Beyond the 'grim resisters':

towards more effective gender mainstreaming through stakeholder participation

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Introduction

Substantial consensus has emerged in the literature with regard to some of the 'minimum requirements' for gender mainstreaming within organisations (e.g. Kardam 1991; Hannan-Anderson 1992; Jahan 1995; Macdonald 1994):

- a positive policy commitment to gender and development, with management support;
- gender experts acting as focal points with a catalytic role;
- awareness- and skills-raising for all relevant personnel through gender training;
- incorporation of gender objectives into planning and implementation procedures;
- a clear identification of who has responsibility for implementation and a system of accountability.

Many of these requirements have been recognised and at least partially implemented in international development organisations and NGOs over the past decade or so. The ongoing discussion on gender mainstreaming has reached the 'lessons learned' stage, and is achieving sophistication and refinement. There are two main bodies of literature on gender and mainstreaming in complex organisations.[1] The first presents frameworks for gender planning that are meant to provide means to define goals and relate these to strategies and instruments (e.g. Moser 1993; Young 1993; Kabeer and Subrahmanian 1996). The second consists of organisational case study analyses of practical gender mainstreaming experiences that benefit from a longitudinal perspective (e.g. Kardam 1991; Jahan 1995; Macdonald et al. 1997; Ravazi and Miller 1995; Wallace 1998). It is driven by the desire to explain the continued frustration of attempts to mainstream gender in

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development policy, planning, and programmes, in spite of much progress achieved in implementing, at least partially, the 'pre-requisites' mentioned above.

While all of the above literature provides substantial insights into the needs, complexity, and potentials for effective gender mainstreaming, it also presents a series of conceptual and methodological shortcomings that inhibit our abilities to come to grips with both the impediments to mainstreaming and the means to make it more effective. In this paper, I focus on the critical issue of stakeholder involvement in gender mainstreaming. Stakeholder involvement refers to 'who' should be involved in the mainstreaming process, the nature of their involvement, and the means to make their involvement work in favour of women. I illustrate the importance of this issue through three practical experiences within the UN system.

Conceptual frameworks for gender mainstreaming: who are the stakeholders?

Conceptual frameworks for gender planning have evolved in part due to a shift towards greater emphasis on women's participation, empowerment, and diversity. In comparison with the project frameworks available in the 1980s, these newer planning frameworks seek to address gender policy at an organisational level; to deal with causes rather than merely symptoms of women's subordination; and to incorporate the multiple dimensions of power, consciousness, position, and interests that differentiate women. These newer frameworks stress the need to involve women beneficiaries as stakeholders in the planning process, regardless of the level at which planning occurs (e.g. policy planning or grassroots project development). Moser (1993) argues that this is needed to give a direct voice to and empower women. She also sees it as a means to deal with 'women's diversity' and to bring pressure to bear upon, and raise consciousness among, (male) planners and policy makers. For Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 'participation of the excluded in the process of policy design is not only critical to ensure policy goals which respond to their priorities but is also a strategic means for overcoming social exclusion' (1996:27). For Young, 'involving women at all levels of development thinking, planning and implementation will make a world of difference' (1993:147). However, as Young points out, it will be a long time before women at the grassroots are systematically involved in the planning process in most large bureaucratic organisations.

The obstacles to grassroots women's involvement in planning and the obstacles to mainstreaming in policy-making organisations in general stem from the same sources. Drawing from gender and organisational theory, the planning frameworks are analysing some of these 'structural blockages' and providing tools to diagnose gender power relations within organisations, including organisational cultures and management styles as well as psychological and structural conditions. Kabeer and Subrahmanian, for example, discuss methodologies to identify institutional barriers to change, and highlight conceptual and technical biases, errors, resistance tactics, rules, and practices which work against a 'new, human-oriented approach' (1996:47). Power remains in the hands of non-gender-expert (male) policy makers and planners whose belief systems, culture, and procedures preclude gender mainstreaming and women's participation.

