

Capacity Development for Promoting Gender Equality in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda

Lessons from Sub-regional Consultations
in Africa

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Introduction

In the context of discussions on financing for development and aid effectiveness, and particularly with the roll out of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, there has been growing recognition of the importance of integrating gender equality in national development planning and programming cycles. This has produced greater recognition of the capacity needed by both governments and gender equality advocates to advocate for and successfully integrate gender equality objectives and priorities in national plans and allocate sufficient resources to achieve them.

To date, few national development plans have strong gender equality elements, while national gender equality action plans have little or no connection to national development strategies. Although national development plans occasionally make reference to national gender equality action plans, the linkages tend to be weak.

These weaknesses have become particularly evident in the new aid environment, as national development plans are increasingly defining the priorities for government expenditure allocation, including official development assistance to direct budget support or sector-wide approaches (SWAPs).

These challenges emerged in a series of African regional and sub-regional consultations on gender equality and aid effectiveness. Held in Burundi in July 2006, Djibouti in November 2006, Ghana in November 2006 and Zambia in July 2007, the consultations brought together representatives from governments, donor partners and civil society to share experiences and explore strategies for advancing gender equality goals in the new aid environment.

Participants highlighted the lack of capacity of gender equality advocates to effectively

engage in new aid modality policy and planning processes on the one hand, and the lack of capacity of finance and planning officials to effectively incorporate the gender implications of the new aid modalities in policy formulation on the other. Drawing on these experiences and insights, this discussion paper outlines a capacity development strategy for advancing development effectiveness and gender equality in the new aid agenda.¹

Demand for capacity development to advance gender equality

Capacity development to advance these goals goes beyond training on how to mainstream gender into finance and planning ministries, or training gender equality advocates on how to formulate gender-sensitive macroeconomic policies. The UNDP defines capacity development as a comprehensive approach to generating a process through which abilities to formulate objectives, perform functions and achieve goals are obtained, strengthened, adapted and maintained.²

With respect to new aid modalities, this approach should also include the capacity to understand and link global policies to the implementation mechanisms established by the donor community and the gender dimensions of such policies and mechanisms.

Gender equality advocates have pointed out that the ability to apply gender analysis needs to be made a core competence in policymaking bodies in order to move gender equality to the forefront of development interventions.³ Consultations and discussions on the new aid modalities have highlighted the fact that unequal power relations and hierarchical governance structures have restricted the spaces for gender advocacy and hampered progress in mainstreaming gender into national policymaking processes.

In the Burundi consultations last year, participants raised the issue of reduced negotiating space in the implementation of Direct Budget Support because this was managed by donor countries and the Ministry of Finance. West African participants at the Ghana consultations raised “a strong need for capacity building for policy dialogue and negotiations and capacity transfer within governments, NGOs, UN and donors on gender and new aid modalities.” A more specific set of capacities was highlighted in the consultations in Djibouti, where participants pointed to the need to develop capacity for gender responsive budgeting that can be applied to both national and external sources of financing.

These demands are best captured as a call to *strengthen capacity development of organizations*—including government institutions, women’s machineries and women’s organizations—to analyze, advocate and actively engage in implementing the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The call for capacity development is designed, in particular, to ensure that gender equality is

reflected in implementing the five principles to promote aid effectiveness outlined in the Paris Declaration: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability (see Box 1).

As part of the regional consultation meetings, a background paper⁴ identified a number of capacities that needed to be strengthened in countries throughout the region, including:

- **Ministries of Finance and Planning need to strengthen capacity of technical staff to carry out gender-responsive budgeting. The capacity of gender focal points in sector ministries to coordinate gender-responsive budgeting with counterparts in the Ministries of Finance and Planning and the national women's machinery also needs to be strengthened.**
- **National women's machineries should enhance their skills to participate effectively in national planning processes, monitor implementation and promote accountability mechanisms for gender equality.**

**Box 1. The Paris Declaration:
Five principles to promote aid effectiveness**

- **ownership**, which commits developing countries to take leadership in implementing nationally defined development strategies and ensure inclusiveness in defining priorities;
- **alignment**, which commits donors to support national development strategies;
- **harmonization**, which commits donors to harmonize aid based on country priorities;
- **managing for results**, which commits donor and partner countries to focus on results;
- **mutual accountability**, which commits donors and partners to measure aid performance through systems, procedures and capacities.

