bias, and roadside bias involved during conducting poverty research. Similar kind of biases work towards keeping women away from development process and planning.

Kabeer identified a few categories for which women have not been included in the development process. She viewed factors like 1. development projects concentrate on things and not on the people and 2. fallacies of aggregation are responsible for marginalizing gender within the policy framework. For example, the projects on infrastructural development assumed either men as the primary beneficiaries or assume that since the project does not specify men or women as beneficiaries, therefore the project is gender-neutral. Similarly, fallacy of aggregation explains the fact that the usage of concepts like the community, the poor, and the peasants in the project seems to treat all the people or beneficiaries as undifferentiated category, therefore, the planners often neglect the inevitable issues of power and conflict between men and women. For example, while using the concept ‘the household’, the planners and development practitioners assume that the benefits of the development

projects will trickle down to the head of the household and further moved down to all the members of the household. In this context, the planners play little attention to the fact that equality and egalitarianism are not necessarily being the features of household. This example looks at the issue of exclusion of women from the research and policy planning.

15.7.1 Steps Involved in Engendering Programme and Planning: The following steps are involved in engendering the programme and planning process;

- Ensuring vision, mission, constituency and geographical area reflect a gender perspective.
- Examine the gender disaggregated statistical data and qualitative profile for the geographical area where the organization is working.
- Encourage programme staff at all levels of organization to examine and evaluate gender-specific constraints and opportunities at the level of household, community, village, market, and the state.
- Encourage to develop gender-specific programme which can enable the constituency to move from present to desired state.
- Ensure that the programme strategies in relation to welfare, anti-poverty, equality of opportunity need to be combined with empowerment and equity approach.

Box 6: Recommendations for Future Gender Mainstreaming Activities

National Government Level

What to do?

- Ensure that gender sensitization, gender analysis, capacity building training are

built into ongoing staff training.

- Mainstream gender equality into the educational curriculum.
- Introduce rewards and recognition for good gender mainstreaming work.
- Sensitize policy makers on the importance of gender equality in development planning.
- Built and strengthen gender sensitive infrastructure.
- Make technology, in particular the media and internet, responsible and gender sensitive.
- Institute Government policies to faster: 1. Gender integration in systems and processes; 2. Recruitment of female staff at all levels; and 3. Promotion of NGO/GO partnerships for gender equality in development initiatives.

Organizational Level

What to do?

- Allocate resources (human and financial) for gender mainstreaming.
- Undertake continuing capacity building on Gender and Development (GAD).
- Conduct gender audit or other organizational gender assessment process.
- Institutionalize sharing, exchange and learning on gender mainstreaming and gender programming.
- Integrate the application, documentation and dissemination of social and gender analysis into development programming.
- Network and build linkages with other organizations working to promote gender equality.

Community Level

What to do?

- Built community equality and self sustainability into all community level development interventions.
- Built gender sensitive support system in the community.
- Formalize and strengthen the capacity of women's association and involve men in the process.
- Sensitize local on leaders on the importance of gender equality in community work.
- Challenge and transform community norms that sustain gender discrimination.

Household Level

What to do?

- Increase the level of gender awareness of all family members.
- Encourage the involvement of entire family in household and productive work.
- Put special focus on male family members and solicit their support for women's participation in house hold decision making and their leadership in community development activities.

Individual Level

What to do?

- Conduct gender counseling and mentorship for individuals.
- Hold gender training and capacity building workshops.
- Facilitate individual participation and creation of social groups among women.
- Encourage them to stand up against any kind of gender discrimination and to share and learn from experiences.

- Increase literacy, access to information and socio economic status.

Reference: Gender mainstreaming in Action: Successful Innovations from Asia and the Pacific, published by Interaction's Commission on the Advancement of Women and the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction.

Box 7: A holistic approach to Gender and Development

Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world faces various socio-economic problems from illiteracy to unemployment, discrimination to social violence. Lives of girls and women are well defined and all the social evils like childhood marriage, early marriage, low literacy, voiceless and treating women as second class citizens are rampant in Nepal society. Apart from this domestic violence, anemia are also prevalent. Heifer Nepal a non-profit organization that works in partnership with others to alleviate hunger, poverty and environmental degradation through livestock and related knowledge is working to address these problems through its gender focused programme. Heifer believes that a strong family is the foundation for just and sustainable community. So it targets both men and women to sensitize gender issues. All these gender issues were addressed through creating awareness, strengthening the family, participatory approaches and various training activities. By forming and working through women's groups all gender issues were addressed. In this process men were also involved. In the traditional Nepalese society bringing women out of home is very difficult. The gender development

programmes not only targets women it also trains men. By forming groups and providing farm animals Heifer made women as successful entrepreneurs. The group women enjoyed the benefits of empowerment such as improved living, recognition from Government and other NGOs and more significantly male counter parts also appreciated them. In the beginning women were provided with farm animals. When the animals reproduce the first female offspring of that animal will be given to the needy women in that community. In this process more women were benefited and women saved money by selling animals. Money was mobilized into microcredit project and more and more groups were formed. Over the period of ten years these women became very skillful, strong and confident and are able to handle community development projects all by themselves. The respect and continuing support from the family members, positive advice from male counterparts their ability to take up responsibility and leadership, the ever growing relationship with various donor agencies and the small micro credit project run under group savings and credit programme are all good signs of self reliance and project sustainability. This case shows that including men in the planning process is also important so that the entire community will benefit. Inculcating leadership and organizational development is also important for the sustainability of the project. During the process women were trained on animal management. That is also very essential. Adopting holistic approach leads to a holistic social change.

Reference: Gender mainstreaming in Action: Successful Innovations from Asia and the Pacific, published by Interaction's Commission on the Advancement of Women and the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction

Box 8: Domestic violence in India: Community Response

Around the world one out of every three women having experienced domestic violence.

A study conducted by ICRW in partnership with the International Network of Clinical Epidemiologists entitled India Safe 2000 found that nearly 52 % of the women experience psychological and physical violence in their marriage. Nearly 40 % reported physical violence, and of these, 50 % were physical violence committed during pregnancy. Only 30 % sought help, and most of them went to family and neighbours.

