Mind the Gap

Mainstreaming gender and participation in development

Nazneen Kanji

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Preface

Making women's as well as men's voices heard and counted in policies, organisations and planned interventions implies the active involvement of women and men in deciding on issues that affect their lives. Mainstreaming such democratic participation calls for reversals in discriminatory forms of social organisation and practices that generate political and economic exclusion.

Feminist scholars and radical humanists have long pointed out how social, cultural, economic and political processes affect men and women differentially, shaping relationships between women and men in development and wider society. But whilst gender[i] is inherent in the notions of participation and participatory development, it is not automatically addressed. There is thus a need to bridge the gap between the often distant worlds of 'gender' and 'participation' to encourage more equitable, democratic and inclusive societies. This paper is a contribution to this important theoretical and political project. The author attempts to draw out lessons from gender mainstreaming work for those who seek to institutionalise participation in development.

By analysing the shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD), and the recent history and practice of participation in development, the author shows how similar trends have influenced both gender and participation. Examples of these influential trends include the growth of organisations of civil society at local and international levels, research and academic debates, and critiques of wider development paradigms.

Efforts to situate gender issues at the heart of decision-making, institutional structures and resource allocation have generated many relevant lessons for the mainstreaming of both gender and people's participation in development. The author highlights the following in particular:

i. Gender relations determine how power is allocated, and used differently, by women and men. An analysis of gender can help understand how differences between men and women are historically influenced and socially constructed in a variety of contexts.

- The importance of developing practical strategies on the 'how to' of gender mainstreaming – within specific policies, programmes and projects – and to provide follow up support to people working to mainstream gender in a variety of settings.
- Gender champions – working with external allies – can change institutional environments, even when they are inhospitable. Prospects for change are greatest when a) internal structures allow for the open expression of dissent and make it possible to bring conflicts out into the open, converting them into opportunities to deepen levels of mutual trust and understanding in the organisational environment, and b) there is external pressure from strong national and international women's constituencies as well as strategic alliances to promote change.
- Beliefs and values of facilitators and change agents cannot be underestimated – they are of fundamental importance. Experience shows that positive gains are usually made in different organisational contexts when individuals with *strong values of equity and social justice* are in positions that allow them to promote actions in support of these values.
- Even the most comprehensive approaches to institutionalising gender do not emphasise enough the importance of organisational change, particularly organisational norms and culture. But changing organisations – their structure and practice as well as their incentive and accountability systems – is particularly difficult in the mood of neo-liberalism that seems to permeate most conventional organisations today.
- While a greater number of development organisations now use the terms 'gender' and 'governance', the extent to which shifts in terms and concepts have been reflected in policymaking, practice and in organisational structures is debatable. Change can all too easily become reduced to inventing new language and discourse, without any positive effects on the lived experience of marginalised groups.

In both arenas – gender and participation – more organisations and individuals have moved on from a focus on individuals, 'essentialised' groups (women, 'the poor'), and local action to a greater recognition of the importance of social relations and power. There is indeed evidence that the shift from 'women in development' to 'gender and development' is mirrored by a shift from 'participation' to 'governance', with a greater focus in both on a relational perspective, policy processes and institutions.

However, conventional approaches to 'gender mainstreaming' often ignore differences between women and stereotype men while conventional approaches to 'participatory development' tend to homogenise communities and ignore a range of differences between people. Moreover, both run the risk of over-emphasising technical aspects of mainstreaming, thereby depoliticising issues and failing to address more directly power and powerlessness, as well as difference and increasing inequality.

In this regard it is important to note that women are more harmed than men by the growing inequalities, insecure employment, and social unrest that have marked the last two decades of neo-liberalism (1980-2000). Throughout the world, women are the first hit by displacements induced by 'modernising' agricultural development and by the mass redundancies associated with the current frenzy of mergers, acquisitions and re-locations of industries. In both developed and developing countries, women's average wages continue to be significantly lower than men's – in all professions and across all social groups. Women are under-represented in all of the world's governments and parliaments where they are often used as tokens in processes of political participation. Moreover, there is some evidence that the degradation of living conditions in poorer households everywhere has translated into an increase in levels of violence, particularly in domestic and sexual violence in which women are the first victims. For example, as many as 40 per cent of adult women are now subjected to domestic violence in Europe (58 per cent in Turkey…). And it is estimated that in 2002 alone, over 4 million young girls and women were sold for use as slaves, wives or prostitutes throughout the world[ii].

Several feminist economists have shown how the gendered structure of the economy as well as male bias in national and international economic policies deeply constrain the institutionalisation of both gender and inclusive participation in development. More specifically, the neo-liberal approach to development and corporate-led globalisation affirms the superiority of 'economic efficiency' and the 'commodity economy' – to the detriment of a) the 'care economy' where women have a predominant responsibility and b) the many subsistence economies that still harbour diverse definitions of well being.

These observations suggest that a much broader and more comprehensive approach is needed to institutionalise gender-equitable participation. Most donors, external support agencies, government programmes and employers have relatively male-centric views of 'institutionalisation'. Changes in policies, practices and procedures must somehow fit within the wider social and economic dynamics that reproduce

ii. Le Monde Diplomatique, 2003. Femmes Rebelles. Manière de Voir, No 68, Paris, 98pp.

inequitable relationships between men and women (and other axes of difference). The boundaries around 'what is possible and desirable' are usually narrowly circumscribed, – leaving the *status quo* largely unchallenged and intact.

There is therefore a growing need for alternative thinking, practices and innovations for widespread transformation towards gender equity and democratic participation. In addition to the proposals mentioned or implied in this paper, the following *mutually reinforcing* structural reforms seem particularly relevant:

- A redistribution of roles and responsibilities to allow women to work for a decent wage outside the home *and* for men and women to share more evenly in domestic, parenting and caring activities within their households and neighbourhoods. This implies gender equitable property rights over resources as well as redesigning practical arrangements and the use of space and time within the workplace to meet the diverse needs of women, men, dependent children and elderly people (time tables, career paths, working hours, provision of paternity and maternity leave, childcare provisions…).
- A cultural shift that affirms the importance and values of the non-monetarised reproductive sphere as much as the monetarised productive economic sphere – with men *and* women deriving their identities through a plural anchoring in *both* spheres of social life.
- A reduction of time spent in wage-work and more equitable sharing of jobs. This is about finding ways to a) change the sexual division of labour so that men do as much unpaid work as women and engage in caring activities within the domestic/reproductive sphere, b) ensure that wage-work is more evenly distributed so that everyone can invest in other activities, *outside the wage economy*, c) defend the rights associated with wage-work, and d) move towards a post-wage society and introduce new rights de-linked from wage-work. An important goal here is to free up peoples' time for self-chosen and autonomous activities, whilst ensuring freedom from economic necessity.
- The re-localisation of plural economies that combine both subsistence and market oriented activities. The environments where people live will need to offer more individual and collective opportunities to engage in many different activities outside – and unmediated by – the market, wage-work and commodity production.
- A guaranteed and unconditional minimum citizen income for all. A Citizen Income is based on the notion that the productive capacity of society is the result of all the scientific and technical knowledge accumulated by previous generations. This

> is a common heritage of humankind and all individuals regardless of origin, age or gender have a right to benefit form it, in the form of an unconditional basic income. An equitable distribution of the existing world product would allow each person on earth to benefit from such a basic income. Apart from offering a measure of security, a Citizen Income would allow people – men and women – to find more time to engage in caring activities, civic affairs and democratic decision-making over the means and ends of social life[iii].

As the author of this critical paper concludes, it is important that advocates for the mainstreaming of gender and participation continue to question the discrimination and oppression associated with contemporary processes of social and political change. Supporting excluded groups and allowing their experiences, priorities and needs to drive mainstreaming processes is not the easy option. On the contrary, this approach requires a high degree of honesty, courage and commitment by actors working for sustainable and equitable development. Alliances with emerging groups and movements working at different levels (from the local to the global) are needed to prevent the cooption of visions, actions and values that guide efforts to mainstream both gender perspectives and participatory approaches to development and social change.