Gender planning frameworks are clearly written for gender experts to help them guide the process of institutional change. The gender planner is *the* major stakeholder—the person who is expected to carry out the diagnoses, mobilise the women, implement the framework, etc. Besides involving grassroots women, all of these conceptual frameworks point to the need to involve policy makers, planners, and implementers who are clearly key participants. However, the discussion about this last group is generally quite vague, in terms of both their roles and contributions. Generally, policy makers and planners are characterised either as active resisters or, at best, passive implementers of gender planning. If they have anything to contribute to the process, it is resistance or simply compliance. Where there is detailed discussion of the non-expert (male) planners, it is in relation to them as obstacles, and hence, to what must be done to overcome their resistance so that the gender planners and their allies can get the job done. In fact, it seems that the more emphasis there is on incorporating insights from organisational theory regarding the gendered nature of institutions, the more the discussion focuses on planners as obstacles. For example, Kabeer and Subrahmanian disaggregate the category 'people' within development organisations as 'innovators, loyal bureaucrats, hesitators, and hardliners' (1996:49). These being fairly typical epithets, there are numerous prescriptions offered to deal with the resistance or passivity that planners present.

Lessons learned from mainstreaming experiences

The growing body of literature documenting institutional experiences with gender mainstreaming is oriented both towards attaining a better understanding of organisational conditions and impediments, and to drawing lessons on strategies at a number of levels. This literature has provided a great deal of food for thought in relation to specific types of organisation, strategies, and 'stages' of evolution in the mainstreaming process. Here the analysis with respect to the stakeholders, and the strategies to overcome 'structural blockages' to gender mainstreaming, tend to be more pragmatic and nuanced in comparison with the gender planning literature.

The analysis naturally tends to focus on who *has been* involved in the mainstreaming process and how, rather than who *should be* involved and how. The discussion of change agents is often very concrete. For example, there are careful assessments of the pros and cons of particular roles and organisational locations for gender experts or of the efficacy of particular strategies to sensitise planners or convince managers. In fact, non-expert (male) planners are implicitly a central focus of this literature insofar as it seeks to diagnose how to be more effective in convincing them to implement gender-sensitive policies and procedures.

There are two tendencies with regard to the conceptualisation of stakeholders, and they are often mixed. On the one hand, the language often reflects the negative assessment of planners as active resisters: policies need to be 'enforced'; implementers should be 'policed'; managers should be 'made accountable' through various types of top-down administrative procedures (e.g. Berg 1993). The characteristics of the 'grim resisters' (following Staudt 1990:10), their degree of resistance, the amount of power they wield, and the means to pressure, lobby, and persuade them to change, are standard fare. On the other hand, there is a tendency to see non-expert planners as passive recipients rather than active resisters, and as such they must be properly sensitised and equipped through gender training, data, studies, guidelines, and procedures. If backed by the encouragement of management and the support of gender experts or consultants, they can be expected to at least implement what they have learned. Frequently, those who characterise planners as passive recipients also note that they are not all the same: they work in different sectors and with different procedures and target groups, so that gender planners need to develop specific tools that meet their needs.

The degree of success of the mainstreaming approaches used to date varies substantially depending upon the strategies used, the resources allocated, the type of organisation, the commitment of management, etc., so that it is difficult to generalise. To the extent that generalisations are made, however, it is with respect to the conclusion that not nearly as much progress has been made as could be expected, or certainly as is desired.[2] In terms of diagnosing why this is the case, the literature most frequently focuses on factors 'out there'—that is, on external or organisational constraints limiting the implementation of mainstream strategies (e.g. resistance)—and, somewhat less frequently, on problems with the strategies themselves. Only rarely are the assumptions underlying the strategies questioned. In particular, the assumptions about planners-as-stakeholders go unquestioned and, therefore, strategies are usually evaluated in terms of how well they either (a) overcome resistance, or (b) develop, adapt, and diffuse the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools.