Community level arbitration is often the most accessible means to poor women to find resolution to the violence. But often the patriarchal values and socialization process made women to accept violence. In the year 1996 the Nari Adalat and the Mahila panch that were evolved as the national level group from Mahila Samakya. This was launched in the two states of UP and Gujarat in India. In the Mahila Samakya programme women collectives were formed at the village level for learning reflection and collective action. Ten sangas formed as a cluster and every cluster has Sayahogini a woman who receives monthly honorarium to play the role of activist, organizer and resource person. The sangas not only concentrated village issues in the beginning, it also highlights the social evils. The success of sorting of these social issues paved the way for them to concentrate controversial issues such as violence against women. The domestic violence occurs both at the village level and personal lives of functionaries and other women. The Sahayoginis, the functionaries of Mahila Samakya Programme, developed a support group to address each others personal problems. They discuss domestic violence at the group and they arrive at a mutually acceptable solution by successfully sorting out domestic violence even though they face some limitations like kinship ties, the pressure

of village level politics, caste and family dynamics. more and more cases were taken up and solved. The legal committee renamed itself the Nari Adalat and began first in Baroda District of Gujarat in September 1995. The Mahila Panch in Rajkot district and the Nari Adalat in Sharanpur District in Uttar Pradesh both became functional in 1998. The name Nari Adalat (women's court) was consciously selected to represent alternative legal structure where women can access justice at their terms with minimal expense and through empowering process without fear, shame or guilt. The first step was to build a feminist perspective among Sanga women on gender based violence and legal responses to the issues. The Shayoginis and representatives from various collectives underwent a rigorous three month phased training programme which included issues such as strong feminist critique of the legal system, understanding of women's status in the society, law pertaining to women, the conceptual understanding of violence against women, mediation and arbitration technique etc. These perspectives have shaped both the way in which these interventions interpret terms such as maintenance, custody, compensation as well as a non negotiated women centre approach.

Reference: Gender mainstreaming in Action: Successful Innovations from Asia and the Pacific, published by Interaction's Commission on the Advancement of Women and the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction

Check Your Progress Exercise 3:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What are categories identified by Kabeer for which women have not been included in the development process?

15.8 SUMMING UP

The above discussion and the case studies have shown us Gender-positive approach in gender mainstreaming initiatives can bring gender equality and substantive equality in the society. Successful mainstreaming at different level requires leadership and commitment. The case studies have taught us invaluable lessons. The gender mainstreaming initiative at the community level highlighted the importance of sensitizing and generating awareness among all community members—female and male. It is also important to involve community members from the beginning in all kinds of gender related interventions. This will bring sense of ownership among community members. The organizations working at the community level adopted different strategies to achieve gender equality and it is a process and not an end by itself.

15.9 GLOSSARY

European Commission: European Commission is one of the institutions involved in European Union decision making. The commission is both the institution and the college of

commissioners. There is currently one commissioner from each European Union country. Since 2002 the commission has been working to simplify and improve the regulatory environment in the European Union. This means cutting red tape, making better laws for consumers and business alike.

Gender Management System (GMS): Gender management system is a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organizational work to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organizational work, in order to achieve greater equality and equity within the context of sustainable development. A GMS may be established at any level of Government or in institutions such as Universities, Inter governmental or Non-Governmental Organizations, private sector organizations are trade unions.

ICRW: International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) is a global research institute with headquarters in Washington D.C and regional offices in Nairobi, Kenya and New Delhi, India. ICRW are thought leaders driven by a passion to alleviate poverty and rectify injustice in the world. It believes that women and girls in developing countries in collaboration with men and boys are essential to the solutions. It also believes that when their quality of life improve families are healthier and economies are stronger.

15.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

1. 1976-1985

2. Gender mainstreaming aims at planned and structured strategies to bring transformation in the social constructed notion of gender relations at different levels of society, organization, projects, and development process.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. Men and women have equal opportunity to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political institutions to realize their potentials.
It recognizes and accepts the similarities and differences with regard to specific needs and concerns of both men and women.
Ensures both qualitative and quantitative participation of men and women in the process of development.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3:

1. Development projects concentrate on things and not on the people and fallacies of aggregation are responsible for marginalizing gender within the policy framework.

15.11 REFERENCES

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15.12 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Explain the steps involved in engendering programme and planning.
2. What are the major recommendations for gender mainstreaming at different organizational levels?
3. Write a case study for holistic approach to gender and development.

UNIT 16: GENDER MAINSTREAMING OF STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS

Structure

16.1 Introduction

16.2 Objectives

16.3 Historical development

16.3.1 National Machinery

16.3.2 Institutional structures in India

16.4 Development over a Period of Time in India

16.5 National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001

16.6 Summing Up

16.7 Glossary

16.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

16.9 References

16.10 Questions for Reflection and Practice

16.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is divided into three sections. The first section deals with a brief history as well as a running analysis of state agencies that the Indian state has set up from time to time (starting from 1953) to be accountable for women in the context of development planning and the realization of Constitutional commitments to them. This section includes some general discussion on the thinking on and the main ideological approaches towards women's equality following the Indian Constitutional mandates, which influenced the working of these agencies.

The second section presents a deeper analysis of the external and internal environment in which changes in these institutions have functioned; as well of changes that have taken place over the decades, especially those influenced by the United Nations, the International Women's Decade and the four World Conferences on women.

The third section deals with the exigencies of preparing a plan of action in the context of the provisions of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001 given the institutional context as well as other features of the Indian democratic polity. It looks specifically at the contemporary period of the nineties and after, the Beijing World Conference on Women, the setting up of the National and State Commissions on Women and offers suggestions for implementing the National Policy For the Empowerment of Women through interaction and close involvement of the larger constituency of women outside the government – broadly termed as the Indian women's movements – who have contributed in substantial measure to the ideation, the philosophical underpinnings and the discourse on women, rights and development since the seventies.

16.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Describe the historical context of women in development process in India;

- Analyse the external and internal factors which paved way for women in development; and
- Explain the recent development with regard to women empowerment.

16.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

As the largest democracy in the world India has always enjoyed the freedom to experiment with a variety of forms and modes of organizations and organizational working in what can be called very broadly, the social sector, and more specifically, the area of women's equality or women's status. The earliest of these was initiated in the beginning of the post-Independence period (in the early fifties) long before the United Nations during the International Women's Decade and the World Conferences on Women (in the mid-seventies to the mid-nineties) succeeded in 'globalizing' the concept of "National Machinery" in all its member countries throughout the world.

The Indian Constitution accorded to the State the role of the prime mover in bringing about social change – the State was charged with the responsibility of ensuring, among other goals, the Fundamental Right to equality between the sexes (Article 14) and the absence of discrimination on the basis of sex (Article 15[1]).