- Women's organizations and gender equality advocates need to strengthen understanding of national planning and budgeting processes in order to effectively engage in new aid modality policy and planning processes.
- The sustainability of new capacities needs to be safeguarded through broad-based partnerships and stakeholder forums to determine policy priorities, implementation strategies and accountability mechanisms. Donor partners can play facilitating roles, enabling countries to take ownership and follow through on commitments.

These capacity demands should be seen as part of a governance practice that enables the promotion of gender equality. Even when capacities are developed, governance structures should provide the incentives to ensure that capacity translates into performance, which in turn should advance gender equality and greater development effectiveness. Efforts to meet these demands have grown in recent years, as can be seen in country experiences in Africa.

Ownership: developing capacity to engage with women as stakeholders

The challenge in developing capacity among stakeholders involved in national development planning is building consensus around gender equality priorities. A successful approach requires mobilization of stakeholders; facilitating partnerships among them; managing dialogues among various groups; mediating divergent interests; establishing collaborative mechanisms. Each of these processes entails gender role expectations and power relationships that capacity development approaches must take into account so that engagement is inclusive. Inclusiveness is an important ingredient for ownership of priorities contained in national development plans.

Country-level experiences in producing poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) or other national planning documents have provided important lessons for the Paris Declaration principle of ownership. As part of the planning process, consultations involving governments, women's groups and civil society organizations as well as donor partners are key venues for capacity development in engaging effectively with stakeholders. The extent and quality of stakeholder participation in these consultative processes will determine the credibility of ownership. The quality of such engagement by stakeholders, especially women's organizations depends essentially on how well they are prepared to participate in these national planning processes.

A good example of the value of investing in strategies to ensure the informed participation of all stakeholders is a joint initiative by UNIFEM and the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to bring women into the peace process in the Sudan and Somalia.⁵ The initiative not only secured the participation of women in the Sudan's national planning process and the inclusion of Somali women at the peace table but also prepared the women for these processes, resulting in the inclusion of commitments to women's economic empowerment and rights in both the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Transitional Federal Charter in Somalia (see Box 2).

Managing for Results: developing capacity for gender-responsive budgeting

Capacity development for gender-responsive budgeting can be done at various levels of government, ranging from Ministries of Finance to local authorities. While many countries have embarked on gender-responsive budgeting initiatives, there appear

Box 2. Technical support to women to participate in post-conflict needs assessment

In Somalia, the Joint Needs Assessment, a process for post-conflict planning involved the preparation of a situation analysis, based on field work involving the Somali government and civil society actors, Somali experts from the Diaspora, and international partners from multi-lateral and bilateral partners and non-governmental organizations. The joint Framework was presented around eight “clusters” (institutional development; rule of law; economic policy; productive sectors; basic social services; infrastructure; livelihoods and social protection; and information and media), with the cross-cutting themes of environment, conflict-prevention, HIV/AIDS and gender equality.

The respective needs assessment activities provided Somali and Sudanese women with the opportunity to prepare for effective inclusion and participation in development planning especially with regards to prioritization, implementation, management and monitoring for gender equality and women’s rights, because skills training, resources and space were provided through the support of IGAD and UNIFEM. In the case of Somalia, gender equality experts participating in the joint needs assessment lobbied for the inclusion of priorities identified by women in a results-based matrix for which they demanded full resources.