The analysis of the gendered nature of organisations illuminates a series of inter-related factors which, taken together, present very serious problems to be resolved before gender mainstreaming can be made effective. However, there is much that is unproductive in the characterisation of (most) planners as resisters, which implies that people (both men and women) and organisations are resistant, static, tradition- and interest-bound, and inherently and unconsciously (structurally) biased. These characterisations, no matter how well founded, tend to lead to prescriptions that are top–down, based upon ('correct') expert input, and managerial and administrative coercion. On the other hand, the characterisation of planners as passive recipients leads to somewhat different strategies, where at least it is recognised that, in an enabling environment, they have the capacity to learn, understand the need for change, and implement procedures that will improve the outcomes for women. However, such a characterisation is also in many ways top–down and static, since the involvement of non-expert planners is as implementers rather than as innovators or even planners. The strategies are often reinforced by measures that are used when planners are seen as resisters. In fact, both conceptualisations of planners as stakeholders are contradicted by most contemporary approaches to participatory development. I argue that the conceptualisation and characterisation of non-expert planners that prevails, in the literature and in practice, presents an important obstacle to gender mainstreaming.

Most participatory approaches to development start with assumptions that are quite different from those which many gender specialists use to characterise non-expert planners, such as: everyone has knowledge, can learn, and can take responsibility for change, if they are provided with the opportunity. In stakeholder approaches, experts have knowledge to share, but are only one part of the equation—they have as much to learn from other stakeholders as other stakeholders have to learn from them. Often, the expert's role must be to facilitate the process whereby the diverse stakeholders diagnose their problems and discover and negotiate their own solutions. The expert's role is to provide information, ensure that the enabling resources and environment exist, and represent their own 'stake' in the process. With stakeholder participation, it is assumed that one has to begin with conditions as they are (including knowledge, consciousness, interests, etc.). It is also assumed that conditions can change. Finally, it is assumed that the process is as important as the outcome, and that the outcome is innovative (not the one predicted or desired by any particular stakeholder). The process moves in the only direction in which it could have moved—that is, it moves both towards mutual learning, and towards the best *possible* outcome, given the real starting point (the information, knowledge, interests, and power relations entailed). Gender experts have promoted this approach at the grass-roots level, but have been hesitant to try it as a strategy for gender planning and mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming gender through stakeholders: a pilot experience in Honduras

The experience with gender mainstreaming at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that I present below was influenced by an exercise I carried out in Honduras in my junior years as a gender planner. The UNDP asked me to review all UN projects in Honduras to determine how they could better meet women's needs. Three outputs were sought: (1) sensitisation of project managers; (2) a prioritisation of the most strategic projects that would receive my direct inputs to improve their design and implementation; and (3) an assessment of global constraints of projects and lessons learned that could be addressed by system-wide activities (at government or UNDP level). With more than 30 projects to address in less than three months, we decided that the most efficient way to proceed would be to hold a workshop with the project directors, to sensitise them, and carry out a

joint analysis of their achievements and constraints. Having had little practical experience, we had little idea that such an exercise would meet with substantial resistance on the part of these nearly all-male, all-Honduran planners.

To prepare, I developed a background paper using national-level data to illustrate some of the main problems that Honduran women confront. This was accompanied by a questionnaire for project heads to hand in prior to the workshop, in which they were to relate some of the main issues presented in the paper to the specific projects that they were managing. At this point, some coercion and support was required: some of the project heads had to be repeatedly requested to hand in the questionnaires, and some needed my support to fill them in. During the one-day workshop, I presented a summary of the issues in the paper. Project heads then met in small sectoral groups to discuss questions related to the 'gender biases' they encountered in their project. In plenary, groups reported their conclusions and held further discussion. A second small group plenary session focused on what project heads saw as constraints to working more effectively with women; and a third focused on what needed to be done to overcome the constraints.