The concept of 'National Machinery' came into public consciousness throughout the world during the International Women's Decade followed by the four World Conferences on Women (1975-1995). The phrase itself belongs to the UN discourse. The task of ensuring the implementation of the Plan of Action

(Mexico), the Program of Action (Copenhagen), the Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi) and the Platform of Action (Beijing) was primarily cast on the state.

For carrying out his task there had to be some institutional set up under the state.

This was how National Machinery was initially envisaged.

16.3.1 National Machinery

Broadly speaking, National Machinery was understood to mean any body or bodies designated by the state to deal with the overall promotion of the status of women. It was a flexible concept, not very narrowly defined. It covered executive and **operational** agencies such as Ministries, departments, Bureaux,

etc. as well as **advisory** bodies and committees, commissions, etc. But they had to be specially designated as such and had to bear the imprint of state approval.

One of the main objectives of National Machinery (NM) was to ensure integrated planning and implementation of comprehensive strategies and plans for women's advancement. The location of NM was either within the state or closely linked to the state. NM was very much a creature of the state. At the same time, since the world-wide member countries of the UN were governed by a very wide variety of political and administrative systems, no blue print could be handed down which could suit the needs of all countries. Where NM had to be a mixture of government and non-government, it was expected to be strong enough to exert enough power and influence on the state. But NM was always more or less identified with the government and the bureaucratic set up. Its configuration tended to be that of ***centrally located machinery***, created at the national level, with a central office, which interacted with all the relevant administrative structures at other levels. The basic premise underlying the concept of NM is that power resides at a central point in a large system, which then flows to structures

at lower levels. The movement of concepts, policies, strategies and services is top down.

16.3.2 Institutional Structures in India

The earliest set of institutional structures for women set up by the State in India is the Central Social Welfare Board and the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards. Placed outside the bureaucratic framework, yet seen clearly as an initiative of the State, the Boards enjoyed, especially in the early part of their life, a unique position. This was the result of tapping into **two** constituencies - the voluntary sector, and women. The Boards fostered women's leadership but also made the State accountable to them. Durgabai's (the founder-chairperson) leadership ensured and fostered close coordination amongst different state agencies working for women. Among these were the Community Development program, the All India Handicrafts Board, National Committee on Family Planning, National Commission on Adult Education, National Committee on Children, etc. She had a genius for institution building that ensured that the Boards became identified with the idea of working for women on behalf of the government of the day. In spite of the inescapable ravages of time, the Boards even now continue to be run by women and to work almost solely through voluntary organizations. The weaknesses of the Boards, over the years, arose from its inability to adhere to some of their main objectives – creation of women-led voluntary organizations in those areas where such resources are missing, and secondly, its neglect of priorities for women – such as influencing social policy formulation – other than the purely programmatic and funding functions.

Unlike the Boards, most of the formations of NM that came later on were embedded within the larger structures of the government. Among them could be counted the Women's Bureau (1976), a separate Department of Women and Child Development (1985) and a plethora of 'special structures' for women such as Divisions (The Women's Division in NIPCCD), cells (Labor Ministry, Ministry for Science and Technology, Ministry for Rural Development, Ministry of Industrial Development, NCERT, Ministry of Agriculture), parallel women-specific agencies (such as Women's Directorates in the states in place of umbrella directorates for social welfare), separate institutions for economic advancement of women (such as the Women's Development Corporations, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh) and finally the National and State Commissions for Women, both statutory and non-statutory. The last-named represent efforts to grant women functional and political autonomy.

In addition, there were short-term committees, boards, and commissions, some of which were predominantly non-official, though constituted by and retaining links with the State. These were usually meant for specific tasks, like investigation into a particular aspect of the women's question (study of women prisoners and women in custodial situations, women workers in the unorganized, informal and self-employment sectors) or to help plan formulation and policymaking (Planning Commission working committees and groups on women's employment, organizations for rural women, status of women in science and technology establishments) etc. The most comprehensive bench mark of women's status that was presented in 1975 – 'Towards Equality' – was the outcome of a Government-sponsored report through a Committee (predominantly

non-official, but very much a creation of the Ministry of Social Welfare) that was debated in Parliament and follow up initiated through the system-wide Government machinery.

In Government documents, the arrangement of the NM is shown in terms of an ordered hierarchical power structure. Thus, the Country Paper that the Department of Women and Child prepared for the Beijing conference in 1995 shows NM “with its institutional support” diagrammatically as a series of concentric circles, with the Department of Women and Child Development (NM) at the center and other government agencies and non-government agencies, commissions etc. arranged within the series of larger circles around the center. Similarly, the Department of Women and Child Development brought out a report titled “Platform for Action – Five Years After – An Assessment” in 2000 in which it states, “The machinery for women’s advancement is visualized as a set of structures and systems with the Department at the center”. Another way of representation of NM is a vertically ordered diagrammatic format, in which the nodal or focal point is right on top and the other agencies arranged in descending formations, in order of their power and strength. The concept of the **focal** or **nodal** point for women is also tied in with this thinking and approach to NM. A nodal point becomes the point of reference for all questions relating to the theme or subject of women within the larger configuration of the government and state establishments. Implied in this approach is the sense of power, flowing from the center to the periphery, from top to down. Also embedded in this thinking is an **exclusive** approach to defining NM, in terms of limiting the numbers and types

of structures that go to make up NM in accordance to their proximity to bureaucratic power.

In a departure from this approach, there is another approach which deliberately advocates an ***inclusive*** approach to listing agencies as components of NM. This is at variance not only with the approach followed in the Indian state documents, but also with the approach adopted in the early years of the UN's engagement with the IWD and the World Conferences. The ***exclusive*** approach is to see a particular agency or a small set of agencies within the heart of the government's decision-making system, as being primarily responsible for the women's question. Exclusiveness in defining the constituents of the machineries often leads to stress on hierarchical functioning and non-transparency, among other deficiencies and weaknesses.

NM for women should be more broadly defined so as to include all institutions – government, non-government, central and state governments, local governments, all of which support the cause of women or the concept of women's advancement. It argues that not only agencies and structures, but also mechanisms such as the budget for women or other innovative features of organizational functioning should be included in the definition. The phrase 'national machinery' does not properly convey the entirety of this dimension. NM, on the other hand, conjures a picture of a Delhi-centric entity or entities, that by implication, enjoy a position of higher power vis-à-vis the formations at the state and the panchayat levels. This is not in tune with the tradition of India's strong federal system. The term 'institutional mechanisms' (which is used in the

Beijing Platform of Action) is a more appropriate one than NM. Mechanisms evolve, change and respond to movements in the environment. It goes far beyond a finite number of agencies and structures. Mechanisms could constantly innovate, could bond different types of agencies in new patterns, and prioritize method and process over procedures, formats and frameworks. That UN itself has changed the nomenclature and the definition of NM over the decades is truly significant.

