GENDER MAINSTREAMING:
A road well-travelled, but miles to go for equality

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), gender mainstreaming has been almost universally endorsed as the strategy of choice for the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights. Governments, donor agencies, civil society organisations, women's movements and other international and national actors in development have worked to actualise the commitment to gender mainstreaming mandated by the Beijing Platform for Action, However, despite the sustained investments in mainstreaming by all actors in development and considerable progress in terms of enabling policy frameworks, there is general agreement that translating gender mainstreaming policy objectives into real-life outcomes is fraught with challenges and contradictions.

This paper presents a critical review of the gender mainstreaming experience in the Asia-Pacific region. It is not the outcome of an academic exercise, but is focused on highlighting the complex issues involved in interpreting concepts and implementing strategies at the field level. The first section of the paper presents a brief overview of the historical origins of gender mainstreaming and its location within the larger canvas of development. The basic conceptual framework that underpins the approach is discussed with a focus on its political moorings in feminist theory and its normative grounding in discourses on women's rights, human rights and human development. The second section of the paper reviews the insights and lessons from the global experience of diverse actors, counterposing these against experiences in the Asia-Pacific region to assess the extent to which they reflect an understanding of mainstreaming as social transformation. The final section surveys the pros and cons of the mainstreaming approach and presents some possibilities for strengthening its potential as a vehicle for achievement of women's rights and gender equality.

1. GENDER MAINSTREAMING: THE CONCEPT

1.1   The evolution of an approach

The much-used (and sometimes abused) term **gender mainstreaming** made a formal entry into the official development discourse at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, where it was endorsed as the appropriate mechanism for achieving the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. The Beijing Platform for Action document enjoins national governments and other actors in development to "promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."[1]

Subsequently, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) reaffirmed the need for the

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1   Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995. United Nations.
    <www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/**beijing/platform/**declar.htm>

international development community to take action on gender mainstreaming, which was described 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 all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."[2]

While it remains the benchmark for the UN System and most development actors, this definition is not without its own internal contradictions (see Box 1 below).

Box 1. The ECOSOC definition: feminist ideologies versus realpolitik?

The ECOSOC definition of gender mainstreaming is politically significant because it frames gender inequality as a structural, rather than a "cultural" problem. By implicitly recognising that gender biases in current policies and programmes are implicated in the reproduction of gender inequality, this definition validates feminist analyses of the structural roots of gender inequality.

However, by placing the onus for change on regular policy makers, the ECOSOC definition creates both opportunities and hazards. The rooting in feminist analysis is counterbalanced by the need to "sell" the notion to mainstream actors. Thus, the ECOSOC definition and strategies derived from it are framed in a way that is meaningful to the policy elite such as civil servants and politicians. For instance, the ECOSOC definition can be (and often has been) read as an assurance that gender mainstreaming gives equal weightage at all times to both women and men – an interpretation that depoliticises and blunts its strategic edge.

In fact, the framing of the definition in terms of the differential interests of "men" and "women" can be traced back to the fierce opposition from religious and pro-life groups at Beijing to the idea of gender as a social and relational category, rather than an essentially biological phenomenon.

In the years since Beijing, affirmations of gender mainstreaming have become ubiquitous in the development sector. All major multilateral and bilateral agencies have put in place policy frameworks and programmes for gender mainstreaming. National governments in most countries have established "women's machineries" and administrative mechanisms for mainstreaming. Clear intergovernmental mandates for gender mainstreaming have been developed for all the major areas of the work of the United Nations, including disarmament, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, macro-economics, health, education and trade. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000, outlines the importance of giving greater attention to gender perspectives in peace support operations. Specific mandates also exist for ensuring that gender perspectives are taken into account in the major planning processes and documents within the United Nations including the medium-term plans, programme budgets and programme assessments[3].

1.2   Historical progression of approaches to gender in development

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2   ECOSOC. 1997. *Agreed Conclusions on Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programs in the United Nations System.* United Nations. <www.un.org/documents/**ecosoc**/docs/1997/e1997-66.htm>

3   See UN General Assembly resolution of December 1997 (A/Res/52/100) and ECOSOC Resolution of 2001 (2001/41).

The conceptual framework for gender mainstreaming evolved from critiques of the "women in development" (WID) approaches and programmes implemented since the early 1970s by several international development agencies. Questions regarding the impacts of these programmes gathered momentum during the UN Decade of Women. The consensus was that while many of these stand-alone projects were innovative and well-designed, they had largely failed to challenge or change the hierarchies of power and privilege that lay at the root of women's marginalisation from development[4]. This marginalisation was reinforced through the institutional arrangements for the implementation of "women's projects" which remained ghettoised in WID Units and national women's machineries that were often under-resourced, poorly staffed and peripherally located within the larger institutional framework[5].

The failure or, at best, limited success of efforts to "integrate" women into ongoing development projects made it increasingly clear that the terms and conditions of participation in development were very different for women and men. Evidence to substantiate this view came from feminist scholars and women's movement activists across the world. For instance, feminist economists challenged the notion of the household as an altruistic economic unit that operated to maximise benefits for all its members. The ideological underpinnings and macroeconomic implications of women's unpaid and care work were painstakingly unravelled[6], as were the links between gendered patterns of division of labour within the household and job stratification, wage disparities and exploitation of women's labour in the world of work[7]. At the same time, feminist activism was "breaking the silence" on violence against women, exposing hidden sites and forms of violence such as sexual violence by intimate partners and families, incest, child sexual abuse and violence against women who transgressed heterosexual norms. Violence against women was exposed as a constitutive element of patriarchy and the framing of violence was a "private" issue was demolished through making visible institutionalised mechanisms of violence such as discriminatory legal frameworks and coercive population policies[8].

Women's movements from the global South were also pointing to the inadequacy of existing development paradigms with their implicit construction of women as a homogenous group, ignoring the ways in which other markers of inequality such as class, race and caste shape institutional gender relations[9]. These critiques of dominant development paradigms were counterposed with demands for an alternative approach that recognised and addressed the social relations and institutions within which gender inequality was constructed and reconstructed[10].

An alternative approach that emerged through these debates is characterised as the "gender in development" (GAD) approach. GAD analysis goes beyond women's exclusion from development,

4   Razavi, Shahra and Carol Miller. 1995. *From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse*. UNRISD, UNDP. Geneva.

5   Jahan, Raunaq. 1997. "Mainstreaming Women in Development: Four Agency Approaches" in *Women, International Development, and Politics: The Bureaucratic Mire*. Kathleen A. Staudt ed. Temple University Press, 1997.

6   Waring, Marilyn. 1988. *If Women Counted*. Harper and Row, New York.

7   Elson, Diane and Ruth Pearson. 1981. "Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers: An Analysis of Women's Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing". *Feminist Review* 7:84-87

8   Kabeer Naila. 1994. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Throught*. Verso, London.

9   Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1991. 'Cartographies of struggle: third world women and the politics of feminism'. In Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Indiana University Press.

10 Sen, Geeta and Karen Grown. 1985. *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*. Earthscan Publications, London.

and trains the lens on the entire landscape of social, economic and political structures and institutions in a given society that subordinate women and ultimately lead to exclusion. The GAD framework emphasises that ending women's subordination requires more than the redistribution of economic resources – rather, it involves the redistribution of power. Drawing on the theoretical foundations of radical feminism, GAD underlines the way in which sexual difference is transmuted into gender inequality and woven seamlessly into social, political and economic structures, practices, discourses and relations in the context of particular societies. GAD frames development programmes not just as conduits to meet material needs, but as vehicles to engage women and men as agents in transforming gender relations, thereby creating more lasting and sustainable change.

Arguments for "institutionalisation" of gender concerns through a GAD approach gained force as reviews by key actors threw up evidence to show that development agencies and development projects reflected and replicated the same institutional mechanisms through which women's subordination is perpetuated in society[11]. The clear implication was that delivering on gender equality in programmes and projects would require development organisations to reorder their own structures and practices to reflect a greater degree of gender equality. Table 1 below summarises the main distinguishing features of the WID and GAD frameworks.

Table 1. WID and GAD - a comparison

WID	GAD
Focuses exclusively on women	Compares situations of women and men to identify differentials in access, participation and benefits. Focuses on the gender relations that generate such differences.
Problem analysis: • women's lack of participation in development; • women's lack of capability and experience to compete equally with men.	**Problem analysis:** • gender inequality; • unequal power relations between women and men that constrain women's participation in development; • lack of recognition by policy makers of the extent to which women are engaged in development but on an unpaid and undocumented basis.
Responses: • training and capacity building to enable women to compete equally with men; • developing new activities for women to *increase* their role in development; • special projects for women.	**Responses:** • the use of gender statistics: sex-disaggregated data showing the differences between women and men, and data on specific gender issues such as counting and valuing unpaid work; • gender training to raise awareness of gender issues and the extent to which they affect policies and programmes; • the use of gender analysis to identify differential impacts on women and men and to develop measures to address such

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11 Goetz, Anne-Marie. 1997. *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development*. Zed Books, London and New York.

				differences.

