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Mainstreaming the gender perspective into social development

1. The purpose of the paper

The social, political, economic and cultural empowerment of women requires that the gender equality issue is drawn into the main stream of decision making and societal development. While by many countries and regional bodies mainstreaming the gender perspective has been declared as the main strategy in equality work, bringing gender equality into the centre of societal policies has proven to be challenging in all countries.

This paper examines the general prerequisites, challenges and solutions of gender mainstreaming in a specific context i.e. the so called Nordic Welfare State model that is characterized by strong political emphasis on democratic governance, social equity and gender equality. The specific focus is on Finland, a country with about 5 million inhabitants ranking to about 20th place in GDP per capita and 12th place in Human Development Index (2009). While the context for mainstreaming the gender perspective in a relatively wealthy country may be considered to be less challenging than in many other regions and countries, a dialogue for analyzing the issues involved in various contexts provides insight for all participating in the exchange of experience on how to tackle empowerment of women in the mainstream policies. The purpose is not to suggest, that societal models or policies would be transferable. Rather the paper attempts to show the usefulness of a systemic, holistic approach to women's empowerment and gender perspective mainstreaming in contrast to an approach focusing on mainstreaming as a project with a given timeframe.

Finland, as a member of the European Union, is used as an example to identify the entry points for better inclusion of the gender perspective in national development strategies and plans. Some specific cases and their effectiveness in mainstreaming the gender perspective are described. The focus is on institutional developments while trying to avoid describing the complex specifics of the social, political and administrative system.

Furthermore, the challenges in efforts to integrate the gender perspective in international development cooperation are examined. A process going currently on in the implementation of Finland's development cooperation policy is presented as an illustrative case on challenges and effective steps on reaching better social quality of cooperation by including gender equality as a cross-cutting objective in all development cooperation. Then some concluding remarks are made on the scope of developmental social policies and a set of general policy recommendations are presented based on the experiences described in the paper.

2. Background for Finland's gender mainstreaming policies

2.1. Origins

The idea of mainstreaming gender in public policy making emerged first in the international development dialogue at the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi (1985). Since then the idea was further developed e.g. within the UN community and in the Northern European countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland). Actually, the Nordic Countries themselves have applied a mainstreaming approach in many social issues as they were used to exercise specific, more comprehensive Social Policy–approach integrated in their general development policies. They also have supported the UN in cash and kind to develop a more comprehensive, integrated approach to social issues as an alternative to targeted group- specific projects.²⁵

In the Beijing Platform of Action (1995) the commitment to mainstreaming the gender perspective was then adopted by the international community as the key strategy to promote gender equality. Currently, mainstreaming is considered to be the main strategy towards gender equality by many countries and intergovernmental bodies including the European Union, the UN and its regional bodies such as the ESCWA.

The Council of Europe²⁶ defined gender mainstreaming in the following way in 1998:

“Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processed, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels, and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making”²⁷

It is useful to make a distinction between gender equality policies and mainstreaming policies.

Gender equality policies take gender imbalances as the starting point and develops actions for better gender equality. The Council of Europe enumerates the elements of the traditional Gender Equality Policy²⁸:

- Equal opportunities legislation and anti-discrimination laws

25 For instance Finland supported UN to produce a manual on how to integrate the disability dimension in development cooperation. See Wiman R (ed): Disability Dimension in Development Action. Manual for Inclusive Planning. Stakes for the UN (1997, 2000,2003)

26 European Union (27 countries) is the largest development cooperation donor. Europe as a region is however larger than that. The voice of the Whole of Europe is possibly better represented by The Council of Europe (1949). It is a “human rights, democracy, and rule of law” organization of 47 European countries. It covers virtually the whole of Europe and is thus much more diverse and multicultural than the EU. Much of EU's policy principles have their roots in the consultations and agreements that have taken place in the Council of Europe. Also in gender equality issues the EU has its anchors in the Council of Europe's work.

27 Council of Europe (1998): Gender Mainstreaming- Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices (p 15) See Gender mainstreaming in EU Member States p 4

28 (1998, p.24. Ref: Gender mainstreaming in the EU member states 2007, p 5)
<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/75096>

- Equality ombudsmen/commissions/councils for protection against discrimination
- Strong national equality machinery
- Specific equality policies and actions
- Research and training on gender equality issues
- Awareness raising regarding gender equality

Gender mainstreaming policies, on the other hand, target policies and fields that do not (yet) deal with gender equality. The purpose is to introduce a gender perspective in other policies to ensure that the outcomes of those policies are more gender neutral.

Reaching better gender equality calls for both gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming policies. The mainstreaming of the gender perspective is not an end of itself but it is a strategy to achieve gender equality in the vast domain of other policies than those mandated to agencies dealing with gender equality issues.

However, mainstreaming the rights, needs and potentials of any group that has been systematically “side streamed”, discriminated, disempowered and excluded is not changing much as long as the mainstream structures that create and maintain unequal power relations work against these good intentions. Therefore also targeted empowering action is needed to complement mainstreaming. Targeted action give immediate results for the targeted individuals or groups. Additionally, empowering support should be designed so as to also build capacity of women as a group and to strengthen their collective voice.