Everyone who participated estimated that the outcome of the workshop was very positive, insofar as project heads had clearly identified a common set of constraints as well as a series of activities that they themselves, the UNDP, and the government of Honduras could implement to begin to overcome these constraints. The major constraints identified related to (a) a lack of information at project and national level on gender relations and women; (b) a lack of sensitivity of project staff and target groups to gender issues; (c) a lack of research on women in specific sectors (e.g. reproductive health); and (d) a lack of access to gender expertise. After the workshop, the list of 30 projects was reviewed in order to identify the five most strategic projects, which I would then help to redesign to ensure more gender-sensitive outcomes. The criteria used to select these projects centred on their potential impact at national level, including their potential for providing new models or instruments for gender-sensitive outcomes applicable to wider governmental programmes; their potential to benefit a large number of women living in poverty; and the economic importance of the sector in which they were located. I then studied the respective project documents and developed a series of recommendations for the project heads. I was concerned that the project teams would resent someone from outside attempting to redesign their

projects, all of which were in the implementation stage. However, when I met with the individual project teams about two months after the workshop, on each occasion the project team *informed me* about what was needed to redesign their projects. In four out of five of the cases, the project teams' recommendations were nearly identical to my own recommendations; in three of the five cases, the project heads had already contacted the donors to request additional resources in order to implement their recommendations. In only one case did I find that the project team was unable to identify the steps that would be necessary to redesign their project. Follow-up on three of the projects some two years later showed that two of the three indeed implemented the recommendations made by the project teams, whereas the other only partially implemented its ideas since the additional resources requested had not been forthcoming from the donor.

The other outcome of the experience was the development of an 'umbrella project' that contained five separate modules to respond to global-level constraints and needs. Only one module was financed and implemented—that which was designed to improve national-level information on women (statistics)—where ILO, UNFPA, and the Honduran government, with the support of gender experts, undertook major efforts to improve the gender sensitivity of the national labour force survey and the population census.

Learning from stakeholders: the experience with gender training at FAO

Beginning with where people are at (ideologically, substantively) and realising that they can learn represent the fundamentals of traditional (passive) training. Participatory training further assumes that people have knowledge and experience that they can bring into the change process, and that can lead to substantively different and new knowledge for all those involved, including the trainer. Participatory methods in gender training have been used mainly to overcome resistance on the part of planners to permit gender experts to do their work. However, they have not generally been used to generate innovations in the gender planning process itself, or seen as an opportunity for the trainer *qua* gender expert to learn. Generally, training has been seen to be effective in improving receptivity and understanding of gender issues among a majority of those trained. However, it has not proved to be as effective in terms of operationalising gender goals; in and of itself, training has not usually led to gender mainstreaming.

I spent two years at FAO as the officer responsible for gender training within the WID unit (Women in Agricultural Production and Rural Development Service—SDWW), and trained some 750 professional staff at regional and headquarters level, 80 per cent of whom were male, and 85 per cent of whom were not social scientists. I evaluated the training exercise with participants at least six months after they received their training. From this evaluation, I learned that the majority of people who were trained were 'ready, willing, but unable' to deal with gender issues in their daily work. When asked to explain why, a majority of these infrequent users indicated that they didn't see the connection between gender issues and their own specific field of work or, if they did see the relevance, they lacked the skills and tools to permit them to address gender in their specific tasks. Gender training was too 'generic' to address the wide range of activities, processes, and subject areas that were represented within the organisation.

I was unhappy with the conceptual framework used in the training (an adaptation of the Harvard Framework), since it perpetuated non-participatory approaches to planning. It envisioned the planning exercise as a technical rather than a technical–political process entailing power relations and interests; it focused on gender while ignoring all other types of social differentiation. It focused exclusively on projects and paid no attention to policy, programming, monitoring, and evaluation or other tasks in the workplace, and it left aside environmental issues. I took a small step forward by introducing participation in the project design process. Trainees had to role-play different stakeholder groups (e.g. peasant women, peasant men, donor and government representatives) and the overall outcomes began to improve. When playing roles, barriers to discussion of gender power relations began to tumble down, and the outcomes of project planning processes visibly began to change as the different 'stakeholders' became more demanding and began to negotiate. Another step forward came when I introduced a training module which asked trainees to identify procedural problems that acted as impediments to the implementation of gender planning, and, afterwards, to identify solutions to the problems that they had found. That is when my attitude towards the trainees began to change, and I began to learn from them. I learned that men in traditionally male-dominated technical fields were far more open to discussing issues of equity, equality, and power than had been contemplated in the training package developed by the gender experts. I learned that real resistance was far less