1.3 Mainstreaming: a radical concept

Gender mainstreaming is the primary strategy for translating the GAD framework into action. Conceptually, it represents an advance from other right-focused strategies for gender equality such as equal treatment under the law and targeted equality policies. By interrogating social institutions and development actors, the mainstreaming approach shifts the focus from *manifestations* of gender inequality (such as discriminatory laws and unequal access to resources) to its *structural underpinnings* (see Table 2 below).

Table 2.   Comparison of strategies for gender equality[12]

STRATEGY	DIAGNOSIS What is wrong?	ATTRIBUTION OF CAUSALITY Who/what is responsible for the problem?	PROGNOSIS What should be done	CALL FOR ACTION Who should do something?
Equal treatment	*Inequality in law, different laws/ rights for men and women*	*Individual responsibilities*	*Change the laws towards formally equal rights for men and women in laws*	*Legislators*
Specific equality policies	*Unequal starting position of men and women. Group disadvantage of women. Specific problems of women that are not addressed. Women's lack of access, skills or resources.*	*Diverse, both at individual and at structural level*	*Design and fund specific projects to address the problems of specific groups of women.*	*Gender equality agencies and established institutions.*
Gender mainstreaming	*Gender biases in social institutions and policies create gender inequality.*	*Policy makers*	*Reorganise policy processes to incorporate a gender equality perspective.*	*Government/all actors involved in policy- making.*

As an influential "thinkpiece" from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)[13] pointed out, an effective gender mainstreaming strategy should initiate and sustain change processes at multiple levels.

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12 Verloo, Mieke. 2001. *Another Velvet Revolution? Gender Mainstreaming and the Politics of Implementation.* IWM Working Paper No. 5/2001. IWM Publications.

13 Schalkwyk, Johanna, Helen Thomas and Beth Woroniuk. 1996. *Mainstreaming: A Strategy for Achieving Equality Between Women and Men. A Thinkpiece.* SIDA Secretariat for Policy and Corporate Development, Economic and Social Analysis Division.

- The **organisation** itself – its policies, procedures, culture and people.
- The **development interventions** supported by the organisation, which lie within the intersection of its own work with the work of its partners.
- The **larger national context,** including the socio-economic, cultural and political environment in the country; the policies and programmes of development partners; and the perspectives and strategies of the women's movements and other civil society actors.

It is now generally accepted that gender mainstreaming involves changes in both "internal" organisational functioning and "external" operational procedures. Internal action is required to align the systems, structures and procedures of the organisation with the goals and values of gender equality. These may include changes in staffing and personnel policies such as hiring more women or appointing women to leadership positions, as well as changing the "culture" of the organisation to make the workplace an arena where both women and men can experience equality. The "external" dimension generally refers to the steps needed to mainstream gender into development operations such as design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and projects. These steps may include integrating gender equality concerns into programmatic goals, strategies and resource allocations, as well as providing specialized gender technical input such as gender analysis and assistance for the design, implementation and evaluation phases.

The internal dimension can be further disaggregated and conceptualised as playing out in different domains[14].
- The technical domain is constituted of the capacities, tools and instruments for gender mainstreaming. Gender experts, guidelines and tools for integrating gender into the project cycle, gender training modules and materials are all located within this domain.
- The political domain is the site for integration of gender equality concerns into processes of planning and decision-making within the organization. This is the domain within which hierarchies are institutionalised, which in turn determine access and control over resources and decision-making in the organisation.
- The cultural domain is the arena in which the environment and daily practice of the organisation are defined, shaped. and validated. While processes in this domain may not be guided by clearly articulated rules and procedures, they are nonetheless critical to gender mainstreaming. Since it is in this domain that the gap between policy and practice is created, it is also the space where it can be negotiated and contested.

Each of these domains is intricately linked to the other. In turn, each domain and the system as a whole are influenced by multiple factors in the external environment – national development agendas, global discourses, civil society, women's movements, donor priorities and geo-political processes and issues.

Power relations are woven into each domain and are manifested in different ways. In the political domain power is visible in forms of leadership, in the ability to influence processes of decision-making, in the creation and maintenance of hierarchies and the control of resources and priorities. In the technical domain, unequal power relations are reflected in the ways in which concepts, discourses and methodologies are defined and shaped – in deciding what is "valid" and what is not, what is 'sound' and what is not, what is 'objective' and what is not. In the cultural domain value systems, attitudes, and relationships all reflect power relations that perpetuate gender inequality.

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14 Menon-Sen, Kalyani. 2005. *A Conceptual Framework for Gender Mainstreaming*. Unpublished internal note. UNDP BDP.

It is the ability to make these power hierarchies visible while interrogating their impacts on gender equality that provides a critical edge to the mainstreaming approach. Ironically, this is also the reason why mainstreaming attracts distrust, hostility and resistance from institutional actors who feel that the immediate costs of such a radical approach may well outweigh its long-term benefits.

1.4   From politics to development: mainstreaming, human rights and human development

At first glance, it appears surprising that concepts as radical in their intentions as GAD and gender mainstreaming have gained such wide acceptability in development circles. Campaigns mounted by international women's movements in the lead-up to the Beijing conference can certainly claim a major share of the credit for this. However, the success of women's rights advocates within the development establishment in linking gender mainstreaming with a range of collateral benefits – from political stability and economic growth to environmental sustainability - must also be recognised. The Beijing Platform for Action proclaimed: "The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are ... the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society." In 2000, promoting 'gender equality' was identified as a key component of the UN's Millennium Development Goals. UN Resolution 1325, which declared that the empowerment of women was critical to the processes of both peacemaking and democratisation, has affirmed this view.

Another key element that increases the acceptability of gender mainstreaming for development agencies is its complementarity to the human rights-based approach. Both strive to ensure greater equality and both involve an interrogation of the impact of development activities on different individuals and groups, particularly the most marginalised and disempowered in a given society. The overarching normative validation for gender mainstreaming as a strategy for women's rights is CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which constitutes a comprehensive bill of rights for women. CEDAW is based on three inter-related core principles – equality, non-discrimination and state obligation for securing women's rights. CEDAW has been described as an effective convergence between the human rights stream and the gender in development stream, since mainstreaming is a necessary precondition for effective implementation of CEDAW[15].

Gender mainstreaming is also congruent with the concept of human development, pioneered by UNDP in its Human Development Reports. The human development approach conceptualises development as the broadening of people's choices, created by expanding "capabilities". Central to the notion of capability is the ability to live a long and healthy life, to be well nourished and clothed, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources and opportunities that ensure an adequate standard of living. Other less quantifiable capabilities include the ability to have self-esteem, to be treated with dignity, to be able to be connected—that is to be able to care, to be cared for, and to be free of systematic social exclusion due to discrimination or other factors. It includes too the freedom to have a voice in economic, social and political arenas: to be empowered and to exhibit agency. In this approach inequality is seen as an "unfreedom" because it contributes to social exclusion and can lead to disempowerment, lack of political and economic voice, and possibly to the undermining of other basic capabilities.

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15 O'Neill, Patti. 2004. "Rethinking gender mainstreaming (or, Did we ditch women when we ditched WID?) — A personal view", *Development Bulletin* no. 64:45-48.

It is important to recognise that mainstreaming alone cannot deliver gender equality. Claiming rights is a political process, and requires the active agency of women themselves in challenging and changing the structures and institutions that underpin unequal power relations. Agency – the ability to act as an agent of change – is itself an outcome of a process of empowerment, whereby which women acquire the capacities and capabilities to make choices and act on those choices to achieve valued ways of being and doing. Empowerment can also be a route to (as well as outcome of) women's political mobilisation at the grassroots which in turn can lead to women's gaining a public voice and demanding change in institutions and structures of governance[16].

Prugl (2004)[17] points out that equal rights/empowerment and gender mainstreaming can both be conceptualised as strategies to change discourses and rules. Both seek to construct women and men as having equal value but differ in the means to accomplish this reconstruction of identities and rights. Whereas equal rights strategies focus on formal rules with attendant enforcement mechanisms, gender mainstreaming targets the deeply entrenched informal rules and uncodified or invisible norms within institutions. Whereas rights strategies rely on the policing powers of the state, gender mainstreaming relies on the power of bureaucracy to define and categorise discrimination. Both these strategies depend for their success on women's movements. While strategies to change laws involve advocacy through pressure groups positioned in opposition to the state, gender mainstreaming relies on the skill of movement actors to operate within the state.

A comprehensive framework has been proposed by Rao and Kelleher18 to explain how human rights can provide a normative and ethical basis for "top down" processes such as policy reform through gender mainstreaming, as well as for "bottom up" processes of women's mobilisation, empowerment and gaining voice. This framework is a useful one in the context of gender mainstreaming because it clarifies the links between institutional change and social change strategies. Thus, strengthening the opportunity structure through programs for women's education or increased resources for women's entrepreneurship does not ensure gender equality, unless women are empowered to capitalise on these opportunities and are enabled to challenge and change the formal and informal institutional structures through which access to opportunities is mediated.