2.2. The European Union and gender mainstreaming

The principle of equal treatment of men and women appeared already in the founding documents of the European Community (EC, 1957) and this principle has since been applied in the Community’s legislation.

Gender mainstreaming policy is of later origin. It first appeared in the European Community’s Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1991-1996). While the Community itself did not yet do much to implement the idea it supported the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the Beijing documents (1995).

After Beijing the window of political opportunity opened. New members joined the Community and three Commissioners from “countries with strong existing commitment to equal opportunities, and with considerable experience in mainstreaming gender in their own public policies” (Sweden, Austria, Finland) were nominated.²⁹ The new Commission (having 5 women as members) launched the Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men (1996-2000) that contained mainstreaming as the central instrument to equality. It also published a Communication

²⁹ <http://centers.law.nyu.edu/jeanmonnet/papers/00/000201-03.html>

“Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into All Community Policies and Activities” (1996)³⁰

The Amsterdam Treaty (1999) the European Community / European Union expanded the Union’s mandates in equal opportunity area and since then EU is committed to a twin- track- approach to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is the primary instrument. Targeted actions are secondary instruments and are needed to complement mainstreaming and to empower women.³¹ This twin - track strategy is applied both in EU’s internal policies and should apply also to its external relations, including development cooperation.³² For development cooperation practitioners, a thorough manual is available.³³

3. Gender mainstreaming policy in Finland

3.1. The historical context

Finland scores at the 20th place when world’s countries are ranked according to the GDP per capita. According to many other indexes that measure human and social development it comes closer to the top. Actually, the August 2010 issue of Newsweek Magazine ranked Finland as the “best “ country of the world on the basis of a composite index calculated from education, health, quality of life, economic competitiveness and political environment.³⁴

However, it has not always been so. Finland has a history characterized by many crises of the sort current developing countries have experienced: colonial past until 1806 under Sweden then under Russia 1809-1917), devastating civil war at independence (1917-1918), land reforms freeing the landless tenants, serious recession in the 1930s. In 1939 Finland’s national income per capita was at the level of today’s Namibia and the country was still predominantly agricultural and livelihoods were based largely on small subsistence farming. Then development was disrupted by two wars with neighboring mighty Soviet Union (1939-45). Ten per cent of Finland’s land area was seized, 10% of the population displaced as internal refugees and a Soviet military base located at the Southern tip of Finland. The peace agreement obliged Finland to paying war compensations in kind by supplying masses of industrial goods to Soviet Union (for free) over a period of 9 years: this was de facto a foreign debt “servicing” of which swallowed some 10-15% of state budget.

Socially oriented policy aiming at equal and universal coverage has been at the core of nation building, of crises management and also of economic growth policies until very recently. There has been a strong element of government involvement in securing sta-

30 <http://centers.law.nyu.edu/jeanmonnet/papers/00/000201-03.html>
Origins of Gender mainstreaming in the EU

31 Gender equality and women’s empowerment in development cooperation “ COM 2007, p 10 / re guidelines p 16).

32 The European Consensus for Development OJ 2006/C/46/1

33 Toolkit on mainstreaming gender equality in EC development cooperation <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sp/gender-toolkit/en/content/toolkit.htm>

34 Newsweek August 23 &30, 2010. Data on web pages <http://www.newsweek.com/photo/2010/08/15/best-countries-in-the-world.html>

bility and promoting equality. Furthermore, the approach has been institutional rather than project-oriented. Decentralization and devolution of powers to local authorities has also been characteristic to the Nordic model of the Welfare State. Gender equality has had a strong position in this comprehensive approach to social policies.

While membership in European Union (1995-) has brought along many economic benefits, globalization directly and through the European Union has started exercising pressures against strong state intervention in markets. Also pressure on cutting social and health sector spending has been increasing.³⁵

3.2. Gender equality as an integral part of social policy

Gender equality has been a progressive, step by step feature in the development of Finnish society for a long time. Already before independence (i.e. before 1917) when Finland was under the colonial rule of Russia (1809-1917), important steps were taken: in 1864 unmarried women were granted full civil rights once 25 years of age. Equality of inheritance rights of men and women was established in 1878. Finland was the first country in Europe granting women voting rights in national elections (1906). The marriage Act released wives from the guardianship of their husbands in 1930.

Despite of the turbulent history and poverty of the nation, several social policy measures were introduced at the time the country was still an agricultural developing country. Most of these social policy innovations were benefiting particularly women: primary education (6 years) for all (1921), Maternity Allowance (1937-), universal Social Pension (1937-), statutory school meals for all pupils (1943-), free of charge local Maternity and Child Welfare Clinics (1944-), universal Child Care Allowance 1948, universal maternity leave (1949-), Maternity Package (clothes and child care utensils) etc.

During the years of rapid growth and industrialization many measures improved women's opportunities to combine work and family life. In 1962, equal pay for equal work – principle was established both in public and private sectors. Since 1963 universal health insurance secured incomes to the family in case of illness – and child birth and maternity leave. Paternity leave was introduced in 1978 in order to involve fathers better to child care – and to alleviate the disadvantage of women in the labor market.

