



Owning Development Promoting Gender Equality in New Aid Modalities and Partnerships

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The National Development Policy Process: Opportunities for Engagement: A Case of Uganda

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1. INTRODUCTION

In many developing countries, including Uganda, the national development policies emphasize promotion of rapid broad-based and sustainable economic growth. To achieve this, the fiscal policies must be consistent with macro-economic stability and prudent financial management. Rarely, however, do these national development policy processes take into consideration the social welfare and equity indicators that are a prerequisite for sustainable human development. This paper highlights the opportunities and strategic entry points for engagement to mainstreaming gender equity issues in the national development policy process. The experience of Uganda is presented as a case study. The paper also highlights challenges and bottlenecks that should be overcome in order to register success.

2. OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS FOR ENGAGEMENT

2.1. Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP): Walking the Macro Economic Terrain

To address the challenges of deepening poverty amongst the people, Uganda promoted poverty eradication as the major focus of its overall sustained growth and development strategy. To this effect, Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was formulated in 1997, revised in 2000 and 2004. The PEAP is built on five pillars, which are interlinked with the national development goals.

- **Economic Management** –emphasizing removal of bureaucratic barriers to investment; improving transport infrastructure and utility services; macroeconomic management; taxation and financial management.
- **Enhancing production, competitiveness and incomes** - focusing on restoring growth in rural incomes; agricultural production and enhancing labour productivity of workers.

- **Security, conflict resolution and disaster management-** focusing on security and defence; conflict resolution; disaster preparedness and management; as well as resettlement and planning for aftermath of disaster and insecurity.
- **Good Governance** – focusing on Democracy, human rights and political governance; and justice law and order
- **Human Development** – focusing on improving the quality of the human resource through education and skills development; health; water and sanitation; and inter sectoral issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS and nutrition.

PEAP provides a framework within which the Government planning effort is conducted. The principles set out in PEAP guide the formulation and review of the Sectoral Plans such as Education; Health; Agriculture; Water and Sanitation; Environment; Justice, Law and Order; and Social Development which are PEAP Priority Sectors through which the overall national development goal of poverty eradication would be achieved.

Many opportunities exist that have facilitated gender mainstreaming in the PEAP both at national and local levels. While some opportunities formed a basis for implementation of PEAP others are yet to be taken advantage of. The process of development and refinement of the PEAP provided an opportunity. These processes were highly participatory with wide consultations with sector working groups and strong involvement from Civil Society and Private Sector actors. To engage with the process effectively, a national Gender PEAP Team was established, to identify critical gender issues, which informed the process of PEAP formulation and reviews. As a result, the revision of PEAP document of 2004 provided a strategic entry point for ensuring that gender inequalities are addressed in Sectoral policies and practices. It is important to note that since PEAP provides agreed areas, which are prioritized in public expenditure, it offers an opportunity for engagement.

2.2. Sectoral Planning Processes: Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) to planning

To implement PEAP and as a response to many years of project oriented development, the government adopted a sector-wide approach to planning. The approach brings together different actors in the sector to adopt common approaches across the sector and all significant funding for the sector is channeled to support a single sector policy or plan. This has proved to be a highly consultative process involving civil society, development agencies under government leadership. Various sectors adopted this approach and sector strategic investment plans were formulated and reviewed annually. These include Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP), Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP), Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), Water Sector Plan (WSP), Road Sector Plan (RSP), and Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan (SDIP). Gender as a crosscutting issue has to be reflected in all these plans.

The National PEAP Gender Team works with the Sector Working Groups to ensure that gender is integrated into these plans right from the beginning. The advantages of SWAPs have been two fold. Firstly, they have eased the work of the national machinery since lobbying is minimized and secondly, since SWAPs encourage consultations, the demand for services of the National Gender Machinery has increased. Experience however, has shown that not all gender issues identified are included in the SWAPs-plans. Moreover the staff of the gender machinery and the PEAP Gender Team are too few to participate in all the simultaneous activities of this lengthy process.

2.3. Decentralization: Engaging with the Local Governments

As part of the national development policy reform, Uganda has one of the most ambitious decentralization programmes whose principles are spelt out in the 1995 Constitution and Local Government Act 1997. This reform significantly changed the relationship between the Central and Local Governments. Within this policy shift, local governments have discretionary powers, *inter alia* to collect and retain taxes, initiate and execute socio-economic development plans. Fiscal

decentralization (FDS) is part of the decentralization programme, whereby Local Governments gained control of the funds provided by the Central Government as Conditional and non-conditional grants. FDS is a process for the reform of the system through which Local Governments budgets are prepared and implemented. It accommodates the respective policy imperatives of poverty eradication, decentralization and sector-wide planning approaches and simplifies the system of fiscal transfers by using a development and recurrent transfer system.

