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Reviewed work(s):

Source: Caribbean Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 2/3, Unraveling Gender, Development and Civil Society in the Caribbean (June-Sept. 2006), pp. 104-120

Published by: University of the West Indies and Caribbean Quarterly

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40654564

Accessed: 12/06/2012 10:12

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Gender Mainstreaming: Its Role in Addressing Gender Inequality in Jamaica

by

FAITH WEBSTER

Introduction

Historical Status Quo

The subordination of women to men throughout history, in most of the world’s societies, is a documented fact. Patriarchy and other pervasive philosophies and mindsets were translated into decidedly unequal relations between men and women in just about every sphere of endeavour.

These have manifested themselves in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions; in wage and wealth differentials, in unequal sexual power relations, in disparities in social status; typically all favouring men.

The Push for Gender Equality

One key factor that contributed to an eventual change in the status quo was the absence of men in their usual numbers on the productive front during the Second World War. With men occupied on battlefields (and perishing in large numbers) women, in addition to fulfilling their time-honoured domestic obligations also had to engage in economic tasks, which were normally the exclusive domain of the male of the species. With this unavoidable shift in the male/female “balance of power”, eventually organised opposition to the long-entrenched second-tier status of women was fomented, leading to the creation of the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1960s.

In turn, as a result of this initiative, various approaches to empowering women were conceptualised and emerged as reasonably coherent concepts with differing degrees of real-world applicability, and practicality. The first such was the Social Welfare concept, which included the Women in Development (WID) approach pursued in the 1970s. This approach however, focused heavily on women’s reproductive role rather than their productive role and viewed women as passive recipients of welfare and not as active participants in development or as creators/owners of wealth in their own right.

In an effort to correct this limitation, the Women and Development (WAD) approach was introduced in the early 1980s. This model sought not only to combine the reproductive role with its productive counterpart but also to address the systemic roots of gender inequality by integrating women in the development process.
Even so, at the approach of the mid-1990s, it was recognized that women’s equality could best be achieved by considering the differential emphases and needs of women and men in national development policies. This idea was conceptualised through the Gender and Development (GAD) approach, which spearheaded a shift from Women to Gender.

The GAD perspective gave rise to the concept of Gender Mainstreaming; Gender Mainstreaming being seen as a strategy or a tool towards the attainment of the ultimate goal - Gender Equality.

**Definitions of Gender Mainstreaming**

What then is Gender Mainstreaming? There are many definitions, but despite differing slants and emphases, just about all definitions point essentially to the integration of a gender equality perspective in sectoral policies and programmes. The definition as articulated in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) agreed conclusions of July 1997 speaks of 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 social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

(Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview, United Nations 2002).

The definition by the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming is as follows:

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

(Gender Mainstreaming, Strasbourg, May 1998).

In a background note of 1997 prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women on Gender Mainstreaming, the Gender Mainstreaming definition was further elaborated upon as follows:

Gender mainstreaming requires more than a quantitative change in numbers of women and men participating in, or benefiting from, policies and programmes. It requires a transformation of all sectoral policies at all levels, and of institutions, organizational practices, attitudes and systems that shape them so that they fully take into account the realities, needs and views of women. (Gender Mainstreaming, A Background Note,
Division for the Advancement of Women, July 1997).

The concept of gender mainstreaming first emerged in international texts after the Third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985.

**Roots of the Process in Jamaica**

In keeping with the WAD approach in 1987, the Jamaican Government in recognition of the need to lift the status of women developed a National Policy Statement on Women. The ten (10) goals of the Policy Statement along with other international agreements outlined the basic areas of attention for women. The objective of the Policy Statement was to allow for the full integration of women in the national development process.

Since 2004, the Government of Jamaica has set up a Gender Advisory Committee (GAC) to strategically advise government on issues pertaining to gender. One of the central roles of the GAC, which comprises representatives from government, NGOs and the private sector, is to formulate a process whereby gender can be mainstreamed in all national public policies and programmes. Stakeholder consultations in this regard have already taken place and a National Gender Policy is presently being developed to this end.