common than we had imagined (but nearly impossible to overcome when genuinely strong). I learned that I could challenge assumptions and ideas in a respectful and intelligent way and find the overall outcome improved; that people wanted to be convinced but were also willing to convince each other. I also learned that these 'resistant' or 'passive' trainees, when properly stimulated, often knew more about problem identification and potential solutions than I, as a specialist in my own field, could ever have known.

I incorporated what I learned as a gender trainer into an effort, which is now called SEAGA—Socio-economic and Gender Analysis—to develop a new conceptual framework for gender training that parallels the efforts to develop new conceptual frameworks for gender planning, and SEAGA introduces a much more holistic framework containing overall socio-economic assessment and, within this, gender as an ever-present dimension. Further, it envisions programme formulation as a political–technical process involving stakeholders, power relations, and potential for conflict, where environmental problems are generally also ever present. One of the provisions that I built into the SEAGA programme is that the main training materials would be complemented by a continually expanding and evolving set of interactive materials and manuals that are sector- and task-specific, which will meet the express needs of planners, and which will be designed and improved by planners themselves. The SEAGA conceptual framework was further developed by a team at Clark University (Thomas-Slayter et al. 1995), and the training-of-trainers programme is now in implementation phase (FAO 2000).

Developing the Second FAO Plan of Action for Women and Development

The first FAO Plan of Action for Women and Development was formulated for the period 1989–1995, in accordance with the request of the FAO Conference (its governing body). A consultant was hired to draft the Plan in two months, with supervision from the WID unit (SDWW). This document was then sent to the departmental level for approval, but was rejected. A new Plan was formulated in four days by one WID officer and a non-WID department manager, and sent up the hierarchy for approval. After some going back and forth, the Plan was approved and presented to the next FAO Conference, where it was ratified. For the next five years, SDWW oversaw implementation of the Plan. Progress on implementation was reported every two years at the

FAO governing bodies. Having participated in these reporting exercises, I recognised, as did everyone else in SDWW, that the Plan was barely being implemented. Most implementation was being done by SDWW itself. Very little progress was evident within the organisation—what progress was being made was *ad hoc*, and depended largely on the 'innovators' in other units who happened to take gender issues seriously for one reason or another.

In 1994 SDWW began preparations to develop the next FAO Plan of Action (1996–2001), which would take effect after the first Plan expired. Seeing this as an opportunity to make amends for a poorly formulated First Plan of Action, we began to discuss ways to ensure that the Plan would be implemented organisation-wide. My previous experiences led me to suggest that, this time, non-expert FAO planners should formulate the Plan. These people, I suggested, had participated in gender training. They knew better than we did what their work programmes would be over the next five years. If they didn't formulate the Plan themselves, they certainly wouldn't be likely to implement it. The then Chief of SDWW, Leena Kirjavainen, fully supported the idea; we proceeded to develop a methodology and convince management.

A presentation was made to the Director General and top management to obtain their approval and support for the 'strategic' planning process. A 'strategic planning method' together with a manual and set of supporting materials were presented to representatives of each of 65 Services (technical units) grouped into 25 Divisional (sectoral) workshops that SDWW facilitated, to familiarise the planners with the procedures and stimulate the generation of ideas about medium-term goals. These planners then worked over a six-month period to develop their 'strategic plans', which included a background, a justification, a statement of the development objectives, a description of the activities, inputs, outputs, and monitoring indicators to be used, and a budget and calendar of implementation. The Service plans were reviewed and eventually approved by all Service staff. The draft plans were commented on by SDWW and by the FAO Evaluation Service. Comments focused only on technical questions such as 'Are the objectives attainable? Are the inputs appropriate?' With rare exceptions, there were no normative judgements made regarding the gender content of the plans. The support of gender experts was requested on only two or three occasions, when the respective Services were unable to formulate their own plans due to lack of knowledge.

