*PM World Journal*
Vol. VI, Issue VI – June 2017
www.pmworldjournal.net

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# GENDER ISSUES IN PROJECT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

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## Abstract

Gender equality ranks high on international and national development agendas. It has been enshrined in international legal instruments and declarations as well as national constitutions. There has been some gain in ensuring gender equality but glaring gaps still exist in many sectors. Gender equality advocacy has consequently become central in discussions concerning development programmes because such programmes are about eradicating poverty and promoting human rights. This paper discusses gender in project planning and management. The paper is based on a review of relevant literature on gender in project planning and management. It explains some key terms and discusses the characteristics and importance of considering gender issues in project planning. The paper explains how gender can be mainstreamed in the project cycle before discussing the tools and methods used to do so. In the conclusion the paper reiterates the importance of gender mainstreaming in projects, acknowledging that not many projects have embraced it.

## Introduction

Efforts geared towards ensuring gender equality have taken center stage in all spheres of development agendas because gender equality is a human right (European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), 2016). It is a requirement by international legal instruments and declarations and enshrined in most national constitutions (European Union (EU), 2010). Governments, Civil Society organizations (CSO), donors and the international community are all keen in assessing gender concerns in different local, national and international laws, policies, programmes and projects. These efforts have however not yielded the results anticipated hence a reason to adopt specific strategies and interventions. A gender sensitive project is a series of activities aimed at bringing about clearly specified objectives and results within a defined time period and with a defined budget while taking into account women and men issues (EIGE, 2016; EU, 2010).

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Gender equality needs to be mainstreamed at each phase of the project cycle (European Union, 2010), but first an explanation of some concepts that are used throughout this paper.

## Key concepts in gender

### Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological or genetic differences between males and females; that is to say the physical attributes pertaining to a person's contours, features, hormones, genes and reproductive organs that cannot be naturally changed (EIGE, 2016; Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), 2013).

Gender refers to the social differences between men and women as opposed to biological ones. These differences are learnt over time; they can also change with time and vary from culture to culture (EIGE, 2016; Pacha & Banda, 2013).

### Gender role

The roles one is expected to play by virtue of being a woman or a man is a gender role. Gender roles are shaped and defined by several factors including socio-economic, political and cultural ones (EIGE, 2016). Gender roles can change either impromptu or as a result of policies and planned interventions.

### Gender relations

Gender relations are relationships of distribution or sharing of power between women and men which characterizes any specific gender system. Gender roles reflect unequal power relation and values between women and men (EIGE, 2016; CDB, 2013).

### Gender equality

It means equal treatment of men and women in laws, policies, being accorded equal participation and access to resources within families, communities and society (EIGE, ). It is not about women and men being the same or in equal numbers in all activities but rather having same status within society (EIGE, Pacha & Banda, 2013; Lentisco & Arenas, 2011). It refers to being free to develop personal abilities and make choices without limitations set by strict gender roles. Gender equality cannot be achieved without putting in place equity measures.

### Gender inequality (imbalance)

The term refers to unequal access and control over material and non material resources and assets of society. Inequality therefore relates to lack of access to rights, assets, resources and decision making. Women's role is usually inferior in the power relationship since they do not

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have equal access to power and decision making structures (EIGE, 2013; Lentisco & Arenas, 2011).

## Gender equity

This is the process of ensuring fair and just treatment of women and men in order to reach gender equality. It is a process of putting in place fairness and justice measures to compensate for social differences that prevent women and men from sharing a level playing ground (EIGE, 2016; CDB), 2013).

## Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a gender equity strategy, which means that project objectives and results are defined in such a way that aspirations, wishes and needs of women and men are equally valued and favored through the project activities. When this is done, a project is said to be gender sensitive (EIGE, 2016; CDB), 2013; Lentisco & Arenas, 2010).
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## Gender sensitivity

A gender sensitive policy, activity or project is one that clearly defines roles of women and men and ensures a balanced gender relationship through equal distribution and sharing of power between women and men in the project. Mechanisms are in place to address the concerns of women and men (EIGE, 2016; CDB), 2013; Lentisco & Arenas, 2010).

## Rationale for gender mainstreaming in project planning and management

The justification for gender mainstreaming in project planning and management is derived from the main objective of establishing development projects, which is poverty eradication. Eradicating poverty brings about benefits resulting from access to income or financial resources, access to and control over material and non-material resources which are major determinants of inequality (EIGE, 2016; CDB, 2013, Lentisco & Arenas, 2011). Benefits such as respect of rights, having political voice, employment, information, services, infrastructure and natural resources accrue to disadvantaged gender (women) as a result of poverty eradication.