Home Care Allowance (1985) enabled also women with smaller incomes better to choose between work and child care. Municipal child care was revised in 1973 and gender equality was one of the objectives. Subjective right to municipal child care for all children until 3 years of age (1990) was extended in 1996 to all children under primary school age (7 years). Day care is a subjective entitlement obliging the municipi-

³⁵ Also poverty was practically eradicated in the end of 1980s. Since then, experimenting with neoliberal economic policies including cuts in social policy, persistent long term poverty is back – and the risk is highest for woman-headed households with children. A lesson learned, but difficult to correct

pality to provide it according to need on request to all families. Next year (1969) a bill was passed providing a choice of municipal day care, home- based care or private care. The two latter alternatives subsidized with an allowance covering a substantial share of the costs. The day care system has concretely improved the choice of women whether to care for children at home or to continue the working career. The paternity part of the parental leave has also equalized the choices of mother and father – still, however, leaving the major responsibility to the mother. Fathers are increasingly utilizing the option but more interest in it would be desirable both from gender equality perspective and that of father - child relations.

Gender equality policy has not been inherent in family policy only. In the Finnish context, gender equality policies have been an essential part of more comprehensive societal policies that aim at promoting equity and equal opportunity in society in general. Free education for all, health for all, social security for all, decent work for all, housing for all were principles introduced already those days when the country was not rich. The universality of societal services and security promoted also gender equality. Furthermore, equality was promoted through three- partite labor marked negotiations system since 1940's . These negotiations included a social policy component. Between 1969 - 2008 The Government, Employers, and Employees Central Unions negotiated consecutive comprehensive framework packages on salaries and working conditions. This package included regularly a social policy component. Often it included solidarity components: higher proportional pay rises to low pay sectors or a component directly targeted at increasing women's salaries relatively faster.

A component on income guarantee and social security for independent farmers was also part of the negotiations of such labor market packages. Throughout the history of Finnish independence another institutions, Producers Cooperatives provided marketing channels and some support services for small farmers in the sparsely populated country side. Again, this institution enabled e.g. widowed women to continue farming.

In sum, policies other than those targeting gender equality, have had a major influence to the development of gender equality in Finland. The development of gender equality was supported by comprehensive social policies that enabled women to get educated and to participate in productive work, politics, culture and society at large and to better combine work and family life. Democracy with strong responsible government, economic growth, comprehensive social policies and increasing gender equality appear to have constituted a virtuous spiral raising the country from poverty to top performers in one lifetime.³⁶

³⁶ Also poverty was practically eradicated in the end of 1980s. Since then, experimenting with neoliberal economic policies including cuts in social policy, persistent long term poverty is back – and the risk is highest for woman-headed households with children. A lesson learned, but difficult to correct.

3.3. Institutional arrangements for promoting gender equality

Improvement in the status of women and in their opportunities for combining work and family has been inherent in many social policy measures and legislation. A specific gender equality policy was officially established in 1966 when the Government appointed a fixed term Committee on the Status of Women. A permanent advisory multi-stakeholder body, Council for Gender Equality (TANE) was established in 1972. The first Government Action Plan for Gender Equality was formulated for 1980-85 in line with the action plan endorsed at the UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico 1975. The Action Plan was formulated jointly by several ministries and contained the obligation of all Ministries to promote gender equality in their mandated area. That was actually the first gender equality mainstreaming policy.

The first legislative, binding Act on Equality between Women and Men (1986) followed the ratification of CEDAW in 1986/87. The Act contained already a formal requirement on mainstreaming gender equality in the work of all Government Authorities. It was revised in 2005 and mainstreaming element was strengthened. There has been a close interaction between international events and agreements on women's rights and the development of domestic legislation and gender equality institutions.

An Ombudsman for Equality was established in 1987 as independent law enforcement authority. The ombudsman works with the Equality Board monitoring compliancy with the Equality Act and serving as an appeal mechanism. A permanent Gender Equality Unit was established at the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health in 2001 to draft Government equality policy and legislation, to coordinate inter-ministerial operations and for mainstreaming and issues related to international collaboration (e.g EU, Council of Europe, Nordic Council of Ministers). The Council for Gender Equality is an independent committee and a wide-based discussion forum between authorities and civil society in equality matters. The Minister responsible for education and culture has responsibility of gender equality issues, as well.

A powerful innovation emerged in the area of the involvement of civil society, particularly women's organizations in gender policy. An initiative to establish an umbrella organization to gather women's groups from all sides of the political spectrum was made in 1987. A Coalition of Women's Associations (NYTKIS) was created. It includes also non-political women's organizations. The first success story of this Coalition was its campaign "Vote for a woman!" As an immediate result, in the 1991 elections, Finland broke the world record on female representation in national Parliaments (77 of 200 seats).

The institutional structure is rather modest compared to most of the 15 "old" EU countries where gender equality issues belong to Mister's Office, have their own Ministry, or Ministry Department. Only in France and Finland gender issues are at unit level.

Furthermore, gender equality issues do not have focal points at local government level. These challenges have been identified by the current government and plans are being made to strengthen the structures.

In the Annex 1, there are examples on what kind of detailed arrangements and resources there are in place in Finland regarding the prerequisites of effective mainstreaming: appropriate policies, adequate information and knowledge base, functional and functioning operative machineries, systems for capacity building, and feedback systems.