Informal pressures
- Ideology and culture
- Unequal power relations

Social and public accountability
- Economic and political opportunities
- Equity and inclusion
- Decentralisation of resources
- Transparency and governance

Social change
Interaction between institutions, voice, processes, structures

Mobilisation and voice
- Rights and choice
- Capabilities, assets, resources

Empowerment

Formal pressures
- Leadership and vision
- Gender equality on the agenda
- Inclusive structures
- Effectiveness
- Accountability

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16 Kabeer, Naila. 1999. "Resources, Agency, Achievement: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment". *Development and Change* Volume 30 Issue 3:435-464.
17 Prugl, Elsabeth. 2004. "International institutions and feminist politics." *Brown Journal of World Affairs.* Winter/Spring 2004 Volume X Issue 2: 69-84.

This framework provides the conceptual grounding for working on "supply side" issues such as opportunity structures, incentives and capacity to respond to women, as well as on "demand side" issues such as strengthening women's awareness of their own agency, voice and collective power to hold institutions to account.

Gender mainstreaming has the potential to contribute to this process through changes in the relations of power within both formal and informal development institutions and institutions of governance, thereby creating the space and opportunities for women to contribute to and influence development discourse and practice.

1.5   Definitions and interpretations: multiple meanings?

As discussed above, diverse strands of critique and enquiry have contributed to the evolution of gender mainstreaming as an approach, with the consequence that it is defined and interpreted in multiple ways[18]. Moreover, the boundaries between WID, GAD and mainstreaming are neither watertight nor well-defined. The field today presents a wide range of practices, from WID-like "integrationist" approaches that seek to "fit" gender concerns within existing development interventions, to "transformative" or "agenda-setting" approaches premised on a complete overhaul of the existing development agenda from a gender equality perspective[19].

Although the ECOSOC definition is internationally accepted as the macro template for gender mainstreaming, other agencies have adapted and modified it to reflect their own operational concerns.   For instance, WHO defines mainstreaming as "the integration of gender concerns into the analyses, formulation and monitoring of policies, programmes and projects, with the objective of ensuring that these reduce inequalities."[20] The World Bank gender strategy document describes the aims of gender mainstreaming as "making Bank interventions more responsive to country gender conditions and commitments; making these interventions more strategic; and improving the alignment of Bank policies, processes and resources to support such interventions."[21]

A presentation on gender mainstreaming archived on the UNDP website[22] provides a simple and functional three point definition that distinguishes between the process of gender mainstreaming (organisational change), its outputs (gender aware policy and practice) and goals (gender equality in society). Lack of the 'process' element is identified as the shortfall in other current definitions, leading to incomplete actions and confusion between the means and ends of mainstreaming.

An additional complication is created by the fact that, although gender mainstreaming is universally recognised as a strategy to achieve gender equality, the understanding of what constitutes equality can vary widely. There is also confusion regarding the terms "equity" and "equality".

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18 Mukhopadhya, Maitreyee, Gerard Steenhouwer and Franz Wong. 2006. *Politics of the Possible - Gender Mainstreaming and Organisational Change: Experiences from the Field*. Oxfam NOVIB and KIT. The Hague.
19 Jahan, Raunaq. 1995. *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*. Zed Books, London.
20 WHO 1998. Technical Paper: *Gender and Health .* WHO/FRH/WHD/98.16
21 The World Bank, 2002. *Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action*. Washington DC. World Bank.
22 <hdr.undp.org/media/Pialek_Gender_Mainstreaming.ppt>

Rees (1998) identifies three basic models for equality[23].

- Equality based on achieving the existing male norm (especially where women enter previously male domains).
- Equality based on equal valuation of different concerns and contributions of women and men in a gender-segregated society.
- Equality based on the transformation of gender relations with new standards for both men and women replacing the segregated institutions and standards associated with masculinity and femininity.

From a theoretical perspective, only the third model has the potential to deliver gender justice because this is the only one that involves the institutional transformation necessary for effective equality, while the first two models clearly retain the standards of the gendered *status quo.* In contrast, development agencies would probably take the view that all three models fall within the realm of gender mainstreaming.

Corner (1999)[24] makes the useful point that mainstreaming embraces two different but related aspects - "mainstreaming women" and "mainstreaming gender". Although the notion of

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23 Rees, Teresa. 1998. *Mainstreaming Equality in the European Union, Education, Training and Labour Market Policies*. Routledge, London.

24 Corner, Lorraine. 1999. *Capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in development*. Background paper to the High Level Intergovernmental Meeting to review the regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, Bangkok, 26-29 October 1999.

"mainstreaming gender" is derived from GAD, it is prone to being interpreted in purely technical terms (gender disaggregated data, gender analysis, gender training) and is therefore less controversial. On the other hand, "mainstreaming women" represents the more political aspect of mainstreaming, and implies women's equal participation not just as beneficiaries, but as active players in all decision-making processes.

2.   GENDER MAINSTREAMING: THE EXPERIENCE TO DATE

2.1   The global "state of play"

In the years since Beijing, a number of reviews have been carried out to assess the impacts and outcomes of efforts at gender mainstreaming, most of them at the initiative of international development agencies. Most contributors to a recent comprehensive collection[25] seem to share a sense of disappointment at the way in which the original conceptualisation of mainstreaming as a political process of reordering hierarchies of power and transforming development agendas, has been depoliticised and "dumbed down" by the very actors who are vocal in advocating for it. For instance, a recent review of UN agencies[26] found that many had not even taken the first step of carrying out gender analysis of policies and programs.

Overall, though, most development agencies have moved from exclusion of women to treating them as a marginalised group with special needs and interests. This is equivalent to the integrationist approach, criticised by feminists as the "add gender and stir" formula where the norms continue to be set with reference to men, while unequal social relations and women's real strategic interests - through which they can achieve change in their positions in society - are both ignored. Thus, instead of gender mainstreaming leading to transformation of the mainstream, the notion of gender equality has itself been depoliticised in the course of its engagement with the mainstream[27].

There is a striking similarity in the findings of a wide range of different studies and reviews of progress on gender mainstreaming - whether of international agencies, national governments or NGOs – over the last decade. Jahan (1997)[28] listed lack of accountability measures, lack of tracking of policy implementation and gaps between mandates and resources as critical barriers in four major international agencies. An 2001 AUSAID review[29] found that continuing conceptual confusions between WID and GAD hampered the environment for implementation of gender mainstreaming. In

25 Porter, Fenella and Caroline Sweetman. 2005. *Mainstreaming Gender in Development – A Critical Review*. Oxfam UK.

26 Hannan, Carolyn. 2004. *Gender Mainstreaming: a Key Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality at National Level*. Prepared for panel "Moving Beijing forward: Strategies and approaches for creating an enabling environment" at the UNESCAP High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes. Bangkok. 7-10 September 2004. <http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/Events/High-level%20meeting%20Sep%202004/English/Carolyn%20Hannan.pdf>

27 Pearson, Ruth. 1999. "Rethinking Gender Matters in Development" in T. Allen and A. Thomas, eds. *Poverty and Development in the 1990s*. Open University, UK.

28 Jahan, Rounaq. 1997. "Mainstreaming Women in Development: Four Agency Approaches" in Kathleen A. Staudt. ed. *Women, International Development, and Politics: The Bureaucratic Mire*. Temple University Press, USA

29 AUSAID. 2002. *Gender and Development: GAD Lessons and Challenges for the Australian Aid Programme*. AUSAID. <www.ausaid.gov.au>

a review of mainstreaming in 14 international agencies, Moser and Moser (2005)[30] found that although all of them had adopted the terminology of gender and gender mainstreaming and had put the appropriate policy frameworks in place, effective implementation was hampered by lack of conceptual clarity, limited internal capacities, weak accountability mechanisms, inadequate monitoring and "cultural" resistance from within the organisation. Similar studies on institutional frameworks for gender mainstreaming in global organisations - such as one by Razavi and Miller (2002)[31] of the ILO, the World Bank and UNDP - have reached the same conclusions.

A 2005 global study of national machineries for women conducted by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in the lead-up to the Beijing Plus Ten review notes a number of challenges that have persisted since 1995. These include lack of political will and leadership, lack of stability in terms of their position within the government, limitations of human resources and finances, poor coordination with civil society and other government departments, and inadequate mechanisms for accountability, data collection and monitoring mechanisms[32].

Many of these constraints have continued to put brakes on gender mainstreaming despite being repeatedly identified as key areas for change. For instance, the issues raised by the 2005 global evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP[33] are almost the same as those underlined in 1998 by Schalkwyk[34] - lack of conceptual clarity on gender, limited understanding and skills of programme staff, lack of commitment from managers and leadership, weak mechanisms for tracking and accountability, lack of space and support for learning and sharing lessons and inadequate allocation of financial resources for gender mainstreaming.

Institutional weaknesses, capacity deficits, poor investments in capacity-building, under-resourcing and lack of political will have also been identified as the main reason for gaps between gender mainstreaming policy and practice in development cooperation in the European Community[35]. These were also the issues highlighted in the AUSAID review[36]. In all these situations, the lack of accountability mechanisms and a culture of lip-service to political correctness fuels the phenomenon of "policy evaporation"[37].

Efforts, no matter how well-meant, to broadbase responsibility for mainstreaming across organisational units have often led to situations where gender is seen as "everyone's task and

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30 Moser, Caroline and Annalise Moser. 2005. "Gender Mainstreaming Since Beijing: A Review of Success and Limitations in International Institutions". In Porter, F. and C. Sweetman, eds. *Mainstreaming Gender in Development – A Critical Review*. Oxfam UK.