The second justification for including gender issues in the project management is because gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex are fundamental human rights recognized by international legal instruments and declarations of different countries and embedded in national constitutions (EIGE, 2016; CDB, 2013; Lentisco, 2011). In spite of this recognition, many societal structures do not accord the same treatment to men and women or boys and girls. Most human rights instruments, however, guarantee equal treatment of men and women.

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## Characteristics of a gender sensitive project

A development project is a way of clearly defining and managing investments and change processes. Gender blind projects can have negative effects and impact on the lives of men and women, boys and girls (Arenas & Lentisco, 2011, EU, 2010). A project should pay attention to gender issues throughout the project cycle. A project should therefore clearly identify stakeholders including the primary target group and the final beneficiaries. A gender sensitive project identifies gender aware stakeholders and gender specific target groups and beneficiaries in addition to having clearly defined coordination, management and financing arrangements (EIGE, 2016). In a gender sensitive project, these arrangements include equal opportunity policies, gender balanced human resource management, and gender budget initiatives (EU, 2010). A monitoring and evaluation system of a gender sensitive project includes gender-disaggregated data collection and gender performance indicators. An appropriate level of financial and economic analysis in a gender sensitive project includes gender budget analysis.

## Importance of considering gender issues in PPM

Arenas and Lantisco (2011) assert that because gender equality and women empowerment are human rights, they hold a center stage in development and development projects. Gender equality brings about benefits such as a faster growth of economies, improvement in children's health and reduction in corruption. It does not only contribute to sustainable development but also helps reduce the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.

Projects with a gender perspective contribute to the achievement of policy goals of development partners and governments regarding women's rights and gender equality (EU, 2010). According to Trine and Elisabet (2012), the way gender is articulated in project planning and management is important because it provides a frame for how gender-related issues such as gender imbalances and inequalities are addressed in the project.

Several studies have exposed the existence of gender inequalities in project planning and management and have shown the importance of projects paying attention to gender concerns. For instance, Lindgren and Packendorff (2006) report on how acceptance of demands for cost and time efficiency by project team members to the exclusion of other relevant work and life concerns perpetuates the masculinization of project work practices. Similarly, in a case study of an all-female core project team, Styhe, Backman, and Borjesson (2005) found out that projects that addressed gender concerns and gave equal opportunities to women and men enjoyed more success than those that did not do so.

De Silva and Jayathilaka (2014)'s study on gender in the context of disaster risk reduction reinforces the argument that gender project planning is vital for any project directed towards development activity. The low representation of women in the decision-making process contributes to the lack of gender sensitivity in the project. In this case, Project managers are responsible for directing the efforts of a project team that comprise of male and female.

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Addressing gender issues  (mainstreaming) in PPM also ensures that project work is of higher quality and that it has greater relevance for society, because it makes projects respond more effectively to the needs of all citizens (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2016). Effective interventions are made to ensure that inequalities are not perpetuated.  Mainstreaming gender in projects aims to avoid the creation or reinforcement of inequalities, which can have adverse effects on both women and men. It also implies analysing the existing situation, with the purpose of identifying inequalities, and developing policies which aim to redress these inequalities and undo the mechanisms that caused them.

## Gender mainstreaming in the project cycle

The European Institute for Gender Equality (2016) suggests that gender be mainstreamed throughout the project lifecycle. Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination. Successful gender mainstreaming requires that a proper assessment of the project gender perspective is done in relation to the various project stages of project implementation (Pacha & Banda , 2013;  Arenas & Lentisco, 2011; Thera, 2010). The authors further posit that integrating gender in all phases of the project is essential because many times projects carry out thorough analysis and set appropriate gender objectives but fail to implement and monitor the planned phases. Other than leave the responsibility of gender mainstreaming to one person, the whole project team should be enabled to acquire expertise in gender mainstreaming so that they can support the process (Pacha & Banda, 2013).

### Project Programming

A gender analysis needs to be carried out during project programming to assess how the development project will affect women and men and gender relations (Arenas & Lentisco, 2011; EU, 2010; Thera, 2010). To ensure sustainability of the project the gender perspectives of the donor country and partner or recipient country should be given serious considerations (EIGE, 2016, EU, 2010). Inability to mainstream gender at the programming stage will likely enhance already existing inequalities because it will promote employment opportunities for men who already have better skills.