3.4. The current Government Action Plan on Gender Equality

The current Government has committed itself to promote gender equality in all its work and decision-making. Actually the Government itself is historically unique in this respect: the prime minister and the majority of Government's members are women (12 of 20).

The Programme includes the following objectives that also illustrate the main current equality concerns in the country :

- mainstreaming - introducing gender equality in all governmental decision making and action
- narrowing the earnings gap between women and men
- promoting career development of women
- increasing gender awareness in schools and narrowing the gendered division of occupations to men's and women's occupations
- improving the combining of work and family life
- decrease violence against women

All together the Programme includes 27 action lines. A comprehensive evaluation is under way and will be published later this year. Below we describe mainly issues related to mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming gender equality in all decisions and actions

The idea of mainstreaming of gender equality has been in the Programmes of various Governments since 1997. Since 2005 mainstreaming has been the lead strategy for promoting gender equality. The definition of gender mainstreaming follows the Council of Europe definition:

“Gender mainstreaming is a strategy by means of which the gender perspective and the objective of promoting gender equality are included in all preparatory work and decision making by the authorities” summarizes the report ^{“37}

The purposes of mainstreaming is to support gender equality policy by taking into account the gender dimension in all policies and practices and to break gender neutral and even gender blind practices and culture. Mainstreaming gender does not replace equality policy. Instead mainstreaming is a necessary complement of equality policy.

In the current Government Action Plan mainstreaming of gender equality is seen in the context of the overall aim of equitable and effective governance and the obligation involves thus all Ministries.

The action lines of mainstreaming included

- mainstreaming gender equality perspective in cross- sectoral policy programmes
- mainstreaming the gender perspective at least into (at least) one main project of the Ministries
- establishing a equality working group at all Ministries
- including gender equality perspective into budgeting
- gender impact assessment in preparing legislation
- introducing gender equality perspective in performance evaluation
- training to the leadership of the Ministries
- establishing an gender equality information service (2009)

3.5. How well has gender mainstreaming worked?

In this item two examples are given on the assessment of the results of mainstreaming exercises. The first one is an awareness raising and training project. The second case describes the outcomes of the Government Action Plan on Gender Equality as a whole and comments on some specific items related to mainstreaming.

(1) The gender glasses project – introducing gender issues at all Ministries

A successful vehicle for mainstreaming has been the project “Gender Glasses”. With some financial support by the European Union the project was launched in 2007 in order to raise awareness and to provide training to the management and personnel of Ministries.³⁸

The first step was to produce a short leaflet “Gender glasses” . The leaflet provides, in a popular manner, simple but logical advice on how to introduce the gender equality perspective in all preparatory work.

First, the issue is introduced in a way that leads to the conclusion that everybody’s tasks tend to be gender relevant:

- Is your activity relevant from the perspective of people and their well-being?
- Does the activity target areas where there are differences between women and men?

³⁷ Gender Glasses in Use” (2009)

³⁸ http://www.stm.fi/en/gender_equality/gender_glasses

- If yes to both, this is for you.

If gender equality is relevant for you, only three steps are needed:

1. Put on the gender glasses:

- assess how the planned activity affects differently women and men, girls and boys
- what you already know about the situation of women and men
- what more you need to know

2. Assess gender impact (GIA)

- How the activity affects differently women and men?
- Use existing information, research and involve appropriate expertise

3. Take note of the results

- highlight the results
- if GIA was not made explain why
- Keep the gender perspective along in monitoring and follow- up

The lesson is that those who are not professional in gender issues are needed to be involved in order to materialize gender equality mainstreaming. A heavy manual is not the best instrument for motivating “newcomers”. The leaflet is an example of how to make the case crisp and clear rapidly to all civil servants needed for mainstreaming to take place in practice.

Another key element in the programme was training. First the leadership was given training. Then followed the civil servants and theme-specific training to equality task forces on how to work in practice. A handbook “Gender glasses in use “ was prepared during the process.

The self-evaluation by the project concluded that the project was able to collate the baseline information and increased awareness on the obligations to mainstream as well as on the ways how to do it concretely. Networking within and across ministries was also increased.

The lessons learned included:

- the normative ground for gender mainstreaming is strong but implementation is weak
- the training needs to be motivating and encouraging not accusing and antagonizing
- it is useful to make the mainstreaming of gender equality a broader concern and issue that that of women only; it concerns also men’s issues.
- concrete advise, support and indexes and tools are needed rather than academic theory
- involving the management boards are an effective entry point
- gender equality must be mainstreamed into the core business of the agency rather than treated as a separate obligation

The project is a good practice example on how to widen the awareness and prepare ground for effective implementation gender equality policies – where also those are needed who are not experts in gender issues. The message needs to be tailored to different audiences. Gender specialists and researchers are not always best trained to simplify messages and make them understandable and attractive for non-specialists.

Mainstreaming gender equality is obviously difficult. While legislation and institutions matter much still depends on individual interest and effort. Training raises awareness but concrete tools and indicators for monitoring and follow-up are necessary for turning awareness to action. While mainstreaming is supposed to be the strategy towards achieving the gender equality policy goals, in reality, gender equality goals that are enforced by legislation, norms and guidelines seem to be the vehicle to promote mainstreaming.