The year 1995 could reasonably be deemed a watershed year for the Gender Mainstreaming philosophy in Jamaica. The concept was brought to the fore at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, where governments including the Jamaican administration committed to promoting the goal of gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action spoke specifically to Gender Mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality. The Beijing document called upon governments 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.” (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995)

The Jamaican government having given its commitment to the tenets of the Platform for Action sought to actualise the principles of Gender Mainstreaming through dialogue and discussions at various levels and through the twelve (12) critical areas of concern prioritised in the document and the areas of priority earmarked for Jamaica’s programmatic activities within the national machinery. This signalled the beginning of a national effort toward the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming programmes and activities.

With this mandate in mind, the Bureau of Women’s Affairs, which is the state agency/national machinery mandated to empower women, began to articulate the concept of Gender Mainstreaming and to incorporate the Gender Mainstreaming language in policy documents, gender fora and other inter-sectoral discussions. The national machinery also advocated for gender concerns to be integrated in all government’s policies, programmes and plans. The Government of Jamaica in cementing its commitment for Gender Mainstreaming as an overarching policy in all Government ministries issued an edict through the Cabinet Office in 1996 that all ministries and agencies of Government should incorporate a
gendered perspective in all their strategic and corporate plans. Likewise, the women's NGOs, which also had representation at the Beijing Conference, began to communicate the Gender Mainstreaming philosophy to their constituents and partners. At times there was also a uniting of the National Machinery, the Cabinet Office and the women’s NGO’s to bring the message of Gender Mainstreaming across to the public sector and other groups, as a means of best addressing gender inequality.

**The Case for Gender Mainstreaming in Jamaica**

Based on the forces, historical, economic and otherwise, that shaped Jamaican society, the country, typical of those cited in the Introduction, is characterised by marked gender inequality in favour of men (this is despite the undeniable traditional “domestic” influence and leadership of women, a reality also readily acknowledged and richly documented by many researchers, and the relatively contemporary phenomenon of females outstripping males academically and coming to the fore in the sphere of public sector management). On the basis of a number of indicators both quantitative and qualitative, it can be reasonably argued that Jamaica is therefore a highly suitable candidate for Gender Mainstreaming intervention. To make the case, a few areas of historical (and current) inequality in the economic, social and inter-personal spheres, will be highlighted.

Specifically, an examination of some key social and economic indicators from a gendered perspective, as provided in the Jamaica Gender Advisory Committee Desk Review of July 2005, amply illustrates the case for Jamaica being on the receiving end of a comprehensive Gender Mainstreaming thrust:

**Gender and Poverty**

- Over the past decade, consumption levels by female-headed households declined by up to fourteen percent (14%) whereas that for male headed households fell by just 1.7 percent
- Women are more susceptible to chronic poverty in light of their triple burden of childbearing, employment and household management, which monopolises their time and stretches their resources

**Gender and Education**

- Daily School attendance rates are higher for females at all three (3) educational levels (primary, secondary, tertiary)
- The literacy level is higher among females
- Females outnumber males significantly at the tertiary level
- Females are outperforming males at all three levels
- Females manifest a leaning toward “softer” subjects (i.e. the arts, humanities) at tertiary level. This is essentially attributable to gender socialization in the overall school system
Gender and Labour

The female participation rate in the labour force has been consistently lower than that for males. Males continue to represent the majority of the employed labour force, accounting for 57.9 percent

- Gender differentials in unemployment are marked, the female unemployment rate (16.9 percent) being twice that for males (7.9 percent)
- Although females are outperforming their male counterparts educationally, women's access to employment is generally lower
- Women are dominant in sectors that are lower paid and offer less job security. Protection from trade unions is still less accessible to women
- There is no recognition in law, of sexual harassment, which predominantly affects women
- At the highest level of corporate power and decision-making, females are outnumbered by males. The glass ceiling has been cracked but not shattered
- Significantly, it is estimated that over a third (35.8%) of each sex group would have to change its occupations in order for gender equality to be attained