The philosophy and practice of state-sponsored welfare and socialism and the dominance of decision making in the public arena in India did not prevent the growth of healthy people's movements based on social campaigns and social action. The women's movement, whose third wave coincided with the International Women's Decade, has been a major force making specific contributions to policy as well as advocacy for women. Heterogeneity, pluralism and diversity have been the abiding features of the Indian polity. The Indian women's movements have reflected a variety of ethnic religious, ideological and economic interests. This has helped in highlighting the specificities of the women's situation through the powerful instrumentality of women's studies. Women's studies created classifications and categories in areas such as the informal and unorganized sector, urban slums, artisanal groups, dalits, adivasis, female headed households, the girl child, adolescent age groups, etc. It sharply delineated aspects of poverty and exploitation in the context of gender. It has highlighted the importance of gender analysis, at the social construction of gender and of the differential impact of gender on men and women. Its intellectual output has contributed to prevent a simplistic homogenization in the

name of women in state policies and programs. Within women's studies, interest groups highlighted those aspects that are specific to women and gender relations with a commitment to feminist values.

This adds to and reinforces the justification and the rationale for adopting an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach to defining state machinery for women's advancement. UN itself has, over the two post-Mexico Conference decades of its own involvement with the women's question (1975-1995), shifted its focus from an exclusive to a more inclusive approach. It has done this as part of its own learning curve. The Beijing Platform of Action (1995) represents a break with the past approaches. This is in contrast with the first World Conference on Women in Mexico (1975) when stress was laid on "the establishment of interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral machinery within Governments, such as National Commissions, Women's Bureaux, and other bodies with adequate staff and budget ..." (Mexico Plan of Action 1975, emphasis added). In the same vein, the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies called for "appropriate machinery with sufficient resources and authority to be established at the highest level of government as a focal point to ensure that the full range of development policies and programs in all sectors recognizes women's contribution to development ..." (1985, emphasis added)

Using the term 'institutional mechanisms' in place of 'national machinery', we could roughly make the following categorizations :

State sponsored dedicated agencies for women, such as Commissions, Boards, Committees, Councils, Corporations, Women's Resource Centers, Women's Studies Centers, grass roots formations such as mahila mandals, self-help groups.

To this could be added the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women, constituted to play a review and watchdog role vis-à-vis the government agencies and keep issues of women's status under constant review

Government structures with a mandate for women, such as Ministries, Departments, Directorates, focal points, Bureaux, Cells, Desks, Coordination mechanisms such as inter-agency committees.

Institutions of local government such as panchayats at all three tiers and urban local bodies to which are delegated vast administrative, financial and legal powers across the development sectors, including social sector and women's development and rights.

Mechanisms such as budgets, plans and policies such as gender budgets, component plans for women, action plans, monitoring mechanisms such as human development reports, audit systems (gender audit, social audit), appraisals and evaluations (gender analysis, participatory exercises), to these can be included the grass roots innovations now capturing attention such as jan sunwais (public hearings), informal and open hearings in the style of courts or other judicial bodies.

Women's bodies and groups such as voluntary, feminist, action, action-research, academic, educational, advocacy, networks, women's studies (autonomous as well as non-government sponsored), federations, trade unions, cooperatives, grass roots, mahila mandals (autonomous or community-based), youth and other age groups, ad-hoc groups based on campaign or other modes, watch dog bodies, local monitoring groups.

Other groupings such as traditional institutions (in tribal areas for example), traditional village councils, armed forces, political parties, houses of parliament or state assemblies, etc. Women's groups sometimes use traditional institutions to broaden their campaigns for rights of women belonging to that community. An example is that of Rajasthan WDP which secured the largely male-dominated tribal community groups' approval for their campaign on tribal women's property and other rights. However, usually community power groups are anti-women's rights. If any clear trend is discernible, in the last four decades, it is the lessening of polarities between what is considered "the Government" and "the non-Government" – an unmistakable movement towards interdependence.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Define National Machinery.

2. What are the tasks developed in four UN women conferences?

16.4 DEVELOPMENT OVER A PERIOD OF TIME IN INDIA

In India, the replacement of structures and formations from time to time, their modification, renewal, new growth and creation etc. has also been influenced by emerging concepts of and approaches to women's development. In the last five decades, development planning for women has straddled theories as wide ranging as welfare, development, equity, efficiency and empowerment. The institutional structures have also undergone changes in response to these evolutionary trends. The state (just after independence and the advent of the five year plans) saw women as a handicapped category, and as appropriate recipients of welfare doles. Today the State talks of women's empowerment, of women as active agents, participating in planning and guiding their own development. While the International Women's Decade was a strong catalyst in managing the shift from welfare to development, the publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India "Towards Equality" in 1974-1975 was a significant water-shed. The Committee's focus on women as economic actors and active producers in the subsistence households and primary markets

stimulated research, especially in the unorganized sector. This report and the outcome of the first World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 led to the establishment of structures such as the women's bureau, women's development corporations and women's cells within ministries. **The catchword or phrase then, was “women in development”.**

There has, however, always been a mismatch between the growth and evolution of concepts and theories on the one hand and action at the grass roots. A working group set up by the Government of India to prepare the Chapter on Institutional Mechanisms for the Country Paper to be taken to Beijing in 1995 had pondered on this problem. It was the common feeling in the group that concepts and theories inevitably outpace grass roots action. Concepts get refined, but institutional movement is invariably slow and generally lacks dynamism. The momentum of change at the field level is very slow. The ‘brilliant idiom’ of the one is at variance with the ‘lagging actuality’ of the other. These were the evocative phrases used by members of the group, most of them were from grass roots movements of women or women who combined research and activism. Ideally, they felt, the process should be reverse – the shift in concept should come from action at the grass roots and this then should contribute to theory and to the conceptual underpinnings of policy. A reversal of this direction is called for.

Now, nearly a decade after Beijing, the need for a directional change is all the more urgent and critical. With the emergence of the third tier of government – the panchayati raj and the urban local bodies – NM or institutional mechanisms

for women's advancement have to undergo a sea change. If planning is to start from the gram panchayat and the municipal committees, the definition of NM and its functions will have to undergo a radical change. We need to reverse the direction of social planning and in the process the local milieu, the local institutions and groups have to occupy a more important place instead of being at the periphery.