(2) Evaluation of the Government Action Plan as a whole

The Government Action Plan was first evaluated in 2009, one year after the launching of the Plan. The study revealed both successes and failures in implementation.

The success was that all Ministries had introduced some activities. Progress was, however, variable.

The gender perspective was identified and observed but in most cases it is not cutting through from strategy to practical action. Progress has been most visible in the legislative process and in gender sensitive budgeting. These are fields for which there have been high level guidelines by the Government. Gender Impact Assessment in law preparation has been mandatory since 2003.³⁹ Still about 87% of the proposals of the Government to the Parliament lacked gender impact assessment (2009). One half of the Ministries had observed the gender dimension in their budgeting.

The main conclusions that can be thought to be applicable in a variety of other contexts are:

- The goals, management and guidance as well as monitoring needs strengthening.
- The crucial role is by the strategic leadership, and its commitment and systematic guidance. Also the leadership needs training.
- Also more practical guidelines are needed.
- The role of the equality task forces at Ministries and Agencies have been crucial in changing the practices permanently.
- While gender perspective has been observed in most ministries in budgeting to some degree, it will be implemented only if it is also observed in detailed planning and programming.
- Gender equality training is more effective if it is included in the mainstream training

³⁹ A manual on Gender Impact Assessment in law preparation has been prepared in 2007. (Suvaopas, STM 2007:25)

programme that deals with the core contents of the work of the agency in question.

- Also the role of inter-ministerial follow-up task force is crucial for commitment and implementation.

The Government is currently preparing the first comprehensive Report on Gender Equality that is an evaluation how well Governments' gender equality goals have been achieved during the last 10 year period. The special themes of the report will be

- decision-making
- reconciling work and family life
- violence against women
- education and research
- men and equality
- mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality policy
- organization of equality policy

On a number of the themes an in depth study was commissioned. While it is not possible to comment all these, some items are commented on below.

Decision making and governance: Finland is the first and only country in the world where both the President and the Prime Minister are women. In the current Government there are 12 women and 8 men. However, in general, in the Government agencies, the higher the post the higher is the proportion of men. The proportion of women in the leadership of Government offices has increased slowly. The Equality Act requires that in public committees the proportion of men/women must be at least 40%. In 2009 the proportion of women in Government committees was 45%. As of the private sector, 17% of Executive directors were women. In EU the average is about a third. Improving the situation stays on the agenda.

Violence against women is considered to be one of the most serious obstacles for gender equality. The CEDAW has repeatedly drawn attention to the insufficient measures to prevent violence against women in Finland. The issue was included in the Government Programme on Internal Security 2004-2007 and actions will be continued in 2008-2011. Violence against women has been addressed with fixed term projects which are neither adequate nor sustainable. Among others, a holistic strategy should be prepared, permanent resourcing secured for preventive work and service system for victims and other involved stakeholders upgraded.

Men and equality: Since the equality programme 2003-2007 men have been included in the Action Plans to some extent. The Council for Gender Equality motivated the inclusion of this item by pointing out that inclusion men's issue as a cross-cutting theme may not be enough. At this stage, it is a new theme and "mainstreaming may make it invisible". By making men visible, their (gender specific) problems and the consequences of their (gender specific) action will be handled in societal policy dialogue.

Gender equality is an issue that is relevant to both genders. Also it is important to realize that achieving the goals of gender equality policy calls for cooperation rather than setting men and women against each other. Also men's NGOs have pointed out, that most institutional structures dealing with gender equality constitute of only women or have far less than 40% of men – the proportion that would be required by equality legislation.

4. Gender mainstreaming in the context of international cooperation

4.1. The European Union

EU and the Member States are signatories of the main international frameworks for gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women. In its external relations, however, the EU is not systematically pursuing these principles.⁴⁰ In its development cooperation the twin track approach of combining gender specific and mainstreaming interventions is applied – in principle. In practice i.e. in implementation many problems and gaps still remain. Some Country Strategy papers include gender issues but, as European Parliament has noted, true integration is weak. In several instances, gender is stipulated as a cross-cutting issue or is referred to rhetorically as “shall be mainstreamed” without clear indications on how this will be achieved nor financially supported Gender issues have been fragmented across EU institutions. It has become everybody's and nobody's responsibility without an adequate budget line.⁴¹

On the other hand, very thorough toolkits on gender equality in development cooperation have been produced by the EU. With experience of the hectic environment of Aid Agencies/ Ministry for Foreign Affairs one can say that these are too thorough – too long toolkits tend to end up on the shelf “to be read” rather than on the pile of daily desk top tools.

The Union of the Mediterranean, that consists of EU and the 16 North African and Middle Eastern countries have agreed at ministerial level in Istanbul 2006 and Marrakesh 2009 “to promote de jure and de facto equality between women and men and to respect civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women as well as men, as defined in the international human rights instruments to which they are parties” (Conclusions of Marrakesh)

Human rights NGOs have welcomed such an agreements but are concerned of their implementation. For instance, the Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network, *EMHR* “*recommends that gender mainstreaming is inscribed into the national action plans*” and resourced adequately.