FDS operates within the PEAP policy framework, which guides government policies and plans in order to eradicate poverty. FDS therefore provides a means with which transfer of funds to local governments and the effectiveness with which local governments use those funds for delivery of quality services. In implementation of FDS, however, there is little room to maneuver for implementation of local priorities.

In response to this policy shifts, local governments are targeted as means to promote gender quality and mainstream gender in the three year District Development Plans (DDPs). The working methods involve regular sensitization and training for political heads, technical staff and planning units at the district levels, issues are identified and incorporated into the DDPs which are rolled out annually during the budget process.

Experience has shown that the district planning units need constant monitoring so that gender issues are routinely included in the plans. The challenges to many actors, is therefore “ how to do it”.

2.4. Resource allocation and gender budgeting

It is expedient to acknowledge the relationship between gender sensitive plan, policy and resource allocation. As Budlender et al (1998) note, a national budget reflects the values of a country; what and whom it values received what resources. To be part of the mainstream means equitable access to society's resources including socially valued goods, opportunities and rewards, for example recognition and respect, secure and rewarding employment, education, health, leisure, and personal security. It also implies equal and meaningful participation in influencing what is valued, in shaping development directions and choices, and in the distribution of opportunities at all levels.

In Uganda PEAP provides agreed areas that are prioritized in public expenditure decisions. Each year, annual budget and investment programme is set in the three year Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). Experience has shown that the budget cycle process is highly participatory with forward and backward linkages in consultations involving the public sector ministries, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector institutions and the development partners as espoused by the SWAPs principle. The budget cycle is informed by sector review reports, local government submissions and CSO reports on implementation of the government programmes. Strategic entry points for engagement with the budget process include participation in the following events: -

- Sector Working Groups and Sectoral reviews conferences
- Preparation of sector budget framework papers which highlight priority issues for funding
- Civil society reports
- Local Government budget conferences and framework papers
- Interface with Parliament. According to Budget Act 2001, Parliament approves the budget before government can implement it.

The major challenge with influencing the budget process has been capacity to recognize and internalize gender budgeting.

Since 1999, Gender Budgeting in Uganda has mainly been spearheaded by Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), a civil society organization involved in promotion of women's advancement and gender equity. The organization has carried out gender sensitive budget analysis at national

level and in some local governments. Recognizing that coverage of gender budget initiatives was clearly still low, a number of other actors and civil society organizations have joined the efforts of FOWODE to promote gender budget initiatives. They formed a Gender Budget Coalition, for purposes of coordination of gender budget efforts.

Effective gender budgeting requires focusing expenditures between and within sectors on areas where gender concerns are paramount and those that benefit women in cases where their development initiatives are constrained by lack of funding. To address the inadequate capacity in gender budgeting, government initiated a process to promote the gender budget initiatives. The activities have involved sharing experiences with other countries (e.g. Institute of Democracy in Southern Africa; training of gender focal points (GFPs) in ministries, and planning units staff of local governments. Gender Budget guidelines have been developed and are attached to the budget-call circulars to assist sectors and local governments in identification of gender issues to include in the budget. Collaboration among the National Machinery, Ministry of Finance and development partners has provided successful in this venture. Despite the progress, practitioners involved in gender budgeting initiatives in the country have identified a number of challenges namely: -

- Budgeting is an area dominated by orthodox economists. It is not easy to introduce gender perspectives into their work.
- Gender advocates are not economists
- Bureaucratic resistance to gender equality among key decision makers
- Inadequate gender disaggregated data

In Uganda, the funding modality is by budget support. The shift from the Sector and Specific Project Support approach to Financing General Budget Support (GBS) has led to greater control by the central government to channel resources to government priority areas. The shift of some donors' interest from project to GBS has led to a move from conditionality to partnership in the delivery of poverty-focused aid. However, sector ministries operate within budget ceilings under the MTEF and no extra funds are accepted beyond the ceiling. Experience has shown that when gender and equality issues are not high on the priority agenda, then resources are not allocated to them. Competition among sectors instead of complementarity is often the norm since each sector tends to bid for resources to finance its priorities.

Much as GBS is the preferred modality in Uganda, some donors support both GBS and projects at the same time. Similarly some donors want budget support while others are not yet convinced about it. Either way, the benefits of GBS to gender equality are yet to be identified.