Michel Pimbert (Series Editor)

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iii. For more details on these proposals see: Mies, M. and V. Bennholdt-Thomsen (1999) The Subsistence Perspective. Beyond the Globalised Economy. Zed Books; Gorz, A. (1994) Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology. Verso Books; Méda, D. (2001) Le temps des femmes. Pour un nouveau partage des roles. Flammarion, Paris; Pimbert, M.P. (2001) Reclaiming our right to power: some conditions for deliberative democracy. PLA Notes 40: 81-84. IIED, London.

1. Introduction

Feminists and advocates of women's rights, mainly women, have tried to mainstream a gender perspective into development policy and practice while a different set of academics and practitioners, mainly from rural development policy and practice, have worked to institutionalise participation. At the same time, however, there have been significant attempts to combine these approaches and promote both gender and participation in policy and planning processes as well as in development programmes and projects (Moser, 1993; Levy, 1996; Guijt and Kaul Shah, 1998; Cornwall, 2000a).

This paper attempts to draw out lessons from gender mainstreaming work for those who seek to institutionalise participation, drawing on literature and on my own experience of promoting mainstreaming in a range of development organisations. Approaches to both gender issues and participation have been influenced by similar processes: the growth of organisations of civil society at local and international levels, and research and academic debates and wider development paradigms and processes. In both arenas, gender and participation, more organisations and individuals have shifted from a focus on individuals, 'essentialised' groups (women, 'the poor'), and local action to a greater recognition of the importance of social relations, systems, policy processes and institutions. While more development organisations now use the terms 'gender' and 'governance', the extent to which such shifts have been reflected in policymaking, practice and organisational structures is debatable.

The terms mainstreaming and institutionalising are often used interchangeably in development literature. Mainstreaming – defined as situating gender issues at the centre of policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocation – was adopted as a strategy at the 1995 Fourth International Conference on Women. Institutionalisation describes the process whereby social practices become regular and continuous enough to be described as institutions – maintained by social norms and with a major significance in the social structure. The term 'institutionalisation' connotes longer term, sustained change, which in turn recognises the conflict

between regular practices of organisations, which inevitably reflect a particular set of interests, and their responsiveness to change.

This paper begins (Section 2) by discussing the shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) and the conceptual frameworks which contributed to this process. Section 3 examines the strategies used to mainstream gender, the achievements and the challenges. Section 4 discusses the shifts from participation in itself to governance, suggesting that the shift from 'women in development' to 'gender and development' is mirrored by a shift from 'participation' to 'governance', with a greater focus in both on a relational perspective, policy processes and institutions. Section 5 explores the tensions between gender mainstreaming and participatory development. The final section concludes and suggests ways of bridging the gaps. The political weakness of many women's and 'participation' movements in the current wider socio-economic context does mean that mainstreaming efforts depend too heavily on committed individuals working in different organisational contexts. Renewed alliances with emerging groups and movements and more critical perspectives are required to prevent the cooption of the visions and weakening of the values which underpin efforts to mainstream both a gender perspective and participatory approaches to development and social change.

2. From WID to GAD

2.1 The emergence of WID

The term 'Women in Development' (WID) was coined in the early 1970s by a Washington-based network of women development professionals who argued that women in the South were not benefiting equally from the modernisation and accelerated growth models that were the mainstream development paradigms in the 1950s and 1960s. They argued that women had been marginalised in development efforts, with resources and skills directed mainly towards men. A formative influence on WID was the women's movement in the North and the efforts by Western feminists to get equal rights, employment and participation in public life.

At the same time, there was an emerging body of research on women in developing countries. Ester Boserup's work on women's role in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa was particularly influential (Boserup, 1970). Sub-Saharan Africa was characterised as an area of 'female farming systems' in which women, using 'traditional' hoe technology, assumed a substantial responsibility for food production. Her critique of colonial and post-colonial agricultural policies was that productivity-enhancing interventions and dominant Western notions about what constituted appropriate female tasks, had facilitated men's monopoly over new technologies and cash crops. This undermined women's roles in agriculture and created a dichotomy between modern cash crops and the subsistence sector. Relegated to the subsistence sector, women lost income, status and power relative to men and their contribution to agriculture became invisible (Razavi and Miller, 1995).

Boserup's study *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970) has been described as 'the fundamental text for the UN Decade for Women' (Tinker, 1990) (referring to the first decade, 1975-85). During the decade, particular attention was paid to women's productive labour and integration into the economy as a means of improving their status. This was in part a reaction to earlier policies which had defined women almost solely by their roles as wives and mothers and limited policy interventions to social welfare concerns such as nutritional education and home economics, often referred to as the 'welfare approach' (Moser, 1993).

The theoretical roots of WID lie in liberal feminism – the aim of both is to apply the liberal political values of equality, liberty and justice to women as well as men. Central to liberal feminism was the idea that women's disadvantage stems from stereotyped customary expectations held by men and internalised by women and promoted through socialisation processes. These disadvantages could, in principle, be broken down by giving girls better training and more role models, by introducing equal opportunity programmes and anti-discrimination legislation, by freeing labour markets or through some combination of these. There was little focus on men or on power relations between men and women.

Proponents of WID were not so much critical of the dominant model of development, as concerned that women had not benefited from it. Early responses to women's advocacy and the first UN International Decade for Women (1975-85) resulted in the creation of 'women in development' policies and machineries in many countries and international development organisations. Women's Ministries and Bureaux in national governments, WID desks, and 'focal points' in international agencies proliferated and WID informed the work of many women's organisations and projects. As modernisation and growth-oriented development strategies began to recognise more explicitly the failure of 'trickle down' and the need for explicit poverty reduction strategies, the 'anti-poverty' approach to women appeared, which aimed to increase both women's productivity and their participation in development interventions (Moser, 1993). WID demands for 'productive employment' were met by greater support for small-scale income-generating activities for women. This was the era of numerous 'Women in Development' projects, many of which 'misbehaved', as economic objectives were subverted into welfare action during the course of implementation (Buvinic, 1986). Interventions were often directed towards developing women's skills in nutrition or traditional handicrafts, and women-only projects did little to overcome women's economic marginalisation.

By the end of the 1970s, critiques of WID increased. For example, feminist thinkers in the 'Subordination of Women Workshop' meeting in the UK at the end of the 1970s provided a far-reaching critique of WID, arguing that it tended to isolate women as a separate and homogeneous group and that it was undecided and ambiguous in its identification and analysis of women's subordination (Young et al., 1981).

Feminists in the South presented another set of criticisms of the WID approach. They argued for women's empowerment, not their integration into development processes which, they argued, were premised on inequalities between industrialised economies in the North and poor countries in the South. The empowerment approach was influenced by anti-colonial struggles, with theoretical roots in neo-Marxism and

dependency theory. The most well-known representatives of this perspective, DAWN, an international network of Third World women researchers, advocated women working together in autonomous organisations in the context of broader anti-imperialist coalitions or in self-help initiatives to meet their own needs (Sen and Grown, 1987). One of the best examples of just such a successful organisation which has maintained its strong grassroots base over a long period is the Self Employed Women's Association in India. This organisation has at the same time been active in networking and promoting women's interests at the national level (see Box 1).

BOX 1: THE SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (SEWA), AHMEDABAD, INDIA

SEWA was founded in 1971 and registered in 1972 as a trade union for women in the informal sector. A few thousand women subsequently established the SEWA Bank as a co-operative to provide poor, self-employed women with access to credit and financial services and to reduce their dependence on exploitative moneylenders.

SEWA has strategically used the collective bargaining tools which have charactersied many trade union movements. In areas where there are few prospects for employment, however, traditional unionising techniques do not work. In such situations, SEWA has worked at the grassroots level to form village organisations. SEWA helps women to run their own organisations, form cooperatives and bargain collectively in the marketplace.