31 Razavi, Shahra and Carol Miller. 1995. *Gender Mainstreaming: a Study of Efforts by the UNDP, the World Bank, and the ILO to Institutionalize Gender Issues*. UNRISD Occasional Paper No. 4. UNRISD Geneva. August 1995.

32 UN Division for the Advancement of Women (2005) *The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women*. Report of Expert Group Meeting, 29 November to 2 December 2004, Rome, Italy. <www.wwan.cn/womenwatch/**daw**/egm/**national**m**2004**/docs/>

33 UNDP Evaluation office. (2006). *Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP*, UNDP New York. <http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/EO_GenderMainstreaming.pdf>

34 Schalkwyk, Johanna. 1998. *Building Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming: UNDP's Experience*. UNDP GIDP, New York.

35 Painter, Genevieve and Karin Ulmer. 2002. "Everywhere and Nowhere: Assessing Gender Mainstreaming in European Community Development Cooperation". APRODEV, Brussels and One World Action, UK. <http://www.aprodev.net/files/gender/EverywhereNowhere02.pdf>

36 AUSAID, op cit.

37 Longwe, Sara. 1995. "The Evaporation of Policies for Women's Advancement'. In N. Heyzer, ed. *A Commitment to the World's Women: Perspectives on Development for Beijing and Beyond*. UNIFEM , New York.

nobody's responsibility"[38]. For instance, when the Dutch government attempted to mainstream gender in the policy-making process, all gender equality offices at the local level were closed down. As a result, accountability was diffused and equality policies disappeared from local government.[39]

A decadal review of the mainstreaming experience in DFID found that gender equality policies focused on programmes in social sectors with little attention given to gender in programmes for economic opportunities and decision-making. While several good approaches had been piloted by the agency, these were not consistently applied. Evidence on 'policy evaporation' was inconclusive, with the availability and quality of evidence declining from programme planning, through commitments and expenditures to the implementation and organisational levels. The review suggested that the benefits of gender mainstreaming in terms of its impacts on gender equality were "at best embryonic and at worst still to become visible."[40]

In analysing her experience as a technical consultant on gender mainstreaming, Pradhan (2004)[41] points to the composition of the international pool of expertise in key sectors as a barrier to integration of gender concerns into technical projects. International agencies usually look for consultants with the seniority and credibility to engage at policy levels in the recipient country. This criterion privileges active senior public servants, former senior public servants and academics. While these specialists may be highly competent and skilled in their particular field of expertise, many international technical specialists, particularly those who fit the 'status' criteria, do not have either developing country experience or gender expertise.

In addition to these apparently ubiquitous barriers to implementation of gender mainstreaming, Mitchell (2004)[42] has pointed to the daunting scale and scope of the concept as articulated by UN agencies, and suggests that failure is inevitable since the bar of expectations is set too high. In the same vein, Brenner (2009)[43] suggests that the difficulty of implementing mainstreaming reflects the inability of feminists to back up their critiques of mainstream development with pragmatic "solutions". The holistic and transformative aims of gendered approaches to development such as mainstreaming, therefore remain aspirational and have proved difficult if not impossible to realise in practice.

2.2   The Asian experience

Even a cursory review of the literature on the Asian experience of gender mainstreaming is enough to highlight the fact that a lack of consensus on the interpretation and implications of the term make

38 Mehra, Rekha. and Geeta Rao Gupta. 2006. *Gender Mainstreaming: Making it Happen*. ICRW Discussion Paper. ICRW Washington. <http://www.icrw.org>
39 Verloo, Meike. 2001. *Another Velvet Revolution? Gender Mainstreaming and the Politics of Implementation*. IWM Working Paper No. 5/2001.
40 Watkins, Francis (2004). *DFID's experience of gender mainstreaming: 1995-2004*. DFID. <www.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/52/35074862.pdf>
41 das Pradhan, Rima. (2004). "Practical challenges for gender mainstreaming in governance projects: Observations of a consulting practitioner". *Development Bulletin* no. 64: 58-62.
42 Mitchell, Suzette. 2004. "What Lies at the Heart of the Failure of Gender Mainstreaming: The Strategy or the Implementation?' *Development Bulletin* no. 64:8-10
43 Brenner, Aletta. 2009. "GAD and gender mainstreaming: A pathway to sustainable development?". *Consilience. The Journal of Sustainable Development*. Spring 2009. <http://consiliencejournal.readux.org/2009/03/gad-and-gender-mainstreaming-a-pathway-to-sustainable-development/>

it difficult if not impossible to reach any general conclusions on the overall "success" or "failure" of the approach.

It is clear from the literature that the term "gender mainstreaming" is applied to a continuum of approaches and strategies for women's rights and/or gender equality, with integrationist approaches at one end and "transformative" interventions at the other. Recognising the impossibility of accurately depicting the scale and scope of the field and doing justice to every innovation within the limitations of a short paper, the following discussion is restricted to some typical interventions in five key sectors – economic development and livelihoods, public finance and public policy, electoral processes, governance, and civil society organisations

Apart from evaluation reports, most of the literature on gender mainstreaming available in the public domain in the Asia-Pacific region (as elsewhere) is in the form of case studies of "best practices". It is worth pointing out here that best practice documentation is not always a reliable source of information on the outcomes of gender mainstreaming. A typical "best practice" case is like a snapshot of an intervention taken at the peak of success, and does not always reveal the end of the story. Process documentation of gender mainstreaming interventions which might provide honest answers to this question – as well as valuable lessons for other practitioners – is unfortunately very rarely undertaken except by a few women's groups and NGOs.

Corner (1999)[44] presents the following broad typology of gender mainstreaming in the Asia-Pacific region, distinguishing between interventions that mainstream gender and those that mainstream women.

Table 3. "Mainstreaming gender" versus "Mainstreaming women"

Mainstreaming Gender	Mainstreaming Women
1. **Develop a gender perspective in planning and programming** - conduct advocacy, gender awareness & sensitivity training to generate understanding among planners and programmers..	1. **Capacity building for women** - provide technical training for women in non-traditional areas, especially politics, leadership and governance, and provide self-esteem and self-confidence building programmes for women.
2. **Develop technical capacity** - develop manuals and guidelines, prepare trainers and train planners and programme staff in the use of gender analysis, gender statistics, gender budgeting and gender auditing.	2. **Institutionalise women's participation** - advocate and implement measures such as affirmative action or quotas to increase women's roles in decision making, particularly in politics, leadership and governance.
3. **Institutionalise gender mainstreaming** - issue regulations etc to ensure the use of gender tools for planning and programming; appoint gender focal points and specialists to support gender mainstreaming.	3. **Social capacity building** - change work & social arrangements, as well as attitudes & behaviours, so that women can operate on an equal basis with men in the mainstream.
4. **Policy advocacy** - influence policy makers at the highest levels to mainstream a gender perspective in macroeconomic, finance and trade policy, and in political affairs.	4**. Capacity building for men** - change men's gender attitudes, eliminate gender-based violence, and enhance men's capacity to share unpaid domestic and caring work more equally with women.

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44 Corner, Lorraine. 1999. Op.cit.

2.2.1 Gender mainstreaming in economic development

The literature on gender mainstreaming in economic development is dominated by "integrationist" interventions. Diverse strategies have been adopted to increase women's participation in paid work and to bring women into specific sectors of the economy. For instance, Malaysia and Philippines have adopted policies and programmes aimed at facilitating the entry of women into exporting and to assist existing women exporters and entrepreneurs[45]. Research has been undertaken in Viet Nam to identify agricultural machinery that best meets the needs and economic situation of women farmers[46].

There are a few examples of projects that have succeeded in bringing women into projects in sectors that are generally considered gender-neutral[47]. Thus, the ADB-funded Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project in Bangladesh contracted landless women's societies for construction work and recruited women into user groups designed to oversee operations and management. Similar success is claimed for the Bangladesh Rural Infrastructure Development Project, aimed at economic and social development through improving roads, bridges and culverts, tree-planting, construction of local government complexes and improvements to rural markets (including construction of "women's sections"). According to an internal review, "mainstreaming gender enabled over 2,000 women to obtain steady employment and wages for the duration of the project; increased business skills and opportunities for women in retail; enhanced women's mobility and self-confidence; and improved household living standards, nutrition and education for children."[48]

Interventions such as these, rooted in a vision of equality based on "catching up" or "closing the gap" between women and men, are essentially efforts to include women in mainstream development regardless of the gendered nature of the mainstream. Such projects take little account of the fact that globalisation and structural changes in the economic environment in the countries of the region are impacting women's economic activities in several ways. Thus, the focus on women entrepreneurs in some countries has served to shift attention away from the situation of an increasingly vulnerable female labour force in these countries. Increased access to paid employment in export-oriented industries is often cited as a successful example of mainstreaming, even if the quality of this employment is questionable. Women's enterprises have been supported through trade promotion activities, but women are often concentrated in sub-sectors that have been adversely impacted by globalisation. For instance, a review of an aquaculture project for women project found that women's gains in small-scale aquaculture were jeopardised because investment is concentrated towards large-scale aquaculture activities where women are poorly represented.[49]