2.5. Gender Disaggregated data: The role of Data collection machineries

Gender disaggregated data is a major component of the mainstreaming strategies in that it substantiates with facts on the disadvantaged position of women vis-à-vis that of men. To this end, collaboration with that National Bureau of Statistics whose mandate is to collect and publish national data has been critical. At the survey design stages, gender perspectives are incorporated in the survey instruments such as National Household Surveys, Population Census, Demographic and Health Surveys, and Sector specific surveys as well as district profiles. However, usually the data collected is too enormous to be included in one publication. Consequently, sex information is usually presented in the reports. The challenge is to carry out deeper analysis of individual surveys in order to come up with comprehensive information of gender.

2.6. Other opportunities/strategic entry points

In Uganda, political will and commitment at the highest level by the Head of State is, and continues to be, a major element that provides an enabling environment in the pursuit for gender equality. With the creation of the National Gender Machinery in 1988, the President affirmed the government policy of strengthening the position of women in the economy by raising the value of and productivity of women's labour and by giving them access to and control over productive resources.

Since then, the Head of State continues to make pronouncements urging development partners and practitioners to address the disadvantaged position of women and has in some instances issued administrative measures to address this. One such measure in the affirmative action in political participation, which was later enacted into law.

Regional processes also offer opportunities for gender. Integration and formation of large economic and political groupings are requisite for survival of small nations and states in the competitive and globalized world. Therefore, in Africa efforts have been towards integration into large bodies. These bodies include at the apex the African Union (AU) and regional bodies such as EAC, SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS and others. These organizations have come up with protocols to guide promotion of gender equality in their respective member states. For instance, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the Protocol on African Peoples Human Rights on Women of AU and the Gender and Community Development framework of East African Cooperation provide entry points in engaging into the member states.

3. OVERALL CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

Despite the various opportunities discussed above, gender mainstreaming in Uganda has not been without major challenges. As a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs gender mainstreaming calls for diffusion of responsibilities for gender issues from a small focal point in an institution to different Sectoral and technical organizations. In order to do this, there is need for capacity building of stakeholders to be able to advocate and institutionalize gender. For effective engagement in PEAP, gender experts are required in all sectors to ensure that actions to address gender concerns are brought on board with the sector investment plans. This can happen if staff in sector ministries such as policy makers, planners and implementers have adequate gender planning and analysis skills.

When Uganda adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy, Gender Focal Points (GFPs) were appointed in all line ministries. These were to act as in-house gender experts within their respective ministries. In order for the GFPs to perform their roles effectively, it was desired that they were placed in strategic/influential positions and be involved in influencing policy directions and agendas of the ministries. In practice, however, junior female officers were in the majority cases appointed as GFPs possibly due to conceptual problems of not differentiating between gender and women or regarding gender equality as insignificant. This phenomenon largely rendered the strategy of GFPs less effective. From this experience, the challenge is to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the existing structures such as the planning units to sector ministries who should be assigned the responsibility of integrating gender in the sector investment plans.

Related to the above, is the training and sensitization at the Local Government levels. In the context of PEAP and SWAPs, the challenge is to build the capacity of the district-based staff on a continuous basis so that they can be able to identify and plan for integration of gender issues. Other stakeholders that need to be targeted include civil society organizations, private sector as well as parliamentarians since these groups are crucial in the budget processes and allocation of resources. Through these capacity-building activities as critical mass of gender policy entrepreneurs and advocates to influence the processes.

The budgeting process as described earlier puts great demand on the limited numbers of gender technical officers in the ministry. During the budgeting period, a lot of activities are going on simultaneously. The gender staff and the PEAP Gender Team is not able to participate in all these activities to provide backstopping and this often results in marginalizing gender issues in the sector plans.

In addition, our experience has taught us that the gender advocates and entrepreneurs have limited skills to assist them influence macroeconomic policies. The macroeconomic terms such as fiscal policy, economic growth, GDP, elements of world trade organization are in most cases not understood by the gender experts. This calls for imparting economic literacy skills to them.

To ensure capacity building for gender mainstreaming, adequate funding is critical in view of the fact that gender training and other advocacy activities are expensive. The “watchdog role” of the gender machineries should be recognized and funded so that they are able to address this important role of capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming process with adequate resources. This may call for a stand-alone program for the National Machinery with clear earmarked resources to enable it play its role in PEAP effectively.

The basic challenge is the conflicting policies within the national governments and the development partners as well. On one side governments are committed to poverty eradication, which warrant focusing on the poorest of the poor, on the other, the national development policy intervention emphasis, fiscal policies, taxation for widening the tax base, macroeconomic stability and economic growth. For example, the benefits of commitment of universal education are thwarted by the move to reduce the size of the public service including the teachers! The goal of economic growth and that human development sometimes conflict.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on experiences on mainstreaming gender in the national development policy process. While there are opportunities for engagement, there are also challenges that need to be addressed. It is only when that is done that the national development policy will have positive impacts in the lives of women.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