More important than providing access to credit, SEWA has concentrated on empowering women to use their own resources more effectively. In the villages of Gujarat, and in the city markets of Ahmedabad (where SEWA has its headquarters), women are speaking out more, taking leadership roles, and realising how far they can go when they have collective bargaining power for wages, better working conditions, combating domestic violence, or improving education and family health.

Source: Adapted from SEWA homepage: www.gdrc.org/icm/sewa.html

Different concepts of gender

It is worth summarising the different feminist approaches which contributed to and underpinned the shift to (Gender and Development) GAD, above all to show that there are different schools of thought which interacted and still interact. Calas and Smircich (1997) provide an excellent account of these different theoretical positions, which has been selectively and briefly summarised in Table 1. The table overleaf illustrates the different intellectual roots and the diversity of conceptions of human nature and sex/gender and of what constitutes a 'good society' in feminist thinking.

TITLE OF TABLE				
SCHOOL OF THOUGHT	LIBERAL	RADICAL	PSYCHOANALYTICAL	
Intellectual roots	Evolved from 18th and 19th century political theory.	Generated in the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s.	Evolved from Freudian and other psychoanalytic theories.	
Conception of human nature	Individuals are autonomous beings capable of rationality.	Human beings arte fundamentally embodied sexed beings.	Human nature develops biologically and psychosexually.	
Conception of sex/gender	Sex is part of essential biological empowerment, a binary variable. Gender is socialised onto sexed human beings for appropriate behaviour.	'Sex-class' is the condition of women as an oppressed class. Gender is a social construction that ensures women's subordination to men.	Individuals become sexually identified as part of their psychosexual development. Gender structures a social system of male domination, which influences psychosexual development.	
Conception of 'the good society'	A just society that allows individuals to exercise autonomy and to fulfill themselves through a system of individual rights.	A gender/sex-free society (or maybe a matriarchy).	No gender structuring because both parents share children's upbringing.	

Source: Extract from Calas and Smircich (1997:214-15), a summary of feminist approaches.

	MARXIST	SOCIALIST	POSTSTRUCTURALIST/ POSTMODERN	THIRD WORLD/ POST-COLONIAL
	Based on and a 'correction' of Marxist critique and Capitalist society since the mid-19th century.	Emerged in the 1970s as part of women's liberation movements' attempts to synthesise Marxist, psychoanalytic and radical feminisms.	Located in contemporary French post-structuralism critiques of knowledge and identity.	Emerging from intersections of gendered critiques of Western feminisms and post-colonial critiques of Western epistemologies.
	Human nature reflects historical and material conditions. The human essence is the ensemble of social relations.	Human nature is created historically and culturally through dialectical interrelations among human biology, society and human labour.	Decentring of the rational, self-present subject of humanism. 'Subjectivity' and 'consciousness' are discursive effects.	Analysed as a Western construct that emerged by making its 'other' invisible. Invisible or almost human.
	Gender is part of historical class relations, which constitute systems of oppression under Capitalism.	Gender is processual and socially constituted through intersections of sex, race, ideology and experiences of oppression under patriarchy and Capitalism.	Sex/gender are discursive practices that constitute specific subjectivity through power and resistance in the materiality of human bodies.	Considers the constitution of complex subjectivities beyond Western conceptions of sex/gender focusing on gendered aspects of globalisation processes.
	A classless society that allows for the full development of human nature.	Elimination of all systems of private/public oppression based on sex, gender, race, class, etc. and thus transformed social relations.	Ongoing deconstruction and denaturalisation of discourses and practices that constitute society.	A Western ideology produced through colonial relationships that favour Westernisation. Other social formations are possible.

A detailed discussion of each of these approaches is outside the scope of this paper. However, the diversity of approaches helps to understand why, despite the now widespread use of the term 'gender' in development discourse, different actors and agencies interpret the concept and may attempt to mainstream gender in very different ways.

In writing this paper, I do not wish to claim any spurious detachment. My experience as an Indian woman, born and brought up in Tanzania but completing my education in Britain, and influenced here by the socialist feminist school, has affected my 'positioning' on feminism and on development studies. Although I would locate myself in the post-colonial school, I am aware of the contributions made by post-structuralist and post-modern schools in challenging the 'meta-narratives' of development. Above all, however, it is my experience through the 1990s of trying to mainstream gender in the work of development agencies – from grassroots organisations, to governments and donor agencies – that informs this paper.

The Shift to GAD

Since the mid-1980s, there has been a slow shift away from WID to gender and development – GAD. The term was coined by Rathgeber in 1982 and was adopted to move the focus away from 'women' and towards the relations, processes and structures which give rise to women's disadvantage. It was increasingly recognised that a focus on women alone was inadequate to understand the problems that women face and, at the same time, that women are not a homogenous category but are divided by class, race, ethnicity and other socially constructed identities and relationships.

An analysis of WID interventions from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s is well-summarised by Caren Levy (1992:135):

> '…the last 15 years has seen the creation of a narrowly based women's sector, manifest in the creation of 'women in development' offices in international agencies, funding ministries of women's affairs and women's bureaus, implementing projects with women's groups. One of the most disturbing features of this 'women's sector' is that it is a weak sector. It is characterised by a lack of any real political influence, and is therefore under-funded and under-staffed, both in numbers and qualifications. A key factor underlying these characteristics is the conceptualisation of both the problems and strategies of this sector in terms of women, not gender'.

Table 2 illustrates the basic shifts which many gender advocates interested in influencing policy and practice expected to encounter in moving from the integration of women to mainstreaming a gender perspective.

TABLE 2: THE BASIC SHIFTS IN MOVING FROM INTEGRATION OF WOMEN TO MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT: INTEGRATION	GENDER MAINSTREAMING
Women's participation: increasing numbers but agenda already set	Beyond (but including) numbers to transform the development agenda
Focus on women: contributions and impact on women	Focus on gender bias in interventions and processes
Analysis of roles of women and men	Analysis of relations of power and inequality
Technical focus: methods, skills and tools	Political focus: agenda setting, changing institutions and organisations
Project orientation	Broader focus: programmes, partnerships, policy processes and agencies themselves

The shift from WID to GAD took place in the context of a deteriorating economic situation in industrialised market economies in the North and increasing indebtedness in the South, exacerbated by the oil crises. The global economic context changed and neo-liberal economic reform took hold, heavily promoted in the Reagan–Thatcher era. Countries in the South, particularly in Africa and Latin America, had to deal with high debt payments, and falling demand and lower prices for primary commodity exports. Structural adjustment programmes were the solution promoted by the international finance institutions, with their emphasis on economic liberalisation, market-led growth, the 'rolling back' of the state and cuts in public expenditure.

A corresponding shift took place in relation to women whose multiple roles in society were increasingly recognised by development agencies. Women were seen as excellent managers of their time, able to compensate for declining household income and state provision of services by combining different roles at home and at work in many contexts. Moser (1993) characterises this as the efficiency approach, its purpose being to ensure that development is made more effective and efficient through women's contributions. She argues that this was the dominant international agency approach to women in the 1990s.

'Efficiency' approaches have been heavily criticised for shifting social costs to women. Research has documented the negative social effects of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s, which arguably transferred costs from the state to less powerful sections of society, including women (Afshar and Denis, 1992; Moser, 1993; Kanji, 1995). Feminist economists, notably Diane Elson (1991), have shown how structural adjustment policies are imbued with male bias, in the way in which economies are conceptualised and measured, since they focus on the 'commodity' economy, to the detriment of the 'care economy' where women have a predominant responsibility.