The directional change will also help in localizing concepts, making them more indigenous and homegrown. A typical example is the use of the phrase "women's empowerment" or "empowerment of women". While the word "empowerment" has not been defined in the Policy (The National Policy on the Empowerment of Women 2001), some attempts have been made to do so. Due to this lack of definitional precision, the word is now being used as a catchall or an umbrella phrase, which could mean different things to different people in different situations. Empowerment could mean anything from providing a loan or training in computers to women! This impacts on institutional behavior on the nature of delivery of programs and services, on their procedures and substantive content. This is a serious gap, in the policy document, one that should be filled up at the earliest. What empowers women at the grass roots level should be the paradigm, this should then inform the policy documents. For this field action and research are both essential. Women's studies should take this up as a priority.

That empowerment is connected with the shifts in women's self-perception that accompanies certain external interventions, that empowerment makes it possible for women to take more and more control over their lives, that empowered

women are able to contribute collectively more to the community and to society, have been more than amply demonstrated by many of the grass roots initiatives in the country.

We see the role of the state in transforming women's status from *de jure* equality to *de facto* in different and varying contexts. Some view the state as an aggressive, monolithic and powerful actor. In the context of the recent changes (post-1991) in national economic policies, there is a common and well-founded apprehension that the state is in retreat from many critical areas in the social sector – health, education, employment and livelihoods, labour protection, environment and sanitation are examples – and that it allows the market to take over many functions that by Constitutional mandate, belong to it. There is a wide acceptance amongst many interested sections of civil society – of which the women's movements are one of the foremost – that a strategy is needed to target and address advocacy efforts so as to make the state perform its constitutional role and duties. But it is not only in the delivery of social and human development services that the state is found wanting, nor in resource endowment of the institutions (schools and health facilities for example) in these sectors. It will be illogical to dwell only on institutions and structures and not look at the role of the State in framing macro policies in terms of their impact on both men and women. That women are more adversely affected by these sweeping economic changes than men is axiomatic. Cutbacks in services and jobs impact women more adversely because of their roles as home providers as well as earning members of poor households.

The 1994 working group on institutional mechanisms (referred to earlier) articulated their strong view that the role of the State should be to help the poorer women to access services and entitlements by capacity building and strategic resource management so as to conserve scarce resources and provide minimum economic and social security. The state should also safeguard against leakages in delivery by innovative strategies, which will mobilize groups of participants to receive the goods and services. Expectations of such a dynamic role on the part of the state will not be belied if the most powerless, that is, the poorest women, are to ask for it. The state ideally, should forge a partnership with such marginal groups. One of the innovative strategies for service delivery that can be thought of was introduced by the national government in 1993 when it amended the Constitution providing for a third tier of government – local government – separately for urban and rural areas. That leakages can be decreased with the devolution of powers and authority to local women and delivery improved qualitatively has been proved time and again, wherever programs involving local communities in designing and delivering programs have been tried out. The People's Plan in Kerala is one such example.

One of the most disquieting features of the National Machinery is its systemic tendency to move away from a broader vision and mandate of women's equality and women's rights to programmatic and "delivery" aspects. Generic issues of gender status such as patriarchal culture, norms and women's subordination, gender role stereotyping, unequal power relations both 'inside' and 'outside', sexual and other types of discrimination at work, violence, etc. are seldom addressed, either directly or indirectly. If at all, these issues are subsumed under

the schematic format. It is assumed that the program goals, objectives or targets will have the effect of attacking systemic biases. Attention then diverts to program details, project procedures, schematic patterns, quantitative targets, completion of schedules of reporting etc. The monitoring format over emphasizes the quantitative outputs and under-assesses aspects of sustained behavioral change. The monitoring process is guided by conventional parameters. Evaluations also tread the conventional path. Evaluations are rarely participatory; the methodology used produces outcomes that end up as negative, faultfinding exercises. Designing evaluations as a positive and supportive mechanism for aiding program development is almost unknown in most government situations. The impact of programs is rarely measured by the use of indicators of transformatory changes in the women.

The continuing insensitivity of the delivery mechanism, as represented by the bureaucracy and the extension service system, is another drawback of the machinery. Increased emphasis on “gender sensitizing” of civil servants from the eighties onwards has not been able to deal satisfactorily with this flaw. Process of monitoring and evaluation of gender training is generally guided by conventional parameters. The raising of critical consciousness amongst women is not a declared program objective. If one were to adopt the feminist slogan “The personal is the political” one would find a huge gap in those very cadres of field functionaries, who do not internalize the values of gender equality – the very values which they are committed to propagate through various programs meant for women. Without changes in personal beliefs, practices and behaviour, can a set of state functionaries be able to ‘deliver’ the value of gender equality to the

women targeted to receive the message? Gender sensitization cannot be confined to teaching a set of skills (such as gender analysis) or conveying information (sex disaggregated data and other specific gender profiles) without touching the deeper core of the self of those who are being 'sensitized'. Besides the mind and the intellect, the visceral and intuitive dimension is also to be reached. This calls for specific methodologies and for careful choice of those who are to be the trainers. Training cannot be a unidirectional activity – both trainer and the trainee should engage in a dialogue based on equality and mutual respect if positive results are to follow. One of the points made in the 1994 drafting exercise on institutional mechanisms is that gender needs a specific delivery system – which at present is lacking. There is very little appreciation of this fact. In such a situation, institutional structures become hindrances to the women's cause rather than facilitators. Functionaries become impediments. When this happens, there is likelihood of the programs negating their own concepts. If centrally located national machinery is made responsible for the rest of the system being sensitive to gender, it must first ensure its own sensitivity to gender issues relating to women's needs and problems.

Such gaps in gender awareness are widespread, but also differ from location to location and from time to time. Old institutional practices such as the mode of delivery of welfare schemes and programs still influence current thinking and practice. Sometimes populist programs are launched, but they do not contain any module or component of education, dissemination of values, or even of objectives.

Two innovative projects that tried to break new ground by use of methodologies and concepts evolved by and with women at the grass roots are WDP (Rajasthan) and Mahila Samakhya. Both were made operational under the state umbrella and like the Social Welfare Boards set up in the 50's. The methodology directly empowered the most marginalized women in the villages with communication and information. The training involved both the trainers and the village women in a learning process. The outcome of the learning (through the training sessions) was judged by assessing the changes in the women's capacity for self assertion at both individual and collective levels. This assessment was facilitated through a process of critical self reflection, which then led to further learning and action. The learning focused on, among other things on understanding the institutions that perpetuated class and gender oppression – from family to the community and the state. In terms of delivery, the programs fused government extension machinery with a cadre of village women workers imbued with an indigenous set of feminist values. This unconventional feature created its own tensions and contradictions. But it served to teach a very important lesson – any machinery or mechanism that aims at women's advancement must itself be gender sensitive. In comparison, the centrally located national machineries have tended to neglect this aspect.

