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INSTITUTIONALISING / MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY.

I. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

1.1. DEFINITION

Gender - focussed development has become more critical especially in the last decade. There is a growing recognition in both developed and developing regions of the world that gender is an organising principle of society that affects men and women in all activities and relationships and consequently influence the outcomes of development interventions. GENDER refers to men's and women's roles and relationships in a specific society or culture. It is therefore incorrect to confuse gender with women issues or sex, which refers to universal, biological characteristics of women and men.

The concept of gender is based on socially constructed and learned stereotypes of male and female behaviour that are associated with sex. Gender is defined, supported and reinforced by societal structures and institutions. Gender roles are basically inhibiting factors in development in that both men and women do not freely exploit their maximum potential in development and these roles have a more repressive impact on women than men by restricting their participation in the development process. However, gender roles can be changed by factors such as education, government and sectoral policies, technology and political or social crises such as war, conflicts...

Women and men in their different roles have unequal access to resources and benefits and have, different types and levels of involvement and responsibility in development, and different perspectives on defining and solving problems. Because of these deep-seated disparities, gender focussed development seeks to increase equality of opportunity and equity or fairness of impact for both men and women. Gender analysis takes into account the existing disparities or gender gaps between men and women and provides strategies to redress these imbalances.

1.2. WHY IS GENDER APPROACH IMPORTANT IN DEVELOPMENT ?

There are three main reasons for integrating gender concerns in development policies, programmes and projects.

- **Equity :**

Gender - equity addresses the imbalance between men and women, ensuring that development activities benefit women and men in a fair manner.

Experience indicates that women will not automatically benefit from development initiatives. Some deliberate planning interventions have to be made at the policy, programme and project design levels.

- **Economic Efficiency:**

There is increasing evidence that a focus on gender equity and gender-sensitive planning makes sense from the economic efficiency perspective. Multilateral Development Agencies such as the World Bank recognise that investing in eliminating gender imbalances (eg investing in girls education) is central to sustainable development. For example as 70 % of the world's poor are women, investing in women leads to lasting economic growth, improved family welfare, a reduction in poverty and a more equitable distribution of the socio-economic benefits of development.

- **Effective development:**

Gender analysis is crucial to good development practice. Programme and development goals cannot be achieved without a clear understanding of the target groups involved. Knowing who does what work and documenting women's and men's roles are essential planning inputs, hence the need to categorise the population into men, women, boys and girls for proper targeting of beneficiaries as well as actors in development process.

Numerous development failures can be traced to the assumption that the eventual benefits were to a homogeneous group, rather than women and men with different needs and interests.

1.3. GENDER IS A CROSS-CUTTING THEME

Gender approach is linked to other themes and policies such as environment, human and legal rights, good governance, sustainability, education, economic reforms-all these underpin development work.

Gender concerns must inevitably intersect all development areas and sectors since policies, programmes and projects have an impact on people's lives. All development initiatives therefore require a gender analysis.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN SECTOR MINISTRIES.

In part one of these series an attempt was made to define gender as a tool of development practitioners "while considering gender issues in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluations as a means of ensuring that the different interests and needs of men and women are duly addressed in order to attain equitable and sustainable development.

Part two of these series, highlights the need for government sector ministries to mainstream gender in their policies programmes and projects. By definition mainstreaming gender in an organisation means that gender concerns are taken into account at the conception, design and implementation levels of all development interventions as well as in monitoring and evaluation.

It means that concrete strategies are put in place and implemented in each respective ministry, to ensure that both men and women are given equal opportunities to participate fully and benefit from the development process. Such strategies ought to reflect gender inequalities prevailing in each sector.

the government of Rwanda is committed to an overall policy of creating a more just, and sustainable society. Among other things, the government has demonstrated its support for the policy of promoting gender equity in all development endeavours. The creation of a gender ministry at the beginning of 1997 is a testimony of this commitment and marks a departure from the traditional tendency of addressing women as marginalised and vulnerable groups of our society that need to be supported through women promotion strategies. However such approach focuses on the consequences rather than the underlying causes of gender imbalances that affect development and women's advancement in particular because the structural imbalances between men and women in terms of power and social relations remain unchanged. It is important, therefore to opt for transformative approaches in development hence the preference of Gender in Development approach rather than Women in Development approach.

The purpose of creating a gender ministry is essentially to address fundamental causes of gender disparities rather than the consequences of gender discrimination. Its thrust is on empowerment rather than welfare. Nevertheless, in the initial initial phase, it is imperative to tackle both the causes and their consequences simultaneously, but with greater emphasis on the former.

The Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs(MIGEFASO) treats gender inequalities in our country as societal in character, hence the need to have every institution committed and actively participating in finding a durable solution. These inequalities are embedded in our culture and accepted as natural. They are subsequently manifested in institutional policies and laws tend to be patriarchal in nature. In order to transform our society and put it on a sound modernisation course, all public and private institutions should have in the first place the responsibility of correcting gender imbalances. The assumption that MIGEFASO has the sole responsibility of dealing with issues of gender inequalities is unrealistic and

untenable, since it is not an implementing institution. A more pragmatic approach is for each sector ministry to analyse the nature and causes of gender disparities in its respective sector and rectify them using appropriate remedies. This will contribute to the institutions' increased capacity to deliver goods and services to the appropriate target groups of the population in a more equitable manner. By integrating and operationalising gender concerns in each sector ministry, it will be possible to tap the potential of both men and women thus ensuring their maximum participation to the benefit of women and society as a whole.

At this juncture one may pose the question as to whether gender imbalances in the various socio-economic sectors of our society are a real or perceived. Some people including policy makers, development practitioners and opinion leaders still argue that gender imbalances do not exist in our society and that there are equal opportunities for all. A casual glance at the socio-economic indicators in all sectors paints a picture of the glaring imbalances between males and females in terms of participation, access to and control of resources.

There are yet others who argue that gender inequalities do exist but they will naturally disappear with time. It is worth noting that just like other development distortions, concerted efforts through gender-responsive government policies have to be adopted and applied in order to bring about the desired changes in gender relations.

The nature and magnitude of gender imbalances in the various socio-economic sectors and the mechanisms of rectifying them will be in the next issue.

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(Por informasyon)

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Bwana Burugumesitiri
wa Komini

Fice
J. Umwami
30/11/99

● Impamvu: Gushimangira inzego
z'abategarugori
n'uruburuko.

Bwana,

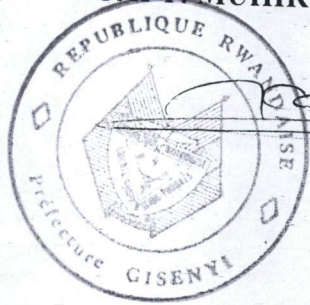
K'umugereka w'iyi baruwa nejeje no
kukugezaho fotokopi y'ibaruwa ya Nyakubahwa Minisitiri w'Ubutegetsi bw'Igihugu
n° 1214/07.02/01/99 yo kuwa 13/8/1999.

mu bikorwa ibiyikubiyemo byose.

Ndagusaba kuyisoma witonze kandi ugashyira

Akazi keza.

PEREFE WA PEREFEGITURA
CAPT. MUHIRWA JEAN BAPTISTE



Bimenyeshejwe:

- Nyakubahwa Minisitiri
w'Ubutegetsi bw'Igihugu
KIGALI
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