In these cases, SDWW staff or a gender consultant provided the expertise, working directly with the staff of these Services and their work programmes.

The 65 individual Service plans were consolidated into 25 Divisional plans by divisional staff (usually they were not gender experts). These were then consolidated into five Departmental plans, which were then consolidated by SDWW into a single FAO Plan of Action that was presented to the FAO Conference in 1995 and approved (FAO 1997). Follow-up to the Plan's implementation was meant to be done in the same fashion in which it had been formulated: Services are responsible for implementing and monitoring their own Plans; Divisions monitor and evaluate their Services; Departments monitor and evaluate their Divisions, and SDWW, together with the Service responsible for overall planning, would monitor and evaluate the Departments.

The Plan had many unique features:

- All activities foreseen in the plan fit carefully within the 'normal' working programmes of the various units.
- Responsibility for implementation of the plans lies with the staff of these units who are aware of, and generally in agreement with, what they are supposed to do.
- All activities foreseen are budgeted.
- All development goals have specific monitoring indicators.
- Almost all units in the organisation, irrespective of their areas of activity, have WID plans— including 100 per cent of all technical units, but also many administrative and service units—for example, Personnel, the document and photo libraries, the press service (several of these were at first excluded from the planning process, but later *they asked* to be included).
- Some of the technical units are concerned exclusively with developing and implementing operational procedures, such as planning, reporting, and monitoring. These units also developed their strategic WID plans, which, unsurprisingly, contemplate ways to make these procedures more gender sensitive.
- With respect to Personnel, the development objectives were to improve the overall hiring, retention, and promotion of women professional staff. Personnel couldn't achieve this alone—the support of all technical units was required. Therefore, all Divisions set targets for hiring and promotion.

How do I explain the fact that, while staff indicated that gender training had left them 'ready, willing and unable' to deal with gender in their work, they were in fact able to develop strategic WID plans? First, many of the plans devised anticipate the means to enable staff to better incorporate gender dimensions in the future—such as guidelines, evaluations, and even specific training. Second, the strategic planning process was an 'action-research' and 'action-learning' process where staff worked together, with gender experts as facilitators and resource persons, to formulate plans. Therefore, the participatory planning exercise should be evaluated not only in terms of its outcomes (the plans themselves), but also in terms of the learning processes that were generated throughout the organisation.

An undertaking of this magnitude was not simple. The main problems encountered during plan formulation can be summarised as follows:

- Due to unevenness in the gender training process, a few Services lacked properly qualified or motivated staff and were unable to formulate plans on their own.
- Lack of familiarity with strategic planning and formulating plans on the part of staff meant that many plans had to be reformulated several times, generating resistance due to excessive workload.
- The concern about lack of funds to implement the plans was present at the time the plans were being formulated, since many Services considered that their funds were too low even to implement their 'normal' programme of work. Therefore we encouraged the development of activities that would require no additional funding, and we encouraged people to seek external funding where necessary. However, some two months after the Plan was approved, FAO was forced to cut its budget by about 20 per cent, which was followed by additional severe budget reductions. In these circumstances, many staff reported that the WID plans would not be fully implemented without these required additional resources.

Three years after the Plan was adopted, an evaluation of gender mainstreaming at FAO, carried out for the Norwegian government, had this to say about its implementation:

> *Even though divisions have been mandated to write their contribution to the Plan of Action, not every division represented in the plan has adopted mainstreaming ideals. It seems that divisions that have always been active*

in integrating gender concerns have been encouraged by the Plan of Action and the process of drawing up the activities has been a participatory process. For other divisions, writing the Plan of Action contribution has been a necessary evil, with which nobody identified and which some staff member had to comply with for form's sake. Others hired outside consultants to write the divisions' contribution. Obviously in such cases there is no ownership or commitment. Thus, a member of one division included in the Plan of Action and operative in a field where gender issues are of considerable importance, plainly rejected the thought that the operations of his service had any bearing on gender whatsoever. (Geisler et al. 1999)