### Project identification

During project identification, a gender analysis should be included in the general analysis. The log frame can be used to analyse the problems of women and men and to identify ways of providing remedy to ensure equal rights and benefits for women and men (Arenas & Lentisco, 2013; Thera, 2010). At this stage assessment and analysis should adopt a gender perspective. Project teams would do well by undertaking gender assessments and planning by seeking the views of women and men; boys & girls through gender sensitive tools such as sex disaggregated baseline data, activity charts, control, access and decision making charts (EIGE, 2016; Thera,

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2010). Target groups should also be assessed to ensure gender equality. At this stage gender gaps and discriminatory practices have to be identified and practical strategies considered to ensure equality access and control of women and men to resources.

## Project Formulation

In the project design, gender sensitive objectives, goals, purpose and outputs should be set based on the information gathered in assessment and analysis. The log frame can be used to formulate a project plan with a gender perspective (Arenas & Lentisco, 2013; Thera, 2010; EU, 2010). Identifying gender sensitive objectives and indicators and developing a gender sensitive log frame are ways of enshrining gender issues in the project design. The question of whether the project is gender inclusive and whether it effectively and equitably targets women and men has to be addressed in the project design. The project should be designed in a way that it has a specific target for encouraging the participation of the disadvantaged gender.

## Project Implementation

Gender considerations are incorporated in project implementation by running programmes in a gender sensitive manner and ensuring that the project delivers benefits to women and men; girls and boys (EIGE, 2016; Arenas & Lentisco, 2013; Carribean Development Bank (CDB), 2013). The log frame can be used as an important management tool to ensure equal opportunities, rights and benefits for all (Thera, 2010) The project team should ensure that all planned activities empower women and men, and steps taken to ensure that difficulties that prevent participation of either women or men are dealt with. At this stage differences in participation and the impact of the project on gender relations need to be assessed and analysed. The analysis can be used to achieve objectives of gender equality.

## Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous assessment at the evaluation stage will greatly benefit from gender oriented mechanisms. Gender specific results, outcomes, performance and impact are evaluated on the basis of the log frame (Thera, 2010). According to the European Institute of Gender Equality (2016), the measures used in project monitoring and evaluation should be gender sensitive. Evaluators must find out whether inequalities have been reduced and how the project has benefited and impacted men and women, boys and girls, and the negative effects on each group. During monitoring and evaluation the team may have to establish what they might wish to change in the future and document lessons learnt (EIGE, 2016; Thera, 2010). When monitoring mechanisms are gender-oriented, positive feedback is provided, enabling the responsible team members to follow the gender mainstreaming progress and eliminate gender gaps.

## Tools and methods of incorporating gender in project planning and management

Having underscored the importance of addressing gender issues in project planning and management, presented the characteristics of a gender sensitive project and discussed

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mainstreaming gender in the project cycle, it is important to consider the methods and tools needed for doing the job. The European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) (2016) suggests seven tools discussed in the following paragraphs:

## Gender Analysis

Gender analysis is an analysis of gender relations which provides information on the different conditions of women and men, and the different effects that policies and programs may have on them (EIGE, 2016). When setting up a project, an essential first step for ensuring that it meets gender equality requirements is to conduct a gender analysis to help understand the gender situation. Gender analysis provides an insight into patterns of participation, behavior, involvement and activities of women and men, considering a diversity of socio-economic, political and cultural structures. It therefore provides an answer to how gender issues should be addressed in the project. It provides information that is used in setting objectives, developing indicators and choosing activities.

## Gender Audit

This is a social audit used to assess the institutionalization of gender equality in policies programmes, structures, decision making processes and other practices (EIGE, 2016). It is used to determine the effectiveness of the processes and practices within the project in supporting systems for gender mainstreaming and whether they are being followed. It is through the gender audit that good practices can be identified and gender gaps and challenges can also be addressed. It helps the project to identify its strengths and weaknesses in promoting gender equality. The ultimate aim of a gender audit is to monitor and assess the progress made in gender mainstreaming in the project.

## Gender Awareness-raising

Raising awareness about gender is achieved by explaining how gender norms influence and limit opinions in decision making processes and helps to challenge them (EIGE, 2016). The aim of raising awareness is to show how existing values and norms influence the way people understand reality and expose mechanisms that perpetuate stereotypes and promote inequality. Through gender awareness raising, values and norms that limit involvement of men and women in decision making can be challenged. Stakeholders become sensitive to gender issues and project team members and other stakeholders strive to use gender sensitive language. Images that portray gender stereotypes or portray violence against a particular sex must be avoided

## Gender Budgeting

Gender mainstreaming uses gender budgeting, which is a gender-based assessment of budgets. It means analyzing the budget from a gender perspective and incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality (EIGE, 2016). Through gender budgeting, projects can assess if the project

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budget has reduced or increased gender inequality or left it unchanged. Gender budgeting requires incorporating gender analysis as part of the project budgetary process. The realization that resources have not been distributed equitably or that distribution does not match national gender equality policies calls for budget realignment and restructuring.