BOX 2: THE ECONOMY AS A GENDERED STRUCTURE

A gendered economy approach starts from the premise that the 'economy' as defined by many economists provides at best only a partial analysis of reality. Economics focuses on the monetarised commodity or productive economy, but fails to analyse the non-monetarised reproductive economy. Productive activity involves the production of goods and services that enter the market at a price. Reproductive activities are usually undertaken at the level of the household, and involve domestic work (water and fuel collection (mainly in developing countries), food preparation, cooking, cleaning), care of children, older people and the sick, and (importantly for developing countries) household production that is for direct subsistence and not the market. Economic analysis prioritises the productive, largely ignoring the reproductive. From a gender perspective, neither the productive nor the reproductive economy is a 'gender neutral' terrain. They are both socially constructed on the basis of a gender division of labour, which assigns primacy of men in productive and women in reproductive activities.

Source: Extract from Kanji and Barrientos (2002:23)

Powerful development agencies, such as the World Bank, have reacted to research and advocacy by moving away from the structural adjustment 'packages' of the 1980s. In 1997, the World Development Report (WDR) re-emphasised the enabling role of the state and the 2000/01 WDR emphasises the importance of institutions and 'empowerment' in development. The extent to which the fundamentals of a neo-liberal approach have been modified remains a moot point, with many analysts arguing that the reforms do not go far enough, nor are they manifest in most of the policies and programmes of governments and international development agencies around the world. This wider context influences the approaches and strategies to mainstream gender in a wide range of organisational contexts.

3. Strategies for mainstreaming gender: Achievements and Challenges

Rounaq Jahan (1995) divides the strategies which have been used to mainstream gender in development organisations between institutional and operational strategies.

Institutional strategies are input-side interventions aimed at structural change within governments and agencies including issues of responsibility for mainstreaming, accountability, coordination, monitoring and evaluation and personnel policy. Operational strategies concern mainstreaming gender in country programmes, macro policies, policy debates and include providing guidelines, training, research, analytical tools and special projects. A mainstreaming approach goes beyond integration and implies what Jahan has called 'agenda-setting', an approach which seeks to transform the development agenda itself, through the introduction of a gender perspective. This approach is central to the Platform of Action adopted at the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which calls for the promotion of a policy of mainstreaming.[1]

However, as Beall (1998) points out, there is still considerable confusion about what a policy of mainstreaming means in practice. Much work has been carried out on the technical and operational side, particularly in training, analytical and planning tools and guidelines. The work of Caroline Moser and Caren Levy at the Development Planning Unit in London in the 1980s, on a new more iterative and participatory planning methodology, has been influential and widely used by gender advocates in many countries in the South. Much of the gender training which took place in the late 1980s and 1990s was influenced by this 'gender planning' approach and by the work of the Harvard Institute of International Development with the WID office of USAID. The basic rationale used in training was to discuss the different roles of women and men in particular contexts and their unequal access to resources and to decision-making. These roles and inequalities result in different needs which must be

1 For some international agencies, mainstreaming included focused initiatives to support women's empowerment (SIDA) while others (NORAD, DFID) adopted a twin-track approach: addressing gender issues as an integral part of all development activities and supporting specific activities to enhance women's empowerment and gender equality.

recognised by development policy and planning if interventions are to be effective and equitable. The situation analyses that were spawned by this approach, many carried out through consultative processes with women and men, provided a wealth of data in what the differences were in the activities and interests of women and men in different urban and rural contexts.

Moser's work, in its attempt to win over policymakers and planners, has been criticised for focusing too much on gender differentiated roles and underplaying the importance of power and social relations (Kabeer, 1994). Kabeer argues that a focus on gender roles ignores intricate and changing systems of cooperation and exchange between women and men, which are nevertheless potentially conflictual. This more complex 'social relations' approach has also influenced training and programme development in many countries in the South.

My own work with gender planning training in the 1990s clearly showed how important it is to develop practical strategies within specific policies, programmes and projects, the 'how to' of gender mainstreaming, and to provide follow-up support to people working to mainstream gender in projects and programmes. A positive approach which treats staff in organisations as change agents, rather than assuming there will be resistance, is also important. On the other hand, there is no doubt that training is no magic bullet (as it was sometimes viewed by agencies) and changing attitudes and norms is a long slow process. One of the key issues is how dependent mainstreaming is on individual change agents – as they move on, organisations and programmes can revert to 'business as usual' and processes of change that may have been set in motion may not be strong enough to maintain independent momentum. In other words, the gender perspective is not even mainstreamed, much less institutionalised.

One of the most comprehensive methodological tools for institutionalising gender is Caren Levy's (1996) 'web of institutionalisation', which builds on but goes much beyond her earlier work. She outlines the conditions under which gender can be institutionalised, represented by thirteen elements of a web, with each element representing a site of power. She begins with women and men's experience of reality and includes the pressure of political constituencies, representative political structures, political commitment, policy and planning, resources, mainstream location of responsibility, procedures, staff development, methodology, delivery of programmes and projects, research and theory building. She brings together work which has been done by different groups of people in a range of interrelated spheres of activity: political, organisational, technical and research, with some actors operating in more than one sphere. However, it is extremely difficult to find positive

examples of such comprehensive processes in any one country or location – the reality is much more fragmented and ad hoc.

The recognition in the 1980s that efforts to 'integrate' women into development had failed to achieve significant results, primarily because of the gendered nature of institutions, also led to a greater emphasis in the 1990s on the need to restructure institutions to ensure that they reflect and represent women's interests.

BOX 3: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON INSTITUTIONS

Early work on gender identified the family or household as a primary site of inequality in the division of labour and intra-household distribution of resources. Extensive conceptual and empirical work has shown that the household should not be treated as an undifferentiated unit and inequalities in power and welfare among household members cannot be ignored. More recently, gender analysts have examined how the strategic behaviour of individuals within households is linked to wider social processes, institutions and power structures. Community structures, public services and markets, for example, are not neutral but operate according to rules and norms which afford different access to women and men.

Recognising the way in which institutions are constructed in different societies shows that they are not immutable or natural and that they embody a history of social choices by particular groups. All institutions have privileged participants, and included and excluded groups, and gender is only one axis of inequality but an important one!

Menon-Sen's study of gender mainstreaming in UNDP India (1999) focuses on the understudied area of the implementation of mainstreaming at the organisational level, rather than the more common focus on the policy and programme levels. She argues that large organisations are like complex ecosystems, with several communities and components in a state of dynamic equilibrium. Even if the overall environment is inhospitable, several sub-systems can exist in which concepts such as gender equality can take root. She argues that 'gender pioneers', working with external allies, can change the environment. However, they must allow the open expression of dissent, bring conflicts out into the open, and convert them into opportunities to deepen levels of mutual trust and understanding in the organisational environment. Carol Miller's study of mainstreaming gender in three multi-lateral organisations, UNDP, ILO and the World Bank (1998), draws attention to the political strategies used by internal advocates to build alliances across the organisation and to overcome resistance. Advocates adjust their language and their arguments to show synergy between gender concerns and the organisation's goals – such as poverty reduction, social development, environmental sustainability and so on. The study emphasises

the importance of pressure from strong national and international women's constituencies and the need for strategic alliances to promote change.

Achievements

In her appropriately titled book *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*, Jahan (1995:110-13) summarises the positive achievements in the following way:

First, the raised level of awareness is the most significant achievement:

- Women's economic contributions as waged and non-waged workers, as breadwinners and workers in export-oriented sectors, are well recognised.
- Women's rights and abilities to make choices and control their own lives are increasingly accepted.
- Women's knowledge and perspectives in attaining the objectives of sustainable development are gaining recognition.
- Discriminatory practices which were regarded as natural and/or in the private domain, such as sexual harassment and domestic violence, have gained public policy attention.

Secondly, expertise on gender issues has grown with the development of different methodologies for research and data collection, procedures and tools for planning and the development of training methodologies.

Thirdly, affirmative action policies and measures have improved women's participation in decision-making bodies and increased their access to development opportunities. Men still tend to dominate most formal public sector and most private sector market institutions, however, as well as most socially significant civil society associations. 'Significant' civil society associations would include trade unions, producer and professional associations, and NGOs.

Fourthly, there has been progress in legal reforms to remove discrimination against women, with equal rights before the law in personal, civic and political affairs, laws to combat violence against women, and access to institutions and jobs previously barred to women.