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45 True, Jacqui. 2007. "Trade Governance and Gender Mainstreaming in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC)". Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, Chicago, February 28 - March 3, 2007 . <http://www.apec.org/apec/publications>

46 Gibb, Heather. 2001. *Gender mainstreaming: Good practices from the Asia-Pacific region.* North-South Institute, Ottawa, Canada. <http://www.apecsec.org.sg>

47 Mehra, Rekha and Geeta Rao Gupta. 2006. Op. cit.

48 Thomas, Helen.T., Shireen Lateef and Firdous Sultana. 2005. *Gender Equality Results in ADB Projects: Bangladesh Country Report.* Asian Development Bank, Manila.
    <www.**adb**.org/Documents/Books/Gender-Equality-Results/**Bangladesh**/default.asp?p=genpgad>

49 True, Jacqui. 2007. Op. cit.

Microcredit programmes for women's economic empowerment are a standard element of gender mainstreaming in many poverty programmes. While they have undoubtedly contributed to women acquiring voice and agency through collective processes, their real impact on poverty is unclear. In India, activists have pointed out that without corresponding changes in the larger macroeconomic policy environment, the degree to which microcredit can enable poor women to address their own poverty is limited. Experience shows that, to become financially viable, micro-enterprises need support in the form of subsidies on raw materials and marketing assistance, whether from the government or from a well-connected NGO. Ironically, as part of the economic restructuring package, the state is retreating from providing precisely this kind of support. With government policies favouring the entry of multinationals into the rural market, the extent to which micro-enterprises can provide a viable base for rural entrepreneurship is also now being questioned at many levels[50]. Moreover, the overwhelming focus on microcredit has reduced the resources flowing to other programmes with potentially empowering outcomes, such as adult literacy programmes.

2.2.2 Gender mainstreaming in public finance and public policy

The limited technical capacities of women's movements and national machineries for women (such as women's departments and women's bureaux) have hampered efforts to mainstream gender equality into public finance and public policy. Interventions in this sector have had mixed results. A recent study[51] of the impact of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, gender equality and women's empowerment in Indonesia, Nepal and Papua New Guinea found that all three countries have made ongoing efforts to strengthen public finance management systems and promote performance based management by linking development strategies to annual and multi-annual budget processes. While some progress has been achieved in integration of gender equality priorities in national development and poverty reduction strategies, there has been general evaporation of the gains when it comes to the integration of specific targets and indicators in the results and budgeting frameworks. While there has been a notable opening of policy spaces for civil society and local community participation in national development planning processes, especially in Nepal and Indonesia, the study points to the need for strengthening the capacities and empowering women's machineries and gender equality advocates to enable them to participate effectively. The study found that where gender equality priorities are not adequately mainstreamed in national development plans and budgets, there is a risk that gender equality will evaporate in policies supported through development assistance.

While gender mainstreaming is often perceived as a donor agenda, the analysis of donor policies and programmes in the three countries covered in the UNIFEM study reveals limited support for gender equality priorities despite strong national commitments in Indonesia and Nepal. Very few donor-supported projects integrate gender equality as their key priority. In addition the implementation of programme-based approaches including Direct Budget Support and Sector Wide Approaches has often resulted in shrinking of spaces for innovative mechanisms for financing gender equality and women's empowerment. Harmonization in terms of common arrangements for funding, monitoring and reporting among donors remains very limited in all three countries. As a

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50 Menon-Sen, Kalyani. 2003. "Beyond the Feminisation of Poverty" in *Putting Gender Mainstreaming Into Practice.* UNESCAP and the United Nations, New York.

51 Corner, Lorraine. 2008. *Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality in Asia Pacific: Regional Issues and Trends.* UNIFEM, New York. <http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=121>

result there is a general lack of institutionalised donor and government coordination mechanisms in support for gender equality[52].

Despite the above constraints, efforts undertaken to strengthen public finance management systems provide an opportunity to 'en-gender' government budgets, which can provide a strategic entry point for making macroeconomic policies more gender aware.

Gender budgeting seeks to transform macroeconomic frameworks by getting government to look at economy and society through a gender lens. Gender budgeting can also be a tool in challenging many of the basic assumptions of conventional poverty analysis by making visible issues such as intra-household disparities and the contribution to the economy of women's unpaid work[53]. Since budget analysis involves all government ministries and departments, it provides a practical opportunity for officials across sectors to integrate gender into their areas of work.

Given the central role of the finance and planning in budget management and general policy decision-making, gender budget initiatives could integrate gender issues into government operations and financial management, leading to increasing resources for gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender budgeting has been an area of intensive focus for UNIFEM, UNDP and other donors in the region.

Gender budgeting in Nepal takes place within the framework of overall reform of the budget system. This initiative is the result of collaboration between UNIFEM, women's groups and gender experts and the women's ministry on one hand, and the Planning Commission, sector ministries and the Ministry of Finance on the other. A gender budgeting audit in education, health and agriculture at central level and in three districts at the district and village levels was carried out in 2002. An inter-agency Gender-Responsive Budget Committee was formed within the Ministry of Finance and a follow-up study on how to make the annual national budget gender-responsive commissioned in 2006. Guidelines were prepared by the National Planning Commission in consultation with the Ministry of Finance. A scoring system classifies expenditures in all sectors in terms of indicators that measure their impact on women and administrative arrangements for classification at the local level where funds are actually spent and information on impact is most readily available. In the Republic of Korea, according to the 2006 National Finance Act, the submission of a gender budget and gender-balanced reports will be mandatory from the 2010 fiscal year. In anticipation of this, in its budget guidelines for 2007-2008 the Ministry of Strategy and Finance has instructed that every ministry specify gender related demands and use special formats that incorporate gender[54].

While gender budgeting is a long-term investment and cannot be expected to show quick results, it has also been pointed out that the emphasis in these efforts has so far been primarily on process rather than outcomes[55] - tracking of expenditures and impacts has not yet been systematically attempted.

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52 Corner, Lorraine (2008).Op.cit.
53 Norton, Andy and Diane Elson (2002). "What's Behind the Budget? Politics, Rights and Accountability in the Budget Process". ODI DFID, UK. <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/1740.pdf>
54 UNIFEM (2008). *Progress of the World's Women*. <http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/servicesFS_panel2.html>
55 United Nations (2004). *Report of the UNESCAP High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes. Bangkok. 7-10 September 2004.* <http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/Events/High-level%20meeting%20Sep%202004/English/report.pdf>

In India for instance, the UNIFEM-led gender budget initiative resulted in a chapter on gender inequality in the government's annual pre-budget Economic Survey for 2000-01, and a separate statement on gender budgeting in the Union Budget 2005-06. All departments are required to present gender budget statements and as many as 54 out of 71 ministries/departments have set up gender budgeting cells[56]. Nevertheless, macroeconomic programmes and poverty programmes remain conspicuously gender insensitive.[57] In Nepal, health, agriculture and education were the areas selected for a gender audit of the Finance Ministry. Among other things the audit found that the Ministry of Finance considers all its policies and tax measures to be gender neutral. New guidelines requiring ministries to state the effects of their programme on women and poverty are not fully operational[58].

Ensuring the availability of disaggregated data on key issues is an essential tool for gender mainstreaming at the policy level. Initiatives to engender national Census operations have been undertaken in some countries in the region. In Nepal, questions related to women's status and empowerment such as female ownership of land, house, and livestock were included in the 2001 Census. UNIFEM and women's groups were consulted in developing the instruments and output tables. More than 20 percent of the enumerators were women[59]. In India, a special effort was mounted to capture women's work, including unpaid work, in the 2001 Census[60]. This included collaborations with women's organisations and gender advocates to identify key issues, gender training for all levels of personnel, an expanded definition of work, special forms and instruments, instruction manuals with illustrations of women's work and an intensive media campaign, resulting in a significantly higher netting of women's economic activity.

2.2.3   Legislating for gender equality

The focus of gender mainstreaming in several Asian countries has been on strengthening legislative frameworks and introduction of laws for affirmative action. A recent example is Nepal. Following the re-establishment of democracy in 1990, the electoral system has been revised and quotas for women created in the national assembly (50 percent) and in local government (20 percent). The Civil Service Act has been amended to lower the age bar for entry and reduce the probation period for women. Amendments to the civil code have established women's right to abortion, marital property and divorce. The Citizenship Act has been amended to allow citizenship to be transferred through the mother as well as the father. In 2006, the Interim Parliament passed a resolution to reserve one third of posts at all levels within government and one third of decision-making positions within political parties, for women. Women's rights groups are now campaigning for passing of appropriate legislation for the implementation of these resolutions. [61].

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56 Chakraborty, Lekha. 2009. "Institutional Mechanism for Gender Budgeting: Prior Evidence from India". In UNDP. *E-Discussion: Gender – Overcoming Unequal Power, Unequal Voice*. Asia Pacific Human Development Network. Colombo: UNDP Regional Centre for Asia Pacific. [http://www2.undprcc.lk/ext/HDRU/consolidate_gender.php].