IGAD and UNIFEM also mobilized Sudanese women for participation as official delegates in the 2005 Oslo donors’ conference on Sudan addressing post-conflict financing modalities for recovery and reconstruction. These delegates advocated for 80 per cent of the funds in the multi-donor trust fund to support the girl child, women’s empowerment, human rights and increasing women’s capacities to access opportunities and resources. Although current political challenges hamper the implementation of many of these initiatives, these two country experiences have offered useful strategic lessons for gender equality work that apply to all development planning processes.

to be few that apply these principles to new aid modalities.

The Southern Africa regional workshop in Zambia recommended that gender equality priorities be built in during the initial stages of the medium-term expenditure frameworks, which are three-year rolling budgetary frameworks to ensure adequate resources. It was noted that consultative processes are authentic when national priorities are representative of the priorities of poor women and men through the preparation of pro-poor and

gender-responsive budgets and aligning them with planning instruments that identify priorities for gender equality and poverty reduction. Examples of PRSPs that have successfully aligned policies and expenditures to address gender inequalities include those of Ethiopia, Rwanda and Zambia.⁶

Capacity development for budget allocation and management is also useful in the context of decentralization, where decisions about local needs are devolved to local level bodies. Women’s organizations in particular

need to be strengthened in order to effectively influence policy formulation and budget allocation and evaluation. Although women may have been less exposed to policymaking processes, it is important that their perspectives and priorities are heard by policymakers. In many cases, women's representation at local councils and other bodies are guaranteed through quotas, which promote greater inclusion. For example:

- In **Uganda**, decentralization has meant the allocation of 37 per cent of the public budget to community development funds for pro-poor expenditures through local governments. Women's participation was guaranteed by stipulating a share of 18 per cent for women in local councils. Progress towards gender integration allowed that in some districts women representation reached more than 50 per cent of seats.
- In **Mozambique**, decentralization has broadened since 2006 with the allocation of a public budget to all districts of the country to cover not only increased and improved infrastructure but also to finance the local entrepreneurial class. Women's participation in the district development plan was defined through the Regulation of the Law of Local Bodies that established a quota of at least 30 per cent for women in the consultative bodies.

In order to meet this quota, gender committees were set up at the district levels headed by leaders of women's organizations or women community leaders to guarantee women's representation and voice during the consultation process. Consultations with gender focal points for the decentralization process in one province indicate that projects scrutinized by women and identified as priorities are the first to receive finance.

Even where there are quotas or other measures to secure women's representation, it is important to recognize that decentralization is taking place in many local communities where patriarchal norms are still very strong, limiting women's ability to express their views, participate in public forums and compete with men in defining priorities for a gender-sensitive resource allocation. While work being done by UNIFEM and others in different contexts has shown that it is possible to empower women in such restricted environments, this is a long-term process.

Finally, it is important also to insist that governments prioritize gender awareness in the context of financial management, especially when contracting out management of aid funds to business consultants or auditing firms. In some countries, auditing firms have presented new challenges for gender equality work because managing for results, for these institutions, is given to procedures rather than impacts on the ground. Such firms tend to have little understanding of development and even less of gender relations, making it important that governments also support capacity development to engender institutional procedures such as procurement or finance administration.

Furthermore, the language of partnership has not framed the relationships between national governments and these financial management firms. Aid flows through such firms tend to be very process based, with numerous mechanisms of negotiations, meetings, detailed long steps to accessing funds, which means development initiatives often take a very long time to begin and budget time frames fail to be timely. Financial management firms have focused their work on the administrative efficiency of aid, addressing the needs of donors, at a time when managing for results must focus on the actual impact of aid on development as the true measure of aid effectiveness.⁷

Mutual accountability: developing capacity in monitoring and evaluation for gender equality outcomes

Monitoring and evaluation provide necessary information to planners and policymakers on the implementation of agreed plans and programmes. Capacity development for this function includes monitoring of progress on implementation, measuring desired results and capturing key lessons from the experience. When gender equality is stated as a priority but plans include no monitoring and evaluation mechanism, gender equality results risk evaporating. Without monitoring progress on gender equality, planners and policymakers will not receive the feedback needed to ensure that programmes are effective for development.