Gender and Health

- Maternal mortality rates have not fallen appreciably over time
- Females in the age groups 10 - 19 years and 20 - 29 years are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than are males in comparable age groups
- Males are particularly susceptible to death by road accidents
- Males are more likely than females to commit suicide

Gender and Agriculture

- Islandwide, women own less agricultural land than men
- The majority of female farm-owners are smallholders with an average farm size considerably less than men's. Thus limitations, such as lack of economies of scale, associated with small-scale agriculture impact women far more seriously
- The environment in which female hugglers function renders their operations economically inefficient and subjects them to unsatisfactory and demeaning working conditions
- Female agricultural employees are paid lower wages for the same tasks as carried out by their male counterparts. Working hours and conditions leave much to be desired.
Gender and Trade

- Globalisation, with its tenet of trade liberalisation has had a more adverse effect on women. Thousands of low-skilled jobs held by women were lost when trade liberalization afforded incentives for multinationals to shift their operations from Jamaican free zones to those of other countries, in particular Mexico.
- Due to their overall numerical dominance in the service sector, women are more subject to external shocks that reduce the demand for their services.
- Other recent economic developments occasioning restructuring and downsizing of many businesses has proven more detrimental to women.

Gender and Violence

- Domestic Violence and sexual abuse continues to be a problem facing many women.
- More males participate in violent crime.
- Women often play a key role in offering shelter and comfort to male criminals.
- Gender and Coping Strategies
- Females receive more support from relatives both at home and overseas.

Gender and Policy/Legislation

- Implementation of legal reform is slow.
- There is insufficient or non-existent integration of gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects.

Gender and Power & Decision-Making

- Aside from the already-cited under-representation of women at the very highest level of corporate power and decision-making, women are also under-represented in the sphere of representational politics. While Jamaica has now joined the ranks of countries with female heads of government, the proportion of females holding high political/ceremonial office still leaves much to be desired.

It is on the basis of this reality that structured efforts, through the role of the Gender Advisory Committee (GAC) are now underway, via Gender Mainstreaming, to arrive at gender equality in Jamaican society. But admittedly, the process was, initially, essentially driven from without and an examination of international perspectives on and agitation for, Gender Mainstreaming, will afford an appreciation of the Gender Mainstreaming approaches taken in Jamaica.

International Agencies’ Commitment to Gender Mainstreaming

As international agencies themselves sought to restructure their programming, planning and policy approaches along the lines of the gender mainstreaming perspective,
the United Nations entities sought to follow up with the Gender Mainstreaming agenda in its implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. A directive from the Secretary General to all United Nations heads to this effect saw deliberate efforts to establish strategies and procedures for its agencies to position issues of gender equality within its programming, institutional and governance framework. Since the introduction and acceptance of gender mainstreaming as a strategy to attain the goal of gender equality, all of these international institutions have contributed significantly to the body of literature regarding policies and processes for gender mainstreaming. Here, a few of the international agencies and their core guiding principles for programmes of action will be highlighted, as it would be difficult, in the context of this submission, to draw attention to them all.

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

The UNDP seeks to promote gender equality through its human resource policy and to actively mainstream gender in its area of work through six (6) strategic areas:

- democratic governance
- poverty reduction
- crisis prevention and recovery
- energy and the environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- HIV/AIDS

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

UNFPA also sees gender as a crosscutting theme and gender equality and the empowerment of women are promoted within a rights-based and results-oriented framework of development. Gender is also mainstreamed in Sexual and Reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS programmes.

**Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)**

CIDA's policy on gender equality is utilized as a crosscutting theme throughout its development cooperation programmes. Gender is therefore mainstreamed clearly and systematically in its programmes within its five (5) sectors of focus, which include health, governance, private sector development, basic education and environmental sustainability.