40 Gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women in EU's external relations instruments 2009) (p9-10)

41 CONCORD Cotonou Working Group Briefing Paper” Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Nov.2008).

The EU and its neighbors around the Mediterranean Region have shared visions on gender equality and share platforms for dialogue. There are challenges of practical co-operation and policy implementation.

In international cooperation on mainstreaming gender equality, policies and practices tend to be more or less far apart. There are several reasons for this. One is the difficulty of running principles through the system from mission statement to actual work plans. The case of Finland in the next item points out some of the critical entry points in this process.

4.3. Gender mainstreaming in Finland's foreign policy

Finland has committed herself, at the international level, to promote the mainstreaming of gender equality by signing the Beijing Platform of Action and also by joining the European Union as its founding documents commit Member States to gender mainstreaming policies. As discussed, the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) endorsed the mainstreaming policy as the official policy for the Union as a whole and its member states.

The rights of women and girls and gender equality have been at a very central place in Finland's foreign policy and its development cooperation component for a long time. Rights of women is first of the priorities in the Government Report to Parliament on the Human Rights Policy of Finland 2009⁴². The others are rights of the child, persons with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities and rights of indigenous peoples. "Participation of women is not only good governance. It is also good for governance" states the Report. Mainstreaming the rights of women and girls in foreign policy is implemented through actively including gender issues or at least "gender proofing" of all major statements on international for a. An Ambassador on Gender Equality and one Gender Adviser are employed at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in addition to the staff responsible for Human Rights issues.

Finland has been organizing events to support global action in gender issues such as the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security convened jointly by the President Ellen Johnson Sireleaf of Liberia and President Tarja Halonen of Finland (Monrovia, Liberia 2009) . The Colloquium's objective was to support the aims of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security to ensure that women are protected from the worst abuses in times of conflict and to empower them to play their rightful and vital role in helping their countries prevent, end and recover from conflict. Other global initiatives include e.g. "Women and Climate Change" that aims at ensuring that the role of women is particularly taken into account in any forthcoming Convention on climate.

⁴² Government Report to the Parliament on the Human Rights Policy of Finland
<http://www.formin.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=54284&GUID={1248AD8B-CFFB-44F6-A69B-7831BC7F274C}>

While gender issues are well and visibly promoted at the very top at high level dialogue in foreign policy, there are challenges in mainstreaming gender in development cooperation practice. According to the recent evaluation, gender mainstreaming did not lead to increase in gender issue financing, rather the contrary. Also gender equality task force is dormant at the Ministry.

An ongoing exercise at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is to improve the practical inclusion of gender equality in all development cooperation. This is done in the context of improving the quality of assistance by a better inclusion of social and human development – related Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs) in Finnish development cooperation. Gender equality is one of these CCTs:

The Cross –Cutting themes in the Finnish Development Policy Programme⁴³

- Human Rights Based Approach
- Gender equality and promotion of the rights of women and girls
- Societal equity
- Promotion of rights and opportunities of vulnerable groups (children, people with disabilities, minorities)
- HIV/AIDS as a health and social challenge in development.⁴⁴

The process of improving the integrating these Cross-Cutting Themes (or actually cross cutting objectives) across the board of Finland’s mainstream development cooperation follows similar kinds of steps – although in smaller scale – as the implementation gender mainstreaming in national policies. Below we refer only to the gender equality theme but the same steps are being followed for the whole CCT cluster.

A Case: How a new improved cycle of integrating gender equality in development cooperation is being conducted

I. Evaluation of the current situation: Gender inclusive development cooperation Policy Programmes were there (2004, 2007) but not satisfactorily implemented

Development Policy Programmes contained the CCTs, including gender equality, in line with international commitments. Also National Gender Equality Act implies the obligation to the observing of gender impact in all public administration. There was a Guideline on Gender Impact Assessment, as well. While the policy included the obligation to take into account a gender equality and other CCTs, both Government Audit Unit and external evaluations concluded that outcomes were unsatisfactory.

43 Development Policy Programme 2007 <http://www.formin.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=24014&GUID={41C62727-0F60-4794-B744-40E9460D79F}>

44 Also environment and sustainable development and good governance are current cross-cutting themes. Here we deal only with the social development related themes

II. Policy commitment to gender mainstreaming was renewed (2009) through the line of command at the Ministry

First a political commitment for upgrading the effort was needed. NGOs and other stakeholders pushed strongly for this and lobbied the Parliament and Ministry staff. The Ministry issued a new internal instruction containing the outline of a three track strategy gender equality, and the other CCTs, were to be included in all operations.

The strategy for integrating gender equality (and the other Cross Cutting Themes), is a three- track approach:

1. primarily mainstream gender equality and each of the CCTs and
2. support gender-specific targeted projects and
3. include gender equality and the other CCTs in all policy dialogues, training and information dissemination.

Mainstreaming is complemented with targeted empowering projects and political dialogue, awareness raising and mobilization of relevant target groups.

III. Information base was checked and is being improved (2009-10): The current situation and adequacy of information on gender inclusion and equality was checked and revising launched.