Jahan's book is based on a study of international donor agencies in the early 1990s and the focus is on changing the attitude and practices of powerful development

agencies. Although her conclusions are that gender issues have yet to become part of mainstream development, she is generous in assessing the gains which have been made. She does, however, point to contradictory trends: heightened advocacy and awareness of gender issues on the one hand, and growing poverty of the world's women on the other hand.

The shift from women per se to gender has extended the analysis of issues which were clearly concerned with women's reproductive roles (health, family planning, education), through economic roles (employment, income generation, household budgeting) to generic issues of macro-economic planning, structural adjustment and debt, environmental degradation and conservation and civil and political organisation (Jackson and Pearson, 1998: 5). Nevertheless, the shift has taken place in a difficult economic and political environment and most gender advocates would agree that more headway has been made analysing the issue than on successfully mainstreaming a gender perspective.

Challenges

Gender advocates continue to face a number of challenges to mainstreaming gender.

Redistribution of power and resources

As many feminist analysts conclude, the crux of the issue is the redistribution of power and resources (Jahan, 1995; Razavi and Miller, 1998). Anti-poverty and efficiency arguments have been well received by many development agencies and governments to justify investing in women, since these investments are argued to lead to economic growth and poverty reduction. Where investment in women requires:

> 'a redistribution of power and resources – sharing responsibilities in reproductive labour, gender equality in land and property rights, a voice in decision making..- agencies and states were less responsive' (Jahan, 1995: 125).

Current processes of land reform in Eastern and Southern Africa provide just one example. Land reform is highly politicised and controversial and the capacity constraints of under-resourced governments to implement ambitious land reform policies is a cause for concern (Walker, 2002). Whitehead and Tsikata (2002) show how neither land titling nor customary systems of land tenure in Kenya and Uganda have promoted women's interests in land. Drawing on studies in these two countries, they show how important power relations in the countryside are to land reform processes and how women are simply not well positioned and represented in local-

level power structures. If current policies for land reform are to mainstream gender and address women's land rights, not only is greater pressure from women's constituencies necessary, but also needed is an increase in the time and resources available for reform processes, including programmes of public education and debate, staffing and facilitation of community-level processes, opportunities for women to discuss land issues, training of officials, financial support for litigation, and so on. Redistributing power in social relations and challenging male privilege in economic, social and cultural life is a long, difficult and uneven process.

The slippage from 'gender' to 'women'

The use of the term 'gender issues' or 'gender perspective' to refer primarily to women as a homogenous group and/or to women and men as single interest groups seriously oversimplifies complex realities. As Cornwall (2000b) points out, women and men can too easily be stereotyped: women as sharing and caring and men as selfish and individualistic. Men are seen as the powerful and oppositional figures. Yet to take just one example, in some African contexts, young men can be powerless in relation to older men, and sometimes in relation to older women. Over people's life cycles, the constraints and opportunities of being a man or a woman vary. Gender analysis, in practice, has often not extended to analysing men's views, reactions and problems as men.

This is at least in part being addressed by the recent interest in masculinities (see, for example, Chant and Gutmann 2000). There is now more attention being paid to historical and contextually specific assumptions about men and masculinities – and an awareness of the danger of applying them to other contexts in which they are less relevant. However, there is little doubt that gender analysis in most contexts, even when due attention is paid to men's perspectives, disaggregated by class, ethnicity and age, tends to show that women's interests are subordinated in social relations and institutions.

This slippage from 'gender' to 'women' not only leads to conceptual confusion and stereotyping, but also to problems in designing and implementing initiatives, since these can become simply targeted at women, without analysing or addressing the social relations between women and men. When people working to mainstream gender have to provide indicators for success for something which is a long, slow process, this can sometimes become reduced to merely counting numbers of women participants, rather than identifying outcomes which may be positive but not dramatic, nor always expected (Seaforth, 2003). Sometimes, the word 'women' is simply replaced with the word 'gender'. At other times it is argued, perhaps as a way of resisting any focus on inequalities, that all 'gender' interventions, for example credit schemes, must also promote men (Hirvonen, 2003).

BOX 4: MALE DOMINANCE IN INSTITUTIONS

Men's interests are just as difficult to identify 'objectively' as women's interests, nor is the category of 'men' any more valid as a universal than is the category of 'women'. The historical record, however, does show that men tend to act across divisions like class or race more cohesively than women do in defence of certain gender interests, and they do so in ways which mean that public institutions help to forge connections between men's private and public power. In part, this is due to their longer occupation of public office and to their literal dominance of decision-making and decision-enforcing. It is also due to the historical embedding of their needs and interests in the structures and practices of public institutions. Attention to the historical processes through which certain institutions come to promote male dominance and female dependence should help to illuminate the mutability of dominant interests through politics and contestation.

Extract from Goetz (1997:17).

Gender, difference and diversity

Gender is not always the key difference or aspect of identity which most affects people's choices and options and there are numerous examples of how women have prioritised their common identity or interests with men, for example, in anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles. Gender-based inequalities are affected by class, race, ethnicity, age, location and other particularities in a given context. It is the heterogeneity of women and their multiplicity of identities that make it difficult for women to unite as a political constituency. This is not to say that men do not have multiple identities, but that in the case of gender-based inequalities where women are more usually subordinated, such non-uniform identities can prevent united action on the part of women. Cornwall (2000b) points out how the terminology of practical and strategic needs[2] may lead to gross assumptions about what women –in general want or need. In a sense, the escape from essentialism achieved by shifting from sex to gender (biology to social relations) has not resolved the difficulties of finding commonalities between women without losing the importance of the differences between them.

Too great a focus on differences between women, however, can also undermine attempts to deal with the gross inequities that women face in development-related

2 Practical gender needs are defined as the needs which women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. They do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordinate position in society, although arise out of them. Strategic gender needs, in contrast, are defined as context-specific needs which women identify because of their subordinate positions to men in their society and usually relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control. (Moser, 1993).

interventions, for example, in access to key material resources such as credit, or information and extension. As Phillips (1997) argues, in the paper 'From Inequality to Difference: A severe case of displacement', post-modernist influences can, in their celebration of difference and diversity, draw attention away from the structural inequalities that women face on a regular basis.

Conflation of gender and poverty issues

Gender advocates have been quick to use the poverty reduction agenda and discourse adopted by international development agencies to draw attention to the different ways in which women and men experience poverty in different contexts. This has been 'mainstreamed' into development policy in the 1990s through a recognition that women are concentrated in the poorest sections of the population because of the division of labour into paid and unpaid work, the gendering of opportunities for and rewards in paid employment and the ongoing responsibility for household and generational reproduction which women carry, often in the absence of contributing men (Jackson and Pearson, 1998).

However, there has been a conflation of concerns about poverty reduction and gender-focused policies (Jackson, 1996). Jackson argues that gender inequalities are not *caused* by poverty and that it is not helpful to collapse all forms of disadvantage into poverty. As she points out, some forms of opulence can intensify certain aspects of gender subordination (for example, in the norms that middle-class women have to follow in some societies). In other words, while it is important to address the interaction of poverty and gender inequality, they also have to be viewed as separate issues. There is no doubt, however, that gender advocates have used the international poverty reduction agenda and terms such as the 'feminisation of poverty' both to harness attention and resources to address gender inequalities and to promote women's rights.

Organisational change

Even the most comprehensive of the frameworks for institutionalising gender, notably Caren Levy's 'web of institutionalisation', does not emphasise enough the importance of organisational change, particularly organisational norms and culture. Social norms are often not explicit, but rather are embedded in the structures and hierarchies of institutions, in the conditions and requirements for access and participation and in their incentive and accountability structures (Goetz, 1997).