**Canada-Caribbean Gender Equality Fund**

The Canada-Caribbean Gender Equity Fund (CCGEF) was established in 1996 and was the only fund devoted wholly to support gender equality in the Caribbean. The Fund was established on regional priorities set by government and civil society groups in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It was also consistent with the CARICOM Secretariat Regional Gender Policy and Plan of Action. CCGEF's areas of priority for Gender Mainstreaming included empowerment, reducing violence against women and capacity building.
Commonwealth Secretariat

Gender Mainstreaming is one of the key strategies outlined in the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development. In 1996 the Commonwealth Secretariat began to promote Gender Mainstreaming through a Gender Management Systems (GMS) Approach. This system was devised specifically to assist national governments of developing countries to mainstream gender planning and programming. A GMS is described as “a comprehensive system of structures, process and mechanisms for advancing gender equality and equity.” (Gender Mainstreaming in Development Planning, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999)

The commitment of the Commonwealth Secretariat to this process is also evidenced through its Gender Management Systems Handbook on a wide range of sectoral topics, which have proven to be most instructive and informative to many policymakers, academics and other groups.

This commitment at the level of the international donor agencies led to a decision whereby countries receiving funding from these agencies were to ensure that gender was factored into all project proposals as a prerequisite for accessing funding. This was arguably, a manifestation of the principle of “tied aid” albeit on this occasion being put into practice as a means of insistence on a set of measures which few could reasonably deny would augur well for the advancement of gender equality, and by extension the Jamaican economy and society overall.

International Agency Requirements - Effects on National Machinery

As a result of these international agency requirements, separate and apart from the efforts that were being made from the level of the national machinery and women’s NGOs to get the message of Gender Mainstreaming out, other public sector entities were obliged to indicate this gender component since otherwise, projects would not be approved for funding. This requirement from the international donors not only assisted in engendering greater awareness on the Gender Mainstreaming approach, but also bolstered the efforts of the national machinery for gender to be mainstreamed in national programmes, projects, plans and policies.

CARICOM Position on Gender Mainstreaming

At the regional level, the CARICOM Post-Beijing Regional Plan of Action to the Year 2000 encouraged countries to adopt the gender-mainstreaming framework within its policies and programmes. The Plan of Action integrates the notion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming as follows, “[T]he building of new structures of power-sharing at the household, community, national and regional levels, where both men and women can participate fully in developing a system of cooperation in decision-making as equal partners in the sustainable development of their societies”. (Gender Equality, Social Justice and Development: The CARICOM Post-Beijing Regional Plan of Action to the Year 2000, 1997).
Section 4.2 of the Plan of Action specifically speaks to programmes and deliverables to achieve the Gender Mainstreaming objectives and outlines recommended elements for mainstreaming gender in institutions and policy. Some of these rudiments clearly called for the strengthening of national machineries; the development of frameworks, and tools and methodologies to integrate gender into policy, programmes and plans. It was recommended also that the CARICOM Secretariat itself seek to strengthen and equip its own Women’s Desk (now converted to a Gender Desk), to be able to assist the Women’s/Gender Bureaux in the region.

The Fourth (4th) Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women: Review and Appraisal of the Platform for Action, held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines 12-13 February, 2004, in its recommendation in the Kingstown Way Forward: Recommendations called for “national machineries to be provided with requisite technical skills in gender analysis, the support of policy analysts, and the availability of sex disaggregated data to effectively mainstream gender throughout government policies”.

Many of Jamaica’s mainstreaming initiatives have been boosted by mainstreaming interventions at the regional level through the introduction of new and emerging areas on gender issues which were critical to gender equality. These areas included violence against women, poverty eradication, power and decision-making, education, and the environment. Capacity-building through the training of staff from the Bureau of Women’s Affairs, technical officers from the particular sectoral and related ministries and agencies as well as NGO’s were trained and sensitised to the concept of gender and the Gender Mainstreaming processes.