57 National Alliance of Women's Organisations India. 2006. *India Second NGO Shadow Report on CEDAW*. <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/shadow_reports.htm>

58 UNDP Bureau of Development Policy. Undated. *Transforming the Mainstream*. UNDP. New York. <www.**undp**.org/women/docs/publication-**transforming-the-mainstream**.pdf >

59 Malla, Uttam Narayan. 2008. *Managing Population Census 2011 of Nepal*. <http://www.unsiap.or.jp/completed_prog/workshop/ms/ms5/nepal_census.pdf>

60 Parashar, Suman. 2003. "Mainstreaming Gender in Census Operations in India". In *Putting Gender Mainstreaming Into Practice*. UNESCAP and the United Nations, New York.

61 Rai, Anamika (2008).   Contribution to e discussion on the iKNOWPolitics network

Similarly, women's groups in the Philippines have campaigned successfully to put in place a number of laws protecting and expanding women's rights and freedoms. The Act Promoting the Integration of Women as Full and Equal Partners to Men in Development and Nation Building requires ministries to earmark 5-30 percent of official development assistance funds for programs and activities for women. The General Appropriations Act of 1998 also requires government agencies to set aside an amount from their appropriations for projects designed to address gender issues. These, as much as other laws designed to address specific issues such as violence against women and sexual harassment at the workplace, have been successful because of campaigns by women's groups and support from the media, civil society and some key members of the House and Senate[62].

An ambitious initiative for transformation of gender relations is currently underway in the Philippines. The Philippine Senate is debating legislation passed last month by the lower house that would mandate adoption of gender mainstreaming throughout the country. Dubbed the "Magna Carta of Women," the bill's general provisions explicitly reference the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Philippine bill explicitly questions "the validity of gender roles ... ascribed to women and men," calls for adoption of gender quotas and requires all media organizations to "convene a gender equality committee that will promote gender mainstreaming as a framework and affirmative action as a strategy." The "Magna Carta" is backed by feminist organizations and envisions a significant role for women's groups, who are to be "represented in international, national, and local special and decision-making bodies." A separate provision calls for "Gender and Development" programs and "gender audits" of governmental agencies and policies done in "consultation with gender or women's rights advocates."

The draft bill has attracted fierce opposition from critics who charge that the bill's definition of "gender" as "the socially differentiated roles, characteristics, and expectations attributed by culture to women and men" goes against the traditional biological interpretation of the term and even contradicts agreed-upon definitions in UN documents. Pro-life legislators have succeeded in removing "reproductive rights" language that could have been used to push a right to abortion. Concern over the bill's reference to "comprehensive" health services remains, though a clause calling for "due respect" for "women's religious convictions, the rights of the spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood, and the right of women to protection from hazardous drugs, devices, interventions, and substances" was inserted as a "safety-net," according to a source close to pro-family congressional leaders[63].

2.2.4 Gender mainstreaming in electoral processes and governance

Affirmative action has been widely implemented in the region. Quota systems have had notable success in South Asia. For example, in Bangladesh, through a special provision, there are 30 seats reserved for women in the Parliament to ensure their participation in politics, in addition to 300 elected seats. Initiatives taken by the government can also be an effective tool. In Viet Nam, women

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<http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/6191>

62 Agbon, Nelia (2008) Contribution to e discussion on the iKNOWPolitics network
<http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/6191>

63 From LifeSite, a pro-life campaign website <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2009/jan/09011512.html>

were elected to a little over 25 percent of seats in the national assembly, as a result of government guidelines and provision of professional and managerial training to women candidates by various ministries and institutions.

Quota systems appear to be particularly effective in engendering local government. For instance, in India, constitutional amendments in 1993 introducing 33 percent reservations for women in local bodies are universally acknowledged to have had a definite and positive impact on the political participation of women. Evaluative studies of the Panchayat Raj Institutions system have concluded that women have been able to assert control over resources and have successfully challenged male officials. Significantly, women have also chosen to tackle issues as water, alcohol abuse, education, health and domestic violence. However, entrenched power structures and traditional male-dominated social systems continue to pose barriers for elected representatives to exercise their rights, unless they can mobilise social and familial support.[64]

A remarkable example of transformative gender mainstreaming in governance comes from Timor-Leste. the world's youngest nation, where the first election was held in 2007 and has been documented by UNIFEM[65]. Nearly half the voters were women. Of the 65 new members of parliament, 20 were women. During the election, women candidates signed on to a Women's Political Platform, emphasising their common goal of giving women's issues a prominent place on the political agenda. The Election Monitoring Commission, a group of men and women gender equality advocates, kept a close watch on the commitments to gender equality of political parties. Women constitute nearly 30 percent of MPs, hold three out of nine cabinet posts (including the key ministries of Justice, Finance and Social Solidarity) and occupy an increasing number of seats on village councils. Women in elected office are backed up by a Women's Parliamentary Caucus, a Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Rural Development; a Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality under the Office of the Prime Minister, and, most recently, a Prime Ministerial Commission for Gender Equality.

These remarkable achievements are a result of a conscious policy of engaging women in state-building. The first United Nations mission (2000-2002) promoted gender equality in policy, programmes and legislation in the East Timor Transitional Administration. This later evolved into a full-fledged policy-making mechanism which, with the support of women's organisations and a critical mass of women in high-level decision-making positions, provided the foundation for the comprehensive institutional framework for gender equality, that exists today.

The GABRIELA experience of participation in the political process in the Philippines is equally impressive[66]. GABRIELA, an alliance of progressive organisations for the rights of women and indigenous people, has been a vocal and visible opponent of government policies in the country. GABRIELA has campaigned against the forced disappearances and brutal killings of suspected rebels; waged militant opposition to the influence of international financial institutions over the Philippine economy and politics; and denounced government corruption. GABRIELA's entry into the political arena was enabled by the enactment of the 'Party List System' Law in 1995, which transformed the electoral system and enabled excluded groups such as women, workers and farmers

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64 WINAP Newsletter. Women's Information Network for Asia and the Pacific, UNESCAP, Bangkok <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2872/is_1_27/ai_71563388>
65 UNIFEM. 2008. *Progress of the World's Women 2008. Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability.* <http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/>
66 UNIFEM (2008). Op.cit.

to form 'sectoral' parties to contest 20 per cent of the 250 seats in the Philippine House of Representatives. Under the law, each voter has two votes when electing Members of the Lower House, one for the individual district representative and another for the 'sectoral party' of her/his choice. By broadening the political space to which women had access, the party list system not only allowed electoral representation but also supported the political organisation of women.

In 2001 GABRIELA fielded their Secretary General as a Party List Representative under the *Bayan Muna* (Country First) Party. She won, and was re-elected in 2004. In 2007, GABRIELA ran again and earned 3.94 per cent of total votes, winning seats for two representatives. The election of GABRIELA's representative in 2001 greatly advanced the women's rights agenda in the Lower House. She played a major role in the passage of pro-women legislation such as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act. In 2007, the two GABRIELA representatives filed legislative proposals regarding the work benefits of Filipino women and migrant workers, divorce, marital infidelity, prostitution, protection of women and children in conflict areas, and the welfare of female prisoners.

2.2.5 Gender mainstreaming in civil society organisations

Experiences of gendered institutional change in NGOs, though comparatively few, have been extensively documented and analysed in recent years. A detailed process report of an intensive long-term project of gender mainstreaming in NGOs[67] in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Palestine describes the many difficulties, negotiations and compromises involved in translating abstract issues such as gender equality and gender mainstreaming into practice. Whereas most large development organisations usually start with engendering their programmes and turn the gender lens onto organisational issues only at a later stage, if at all, the strategy adopted by this project was the reverse one. The starting point was an explicit recognition that gender-unaware organisations are unlikely to produce gender-aware outcomes. The NGOs involved saw the putting in place of an organisational gender policy as a first step to institutionalising their commitment to gender equality. While gender policies remained in place even after the completion of the project, infrastructure such as Gender Units could not be continued due to lack of funds. Nevertheless, the impact on programmes is visible and reflects a shift from an integrationist approach to a strategic focus on gender justice and women's rights. For instance, one of the participating NGOs from India, the Gorakhpur Environment Action Group (GEAG) now conducts research on specific gender issues and is involved in a regional advocacy campaign combating violence against women and a campaign for the rights of women farmers[68]. It has also undertaken a gender impact assessment of its major programmes. Promoting small local women's groups remains a central strategy for GEAG. In a similar vein, documentation of a long-term intervention with BRAC, Bangladesh[69] (reportedly the largest NGO in the world) highlights the use of action-learning as a tool for integrating gender equality concerns into all aspects of the functioning of the organisation. A functional level of gender sensitivity and gender competence was built within the organisation through a cycle of situation analysis, action-planning and implementation to address both organisational and programmatic

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67 Mukhopadhyay, Maitreyee, Gerald Steenhouwer and Franz Wong. 2006. *The Politics of the Possible: Gender Mainstreaming and Organisational Change:Experiences from the Field.* KIT Publishers and Oxfam Publishing. <http://www.kit.nl/net/KIT_Publicaties_output/showfile.aspx?e=916>

68 <www.geagindia.org/Rightofwomen.htm>

69 Rao, Aruna, Rieky Stuart and David Kelleher. 1999. "Building Gender Capital at BRAC: A Case Study" in *Gender at Work: Organisational Change for Equality.* Kumarian Press. <http://www.genderatwork.org>

issues.