Some feminists have argued that male dominance is embedded in distinctive features of bureaucratic culture, such as the valorisation of instrumental rationality, top-down

command and communication systems, specialisation, and aggressive, goal-oriented styles of management. As Goetz argues (ibid), however, the suggestion that these represent innate sexual characteristics is highly contentious, as indeed is its corollary – that these features exclude positive outcomes for women. She uses the example of how the police force in Zimbabwe, a strongly masculinised and hierarchical institution, succeeded in improving its responses to problems of domestic violence. Similarly, the labour and childcare policies of the top-down and bureaucratic Soviet state produced beneficial outcomes for women.

The capabilities of those who dominate institutions will be reflected in performance or success criteria, and in the physical and social – or spatial and temporal – structure of an organisation's work. Men's social capacity to achieve liberation from childcare and domestic responsibilities allows them more time for work or for institutional interaction beyond the home, while their social independence gives them cultural rights to mobility and autonomy outside the home.

Goetz concludes that changing both organisational structures and practice and incentive and accountability systems is particularly difficult in the 'near-global mood of neo-liberalism' that exists in the management of institutions. Many gender advocates would recognise this constraint, as cost and 'efficiency' considerations over-ride concerns for more gender-aware, participatory practice, which is also more time-consuming and demands more courage and innovation.

4. From participation to governance

Participatory development

As with 'Women in Development', the participation approach arose out of dissatisfaction with the modernisation and accelerated growth models that were the mainstream development paradigms in the 1950s and 1960s. Top-down, economistic and technocratic approaches to development were criticised, both conceptually and empirically, for their failure to address poverty and inequality (the failure of 'trickle down'). In the early 1970s, international thinking about development shifted from a preoccupation with economic growth to a broader concern with poverty reduction and 'redistribution with growth'. Integral to this was the 'basic needs strategy' with its primary purpose of meeting the 'basic needs' of the majority which includes food, clothing, shelter and fuel, as well as social needs such as education, human rights and 'participation' in social life through employment and political involvement (Ghai, 1978).

The concept of participatory development evolved with popular involvement seen as an important means of making development interventions more effective and equitable by building on local knowledge to meet basic human needs.[3] A host of terms including RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) became widely used. As Chambers (1998) summarises, PRA developed and spread so fast that any single definition would mislead. He describes it as 'a growing family of approaches, methods and behaviours to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, and monitor and evaluate' (ibid:1). While RRA is more about data collection followed by analysis done by professionals, 'good' PRA is empowering, a process of appraisal, analysis and action by local people themselves. As Chambers points out, PLA is perhaps a more accurate title for what many practitioners believe in and do. However, there have been enormous concerns with bad practice and the failure to put behaviour and attitudes before methods.

3 There were important precursors that stressed collective action and empowerment but, as Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998) point out, much higher levels of global interest developed in the 1970s.

Abbot and Guijt (1999) provide a useful overview of chronological shifts in approaches to participation and a new set of paradoxes which have emerged:

- The need for participation. The frustration over ineffective 'expert' research and planning in the 1970s/early 1980s led to a search for alternative methods for data collection and planning which incorporated local people's perspectives, skills and priorities. There was a parallel process of politically driven and poverty-focused activism which developed principles to guide empowerment for poverty reduction.
- The boom period of the 1980s/early 90s, particularly in methods for 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' (PRA). There was much experimentation with new methods and principles, which created a bewildering array of approaches and acronyms. The focus was on understanding insider/local knowledge as a balance to the dominance of outsider/western scientific knowledge.
- The participation imperative of the 1990s, with participation becoming the new normative practice, lots of 'manuals' (with few standards) and participation as a conditionality for funding.
- Emerging paradoxes, from the middle to the end of the 1990s, with standardised approaches that contradicted the original aims for flexible and context-specific approaches. A more technical rather than empowerment-oriented use of methods with superficial knowledge of empowerment principles.

Participatory development and people's self-development

A useful distinction has been made between 'participatory development' and 'people's self-development' (Rahman, 1995). Participatory development is used to describe people's participation in development activities which have been designed for them by the state or other external development agencies. 'People's self-development' describes a liberating process of awareness-raising and creative collective action which can lead to a different, more self-reliant form of development and the capacity to negotiate on new terms with powerholders, including the state. Freire's work (1998) inspired much of the thinking around the latter process with his views on learning as a human act, respect for the freedom and autonomy of learners, critical reflection and dialogue, and his conviction that change is possible. However, as Cornwall (2000c) points out, the distinction between 'participatory development' and 'people's self-development' has become blurred as participative methodologies has been adopted by a wide range of institutions.

BOX 5: THE STATE AND ORGANISATIONS OF PEASANTS IN MEXICO

Mexican agrarian reform was a result of a long and violent revolutionary struggle in the first half of the twentieth century, at the end of which the organised peasantry constituted a significant element in the balance of power at regional level in many areas. Land reform redistributed more than 80 million hectares of land to over 3 million landless peasants who were organised within a new type of land tenure known as the ejido system, where land was granted by government as collective property to organised groups of petitioners.

One of the specific studies carried out within an UNRISD participation programme examined the state's control over ejido production through the operations of the Rural Bank, the Banrural, in the late 1970s and early1980s. The Banrural was originally created to support land reforms and peasant participation, but gradually changed over the years from being an institution which fostered the development of smallholder agriculture, capable of maintaining itself, it became the cornerstone of a plan for a particular form of nationalisation of the smallholding sector, under which the Bank would take over ejido production. From early on, the Bank had prevented the ejidos from starting their own accumulation process and creating their own subsistence funds, and so established their continuing dependency on the Bank. By using its power to grant or withhold credits, the Bank effectively took over control of production by deciding what to sow, how to cultivate, what inputs to use and when and how to market the produce. In the La Laguna area that was studied, credit advances became wages in all but name and the people who had been beneficiaries of land reform were reduced to being employees of the Bank.

While this example demonstrates the ambiguous results of formal incorporation of a peasant movement into the political power structure, reforms since the late 1980s have created a different set of problems. Restrictions on renting ejido land have been removed, as have most restrictions on selling, and state control over the ejidos has been dismantled. As in many other countries, the state is pulling out of the countryside, leaving small producers without the basic support structure they require to farm profitably.

Extract from: Stiefel and Wolfe (1994:48-52)

There are many examples of cooption of autonomous collective action at the grassroots, particularly when it has become widespread and threatens powerful interests. An example of this comes from Mexico, which has a long history of formal peasant participation in national political life, of collective approaches to agriculture and of intense interactions between peasants and state agencies (see Box 5).

Another example which illustrates the positive aspects of 'self-development' initiatives, but also the difficulties in actually transforming structural inequalities, is the much celebrated communal kitchen movement in Peru (see Box 6).

BOX 6: THE COMMUNAL KITCHEN MOVEMENT IN LIMA, PERU

Communal kitchens in Lima's poor neighbourhoods exemplify how women have developed a strong activist network to address the problem of poverty – in particular, food consumption and distribution. The first kitchens were organised between 1979 and 1986, as a response to the impact of structural adjustment programmes which drastically cut real incomes and eliminated food subsidies. Continuing economic reforms combined with the unprecedented levels of violence associated with Peru's internal war led to the growth of new forms of poverty among Lima's settlers. By 1994, some 40,000 low-income women were organised in federations, including the Federation of Self-Managed Popular Kitchens, and gathered at 2000 sites every day, pooling their human and material resources to feed their families, some 200,000 people. The federations represent the movement to government officials, purchase wholesale inputs, organise micro-enterprise activities, and transmit a broader view of gender and women's community participation.

Organisational support for some of the kitchens came from the Catholic Church, political parties or the state. Other 'autonomous' kitchens receive support from elsewhere. Two major studies concluded that the kitchens organised in a 'top-down' fashion by the state or church were less likely to transform gender roles and consciousness than autonomous organisations. In the latter, members participated more actively in decision-making and in wider community and civic action.