## Gender Equality Training

It is important that special trainings are organized for project teams on gender equality work. When projects are carrying out other trainings, a gender perspective must not be ignored. The selection and representation of women and men in the training of team members or even beneficiaries should be done with respect to gender so that project training programmes can avoid perpetuating gender inequality.

## Gender Evaluation

A gender-sensitive evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the design and planning, the implementation and results of an ongoing or completed activity, project, programme or policy from a gender perspective (EIGE, 2016). It places focus on gender impacts and the contribution of the programme to promoting gender equality, or throughout project implementation, with the aim of seeking to have a process of continuous improvement. The indicators developed at the planning phase are taken into account and this requires that evaluators must have gender expertise. While evaluating for relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, evaluation should consider how the project has responded to the needs of women and men and whether equality has been achieved and is sustainable.

## Gender Impact Assessment

A gender sensitive project incorporates gender issues in assessment of project impact. This is referred to as gender impact assessment (EIGE, 2016). Gender impact assessment is the process of comparing and assessing, according to gender relevant criteria, the situation, trends and any other developments resulting from the introduction of the project (EIGE, 2016). It involves estimating the different effects of the project on women and men in terms of equality. Assessed this way, project decisions will not have negative consequences on the state of gender equality.

## Gender Indicators

A project that takes gender issues into account includes gender indicators among the project indicators. Gender indicators are a tool for measuring changes in the relations between women and men in a project, policy area, a specific programme, activity, or changes in the status or situation of women and men (EIGE, 2016). They are established to measure and compare the situation of women and men over time.  Indicators play a crucial role in mainstreaming gender throughout the project cycle. Gender indicators are used during monitoring and evaluation to establish whether the project's gender equality objectives are being achieved and to assess the gender effect of project activities.

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## Gender Monitoring

Periodic monitoring should take into account gender perspectives. A gender-sensitive monitoring is a systematic and objective assessment of the planning, design, implementation and results of an ongoing activity, project from a gender perspective (EIGE, 2016, CBD, 2013). It makes use of information and data collected in the different phases of the project. It is necessary to ensure that people involved in monitoring have gender expertise and the criteria for monitoring; methods and reports should integrate gender equality considerations. Monitoring ensures that problems are quickly identified and changes are introduced in order to address gender gaps. Gender sensitive monitoring can only be effective if gender sensitive objectives and indicators are set at the initial stages of the project.

## Gender Procurement

A project can address gender concerns through its procurement processes. Basic principles governing public procurement contracts require that they should always be awarded in observance of principles that have a great potential to promote gender equality, because its basic principles require that contracts be awarded on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, transparency and competition (EIGE, 2016; CBD, 2013). The possibility of incorporating gender equality clauses in the contract and criteria of evaluation will ensure that gender issues are addressed. Public procurement can become an instrument of gender equality if gender equality clauses are incorporated into the conditions for implementation of the contract and if gender equality concerns can be addressed very well during contract negotiation.

## Sex-disaggregated data

Projects should ensure that any data collected is presented to reflect the differences for women and men. Disaggregating data by sex means that data is collected and tabulated separately for women and men in order to allow for the measurement of differences between women and men on various social and economic dimensions and are one of the requirements in obtaining gender statistics (EIGE, 2016; CBD, 2013). To derive gender statistics a project has to rely on sex-disaggregated data to reflect the realities of the lives of women and men affected by project.

## Conclusion

The need to give special consideration for gender issues in project planning and management cannot be overemphasized. Gender equality has indeed become central in the development discourse because it is a human right and considered a weapon for eradicating poverty. Gender mainstreaming requires that gender be incorporated in all phases of the project and that it should not be left to one person. While different organizations and nations have taken big strides in implementing strategies for gender equality, much work remains undone because glaring gender gaps still do exist especially in project planning and development.

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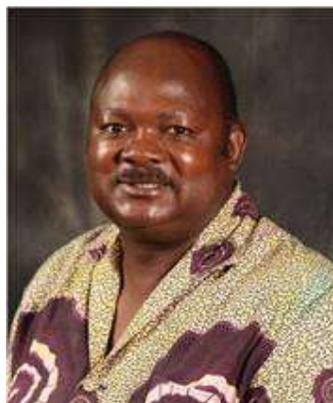
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