It would be a mistake to conclude from these inspiring examples that transformative gender mainstreaming is the norm in civil society organisations. Interpretations and responses to mainstreaming are as varied among civil society organisations as they are in other settings, and depend on the ideological and political positioning of the organisation with respect to women's rights. A recent Indian study compared the implementation of a government microcredit programme by a women's NGO, an activist women's rights organisation, and the women's wing of a mainstream left-wing political party[70]. The study found that the liberal feminist organisation could capitalise on the programme only to a limited extent and could not engage effectively with the state to negotiate for more flexibiliy in implementing the programme. The activist group was able to modify the structure of the programme to integrate it effectively with its own ongoing work on health rights. However, while this organisation has created new spaces and opportunities for the empowerment of the women it works with, its sphere of influence is limited to a small area. The leftist women's group has used the microcredit programme as a platform for mobilising large numbers of women who have gone on to confront the government on issues of domestic violence, right to food and corruption in local bodies.

The results of this study serve to underscore the lesson that transformatory gender mainstreaming does not happen by default. How gender mainstreaming is interpreted in practice depends on the context and the political priorities and commitment to gendered change of the implementing organisations.

3.   THE WAY FORWARD : SOME POSSIBILITIES

The experience of gender mainstreaming thus far would seem to have been unsatisfying for all those who have invested in it – feminists who developed the theoretical framework and lobbied for its adoption as a principle of development, gender advocates within development agencies who have struggled to translate it into operational terms, donors who expect to see returns from years of capacity-building and stockpiles of tools and instruments, and most of all, women who are struggling for their rights and livelihoods in the face of mounting odds.

Yet there is also little doubt that gender equality – the original goal of gender mainstreaming – remains as far from being realised as it was in 1995. Gender inequality, operating in synergy with inequalities of class, caste, race and sexuality, continues to curb and constrain the lives, violate the rights and undermine the dignity of millions of women in the Asia Pacific region. Indeed, it could be argued that neoliberal macroeconomic policies, the rise of religious fundamentalisms, militaristic ideologies, exclusive constructions of nationalism and, most of all, the increasing acceptance of violence as a valid political instrument have worsened women's situation in the post-Beijing decade, pushing millions of women in the global South to the very edge of survival.

While the debate around gender mainstreaming is an ongoing one, the possibilities for the way forward that have come up for discussion fall into three broad categories. These are

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70 Chari, Anurekha. Unpublished PhD dissertation. *Gender Mainstreaming as Development Policy: Microfinance Programmes for Women.* <cssh.unipune.ernet.in/ResearchProjects/Anurekha.pdf>

- Strengthening implementation based on the existing conceptual framework
- Broadening and deepening the conceptual framework to address emerging realities
- Bringing women's rights/women's empowerment back to the centre of the development discourse.

3.1 Strengthening implementation

Many practitioners are of the opinion that it is too early to pass judgement on the success or failures of gender mainstreaming, simply because it has nowhere been implemented in totality. Mehra and Rao Gupta (2006) argue that gender mainstreaming in most agencies has focused on internal organizational dimensions, such as staffing, policies, development of indicators, and training, which are only preconditions or precursors to interventions at the operational level[71]. They point out that the tendency to confuse the goals of mainstreaming with the means leads to the unrealistic expectation of immediate and comprehensive institutional change.

The alternate approach they propose is grounded in the fundamental ideas that showing quick results on the ground is motivating and helps to lower organisational resistance. They suggest an instrumental approach that focuses on high-priority issues where improving development effectiveness can deliver benefits to women in terms of meeting their needs and improving their lives. The gradual accretion of such changes can contribute to building credibility for mainstreaming and contribute to the larger goals of gender equality. Such an approach would involve identification of strategic operational opportunities that will yield visible results for women on the ground; research and analysis to demonstrate the costs of gender inequality and/or the value addition of gender equality; deployment of gender experts who also have sector-specific competence and credibility; development of a clear and specific action plan that steers clear of "doing everything at all levels" and allocation of sufficient resources to make a visible impact.

Suggestions for strengthening implementation can also be gleaned from evaluation reports and the findings of internal reviews. Issues that are common across most of these reviews are summarised as follows (Corner, 1999)[72].
- Conceptual clarity and understanding of the goals and principles of mainstreaming among key decision makers;
- Appropriate organisational arrangements and processes for the implementation of mainstreaming;
- Adequate gender tools and staff skilled in their application;
- Capacity and building to facilitate women's participation and empowerment.

More than a decade ago, Jahan (1995) listed the actions to be taken by development agencies in pursuing gender equality[73]. She emphasised the need to differentiate between instrumental and substantive policy objectives. She suggested the establishment of short term and long term goals

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71 Mehra, Rekha, and Geeta Rao Gupta. 2006. *Gender Mainstreaming: Making it Happen*. International Centre for Research on Women Discussion Paper

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/MehraGuptaGenderMainstreamingMakingItHappen.pdf>

72 Corner, Lorraine. 1999. Op.cit.

73 Jahan, Raunaq. 1995. *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*. Zed Books, London.

with clear priorities and budgets. Goals and timetables need to be incorporated into policy objectives so that monitoring and evaluation does not become elusive. These recommendations continue to be relevant even today.

The need to address the resistance (and sometimes even hostility) to gender mainstreaming of duty-bearers in general, and men in particular, has been much discussed. Involving men as promoters and actors in gender mainstreaming is acknowledged to be essential, but foolproof guidelines are hard to find. An expert group on the issue convened by DAW[74] emphasised that funding for work with men boys should not be at the expense of funding for gender equality work with women and girls. They also recommended that work with men should be done in partnership with women and women's groups so as to lessen the risk of men colluding in or becoming complicit with dominant and oppressive forms of masculinity.

Drawing on successful experiences of partnership between a Northern donor and community NGOs in Cuba, Stuart (2009)[75] underlines the importance of a supportive environment at the community level for effective implementation of mainstreaming projects. She found that the more participatory the approach of the implementing NGO, the more the beneficiaries were able to express their positive appreciation of gender diversity, and see the benefits of complementarity. She identifies the following key factors.

- Presenting gender equality as good for women, men and families, rather than portraying women as victims and men as villains.   This makes it easier for men to be champions and to be actively involved.
- Willingness to start from partner and community reality, and build, no matter how modestly, rather than requiring some ideal starting point.
- Managers who are able to foster positive collaboration among scientists, social scientists and women and men in the communities;
- Awareness by partners that attention to gender mainstreaming is increasingly important for many donors, and will become a condition of funding where it is not already.

3.2.2   Broadening the conceptual framework

Apart from critiques of the way in which it has been implemented, recent discourse has focused attention on the limitations of the notion of gender as an analytical tool. Gender analysis focuses primarily or exclusively on differences between women and men and does not take the differences among women sufficiently into account. Kerr (2001) argues that this failure to distinguish gender from other aspects of identity such as class, religion, race, ethnicity, age, ability, caste, sexuality, and location slows the transformative potential of the mainstreaming approach[76]. Riley (2004) points out that it is problematic in the long term to pursue a strategy that identifies gender inequality as the primary axis of exclusion, and makes a strong case for broadening the mainstreaming agenda so as to take into account other parameters that constitute and regulate difference[77].

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74 UN Division for the Advancement of Women. 2003. *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality.* Report of the Expert Group Meeting, 'The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality', organised by DAW in collaboration with ILO and UNAIDS, 21–24 October 2003, Brasilia, Brazil. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men- boys2003/index.html>.
75 Stuart, Rieky. 2009. Personal communication.
76 Kerr, Joanna. 2001. *International Trends in Gender Equality Work*. Occasional Paper No. 1 November 2001. Association for Women's Rights in Development.
77 Riley, Jenny. 2004. "Some reflections on gender mainstreaming and intersectionality". *Development Bulletin*,64:

Even as far back as 1995 in Beijing, some grassroots women's movements had pointed out that the conception of gender equality encapsulated in the PFA is a narrow one that focuses on sex-based discrimination and ignores issues of racial, political, economic and cultural inequality and injustice. The Caucus of Indigenous Women has stated that the Beijing PFA fails to challenge racism and environmental exploitation, and the draft had been manipulated by the Northern powers to obscure causal connection between neoliberal macroeconomic policies and women's poverty[78]. Gender mainstreaming based on this formulation is therefore likely to benefit women of the "dominant culture" and reinforce the marginalisation of others.

The notion of "intersectionality", although still very much a work in progress, aims to respond to these concerns. An intersectional approach to analyzing the disempowerment of marginalized women attempts to capture the impacts of interactions between multiple forms of subordination. It addresses the issues of women existing at the intersections of racism, patriarchy, class, caste, race and other systems of discrimination.

Crenshaw (2000)[79] describes the dynamics of intersectional subordination as being based on structural, political and representational factors, and argues that intersectional subordination is invisible, since women who experience multiple forms of discrimination being either "over-included" or "under-included" by gender or race discrimination frameworks. 'Over-inclusion' is likely when a problem is presented as gender subordination without consideration of the simultaneous racial or ethnic subordination (as in the case of trafficking, where trafficked women are usually identified purely as victims of sexual violence). 'Under-inclusion' on the other hand can occurs when a subset of women experience a problem that is invisible because it is not the experience of women from the dominant group (for instance, administration of injectable contraceptives in population programmes, which does not affect women who do not use state health facilities).