Communal kitchens exemplify contradictions in women's entry into community decision-making. On the one hand, women have organised a massive movement which has transformed how central government, local municipalities and NGOs understand women's traditional, 'private' role in food provision. It has politicised women around issues of class, gender inequalities and political violence. On the other hand, women are still primarily responsible for preparing and distributing food and many would prefer to seek remunerated employment opportunities elsewhere. Nor has the movement been successful enough to improve the lives of participants and their families in significant ways, but are instead involved in a long-term struggle to provide for their families in an urban system characterised by deep-rooted structural inequalities.

Source: Summarised from Lind and Farmelo (1996:7-12)

Both the examples above illustrate the dynamic nature of participatory processes and the importance of relations with the state. Attempts to coordinate participatory action into large-scale, more powerful movements tend to raise new problems and contradictions.

The shift to governance

Many advocates of participation now use the concept of governance and examine the engagement of governments with their citizens, thereby looking more closely at the

TABLE 3: THE SHIFTS FROM PARTICIPATION TO GOVERNANCE

PARTICIPATION	PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE
Increasing involvement of 'primary stakeholders' (as users and choosers)	Beyond participation to transforming systems of decision-making (as makers and shapers)
Focus on poor people's contributions and impact of development on these groups	Focus on relations between more and less powerful groups
Focus on methods, skills and tools	Political focus: agenda setting, changing institutions and organisations
Project orientation	Broader focus: programmes, partnerships, policy processes and agencies themselves

relational and political aspects of participation (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000). More pluralistic forms of governance and decision-making are seen to be important by a range of different actors in development. These shifts are summarised in Table 3.

Current approaches to policy development and implementation now pay much more attention to the need for the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including those who will be directly affected by policy measures. This is exemplified by the expansion of Participatory Poverty Assessments, which are meant to feed into poverty reduction strategies at country level. They are expected to provide dynamic and differentiated accounts of processes of impoverishment which should increase the understanding of policymakers and provide the basis for more comprehensive and effective strategies for action.

When participation is expected to function at policy level, however, the challenges are even greater than at community and project level, where there is already much room for exclusion and misinterpretation. When 'people's' views are expected to feed into policy processes, the potential for misinterpretation and selection grows as does the chance that more powerful groups will simply ignore inconvenient or oppositional views. The success of current efforts to be inclusive rely on increasing consensus about what poverty is and what processes should underlie poverty reduction strategies. Some analysts (McGee and Brock 2001) argue that this apparent consensus obscures still-intense debates concerning how poverty should be measured and privileges particular forms of knowledge in the final construction of policy measures. which tend to fit into dominant neo-liberal paradigms. As Cornwall (2000c:31) puts it, in the new discourse, 'economic liberalisation, freedom of association and democratic governance are seen as inextricably entwined'.

Critical engagement between government, civil society and the private sector, in many contexts, is yet to develop, and consultations have yet to feed into the political activity of prioritising among a range of options (Thin et al., 2001). For example, a review at

the end of the 1990s covering Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe found that the Bank's poverty reduction strategies, ostensibly based on poverty assessments that included participatory assessments (PPAs), tended to pay little attention to the distribution of assets or to the issues of material and social inequality thatthe PPAs highlighted (Kanji, 2001).

The role of intermediary organisations and change agents

There has been a fresh interest in NGOs as smaller scale organisations, better placed to operationalise participation and to monitor the controlling tendencies of the state.

There is no doubt that NGOs provide supportive services to participatory projects and groups: they facilitate access to technical knowledge, information and funds; they deliver credit and social services; they sometimes help establish horizontal lines of communication between different movements and organisations that allow for the exchange of experiences and the coordination of action beyond the local and they establish contacts between grassroots action and influential individuals, groups and institutions at the national level. In some cases, tactical NGO support to local causes can reach international levels of publicity and support through the action of international NGOs, particularly when local struggles concern specific policy areas such as environmental protection, human rights, health, nutrition, education or consumer concerns (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994). However, NGOs can also manipulate participatory struggles, create new bonds of clientelistic dependency or lose their links to the grassroots, particularly when they are very dependent on donor funding.

Intermediary NGOs and organisations such as trade unions can be as insensitive to gender within their own organisations as international development organisations. Smaller scale organisations and/or those that claim to further the interests of less powerful groups can also be structured and run in a way that privileges men over women. For example, Rao and Kelleher's (1997) study of BRAC in Bangladesh shows that while there have been some attempts to accommodate women's needs, for example during menstruation, the organisational culture, space and ways of working still privilege men. In addition, women workers continue to face physical harassment from villagers and their male colleagues.

Stiefel and Wolfe (1994) present some interesting conclusions from a series of UNRISD studies on popular participation. They contend that the financing of participatory development initiatives raises delicate issues and often results in new relations of dependency on NGOs or other temporary allies; participatory efforts can be unduly dependent on exceptional leaders or committed social activists which can threaten continuity and capacity to survive changes in leadership and alliances;

initiatives are often limited to small-scale, localised activities and attempts to coordinate such successful participatory actions into larger, more powerful movements have raised new problems and contradictions. One of their overall conclusions is that the real effectiveness of the organised efforts of excluded groups depends to a large extent on the nature of their alliances with other social groups and their relations with the state at local and nationals levels.

There have been useful shifts in concepts and terms: in the case of participation, more organisations use the concept of 'governance' and in the case of women's advancement, more use 'gender and development'. It can be argued that both these shifts embody an attempt by some civil society organisations, donors, academics and researchers to rescue the fundamental issues of equity and social justice and to view the problems of inequality in a relational way, bringing power back into the equation. However, too much can be made of shifts in terms that take place without the corresponding shifts in values and behaviour which fundamentally affect what action is taken to further the interest of disadvantaged groups. Both GAD and participation and governance approaches have been circumscribed by wider economic and political paradigms. Promoting pluralistic forms of governance and mainstreaming gender are resource-intensive processes that take up time, energy, commitment and financial resources and do not always meet limited 'efficiency' criteria.

So far, I have focused on the similarity in the trajectories of gender and of participation. However, there are also tensions between these 'parallel worlds', which are explored in the next section.

5. Tensions between gender and participation perspectives

The myth of community

The broad aim of participatory development is to increase the involvement of socially and economically marginalised people in decision-making about their own lives. However, questions have been raised about the extent to which participatory development initiatives have actually addressed the complexity of 'community' and differences based on age, wealth, occupation, religion, caste, race, ethnicity and gender.

BOX 7: DIFFERENTIATING THE 'CONSTITUENCY' OF PARTICIPATORY INITIATIVES

Who are 'the peasants', 'rural workers and producers' or 'the rural poor'? These terms embrace today a variety of social groups and sub-groups with widely differing interests and different perceptions of their actual and desired role in society. Landless labourers, marginal farmers, tenants, share-croppers, middle farmers, rural artisans and tribal groups have different and often contradictory immediate and longer term interests. They may all join in a participatory movement, for example, struggling for access to or ownership of land, but their interests diverge as soon as some have actually received land. Studies in Colombia and elsewhere have shown that the profound heterogeneity of a constituency was one of the main reasons for the decline of a peasant movement which was not able to sustain the initial participatory momentum once a set of commonly agreed objectives had been reached. Studies in Thailand also show that the fragmentation of the rural poor, accentuated by clientelistic tactics of the elite, presents a major obstacle to collective action by the excluded even in the case of objective identity of interests. The complexity of this problem is increased by the fact that many peasants are simultaneously smallholder, labourer, artisan and trader and may themselves pursue contradictory interests at different times. A further dimension of complexity is gender-differentiated interests within each group.

Adapted from Stiefel and Wolfe (1994: 44),
based on findings of the Popular Participation Programme, UNRISD.

Despite all the questions about what constitutes a community, assumptions about community cohesion and harmony often underpin participatory research and planning, favouring the opinions and priorities of those with more power and ability to voice their views publicly. The critique from a gender perspective is summarised by Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998:1) in their book The Myth of Community:

> '…there is a minimal consideration of gender issues and inadequate involvement of women. While a handful of women may sometimes be consulted, rarely does a thorough understanding of the complexity of gender relations help structure the process, the analysis and any resulting community plans.. …the language and practice of 'participation' often obscures women's worlds, needs and contributions to development, making participatory development an elusive goal.'

