

## Gender Mainstreaming Competence Development Framework: SUMMARY

In 1997 ECOSOC adopted agreed conclusions on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. Gender mainstreaming was clearly defined by ECOSOC:

*Mainstreaming a gender perspective is 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 societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*

The Council emphasized the need to incorporate a gender perspective into the mainstream of all areas of the United Nations' work, including macroeconomic questions, operational activities for development, poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance, budgeting, disarmament, peace and security and legal affairs.

In a letter to all heads of Departments, Programmes, Funds and Regional Commissions in October 1997, Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote that "this process is the responsibility of us all, and not just gender experts or isolated units." The letter requested a number of steps including the formulation of: "*specific strategies for ensuring that gender issues are brought into the mainstream of activities*" within each area of responsibility.

The recent General Assembly special session to follow-up the Beijing conference (June 2000) reinforced the gender mainstreaming mandate. The United Nations was specifically called upon to continue to implement, evaluate and follow-up on the mandated work of mainstreaming gender perspectives into all policy making, planning processes and programmes; ensure the allocation of sufficient resources, including the maintenance of gender focal points; and provide training on gender mainstreaming and appropriate follow-up to all staff.

### **A Competence Development Programme**

A competence development programme has been developed which aims to create greater awareness, commitment and capacity for gender mainstreaming division by division within departments / organizations within the United Nations. The competence development programme on gender mainstreaming should assess:

- Past and current efforts of each division to bring a gender perspective to their substantive work;
- Leading-edge thinking in integrating a gender perspective into the specific area of expertise of each division;
- Concrete ways each division can respond to the UN's commitment to gender mainstreaming across all substantive work areas.

Through a participatory methodology based on each division's work areas and specific needs, the Competence Development Programme aims to:

- Document what each division has already done to mainstream gender perspectives;
- Clarify concepts and advance the analysis involved in applying gender perspectives in the substantive areas of the division (the focus will be on identifying how and why gender issues are relevant in both the broad mandate of the division and within specific initiatives);
- Identify resources (research, organizations and individuals) that could assist the divisions to incorporate gender perspectives;

- Identify concrete entry points and priorities for future work.

### **The implications of the programme for each staff member**

The competence development programme involves three elements at divisional level:

1. A meeting (approximately 1 hour) of the whole division, led by the Director, to introduce the competence development programme - objectives, structure, expected staff participation and anticipated outcomes - and present basic concepts. The facilitators are also introduced at this meeting. The meeting provides an opportunity for the senior management to show commitment to gender mainstreaming and the competence development programme and for staff to raise concerns and provide concrete suggestions on the development of the programme.
2. Small-group meetings (2-3 hours) with the facilitators to discuss the work of the division (priorities, past work on gender equality issues, day-to-day challenges, current work-tasks / assignments, etc.). Staff receive advance notice of when they should participate and specific questions to think about before this meeting.
3. A one-day workshop tailored to the specific work of the division. (The larger divisions have more than one workshop in order to keep the number of participants to around 20 in each specific workshop). The workshop methodology should be participatory and the agenda tailored to each division.

Once the divisional level process is completed in each division, a "town-hall" meeting is organized for the whole department / organization, led by the head of the department / organization, to consolidate the learnings and recommendations made.

### **Facilitation of the programme**

Two consultants facilitate this process. An overall facilitator participates in the programme in all divisions in each department / organization to ensure overall continuity in the programme. She/he takes the lead to ensure a participatory methodology that is grounded in the work of the divisions and adequate reporting back. The overall facilitator should have a broad background in gender mainstreaming, including at both policy and programme levels, as well as experience in designing and implementing competence development programmes, developing methodologies and tools and providing concrete advice to support staff to make the links between gender issues and their specific areas of work. The second facilitator should be a gender specialist with expertise related to the specific sector area of each division. There should be a different gender specialist for each division. This consultant, chosen or endorsed by the division, provides subject matter expertise, bringing to the process the latest thinking on gender issues in their areas of work. Although two facilitators are utilized in the process, it is important that the programme is not simply left to external consultants. Gender specialists / gender focal points should attend each session in order to be able to monitor the development of the programme and provide adequate follow-up.

### **Documentation**

The facilitators are required to provide substantive documentation of the results and outcome of the programme for each division, as well as recommendations for follow-up, over and above the normal training evaluation processes. An overall report for the whole department / organization is also required. Developed by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources Management, United Nations, New York.