Thus far, discussions on intersectionality have human rights rather than gender mainstreaming as a starting point. However, Kerr (2001)[80] points out that a growing number of development organisations are adopting rights-based approaches to development over a gender mainstreaming approach. An intersectional analysis of identities such as race and gender can help to resolve tensions between respect for diversity and recognition of the universality of women's human rights.

In its 45th session, the Commission on the Status of Women discussed intersectionality and recommended that governments, UN agencies and civil society groups adopt an "integrated and holistic approach to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, in particular women subject to multiple discrimination."[81] The actions recommended for this purpose have direct implications for gender mainstreaming policies and strategies.

Reviewing the evidence on gender mainstreaming through an intersectionality lens, Riley (2003)[82]

82-86. <http://devnet.anu.edu.au/GenderPacific/pdfs/19_gen_mainstream_riley.pdf>

78 Tauli Corpuz, Victoria. 1995. *Depoliticising Gender in Beijing* <http://www.twnside.org.sg/title/gen-ch.htm>

79 Crenshaw, Kim. 2000. *Background paper on Gender-Related Aspects of Race Discrimination*. Paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Gender and Race Discrimination', 21-24 November 2000, Zagreb, Croatia. <http://www.wicej.addr.com/wcar_docs/crenshaw.html>

80 Kerr, Joanna. 2001. Op.cit.

81 United Nations. 2001. *Report on the 45th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women*. E/2001/27.

82 Riley, Jenny. 2003. *GAD and intersectionality in the region: Forging the future*. Background paper prepared for the

concludes that developing a more comprehensive gender mainstreaming tool that accounts for other modes of subordination as well as gender could result in a gender mainstreaming strategy that is more relevant, contextual, attuned to the reality on the ground, and thus more transformative and more effective in achieving development goals. At the same time, she cautions that efforts to expand ways of understanding and analysing are likely to be constrained in their impact if the barriers and challenges experienced in gender mainstreaming to date are not addressed.

3.2.3   Sharpening the focus on women's rights and women's empowerment

Although feminists and women's movement activists were primarily responsible for advancing the mainstreaming agenda in the 1990s, many are now expressing scepticism and disillusionment with the way in which gender mainstreaming has played out since Beijing. The main points emerging from the numerous critiques by feminist activists can be summarised as follows.

- As presently articulated, gender mainstreaming is a weak and essentially technocratic concept that obscures the linkages between gender inequality and social change[83]. It should be considered a theoretical formulation that requires deepening and detailing before it can be translated into interventions[84]
- Gender mainstreaming, and more generally "gender speak" (exemplified by apolitical and conceptually unsound statements like "gender is about men and women") have undermined the basic goals of women's struggles for rights and justice and have pushed back the past gains of women's movements[85].
- Gender mainstreaming has become an excuse to reduce resources flowing to women. Gender units and gender programmes have been dismantled in some agencies and countries. In others, budget analysis shows that there has been a significant reduction in allocations to women's programmes. Post-mainstreaming in many donor agencies, project proposals that focus on women tend to be rejected or returned with the direction to "include men"[86].
- Mainstreaming has "technified" and "softened" political issues and separated the notion of gender from its feminist roots by skirting contentious issues of men's roles in gender oppression. This "soft feminism" is considered more appropriate to the mainstreaming discourse because it is more acceptable to men[87].
- Gender mainstreaming has shifted the focus away from outcomes to process. There is a mismatch between the huge amount of information and tools, gender training and policy directives of gender mainstreaming and the outcomes in terms of changes in women's

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IWDA Thinktank Symposium on Gender mainstreaming and Intersectionality, 3-4 July 2003 Brisbane, Australia. International Women's Development Agency.
< http://www.iwda.org.au/au/wp-content/uploads/2006/09/iwda_gad_region_-future.pdf>

83 Daly, Mary E. 2005. "Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice". *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 12 (3): 433-450

84 Sandler, Joanne. 2004. "Whither Gender Mainstreaming?" in *Gender Mainstreaming: Can it Work for Women's Rights?*" AWID Spotlight No. 3. Association for Women's Rights in Development, November 2004.
<http://www.awid.org/publications/OccasionalPapers/spotlight3_en.pdf>

85 Win, Everjoice. 2004. "Gender Equality: Mainstreamed Into Oblivion?" in *Gender Mainstreaming: Can it Work for Women's Rights?* AWID Spotlight No. 3. Nov 2004. Association for Women's Rights in Development.
<http://www.awid.org/publications/OccasionalPapers/spotlight3_en.pdf>

86 Johnsson-Latham, Gerd. 2004. "Gender Mainstreaming: The Second-Best Option" in *Gender Mainstreaming: Can it Work for Women's Rights?* AWID Spotlight No. 3. Association for Women's Rights in Development, November 2004. <http://www.awid.org/publications/OccasionalPapers/spotlight3_en.pdf>

87 Bjork, Malin. 2006. *Gender Mainstreaming*. <http://www.scumgrrls.org/article14.html>

condition or position.[88]

An increasing number of voices are now heard advocating a return to a women's rights approach, or at least integration of a sharper and more unequivocal focus on women's rights into mainstreaming strategies.

Kerr (2003)[89] traces two distinct strands in efforts for gender equality since Beijing – the women's rights approach and the gender and development approach – that have proceeded largely on separate tracks. She points out that more and more agencies - "from Oxfam to UNICEF" - are shifting from mainstreaming to rights-based approaches. Rights-based approaches, unlike mainstreaming, avoid any confusion between ends and means by keeping the end result – equal rights for all – in constant view. A rights agenda provides standards by which to measure success, and clearly links results to programme objectives and procedures. However, she also warns that the rights discourse is equally vulnerable to co-optation, distortion and depoliticisation as any other approach. Acknowledging the feminist underpinnings and conceptual strengths of the gender and development approach, she argues for a stronger convergence between all approaches and strategies for women's rights and gender equality.

O'Neill (2004)[90] makes a strong case for grounding gender equality efforts in CEDAW as a practical strategy for convergence between gender mainstreaming and women's rights. Drawing on her own experience, she describes how, in the last 20 years, CEDAW reporting in the Pacific Island countries has changed from a bureaucratic exercise to a powerful tool for improving the status of women. She sees this as a powerful example of gender mainstreaming at partner-country level. She underlines that in implementing CEDAW, governments are effectively taking a rights-based approach, since the convention serves as an international bill of rights for women. She lists the following advantages of using CEDAW and the CEDAW reporting process.

- Governments and civil society organisations must perforce work together to give effect to CEDAW.
- It provides an opportunity for women's offices to provide leadership and to increase their profile.
- Reporting on implementation prompts governments to action, since they want to be seen in the best light when under international scrutiny.
- Statistics and data need to be gathered regularly, and reporting provides a baseline against which progress can be measured over the longer term. ;
- The CEDAW Committee assists governments to identify priority areas for future action. This has the potential to encourage government agencies to take specific medium-term actions to address issues and improve women's status or become more responsive to women's needs;
- Reporting provides a measurable and visible focus for activists to put pressure on their government.

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88 Riley, Jenny. (2004). "Some reflections on gender mainstreaming and intersectionality". *Development Bulletin*, 64:82-86 <http://devnet.anu.edu.au/GenderPacific/pdfs/19_gen_mainstream_riley.pdf>
89 Kerr, Joanna. 2003. "From 'opposing' to 'proposing' : Finding proactive global strategies for feminist futures". In Joanna Kerr, Ellen Sprenger and Alison Symington eds. *The Future of Women's Rights:Global Visions and Strategies.* Zed Books. 2003.
90 O'Neill, Patti. 2004. "Rethinking gender mainstreaming (or, Did we ditch women when we ditched WID?): A personal view". *Development Bulletin* 64:45-48.

Reporting can diffuse accountability and responsibility for actions across ministries, and take the pressure off the under-resourced women's offices.

O'Neill points out that this list is very similar to the standard definition of gender mainstreaming, yet it is driven by a specific women's rights approach and end objective.

3.2.4 Is there a future for gender mainstreaming?

As the above discussion makes clear, gender mainstreaming is far from dead. Even its most trenchant critics do not deny the strength or continuing validity of the concept. Indeed, most if not all critiques are twinned with persuasive arguments for revisiting, broadening, deepening or otherwise strengthening the mainstreaming approach to make it a sharper and more effective tool for achievement of women's rights and gender equality.

The work of "gender people" inside and outside development agencies has generated an impressive body of analyses, tools and methodologies of gender mainstreaming. "Insiders" have a good idea of what works and what does not work, and why. It would be a pity if this body of knowledge were not used to ensure more focused gender equality outcomes for development projects.

More importantly, and despite all the gaps in implementation, gender mainstreaming has been successful in creating space for raising women's rights issues in non-confrontational ways within the development discourse and development organisations. This hard-won territory cannot be easily surrendered – difficult as it is, this is the arena where practitioners and theoreticians must continue to engage in the struggle for a world where women and men can work together for freedom, security and dignity for all.

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