Baseline information in country cooperation programmes and internal statistics showed, for instance, that gender issues had been very inadequately covered. It was not possible to get information on the inclusion of gender equality from the data system of the Ministry except by hand picking.

IV. Management result matrix was revised (2009) and Task Team established: The CCTs, including gender equality, were included in the work plan and results matrix. A CCT -team was formed, including the Gender Ambassador, the Gender Advisor and Advisors on the other themes.

The CCT- team at the Ministry was tasked to prepare an action plan including training, designing of toolkits and to provide expert support to staff. The Gender Team includes an Ambassador for Gender Equality, a senior Gender Advisor and occasional assistants.

V. Training and the designing/adapting of gender mainstreaming tools is going on

The Cross Cutting Themes were re-named as Cross-Cutting Objectives (CCOs) to emphasize that they must be handled in a result - oriented manner. Integrating CCOs, including gender equality, in Project Cycle Management (PCM) -system and reporting is underway. Markers for CCOs are being incorporated into the statistical system. CCO components are included in staff training programmes.

VI. Follow-up and reporting: Performance in the inclusion of gender and other CCTs are to be reported yearly (2009-) through the Minister to Government and to the Parliament

The results will be reported yearly through the management lined to the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and in the Government ODA report to the Parliament for debate. Consultations and dialogue with relevant NGOs is taking place frequently.

The lesson learned is that a key practical element in the implementing of mainstreaming strategies is the inclusion gender equality and other cross-cutting themes as objectives in the Project Cycle Management (PCM) guidelines and documentation as well as in the results indicator system. Experience shows that declarations and commitments do not seem to work without being accompanied by training and easy-to-use “desk-top” tools. The CCO - team is currently busy in designing the tools and inclusive document templates into the internal web-based PCM system. This is done in regard to each of the CCTs, including gender equality. Templates with gender inclusive perspective cover Terms of Reference (TORs) for 1) Programme identification, 2) Decision to launch planning, 3) Programme Planning, 4) Appraisal, 5) Mid-term Review.

However, it has become obvious that the best is an enemy of the good: trying to include very professional, i.e. lengthy and specific, references to gender equality provoked strong opposition from the technical team responsible for the whole revision of all PCM guidelines. Thus only parsimonious notes on gender equality have been proposed to be included in the official project documentation templates and specific checklist are accessible through links to “less official pages” containing tools and good practice examples.

5. The role of international development partners in supporting the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in national development plans – the critical role of ownership

In this item we look into the role of the donor community. The focus is on the OECD-DAC perspective and Official Development Assistance (ODA). However, the suggestions are relevant more widely in relation to the international partners, including regional intergovernmental agencies. There are differences in the mandates of such organizations but as far as cooperation that is considered to be counted as ODA certain principles apply. In 2005 the donors agreed with the developing partner countries on the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and subsequently the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) of 2008⁴⁵. Five crucial principles, “Partnership Commitments” of ODA

⁴⁵ The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>

were endorsed:

Ownership: “Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and coordinate development actions.” This means that each Government is responsible for the development of its own country and is accountable to its own citizens. This implies, that at least awareness and sensitivity to gender equality must be there. If not, support to awareness and to eventual equality policy formulation must be included in the dialogue.

Alignment : “Donors base their overall support on partner countries’ national development strategies, institutions and procedures.” This means: no to “donor push”. Partner country gender equality policies need to be respected and eventual institutional structures need to be involved at an early stage of the cooperation.

Harmonization: “Donors’ actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective.” This means that donors shall work together and aim at harmonizing their contribution and aid channels and procedures for e.g. reporting. Indicators, monitoring and reporting formats must include a gender equality perspective. Strive for joint formats by all donors.

Managing for results: “Managing resources and improving decision making for results.” This means that aid shall be evaluated on the basis of factual outputs and impacts rather than good intentions. Gender equality indicators must be included in the plans and result matrixes.

Mutual accountability: “Donors and partners are accountable for development results.” This means that both parties work according to the principles of good governance and democratic and transparent decision-making. Open dialogue between donors and partners must include the gender perspective.

The crucial message in the context of gender mainstreaming is that donors cannot push their ideas or policies on to the partner country. This is sometimes a challenge. Situations, where gender equality policies, institutional structures and resources are not there alert for the inclusion of an awareness raising support and institution building component into the cooperation strategy, or eventually working first through Civil Society Organizations, e.g. women’s NGOs.

6. Concluding comment: Mainstreaming the gender perspective is essential for sustainable social and economic development

Gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself. It is a strategy towards development goals, one of which is improved gender equality. From people’s perspective the goal of sustainable development is, very generally, enlargement of choices for women and

men - without compromising the choices available to the next generations - starting from today's children.

The concept of social development as referred to by the World Bank MENA ⁴⁶ team points out usefully entry points for gender equality and empowerment inclusive development interventions: “Social development concerns itself with: promoting the inclusion of poor, vulnerable and excluded groups (especially youth and women); strengthening social cohesion and the capacity for collective action towards development and; enhancing the capacities of citizens and civic groups to hold accountable the institutions that serve them.”