The Secretariat continues to facilitate discussions, create linkages and conduct research for countries in the region for capacity building of Bureaux and other entities to enhance mainstreaming efforts.

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)

At the sub regional level the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) continues to press for gender equality via the strategy of gender mainstreaming through its many programmes and initiatives. In March 2004, at the sub-regional meeting in preparation for the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean the “Roads Towards Gender Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean” document highlighted the need to intensify Gender Mainstreaming initiatives being undertaken in the subregion to ensure the genuine integration of the gender perspective in all state actions and interventions particularly in the legislative and institutional spheres.

The UNECLACs Report of the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico City June 2004, further called for the development of instruments for monitoring and assessing public policies in order to adequately mainstream gender perspectives, taking racial, ethnic and generational diversity into account, in all state actions.
Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in Jamaica

As alluded to in the earlier segment of the paper, Jamaica is firmly committed to the Beijing Platform for Action and the gender mainstreaming process in 1995. The Bureau of Women's Affairs and the Minister Responsible for Women’s Affairs at that time, after Beijing, met with women’s NGOs to discuss areas of priority for Jamaica arising out of the Conference. Specifically this was referenced against Beijing’s twelve (12) critical areas of concern and the integration of gender concerns in these sectoral areas. The priority areas identified was to direct the work of the Bureau of Women’s Affairs and are as follows:

- Inequality and decision-making and power-sharing
- Poverty
- Education and Training
- Violence Against Women and Children
- Employment and economic empowerment
- Mechanisms to promote the advancement of Women: Institutional Strengthening
- Women and the Media
- Health
- Environment
- Family Life

The Bureau of Women’s Affairs in its first attempt to implement gender-mainstreaming activities incorporated Gender Mainstreaming in its strategic/operational medium-term plan of 1997-2000 in the areas listed above. As an initial point of entry the Bureau in 1997 then began to specifically put programmes in place to mainstream a gendered perspective on violence against women in a series of justice system workshops with funding received at that time from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objectives of these workshops were to sensitise personnel within the justice system on issues of violence against women/gender-based violence. The stakeholders included members of the judiciary, clerks of the court, selected private lawyers, social workers, health professionals and other functionaries involved in the justice system. To date, I believe that a significant breakthrough and a lot of has been done in terms of mainstreaming gender the area of violence against women/gender based violence.

The attempt to streamline gender-mainstreaming initiatives was further strengthened when an invitation was extended to Jamaica through the Bureau of Women’s Affairs for a multi-disciplinary team to attend a regional conference on Gender Management Systems in the Health Sector. This workshop was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, March 23-27, 1998 and was designed to strengthen the capacity of countries to mainstream gender and accounting systems in all sectors including health.

The team representing Jamaica at this event comprised senior policymakers from the Ministry of Health, leading representatives of the health professions, senior officials of
the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Finance and Planning, Parliamentary representatives with a health brief or with capacity to influence the outcomes, and representatives of national and international non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- increase the skills of policy makers in gender analysis and gender planning
- identify and explore key factors contributing to major gender disparities in health within participating countries
- determine means to be employed to influence the development of policies and programmes which will improve the health of both women and men
- examine the concept of GMS and initiate frameworks for developing national action plans to facilitate its implementation
- secure the commitment of each national group of key representatives to take forward the planning, design and implementation of GMS for the Health Sector after the end of the workshop
- examine the opportunities for mechanisms to support and sustain the efforts at implementing GMS initiatives through national, regional and international co-operation

The final segment of the workshop entailed each country team preparing and producing a document, which would depict the institutional arrangements to introduce a GMS in the health sector, which they could envisage being adopted by their governments.

The idea was that GMS would be introduced in the health sector in Jamaica (as in the other Caribbean countries) as a pilot after which the concept would be introduced to the Ministry of Education then be rolled out to other sectoral ministries.