This generally negative assessment of the plan's methodology is valid to a certain degree, since staff members were indeed 'forced' to contribute to plans. But 65 Services and 25 Divisions developed plans, and it is perhaps not reasonable to expect that *all* would 'adopt mainstreaming ideals', particularly when gender considerations are not equally relevant to all Services and Divisions (e.g. to the Service dealing with international trade in products such as oil seed). It is also not necessarily the case that, if a consultant is hired to formulate the plan together with the Service involved, there will be no 'ownership'. The provision of gender expertise to support a Service's staff can work very well, as was the case with the Statistics Division at FAO which is cited as a 'success story' in the same Norwegian review. The Statistics Division, known as one of the most conservative at FAO, began seriously to mainstream gender issues and change its work methods and plans after a gender statistics consultant worked directly with and for its staff (Perucci 1992).

The Norwegian government report went on to note:

The overall impression still was that nobody followed up on the implementation of the Plan of Action . . . the gender focal points who should be doing the monitoring have neither the skills, tools nor the time and money to comply with this task. Since . . . there is no ownership of the plan in senior management this situation is not going to change until incentives are built into the structures. This might also mean that the gender mainstreaming activities that are happening, might remain unnoticed, unrecorded and unmonitored. (Geisler et al.)

Senior management, indeed, authorised but was barely involved in the planning process. Unfortunately, owing to the lack of effective monitoring, it is not possible to assess the actual impact of the planning process on the organisation's work. Setting up a participatory planning

process is one thing, but getting top managers to participate actively, and replicating the process continuously in order to monitor implementation is quite another. Stakeholder participation is time-, energy-, and financial resource-intensive. What was clear to me, however, was that the non-expert planners in general responded well; they were capable in most instances of carrying out their own planning, and had the knowledge about their programmes and needs to permit realistic and relevant mainstreaming to occur. They were generally pleased with the fact that they were considered as stakeholders, were treated with respect, and weren't being forced to implement someone else's ideas (although a minority did resent having to develop a WID plan at all). In fact, the strategic planning exercise itself was appreciated so much that several Services began to apply the process to create their own five-year Service work plans.

Conclusions: stakeholders as an impediment, or an opportunity?

In this paper, I have presented two types of mainstreaming experiences. One was at field level, with UN project heads who had no previous gender training and who had no clear mandate to deal with gender in their work, other than a request from UNDP that they participate in a workshop. The other was at headquarters level, with staff who had received gender training, and where there was a clear policy mandate and a top–down instruction for people to participate in the mainstreaming exercise. Both exercises were premised on the idea that meaningful planning can occur through dialogue in an environment of mutual respect and mutual learning. Both exercises depended upon the knowledge and experience of the different stakeholders in the process. In both experiences, the immediate outcomes expected by the different stakeholders were not those that actually materialised—they represented in some instances a compromise, and in most a distinct improvement over the pre-existing situation, but in no instance were they less than what those involved anticipated. As gender experts, we were pleasantly surprised by the outcomes, since we, like most others, had learned to have low expectations—to encounter perhaps insurmountable resistance, incomprehension, and lack of skills. Stakeholder participation is not a 'magic bullet'. It is difficult, it has certain prerequisites, and its results are still subject to external limitations and to internal problems related to lack of follow-up and institutionalisation of democratic procedures. Whether the

ultimate outcome in implementation fulfils everyone's newly created expectations or not, one thing seems fairly certain—the direction is the right one.