Evaluations of the national machineries across the world have tended to look more at structural and management issues. These include – location, lateral or horizontal relationships, authority and power, resources, legal roles and powers, formal mandates, staffing pattern, autonomy, etc. The common finding of most of these evaluations was that the machineries did not succeed in the objective of

‘mainstreaming’ or ‘integrating’ women in development. Women still continued to be peripheral to the planning process, especially to the macro-planning dimension. The implication is that if the machinery is located in a more powerful location, if it enjoys more clout with other parts of the government, if it possesses more physical and financial resources and legal authority, it would perform better. The question whether the machinery is able to ‘deliver’ gender equality, equity and social justice is seldom addressed. That the government has accepted the critical need for conscientizing the bureaucracy, who largely comprises the ‘delivery’ system of gender equality in the present-day administrative system, is proof enough that there exists no such effective extension cadre at present. There is implicit faith in the capacity of the highest formations of political power to be able to make a difference to women’s status.

In India, the under-resourced and relatively less ‘powerful’ departments of social welfare – later re-incarnated as departments of women’s development or welfare – were given the gender equality mandate. To make up for the locational disadvantage, India, like many other countries, has tried more than once, creating the device of a high-powered committee on women, chaired by no less a person than the Prime Minister. This mechanism, it was felt, would make up for the systemic tendency to equate women’s development with welfare. The presence of the Prime Minister as the head of such a committee, would, it was argued, increase the visibility and importance of issues relating to women. The meetings of such a high powered committee would be able to cut across through miles of red tape and get quick decisions on account of the PM’s presence.

The first national committee on women was constituted in 1976, the first year of the International Women's Decade. The fall out of the first UN Conference at Mexico (1975) and the dissemination of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the same year created a wave of awareness on these issues. The need for the state to be more proactive was strongly felt. So a committee was set up which, besides the Prime Minister in the Chair, had more than two dozen members, including women ministers from center and states, women members of Parliament and state legislative assemblies, women from voluntary organizations, women researchers, etc. During its life of two years, the committee did not meet even once. After the committee's reconstitution, it met once in 1978 and its term expired in 1980. After 8 years, a new National Committee on Women was renotified in 1988, again headed by the Prime Minister, with more than two dozen members enjoying similarly high status as the earlier committee. It met only once in 1988.

On both occasions when the Committee met under the Prime Minister's chairmanship, one main agenda item was placed before it, besides other matters. In 1978, it was to obtain approval of the National Plan of Action, drafted along the lines of the Mexico Plan of Action, while also incorporating many of the recommendations of the report "Towards Equality". In 1988, it was to get the Committee to approve the draft National Perspective Plan for Women.

But these high powered meetings also discussed other matters of greater policy import. For example, in 1978, the National Committee on Women decided that **the issue of child care** be taken up by the Government **as a national**

responsibility. The National Committee decided constitute a smaller group – called the Steering Group – from amongst its members to cull out items from the National Plan of Action requiring immediate action. In its first meeting (it met twice in all) the Steering Group discussed the issue of political parties fielding women candidates for elections and came to a consensus that the political parties should adopt a definite policy on this subject. In the second meeting of the Steering Group, it was decided that a reasonable percentage of the budget in all sectors of social and economic policy should be earmarked for programs relating to women and should be separately monitored. In the 1988 meeting of the National Committee on Women, a point of view was raised by some members that its composition should have included representatives of national women's organizations as well as those from different political parties.

Both the issues – one, of child care being one of national importance and therefore needing to be declared part of the minimum needs program (or basic minimum services as it is called now) and two, the issue of political parties earmarking a definite number of tickets to women for contesting elections are major policy initiatives. The National Machinery at the highest level, with the Prime Minister in the Chair, cleared both these suggestions. But even after a quarter of a century, these decisions taken at such high levels have hardly translated into concrete strategies or programmatic decisions. The status of child care still remains marginal to the other programs of child development and the budgetary resources earmarked for this activity outside the ICDS are very meager. Within the ICDS, the activity carried on is more that of a balwadi type, (that too for a few hours in a day) for children of the 3-6 age groups. In spite of vociferous lobbying by women's groups, universal child care for the children of

0-6 age groups is still a distant dream. Early child hood care and education is in fact one of the weakest links in the educational sector, especially as this group has now been left out of the Fundamental Right to education in the recent Constitutional amendment. Similarly, there is no pressure on the political parties to take affirmative action in favor of women in the area of political participation, by earmarking tickets for fighting elections. The third issue of earmarking a percentage of budgetary resources for women took nearly two more decades to be accepted, but it is still not completely operational.

The point being made here is that high powered national machineries are not enough to sustain meaningful economic, social and political change in favor of women. Decisions taken at the highest level are to be scrupulously and painstakingly followed up. The environment within the state apparatus, especially in the economic and political spheres, is still very antithetical to strengthening women's agency. Welfare, especially social welfare approaches still have a predominant influence over policy making for women.

This calls for a strong, broad-based, sustained and *political* struggle for women's rights.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is the role of social welfare board?

16.5 NATIONAL POLICY FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN 2001

The 2001 National Policy for the Empowerment of Women has again resurrected the idea of the National Council, headed by the Prime Minister with a very high profile composition of members (paragraph 11.2 of the Policy document). Significantly, the composition of the Council, high profile though it may be, does not include representatives of political parties. The Council's main task is to review the implementation of the Policy. It is to meet twice every year. So far, in the last two years, it has not met even once. Learning from past institutional history helps in improving chances for success in the future. While the 2001 Policy declares that the Council's mandate is to review the implementation of the Policy, the question of the implementation mechanism itself is left open.

A plan for women has to be a system-wide document – it cannot be boxed within the confines of one agency, one department or one ministry. Most agencies at central and state levels are involved in the women's question – home and police, law and justice, science and technology, agriculture and allied sectors, poverty households, education health nutrition and other human development sectors, energy, finance and banking, industry, population, environment, agencies in charge of macro economic policy making affecting the economy as a whole, agencies dealing with marginalized groups such as dalits and adivasis, migrants, development-displaced groups, slum-dwellers, HIV/AIDS, religious and other

minorities, etc. – the list is unending – besides the older divisions into which women were traditionally placed – destitute, widows, handicapped, etc.