There were several attempts by the Bureau of Women's Affairs as the lead agency, to coordinate meetings to get the GMS process going. There were setbacks however, due to various reasons as set out below:

- Difficulties with getting the team of six (6) persons who participated in the workshop session to synchronize their schedules to attend meetings so that the formal process and structure could be concretised
- Some of the representatives from the ministries who attended the workshop were already retired or shortly to go on retirement, when they attended. Consequently, the files with the necessary information were not passed on, thus there is a lack of continuity for the process in these ministries. In response to this shortcoming, the BWA had to institute a process for familiarising and updating other members of staff within the ministries, who did not participate in the initial process
- Lack of overall commitment to the process due to demanding job assignments
• It was not possible for the Bureau to push the process alone, the participation of the various partners was essential

• Lack of full understanding and appreciation of gender issues

• Some level of resistance among certain staff in some ministries. These persons it would appear, genuinely did not see the relevance of gender in health issues

• Timing - the Ministry of Health was during that period undergoing a reform/restructuring process, which included the closure of a number of type 2 clinics, and it was not seen as being feasible to introduce this approach at that juncture, due to limited human and financial resources.

So all in all, the level of commitment that was needed in the Ministry of Health was not forthcoming at that time to make the GMS in Health pilot effective

It must be noted however, that the Policy Unit within the Ministry of Health did make efforts to integrate gender concerns where possible in existing programmes and strategic plans where no extra finances would be necessary. Thus some element of Gender Mainstreaming in policy and programming did begin to be put in place at this juncture within the Ministry of Health. Although the process of the GMS in the health sector did not evolve in a manner consistent with the model that was suggested (see Figures 1 and 2), it is evident that this initial attempt at Gender Mainstreaming in the health sector has borne some fruit, as presently gender concerns in health are being actively pursued and integrated at some levels albeit also being driven externally as part of earlier-mentioned obligations to international donor agencies.

Recognizing the need to really get the mainstreaming agenda in this area off the ground, the Bureau as a follow up to the regional workshop conducted in Trinidad and Tobago requested technical assistance from the UK-based Commonwealth Secretariat. Thus in 1999 a team came to Jamaica to assess the enabling environment through one-on-one sessions with Ministers of Government, and the carrying-out of awareness sessions on gender and GMS to representatives from public and private sector entities, including women’s NGOs and the media. A greater consciousness about the issue of Gender Mainstreaming was inculcated at this time and the consultations were fairly well covered by the media. The Commonwealth Secretariat team specifically met with the Minister Responsible for Women’s Affairs, Ministers from the Ministries of Health, Education, Finance, Transport, and others, to sensitize them on the importance of Gender Mainstreaming as a core development/policy tool towards the achievement of gender equality.

**Linkages Among Stakeholders**

In the meantime the Bureau of Women’s Affairs continued to mainstream gender through its programmes, and in many instances in partnership with international donor agencies such as the Canada-Caribbean Gender Equality Fund, UNFPA, UNDP, and at other times in collaboration with women’s NGO’s. This partnership also included a regional and sub-regional dimension with the CARICOM Secretariat (Gender Desk),
United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC). These organizations provided institutional and financial support ranging from facilitating attendance of national women’s/gender bureaux to attend regional and sub-regional sessions and conferences; training and technical assistance to governments; to research and policy direction on the gender mainstreaming paradigm.

In May 2000, the Commonwealth Secretariat organized a regional workshop on gender mainstreaming; the venue was Antigua and Barbuda. This conference was convened to evaluate the progress so far that Caribbean countries had achieved and to build capacity of member countries in the region to mainstream gender and to develop action plans based on individual circumstances, needs and constraints. Issues taken into consideration included the bases on which countries make the determination whether to mainstream gender through the state machinery, within specific sectors, or through cross cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS management or poverty alleviation.