“Over the last two decades, MENA countries have made noticeable progress in social development. Initiatives have been launched for (i) the inclusion of youth, women and other vulnerable groups; (ii) the reinvigoration and empowerment of local communities; and (iii) improving citizen and private sector access to information on government-related opportunities and benefits. However, the MENA region still faces the social development challenges of inclusion (youth, women, and vulnerable groups), social cohesion (urban and rural space) and greater accountability.” ⁴⁷

The MENA region has a long history of family and social responsibility as well as of public spending on social security and services. Also in employment the public sector is a significant player. Such factors have been contributing to the fact that human development indicators have improved remarkably, especially for girls and women. There remains, however, still a wide gender gap in many spheres of life and “gender-based inequalities contribute to women’s social economic and political exclusion and so retard national development” .

There are development challenges that typically are very gender- relevant in all countries: lack of opportunities, especially employment, lack of channels for participation and influence, exposure to risks, vulnerability, insecurity and violence.

Marginal “social safety nets” or isolated welfare projects are not effective responses to problems that are systemic. Rather charity and minimum last resort handouts maintain the status quo. For disempowered people, safety nets, by definition, are traps rather than springboards that would empower people to (re)gain control over their own lives. Such empowering social services and security treat people as agents of action, not as objects of charity.

Historical experience by many countries suggest that more comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach to social development is feasible and it is effective in transforming the institutions that create and maintain inequalities including those related to gender.

46 Middle East and North Africa

47 World Bank MENA site: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/EXTMNAREGTOPSOCDEV/0,,menuPK:583439~pagePK:34004175~piPK:34004435~theSitePK:583433,00.html>

Gender mainstreaming is an essential element in transformative societal policies that goal-consciously strive toward social development towards “a society for all” that is inclusive of all women and men, girls and boys. Mainstreaming the gender perspective is thus a key element in more comprehensive social policies⁴⁸ that strive for societal (institutional) change that enable and empower all people to contribute to and benefit from development.

7. Lessons learned. Policy recommendation

Improving gender equality is a Human Rights and development goal of its own right. It is also a decisive instrument in efforts to reduce poverty and to achieve other internationally agreed development goals as well as national development priorities, including faster and better quality economic growth. Gender equality has a short-term price tag but in medium and long term it provides ample returns in terms of the social quality of economic growth and societal development.

Creating an enabling environment for full and equal participation of all women (and men) in national development as active agents calls for more ambitious national social development strategies that explicitly aim at improving the social quality of all policies.

A. Strategic choices at the national level

1. Gender equality should be incorporated into the gradual development of comprehensive national social policies with focus on equal rights, different needs, variable life situations and various potentials of women and men, boys and girls rather than addressing gender equality mainly through specific projects, only. Such rights-based, equitable and inclusive social policy calls for the designing of implementation instruments that are designed to create equal access to societal institutions (inclusion), AND equal and secure access to resources and services (decent work and socio-economic security, social and health services), AND respect for diversity and for minority rights (cohesion), AND an enabling environment for full social, economic, political and cultural participation of women and men (empowerment). Such policies shall be monitored through systems that hold authorities accountable.

2. The implementation of the gender equality dimension of these social policies is effective when the strategy is composed of three mutually reinforcing action tracks:

(i) Primary instrument is to mainstream gender equality in all sector policies, plans

48 See Wiman, Voipio & Ylonen: Comprehensive Social Policies for Development in a Globalizing World. Min. for Foreign Affairs, 2007 <http://info.stakes.fi/ssd/EN/comprehensive/index.htm>

and activities, and

(ii) Mainstreaming should be complemented by targeted, empowering action that aims directly at improving the status of women, their livelihoods and capabilities to manage successfully their own and their families' lives, and

(iii) In addition to proactive political advocacy, strengthening the voice of women as collective agent in decision making; this includes support to women's organization and their involvement in development.

3. The institutional arrangements should integrate all the necessary elements for implementation of the strategy:

(i) A conducive policy in line with the relevant international legal instruments

(ii) An adequate disaggregated information base for evidence-based policy making,

(iii) A functional and functioning operation machinery

(iv) Capacity development system including ready-to-use tools adapted to national context

(v) A feedback system that creates accountability and learning cycles

(vi) Structures that enable men to identify a constructive role in equality policy and its implementation through equal cooperation

4. Mainstreaming the gender perspective calls for a Whole-of-Government approach and the responsible agency should be located accordingly to high enough level

The role of donors and international partners, including regional organizations

1. International partners shall take proactively up gender equality issues in accordance to their commitments to international legal instruments on human rights and development issues taking into account the obligation to respect the agency, ownership and responsibilities of the partner government to its constituency and the international legal instruments that are binding to all.

2. The donors should provide support that aims at building systemic capabilities i.e. creating prerequisites for sustainable, institutionalized gender equality policy implementation by the partner country as an integral part of supporting socially just development.

3. Also donors should design a three track action strategy that combines inter-sectoral mainstreaming with targeted, empowering support to women and girls in order to fill the gender gaps and to enable women and girls to benefit from mainstream developments. The third track consists of political dialogue and the strengthening of women's voice in domestic policy-making through support to relevant organizations.

4. International partners should systematically build their own capacities for integrating gender equality in international collaboration at all levels.