A focal point as conventionally understood, such as the Department of Women and Child Development, or the National Commission for Women or any other, has to be capable of coping with the enormity of the task involved in conceptualizing, planning, designing and formulating a plan for women. In this task, the strategy should be for the focal point to influence agencies across the board to internalize their own responsibilities and commitments towards women.

A small focal point will find it impossible to do this advocacy, influencing and championing role unless it calls upon the larger constituency of women outside – what can be broadly called the women's movements, or collectivities of women's groups.

Women do not constitute a sector – they constitute a cross-sectoral and multi-sectoral issue. Women, like men, have multiple identities and multiple needs.

There cannot be a 'single window' to satisfy all women's needs. Individual sectoral policies or strategies for women can become distorted if there is no holistic and comprehensive policy framework. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001 presents a sector-by-sector analysis relating to women, categorizing some of the sectors as 'economic' and the others as 'social'.

But it does not build, visualize or suggest strong intersectoral linkages, except for a reference to self-help groups, "to bring about synergistic implementation of all the social and economic development programs". But the "**how**" of the synergistic implementation is not spelt out. This will need the close attention of

policy makers and drafters at the time the national plan of action is prepared. Unless better linkages are built into the plan, different agencies with programs for women could be working at cross purposes. For example, plans of action for women in productive sectors like sericulture, animal husbandry, agriculture and allied sectors, industries, handicrafts, handlooms etc. have a tendency to look at women as instrumentalities for increasing production through upgrading of their skills and knowledge, but show comparatively less interest in their gendered household roles such as child rearing. Agencies that have taken on women's projects in say sericulture or handlooms would prefer women to learn about their technical aspects or scientific knowledge, but may not invest project resources in say, teaching women about their legal rights. The burden of domestic work and child care affects women's performance in these 'productive' spheres and unless support services are made part of the program intervention, the new sectoral programs would only end up by increasing women's work burden with consequent adverse impact on their health.

Within sectoral agencies such as those relating to credit and training, besides production in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, the institution of cells can contribute positively to a certain extent. Here again, it would be useful to learn from past experience of the strength and weaknesses of these cells. The cells are intended to focus on generic issues relating to women in each sector of activity. But in some cases it has led to the marginalizing of the women's issue and its isolation within the Ministry or Department. In some cases, the cells have concentrated on programmatic and schematic objectives without linking them with the larger goal of raising women's status. Where the cells had legislative

backing (as was the case of the women's cell in the Labour Ministry, with the responsibility for the Equal Remuneration Act) it was able to look at women workers as a group. The cell was able to keep links with women's groups through the mechanism of task forces.

On the whole, the cells suffered from the tendency common to dedicated, women-only structures of getting isolated within the larger organizational space. One unfortunate feature of their working has been termed as a "pigeon hole effect" by a researcher, caused when papers from various departments concerning women are docketed in the cells which then become "the storehouse of papers and not the nucleus of machinery on policies and programs".

In spite of these systemic weaknesses, there is no doubt that women's cells within large sectoral agencies – Ministries and Departments – can provide effective inputs and contributions in the preparation of a plan of action for women.

Another challenge in the preparation of the national plan is to harmonize the national, state and local level plans. Many questions arise in this context. Should the national plan of action be the guiding plan or document or should the state plan take precedence? A national plan cannot anticipate, include or foresee the priorities and specificities of all the states. Planning initiatives at state and local levels cannot be subsumed by national action and plans. Involvement by the state governments is essential for the success of any plan. The states do not readily own a plan that is formulated at the national level without in-depth consultation with the state government agencies. There are many state laws the

implementation of which lie primarily with the state authorities. All states do not have the same laws. In some of the Southern states, besides the all-India law on trafficking, there are local laws dealing with local traditions such as the dedication of girls to certain deities. Education and health are two important segments where the major responsibility of running the facilities lies with the states. There has to be an open dialogue and wide-ranging consultations between the center and the states to work out a mutually agreeable formula for dividing the responsibilities.

A much more formidable challenge to the drafting of a plan of action for women is presented by the presence of the panchayati raj bodies. There has been little genuine and effective devolution and decentralization of powers, authority and finances to the panchayats in most of the states. In Kerala, which is one of the few exceptions, 40% of the budget stands transferred to the panchayats and 10% of this amount is allocated only for women's programs. Planning programs for women under this 'women's' budget is a function that has been decentralized to the gram panchayat level in Kerala. Such a dispensation needs to be introduced in other states as well. While the Kerala experiment is not free from deficiencies, it has at least laid the basic framework by devolution of finances and authority for planning at village level. For a start, the Plan of Action for Women can create enabling conditions in different parts of the country – where the environment is positive – to start similar initiatives on pilot basis.

The question of resources occupies uppermost position in the assessment of the logistics of implementation of any plan of action. The 2001 policy document is

silent on the availability of extra-budgetary funds to finance the plan. What it does say is that availability of resources will be “managed by concerned departments, financial credit institutions and banks, private sector, civil society and other concerned institutions”. It also speaks of effective implementation of the Women’s Component Plan, to be monitored by DWCD. But there is no commitment of any kind in the document that the action plan will be provided sufficient resources.). Paragraph 10.1 of the 2001 policy document, envisages that identification and commitment of resources for the plan(s) for women will be contained in the plans(s) themselves!!

The sequencing of the two – the framing of the financial plan or the budget and the framing of the action plan – becomes crucial. The Policy document, on the other hand, collapses both the processes even while it maintains silence even a very rough, approximate idea of the quantum of resources needed. Again taking a leaf from institutional history, it is significant to note that neither the 1976 National Plan of Action nor the 1988 National Perspective Plan of Action had any specific provision for additional resource allocation for implementation of these plans. If the action plan for women is to be tethered to the Women’s Component Plan, then a clear strategy will have to be spelt out in the plan itself. Absence of clear commitments and provisions for financing women’s programs is one of the continuing weaknesses of planning for women’s development. A post-Beijing evaluation of progress in implementing the Platform of Action found that the annual budget of the Government machinery in India to implement the Platform is 0.40% of the total government budget. (Mapping Progress)

The commissions for women at national and state levels represent the most recent initiatives in creating institutional mechanisms outside the Government, yet representing the political will of the state and its commitments to women.