At this workshop each country reported on achievements and challenges facing it in implementing Gender Mainstreaming practices since 1995. The Bureau of Women’s Affairs in Jamaica highlighted its main best practice with mainstreaming gender on violence against women through an inter-agency campaign involving the Bureau, women’s NGO and several international funding agencies. Some of the challenges faced by Jamaica in the gender mainstreaming process were also outlined; these included:

- Financial and budgetary constraints
- Inadequate understanding of the Gender Mainstreaming process
- Insufficient training for policy makers and technocrats
- The need for overall management and co-ordination of the various strands of the Gender Mainstreaming process
- The need for active focal points in government ministries
- The need to ensure that an understanding of the Gender Mainstreaming concept is inculcated at every level of society

**Some Jamaican Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives (1997 to 2005)**

Even with all these challenges, it would be rather disingenuous to deny that gender mainstreaming is taking place in Jamaica and has made some strides. What exists though, is a virtual plethora of gender mainstreaming programmes and initiatives carried out at times in an ad hoc manner. Reference will mostly be drawn from the Canadian Gender Equality Fund funded activities, that organization being one with which the Bureau of Women’s Affairs has had a close working alliance since 1997 and from which the national women’s machinery, women’s groups and other NGOs have drawn down significant funds to pursue Gender Mainstreaming initiatives. The listing from this Agency was also the most easily
accessible at this time. Perusal of Appendix A will testify to some of the numerous gender mainstreaming initiatives pursued over the period 1997 through 2005.

A study conducted for the ECLAC-CDCC Caribbean Conference on Women in 1999 on Gender Mainstreaming confirms that Jamaica (among the four {4} Caribbean countries that were studied) was found to be one of the most advanced in its level of understanding and application of the Gender Mainstreaming process. The research also pointed out that “different initiatives are being managed by different arms of the national machinery”. Reference was made to the interventions being made by the Bureau of Women’s Affairs, the Planning Institute of Jamaica, The Office of the Prime Minister and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies.

**Challenges to Gender Mainstreaming in Jamaica Analysis**

Five (5) years later after the Antiguan meeting, some of the problems facing the Gender Mainstreaming agenda outlined earlier in the paper persist. Up to the present time, there is still no coordinated, systematic approach to the Gender Mainstreaming process in Jamaica. This has to be addressed if Gender Mainstreaming is to have the desired result and if by extension, gender equality is to be achieved.

Although a policy directive was handed down by the Cabinet Office in 1997, in the absence of a national policy/plan, there is no system to oblige ministries and agencies to apply a gendered lens in their corporate and strategic plans, much less to push forward with the effort of mainstreaming gender in policy within their ministries. It follows therefore that there must be an effective system of accountability and monitoring. Policy directives are not as strong and ‘binding” as a full policy document, they are in fact just statements in principle or relatively general statements of intent.

In order to follow up on Government’s commitment as articulated through the policy directive, the Policy Analysis and Review Unit (PARU) situated in the Cabinet Office in the Office of the Prime Minister did make efforts to train and build capacity among policy analysts and other technical officers within the public sector. In May 2000 to April 2002 a series of training events to enable technocrats to integrate gender considerations into government policies was conducted. While this was a commendable effort and several technocrats received training and gender sensitization, the follow-through in terms of policy commitment for planning and implementation has not been sustained. This has led to what is known as policy evaporation.

Another obstacle to achieving the gender-mainstreaming objective is that gender and the concept of Gender Mainstreaming are evidently still not fully understood. The transition from “Women” to “Gender” is still being grappled with, and therefore it is difficult to implement such a process when comprehension of the concepts and the distinctions between them is still inadequate.

Even technocrats and policy makers who have received training in this area over the years still do not see gender as something that should be integrated in their core job functions. The perception still prevails whereby gender is separate and apart from their “regular routine work”, thus Gender Mainstreaming and gender policy are viewed as an
“add on” and sometimes even as an annoyance, something that distracts from the accustomed and required work flow.