Ghana's experience in engendering the national planning process shows how important it is to ensure the engagement of gender advocates throughout the planning cycle.⁸ The development planning process is led by the National Development Commission and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. It includes few or no women in decision-making structures and discussions on financing and does not involve the Ministry for Women and Children (MOWAC). The process is dominated by economists who regard financial management, procurement and public sector reforms as totally gender-neutral and fail to see their gendered implications.

Ghana's Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS), agreed to by the Government and five development partners in 2005, is intended to lead to harmonized and coordinated provision of predictable development assistance for a period of five years for Sector-wide Approaches and Programmes and three years for Multi-Donor Budget Support (MDBS). The Government of Ghana has also

signed a Memorandum of Understanding with development partners to support the second Ghana Poverty Reduction Budget Support (GPRS) plan. A Core Harmonization Working Group was formed and tasked to develop an "Aid harmonization and effectiveness action plan," which was endorsed by the Government and donors and took effect in 2006.

In this context, women social sector specialists decided to form a Gender Empowerment Stakeholders Team (GEST) to promote gender equality in the Multi-Donor Budget Support negotiations by advocating for MOWAC to be included in deliberations. To date, however, MOWAC has had limited success, being relegated to observer status only and unable to get gender equality issues onto the agenda. Thus the performance monitors for MDBS remain silent on gender despite the presence of gender equality targets in the JAS as well as GPRS II.

Although the Government of Ghana has gender desk officers and focal points in various ministries, their resources are insufficient to carry out their mandate. There is also a lack of coordination in getting information to relevant ministries, which is compounded by different coordination strategies used by donors, so that the commitment to joint ownership is strained. Furthermore, donors use different definitions and approaches to gender equality. Consequently, the formula agreed on to establish results-based approaches for gender equality is not gender-responsive. GEST is therefore taking the opportunity created by implementation of JAS to spearhead harmonization among development partners for gender equality. The Team is also collaborating with the African Development Bank and UNIFEM to enhance MOWAC's monitoring and evaluation skills in order to bridge the gaps between plans, targets and performance indicators.

Concluding remarks

There is a need for capacity development in several functional areas and not just on monitoring and evaluation, as Ghana's experience indicates. The potential for capacity development approaches for gender equality is considerable, especially in countries such as Ghana where there is already a foundation for collaboration across various ministries.

Functional capacities combined with technical knowledge will go a long way towards improving development effectiveness, including gender equality. Capacity development is a response to the needs and demands for greater stakeholder capacities in a development context. Gender equality outcomes will happen only to the extent that the capacity development approach itself pays attention to what is needed to produce these outcomes.

Towards this end, some of the good practice examples mentioned in this paper deserve further development. In the new aid environment, generating nationally owned and gender-sensitive development plans requires a systematic approach to capacity development. For this to happen, government leadership is essential.

Notes

¹ Two background documents also informed this report: "New Aid Modalities: Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Rights: Recommendations from an Experts Meeting," report submitted to UNIFEM, 2006; and "Regional Workshop on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality in Southern Africa: Final Conference Report," report submitted to UNIFEM, 2007.

² "Capacity Development Practice Note," New York: UNDP, 2007.

³ See for example Naila Kabeer, *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

⁴ Jacinta K. Muteshi, Florence Ebam Etta and M.A. Ibraimo, "Advancing Gender Equality for Aid Effectiveness: Experiences from Africa," background paper for UNIFEM, January 2007.

⁵ While this was not designed as a capacity development programme, owing to the fact that capacity development was used as an operational framework, it provides insights for improving results or replicating successes.

⁶ Muteshi et al, "Advancing Gender Equality for Aid Effectiveness: Experiences from Africa."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.



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