The National Commission for Women Act 1990 lists some of its important functions as, investigation and review of the adequacy of Constitutional safeguards for women, intervening in cases of violation of these legal safeguards, advocacy and promotional activities for women, undertaking special studies, etc. The passing of the Act in 1990 was preceded by a series of consultations and interactions in which interested women's groups and representatives of the state took part. Yet, in the decade since the first commission came into being, the question of functional autonomy of the commission has been raised from time to time. The extent of relief the commission can actually provide to women whose rights have been violated is also a gray area, in spite of its power to investigate these violations. Many point out to the higher visibility and more prominent legal-judicial profile of the National Human Rights Commission as constituting another and more powerful structure where women can direct their appeals. The fact that the women's commission is a nominated body, that nominations of the members is made by the government of the day raises the age-old dilemma between two opposing sets of approaches – on the one hand, the need felt by all who champion the cause of women for validation and acceptance by the state of women's rights; and on the other, the dangers of cooption by the state that the larger constituency of women's movements tend to shy away from for fear of the state subsuming women's interests.

A decade of working experience has however also shown that the women's groups do need a mechanism as the commission, to act as a conduit between themselves and the state, to articulate a voice and an opinion that is strongly pro-women around which mobilization of the larger lobbies and constituencies of women can take place outside the state space. The expectations of the women's movements from such a body have always been very high. The recommendation to set up a women's commission in the country is as old as the CSWI report of 1974-75. Ironically, the government of the day, through an empowered committee of high-ranking bureaucrats, specifically set up to sift through the recommendations of the CSWI, felt at the time, that there was no need for such a body as a women's commission – it felt that the existing machineries, such as the Women's Bureau and the National Committee on Women would suffice for the purpose!

As on 1.1.2002, thirteen states had set up commissions for women at their level.

Most of these commissions did not have any statutory base since many of them had been notified under an executive order of the state government. The relationship between the state commissions and the national commission, as for example in the area of work jurisdiction, has nowhere been put down in black and white. The National Policy of 2001 is also silent on this issue. Strengthening the weak legal base of the state commissions should be a priority for action by the national commission – it should attempt to do this through advocacy and active lobbying through the members of parliament, the joint Parliamentary Committee on the Empowerment of Women, state politicians and the women's groups. A good and positive working relationship should also be formalized

between the state and the national commissions in the interests of synergistic partnership.

Notwithstanding the high profile nature of inception of the national commission for women, the Policy document 2001 does not provide any specific role to it or to the state commissions in implementing or monitoring the action plan. The policy document contains only a few cursory references to the commissions, in all of which they are named along with other institutional mechanisms as owning responsibility to draw up time bound action plans for women. In other words, the Policy document treats the Commissions as just one of the multifarious structures within the Government as far as its ability and its capacity to influence the action plan is concerned.

The uniqueness of the constitution of the commission(s), however, is that they have two faces – one looking inward at the entire gamut of the political-bureaucratic constellations that together make up the structure of government, and the other, looking at civic society and within it the lobbies, the constituencies and interest groups representing the women of India. The commissions are also very different from government agencies like departments, cells, committees or bureaux, because they are able to occupy a political space in their functioning. The rigid framework within which the civil service functions does not bind the commissions many of their members are from the public life. The initiative to link commissions with women's studies centers in the different states for example, can be followed up by the preparation of indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the action plan. A major role can therefore

be apportioned both to the national as well as the state commissions and the women's studies centers.

The proximity of the commissions to both the women's constituencies as well as the government can enable them to take on campaigns that ostensibly go against the grain of conventional orthodoxies. They can do this by mediating between women's groups and the state structures and offering forums for discussion. A critical constellation of linked problems requiring immediate attention consist of the current population program with its coercive strategies including incentives and disincentives, the two child norm being imposed as a national priority and the steeply falling female-male sex ratio in the age group 0-6 that has already created a dangerous imbalance in the population of a few states even now. The population sector has its own institutional set up and it is necessary for the women's cause to be taken up by the institutions and agencies dedicated to women's rights.

As it stands, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001 does not contain any consistent or deep reflection on implementation mechanisms. Much planning and thinking will therefore have to go into how the different institutions can be pulled together to play different roles in this process.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Which approach is adopted in the National Policy for empowerment of Women 2001?

2. What is pigeon hole effect?

16.6 SUMMING UP

This Unit traces the evolution of institutions integrating gender into planning and policy making. While tracing these developments the Unit also identify the gaps. While looking at this unit we came to know that the process of integrating gender issues into the policy making process started in mid 1970s but Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights for women in all spheres. The Constitutional Guarantee did not bring many changes in the life of women. The Status of Women in India Report 1974 showed the reality and it created much debate. After this the Government of India brought number of policies and programmes to mainstream gender. This process was intensified after the formulation National Policy for Women 2001.

16.7 GLOSSARY

De jure and De facto: *De jure* and *de facto* are latin words. *De jure* is an expression that means "concerning [law](#)", as contrasted with [de facto](#), which means "concerning fact". The terms *de jure* and *de facto* are used instead of "in principle" and "in practice", respectively, when one is describing political or legal situations. In a legal context, *de jure* is also translated as "concerning law". A practice may exist *de facto*, where for example the people obey a contract as though there were a law enforcing it yet there is no such law. A process known as "desuetude" may allow *de facto* practices to replace obsolete laws. On the other hand, practices may exist *de jure* and not be obeyed or observed by the people.

Mahila Samakya: The Mahila Samakhya programme was launched in 1988 in pursuance of the goals of the New Education Policy (1986) and the Programme of Action as a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly of women from socially and economically marginalised groups.

WDP Rajasthan: Women Dairy Project (WDP) is a scheme implemented by Government of Rajasthan. This programme implemented through public sector organizations, Rural Development Agencies, cooperatives, Federations and Voluntary Organizations.

16.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

1. National Machinery was understood to mean any body or bodies designated by the state to deal with the overall promotion of the status of women.
2. Plan of Action (Mexico), the Program of Action (Copenhagen), the Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi) and the Platform of Action (Beijing)

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. Creating the coordination among various agencies working for the empowerment of women.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3:

1. Sectoral approach.
2. Pigeon hole effect is caused when papers from various departments concerning women are docketed in the cells which then become “the storehouse of papers and not the nucleus of machinery on policies and programs.

16.9 REFERENCES

1. Sudhir Varma, *Women's Struggle for Political Space*, New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1997.
2. Harriet B. Presser (Ed), *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes: Moving beyond Cairo*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

16.10 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. What are institutional mechanisms in place of National Machinery?
2. Critically analyse the National policy for Empowerment of women 2001.
3. Trace the historical development of women in development till 1970.
4. Examine the role of National Commission for Women.