Another reality we face is a seriously cash-strapped fiscal budget, which affords little if any “wiggle-room” for discretionary spending. Financial support for the Gender Mainstreaming process must necessarily transcend that allocated to the core agencies that drive it. Funding is also needed across a range of ministries and agencies to assist them in training and capacity building. Moreover at a very practical level, there must be financing for intuitions such as the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) to give them the tools to take a gendered approach to their data gathering and analysis.

All these considerations need to be brought to the table at one central coordinating level, which will allow for proper, systematic sex-disaggregated data gathering, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming initiatives.

What Makes for Successful Gender Mainstreaming?

Examined below in greater detail are some essential requirements for an effective and efficient Gender Mainstreaming process. They run the gamut from intangibles to “hard core’ operational specifics:

- Commitment necessary at all level - political will, institutional will and individual will on the part of those individuals who are positioned to drive the process
- Systematic indicators to monitor and evaluate gender mainstreaming
- Capacity building including training of national machinery staff and other relevant technical officers in the public sector to carry out appropriate gender policy analysis
- Collection of sex disaggregated data and analysis of such data along lines that will facilitate a gendered perspective
- Interagency collaboration and information sharing and networking with women’s NGOs
- Coordinated and structured approach to Gender Mainstreaming
- Gender Mainstreaming database centrally documenting all mainstreaming activities
- Gender Monitoring Check List/Indicators developed by the Bureau of Women’s Affairs
- A national policy on gender mainstreaming - National Gender Policy currently being developed through the Gender Advisory Committee and the Bureau of Women’s Affairs
- Gender mainstreaming protocol/manual - written as a guide for policy makers and available online to guide the mainstreaming process
- A more responsive media; support from faith-based organizations, educational institutions, the entertainment fraternity and other culturally influential segments of society. All these groups need to see themselves as stakeholders.

Without these ingredients the goals and objectives of Gender Mainstreaming will not be fully realized.

**Conclusion/Recommendations: A Need for Policy/Legislative Support**

Gender mainstreaming as a clear concept was officially introduced to Jamaica in 1995. As a working strategy, it has been up and running since 1996 but more “concretely” so since 1997. As happens sometimes, there is a strategy and there are efforts at implementation, but this takes place in the absence of a policy. For this very reason though, as conceded earlier, in the absence of the shaping and empowerment afforded by policy/legislation, the process is somewhat ad hoc. In a sense then the cart is rolling on without the power of a horse, so for the immediate term the emphasis must be on agitation for establishment of policy/legislative support.

Ironically, to an extent, any progress made to date through gender mainstreaming can not be effectively estimated until one of the essential requirements of gender mainstreaming itself is met, i.e., the establishment of databases and accounting frameworks that separate the effects of all government interventions on women vs. men. To elaborate, for example, the fiscal budget being “gender-blind”, cannot offer an indication of the extent to which planned expenditures and the revenue sources identified for financing the expenditure will impact on women vs. men. In this and other key areas, gender mainstreaming is still at “first base” and will need to have these shortcomings addressed before being able to accurately gauge its own successes or failures.

Where the benefits from gender mainstreaming can perhaps better be assessed is in the “softer” spheres of domestic and social influence and the additional awareness brought about by the mainstreaming thrust.

The hard reality is that gender mainstreaming needs to be supported by a policy framework to address areas such as modified reporting requirements on a number of socio-economic variables including, critically, the abovementioned sphere of fiscal budgeting and perhaps also even in the area of national income accounting. This will represent a true paradigm shift and cannot be left up to the discretionary powers of agency heads or even ministers of Government.

The newly appointed Prime Minister of Jamaica, significantly the country’s first female head of government, has reassumed portfolio responsibility for Gender Affairs. Thus, with support from the highest office in the land, it is perhaps the opportune time to push for Gender Mainstreaming to be seen as a high priority activity worthy of fast tracking.

The National Gender Policy, which is now being written subsequent to stakeholder consultations having taken place, will set the parameters to allow for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to Gender Mainstreaming in pursuit of gender equality.
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