Drawing upon these experiences, and reflecting on the gender mainstreaming literature, I am led to conclude that there is as yet great inconsistency in both analysis and recommendations in terms of: who precisely the stakeholders are in gender mainstreaming efforts; how these stakeholders should be characterised; how the stakeholders should be involved in the process of organisational change; and how the *process* of gender mainstreaming affects the *outcomes*. A tentative summary of the different approaches to these questions is presented in Table 1. In general it can be said that the literature on gender mainstreaming is beginning to place greater emphasis on transformative processes throughout organisations that are expected to be mainstreaming agents (e.g. planning agencies). A small body of literature is beginning to emerge that documents strategies to achieve more far-reaching changes in work relationships between gender experts and other stakeholders within organisations. For example, Rao and Kelleher (1998) report on the BRAC Gender Quality Action-Learning experience and methodology that improved these working relationships, although it has not yet achieved gender mainstreaming. This experience is informed both by participatory planning methodologies, and concepts from gender and organisational change, focusing on how organisations in general are gendered, how women within organisations are disempowered, and how male management cultures function. Rao and Stuart are among the few who advocate a 'stakeholders' approach to gender planning. They are concerned that the tendency of gender planners is to focus on outcomes, 'not recognising that process itself may be an outcome' (1997:16).

> *We must negotiate with members of the organisations, and discover what they see the issues to be regarding gender . . . [N]egotiation is not simply a tactic to increase the enthusiasm of those with whom one is engaging in the organisations, the ideas of the change agent are also a subject for negotiation.* (Rao and Stuart 1997: 14–15)

The room that I leave for sceptics is very great indeed. It will, for many, be incomprehensible that I could suggest that those who should be responsible for empowering women are precisely those who do the most to disempower them; that we should place such a critical task in the hands of those who are the most unaware and bound by tradition,

Table 1: Mainstreaming approaches based upon characterisation of planners as stakeholders

Strategies	Active resisters	Passive targets	Active change agents
Sensitisation	*Emphasis on outcomes* • Participatory gender training with or without follow-up. • Studies and data incorporated in main policy documents. • Pressure from outside groups on management.	*Emphasis on outcomes* • Participatory gender training to reduce resistance, with or without follow-up. • Studies and data created for specific units and tasks. • Persuasion of management.	*Emphasis on process* • Gender training followed by: - action-learning processes on an ongoing basis; - trainer learns together with trainees.
Planning tools	• Pre-formulated global plans, guidelines, monitoring indicators, etc. with mandate from above for adherence.	• Increasingly sector-specific and task-specific guidelines created by gender experts. • Gender support provided to specific units.	• Activity-specific • Devised jointly with change agents at level of specific work programmes/ sectors.
Gender experts	• High-level management positions or input. • Gender units formulate policies, procedures, targets, and instruments. • Build alliances within and outside organisations. • Mobilise pressure groups.	• Gender units and focal points. • Dissemination of information. • Participation in teams of non-experts providing gender input.	• Facilitators. • Prioritisation of strategic interventions. • Consensus building. • Mobilisation of resources for action-learning. • Participatory organisational change.
Accountability	• Centrally-managed monitoring. • Personnel performance assessments. • Organisation-wide evaluations.	• Reporting procedures	• Developed on a participatory basis. • Voluntary adherence. • Incorporation in lessons learned experiences .

procedure, and bureaucratic systems of rewards. But this I do not argue. The gender 'expert', 'entrepreneur', or 'advocate' has a crucial role. In a 'stakeholders' approach this role is, in fact, greater and more difficult than in a more conventional planning process. The 'gender expert' is the catalyst *par excellence*. The gender expert also bears a great deal of the blame if the process does not work—rather than pointing the finger at the institutional, psychological, and cultural barriers, the finger gets pointed right back at oneself. The process focuses not on barriers, but on releasing potential. If it didn't work, one didn't deal adequately with the potential, or there was something wrong with the process. The process itself is risky, the outcomes are uncertain, the transformative potential as yet unknown. However, I would suggest that we already know the risks, uncertainties, and transformative potential of continuing to see the majority of the stakeholders in the process either as active resisters or passive implementers. We know that it is time to try something new.

Notes

1 The discussion in this paper is restricted to gender mainstreaming in complex organisations. It does not pretend to broach the broad and much more diverse literature that deals with grassroots or project-level experience, or that dealing with women-only organisations.

2 There are notable exceptions, for example with respect to the Ford Foundation (Kardam 1991).

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