GENDER MAINSTREAMING:
A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY & THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS
Gender mainstreaming is the inter-governamentally-agreed, global strategy for achieving the goal of gender equality.

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 established gender mainstreaming as the global strategy for promoting gender equality. The outcome document of this Conference, the Beijing Platform for Action, identified twelve critical areas of concern for urgent action to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men. In each of these areas of concern, the Beijing Platform for Action calls on governments and other actors to “promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.”

Accordingly, in 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in their agreed conclusions 1997/2, defined gender mainstreaming as:

“...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality... Gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes or positive legislation, nor does it substitute for gender units or gender focal points.”

Since then, several United Nations inter-governmental resolutions, mandates and decisions have reaffirmed the commitment to gender mainstreaming, and the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These include the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

Gender mainstreaming remains widely accepted as the most practical means to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. It moves gender equality and the empowerment of women from the margins to the mainstream of decision-making, integrating gender perspectives into all policies, programmes, functions and structures of an institution.

Gender mainstreaming thus propels progress towards the ultimate goal of attaining gender equality. It transforms society positively through the elimination of discriminatory laws, norms and practices that limit women’s and girls’ voices, choices, and opportunities and impede them from achieving their full potential.
Why is gender mainstreaming still relevant?

Women **earn 23 per cent less** than men.\(^6\)

Women’s (aged 25-54) **labor force participation rate** is **63 per cent** compared to 94 per cent for men.\(^7\)

Women spend approximately **2.5 times** more time on **unpaid care** and **domestic work** than men.\(^8\)

Only **24 per cent** of all **national parliamentarians** were women as of February 2019, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995.\(^9\)

As of June 2019, only **11 women** are serving as **head of state** and **12** are serving as **head of government**.\(^10\)

It is estimated that **35 per cent** of women have experienced either **physical** and/or **sexual** intimate partner **violence** or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives.\(^11\)

**49 countries** still lack laws protecting women from **domestic violence**.\(^12\)

There are **650 million women and girls** in the world today who were **married before the age of 18**.\(^13\)

At least **200 million girls and women** worldwide have undergone some form of **female genital mutilation**.\(^14\)

Between 1990 and 2017, women constituted only **2 per cent** of **mediators**, **8 per cent** of **negotiators**, and **5 per cent** of **witnesses and signatories** in all major **peace processes**.\(^15\)
Gender mainstreaming is an approach to both programming and institutional change in support of the implementation of global commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy, therefore, requires systematic integration of gender perspectives in policies, programmes and thematic issues.

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT THE PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL

- Gender Analysis
- Programme Design
- Human and Financial Resource Allocation
- Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

- Establish institutional arrangements to support gender mainstreaming such as gender units and gender focal points systems
- Allocate financial and human resources to support gender mainstreaming efforts
- Implement accountability mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality


### Gender Mainstreaming Throughout the Programme Cycle

**STEP 1: Gender Analysis**

- Gather evidence through gender analysis of the context. Identify if, how and why issues affect women and men differently and unequally within a particular context or development sector, and what options exist to address them.

**STEP 2: Programme Design**

- Use the findings of the gender analysis to inform programme design. Programme design includes the selection of priority issues, target groups and coverage, and their integration in terms of programme results, indicators and intervention modalities.

**STEP 3: Resource Allocation**

- Ensure the allocation of adequate resources to effectively address gender equality considerations in the programme cycle.

**STEP 4: Programme Implementation**

- Foster multisectoral and multidisciplinary partnerships, comprised of a range of stakeholders, including women’s organizations for programme implementation.

**STEP 5: Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Utilize effective monitoring and evaluation to build the evidence base for strategic decisions related to gender equality, enable better development planning and hold institutions accountable for their commitments on gender equality.

*Adapted from UN Women Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming (2014).*
In addition to undertaking the above mentioned sequence of steps when designing interventions, widespread development practice has established that a multiple-track strategy for gender mainstreaming has greater potential for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. A majority of development organizations have adopted a multiple-track approach, often called twin-track or dual-track, to implement gender mainstreaming. The multiple-track approach includes combining gender-targeted interventions for specific social groups, organizations and/or processes with gender integrated strategies across the substantive work of all priority sectors.

AT THE PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL, GENDER ANALYSIS HELPS TO:

- Identify contextual constraints and opportunities in relation to gender equality.
- Review capacities of duty bearers to reach out equally to women and men, boys and girls, and to promote gender equality.
- Collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data.
- Understand that women and men are not homogenous groups and identify the different ways men and women experience challenges.
- Understand the ways in which gender intersects with ethnicity, race, age, disability and other social variables.
- Examine how power relations at the household level relate to those at the institutional, state, community and market levels.


Goal: Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

MULTIPLE TRACK OR DUAL TRACK STRATEGY: GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender-Targeted Approaches: In this approach interventions specifically target women and girls

Gender-Integrated Approaches: In this approach gender perspectives are integrated into all ongoing programmes and functions

Development outcomes in sectors: Gender equality and women’s empowerment

Adapted from UN Women Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming (2014).
Furthermore, multiple track gender mainstreaming strategies may include a combination of the following interventions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender targeted interventions</th>
<th>Gender integrated interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address the specific needs and circumstances of diverse population groups, geographical areas and/or organizations (such as civil society and community-based women’s groups)</td>
<td>Aimed at changing or shaping existing mainstream policies, sector initiatives and government systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct interventions</th>
<th>Indirect interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include service provision, subsidies, grassroots advocacy and large-scale social mobilization on a specific theme</td>
<td>Include evidence-gathering, research and analytical work, policy dialogue, institution-building, coalition-building, gender-responsive budgeting initiatives, capacity development, and/or organizational reforms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term measures</th>
<th>Long-term measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressive, transitional and/or preparatory measures such as media campaigns</td>
<td>Systemic changes; behaviour and social change followed by social norms transformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government measures</th>
<th>Sector-specific measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New legislation, policies, data production initiatives or allocations in national budgets</td>
<td>Interventions within a particular sector such as the health sector, security sector, transport, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional level</th>
<th>Programmatic/thematic level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At an institutional level, there has been a significant increase in commitment to gender mainstreaming with established institutional arrangements, such as national machineries for gender equality, gender units and gender focal point systems.</td>
<td>At a programmatic level, interventions embrace complexity, intersectionality and multiple discriminations, a diversity of areas and frontier issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRANSFORMATIVE GENDER RESULTS**

Changes in norms, cultural values, power structures, and the roots of inequalities and discrimination

Adapted from UN Women Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming (2014).
Additional Resources


For more information on UN-SWAP, please see: https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability

Endnotes


4 For more information please see: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

5 For more information, please see: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf


9 For more information, please see: http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures

10 For more information, please see: http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures


14 For more information, please see: http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures

15 For more information, please see: http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures


18 The most commonly used gender frameworks include The Harvard Analytical Framework, the Gender Planning Framework, the Social Relations Framework, the Women’s Empowerment Framework.


20 Ibid.