Even when there is a recognition of different interests in communities, there is a tendency to underestimate the complexities of conflict and negotiation at this level. Participatory development can mean the equal inclusion of all sections of a typical, stratified community: women, men, older, younger, better-off and worse-off. Yet equal inclusion is difficult to define and understanding how specific contexts affect different people's motivations to be involved in externally initiated participatory development processes has not been given enough attention. Words like participation and community often provide a smokescreen for professionals to avoid intra-community struggles, notably the micro-politics of gender relations (Guijt and Kaul Shah, 1988:11).

On a more positive note, a review of six projects supported by DFID (Kanji and Salway, 2000:26) to analyse the extent to which they address issues of gender equality comes to the following conclusion:

> 'Projects which take a participatory approach with deliberate consultation of women and men (in different stakeholder groups), at the beginning and through the project cycle are more likely to identify gender-specific interests and to promote gender equality. This is not to say that participatory approaches will necessarily promote a discussion of unequal social relations nor are less powerful groups always involved, but the approach allows for more context-specific gender equality strategies than past top-down approaches.'

One key challenge for gender-aware practice is to extend the 'space' and time in which participation can take place to everyday fora and not just to consultations and one-off public events, where men may dominate.

Gender in policy processes

As noted in Section 4, there have been efforts over the last decade to engage wider groups of stakeholders in policy processes. However, gendered analysis of recent participatory poverty assessments indicate that even when poor groups are consulted, women's voices continue to be under-represented and/or their concerns not reflected in the resulting recommendations (Whitehead and Lockwood, 1999). Their analysis shows how gender issues become increasingly marginalised in the process of producing the overall Poverty Assessment. Thus, whether and how gender issues are raised depends on the agency of those who shape this process and on their understanding of 'gender' (Cornwall, 2000c:24). Even when the analysis of poverty accommodates disaggregation, the pro-poor strategies themselves may not.

The involvement of women's groups representing women's interests is critical in such participation in policy processes. They can help to open up the debate on women's interests, in the short and longer term, and lobby to keep these high on the agenda.

Women's participation and the role of the facilitator or change agent

Cornwall (2000a) highlights another tension between GAD and participatory development. She raises the issue of how participatory development practitioners address situations where women choose not to participate in mainstream projects, preferring interventions which seem to reinforce what outsiders regard as their subordination. She uses a case study of an Oxfam project in Sudan that was promoting livelihoods to illustrate this point. Female women's coordinators worked with village women to identify their priorities and they requested support for handicrafts, food processing and poultry raising, activities which were separate from the main thrust of the project. The reluctance of the project coordinator to fund such activities reflects, Cornwall argues, the dilemma of inviting 'the community' to design their own interventions, but then running the risk of reinforcing the status quo.

However, it can be argued that what may be more important than the actual choices made by the women is the question of whether the project was able to help create spaces and opportunities for more marginalised/ less powerful women to negotiate with other groups and to exercise choice. As Cornwall then goes on to point out, the core of the 'problem' is not that of participatory methods per se, but rather the use of the methods and the assumptions of project workers themselves.

The example of the Oxfam project illustrates the interpretations of gender mainstreaming of development workers themselves. In many cases, it leads to what Longwe (1999) has called the 'evaporation of gender policies', where organisational

agents diminish choices for women, acting against transformation. In development organisations individual agents play important roles in affecting the impact of policy, nowhere more so than at the implementation level. However, marginalised groups have their own ways of resisting and subverting approaches and strategies which they do not agree with, which usually stop short of collective defiance. Scott, in his seminal study in a Malaysian village, describes the 'ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so on' (Scott, 1985:xvi).

There is no doubt that individuals can have essential positive and catalytic roles – including urban, middle-class activists, teachers, priests, political party activists, trade unionists, government officials and NGO staff. However, the importance of the beliefs and values of these various facilitators and change agents cannot be underestimated, in the ways both participation and gender are interpreted and promoted. My own assessments of gender mainstreaming, in different organisational contexts, show the positive gains made when there are particular individuals with strong values of equity and social justice in positions which allow them to promote approaches and action in support of these values. However, the challenge remains to institutionalise the kinds of incentives and acoountability structures which allow such action to continue and develop, irrespective of the individuals in place at particular moments in time.

6. Bridging the gaps... and moving forward

Conventional approaches to 'gender mainstreaming' often essentialise women, ignore differences between them, and stereotype men, while conventional approaches to participatory development often homogenise communities and ignore a range of differences between people. Much can be learnt from both sets of literature and both sets of advocates. Both, however, run the risk of focusing on technical aspects of mainstreaming, thereby depoliticising issues and failing to address more directly power and powerlessness, and inequality as well as difference. The shifts from women to gender and from participation to governance can too easily become shifts in language and discourse, without any appreciable effects on the lived experience of marginalised groups. As one gender advocate working for government puts it: "We have struggled to develop sophisticated tools, plans, and indicators to gain legitimacy and support from powerful ministries of planning and finance. They have become so complex, they are difficult to implement and take a long time to "trickle down"' (Cos-Montiel, 2003).

As Beall (1998) argues, based on her study of mainstreaming gender in Colombia and South Africa, ensuring women's social, economic and political representation is an essentially political project while mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy and practice is a more technical project. The same is true when we look more broadly at mainstreaming the participation of excluded groups, both men and women. The use of the term governance does shift meanings of participation in a political direction, but the technical aspects of providing methodologies for democratic governance can still become over-dominant. The questions of whose participation, in what and for which ends remain critical.

Although there have been important feminist critiques of attempts to mainstream gender (for example, Jackson and Pearson, 1998), most conclude that there have been incremental gains and that in the real world, compromises and trade-offs are inevitable. All of us who have worked on gender mainstreaming will recognise the times when we have compromised, seeking consensus and some form of action which will address gender inequalities and further the interests of women. Razavi and Miller (1998), for example, put together a useful collection of experiences of feminist engagement with development institutions and conclude that the institutions are too

important in development discourse and practice to be ignored. Razavi (1997) argues that governments and development agencies are not monolithic and that in the real world of politics, those strategic alliances, compromises and instrumental arguments are inevitable. Similar critiques have been made of attempts to institutionalise participation and similar counter arguments can be made concerning the achievements and trade-offs.

Formal democratisation processes are underway in many parts of the world, with the fall of authoritarian regimes and the establishment of democratic structures of government. However, formal institutional changes such as the introduction of multi-party systems, parliamentary structures and mechanisms of representative democracy are not sufficient to bring about a functioning democratic system. A functioning participatory democracy requires a strong and articulate civil society, including organisations which represent women's interests, a network of participatory institutions at all levels through which different social groups can defend their interests, and vertical mechanisms of consultation which allow the local level to defend its interests at higher levels. Much of this is lacking in countries which may have achieved formal democracy. This may be due to history or the absence of democratic traditions, but also reflects the continued political weakness in most parts of the world of both participatory and women's movements.

The wider context of globalisation provides opportunities as well as constraints. While current global economic paradigms and structures often seem to work against participatory, gender-aware, and more equitable development processes, information technology has opened up spaces for organisations and alliances at a global level. The significance is growing of NGOs, citizen groups and networks that work towards changing the policy agenda and rules set by more powerful parts of the development establishment. The expansion and integration of trade and markets has also destabilised social relations, including gender relations, opening up new spaces for action, for example, in export-oriented employment. While it is difficult to be optimistic about positive outcomes in the near future, it is important that advocates for mainstreaming gender and participation continue to question the discrimination and oppression associated with contemporary processes of social and political change. Supporting excluded groups and allowing their experiences, views and interests to drive mainstreaming processes is no easy challenge and requires a high degree of honesty and commitment. Alliances with emerging groups and movements,

working at different levels, are required to prevent the cooption of visions and weakening of values which underpin efforts to mainstream both gender perspectives and participatory approaches to development and social change.

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