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Gender mainstreaming: The experience of SADC and lessons learned



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CASE STORY ON GENDER DIMENSION OF AID FOR TRADE

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING: THE EXPERIENCE OF SADC AND
LESSONS LEARNT**



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1. INTRODUCTION:

'A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are workers in both spheres – those most responsible and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer most when the two spheres meet at cross-purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two.' Gita Sen

One of SADC's main objectives is to achieve development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration. SADC has signed and ratified a range of declaration and protocols aimed at eliminating poverty and hunger fuelled by gender disparities as well as engendering social and economic development programmes including Trade.

Unfortunately, women continue to face challenges that deny them access to and control over productive resources. This exacerbates their already disadvantaged position in the economic front and further reduces their chances to opportunities and benefits of productive resources in our societies. In view of the current SADC economic integration agenda, more concrete efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment efforts necessary to increase the capacity of women to participate more effectively in the trade and economic activities cannot be over emphasized. There is overwhelming evidence that women and girls are more disadvantaged than men and boys, both across societies and among the poor.

Gender inequality is constructed both through society's formal laws and statutes and through unwritten norms and shared understandings. It is not only pervasive across all societies but also the most prevalent form of social disadvantage *within* societies. It cuts across all other forms of inequality, such as class, caste and race. And because gender is key to the organization of production and reproduction, women are also "at the crossroads between Economic growth and human development". The argument for addressing gender inequality, therefore, is not simply that it exists in all societies but that it exists at all levels of society.

2. WHAT HAS WORKED FOR SADC IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

- i. **The Establishment of Appropriate Institutional Structures:** SADC has established clear structures and institutions responsible for executing the gender mainstreaming mandate. All structures of SADC both at Sub Regional and national levels have clearly defined responsibilities to coordinate and implement gender.

- ii. **The Development and Adoption of Sub-Regional Policy Instruments for Mainstreaming Gender in SADC:** Clear policy instruments and guidelines signed and adopted by SADC leaders at the highest level are available at SADC. These have over the years provided the catalytic ability for an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming. The existing SADC policy instruments that guide gender mainstreaming efforts for SADC include the following:
- a) **Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2001(RISDP):** The objectives of RISDP among others, is to provide strategic direction on the key priority issues that SADC should address in the next 15 years. Gender is identified as one of the critical crosscutting issues to achieving poverty reduction; improvement of the quality of the standard of living of the majority of the citizen of the region. The major areas addressed in the RISDP, include: Mainstreaming Gender in all sectoral policies, programmes and activities at national and sub-regional levels.
 - b) **SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997):** The SADC Heads of State or Government signed the Declaration on Gender and Development on 8th September 1997 in Blantyre, Malawi. Article H of the Declaration commits Heads of State and their respective countries to, inter alia; placing gender firmly on the agenda of the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative among other critical areas of concern.
 - c) **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008):** This groundbreaking milestone for gender equality and gender equity was signed by SADC Heads of State and Government at their 28th Summit, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the 17 August, 2008. The protocol has elevated the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development to the most binding of the regional organization's instruments. With 28 substantive targets for achieving gender equality by 2015, this initiative is a global first, and places SADC at the cutting edge of innovative strategies for giving global and continental commitments meaning at sub-regional level.
- iii. **The Development of Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender in Trade:** In 2004, SADC developed clear guidelines for mainstreaming gender issues in Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment. This focused on Policy and Legal frameworks, Institutional Frameworks, Training and Capacity Building, programme interventions and monitoring and evaluation. These guidelines provide clear examples of appropriate interventions necessary at each level. Most importantly these guidelines enhance the efforts of experts in integrating gender at various levels in a more systematic manner.
- iv. **Development of the SADC Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit: In 2009,** SADC developed a SADC Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit. The SADC Gender Mainstreaming Resource Kit aims to make gender mainstreaming the centerpiece of organizational practice in the SADC Secretariat. This also assists in the region's effort to standardize approaches towards gender mainstreaming. It will also be a useful resource for integrating gender into sectors such as Trade and Industry and Finance and Investment, Infrastructure and Services, Social and Human development and Special Programmes, Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation, Admin, Human Resources, and CCU. The toolkit is a practical working guide with step by step checklists and questions to ask for gender mainstreaming and since its use, more and more projects in trade have a gender perspective.

v. **Training and Capacity Building of Trade Experts as a Strategy for Sustainability:**

SADC has over the years embarked on Sector specific training and capacity building in gender analysis, planning, and gender budgeting specific to the sectors of trade, industry, finance and investment. The trainings are usually very practical and explain the importance of gender equality from a development perspective. This has also afforded skills development in gender responsive planning and budgeting (engendering budgets of Directorates of TIFI and the clusters of TIFI). Training has capacitated trade experts in their planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation to engender their planning and budgeting processes at all levels. Furthermore the need to establish a strong base of experts who have the capacity to integrate gender into their programmes is crucial and needs to be sustained, and this approach has proved to work in that regard. Training has further been provided to experts in Trade experts to appreciate the importance of gender equality in Trade negotiations at national, regional and international trade negotiations (EPAs, Cotonou Agreement, WTO, etc.);

Customs Experts have also been trained to raise awareness of the gender issues and concerns that Informal Cross Border Traders (ICBTs) face at borders and with immigration officials at boarder point. Discussions on the importance of simplification of customs procedure to enable fast movement of people and goods at boarder posts and gender awareness of customs and immigration officials have also been engaged upon. On the 1-3 November 2010, SADC shall host a regional High Level Meeting on Informal Cross Border Traders with the intention to engage with all stakeholders, such as immigration officers and trade experts to reduce bottlenecks they face in trade. The main output of this high level Policy Meeting will be a Regional Advocacy Strategy on ICBT's.

In addition, SADC has strengthened the capacity of business women to access regional and international markets through their inclusion and participation in trade fairs and expositions at national, regional and international trade fairs and investment fora). The 2010 SADC Women in Business Trade Fair and Investment Forum was held in Namibia, Windhoek in August 2010. There have also been efforts to strengthen national business women associations to form regional networks/organizations as well as be able to and participate in the regional private sector initiatives.

vi. **Research Studies:**

Research and studies often provide the much needed well informed direction for further interventions in mainstreaming gender in trade. It is on this basis that SADC Secretariat regularly commissions specific studies on gender mainstreaming. The SADC Gender Unit, with the support from UNECA; African Trade Policy Centre, is currently conducting a SADC Study on the Gendered Impacts on Trade with a view to establish the magnitude of gender barriers, gaps and weakness in trade policies, programmes and activities at both regional and national levels in order to address them more appropriately. The main output will be recommendations and actions that will guide clear implementation geared towards eliminating the gender issues in trade policies and process at national and regional levels.

SADC Secretariat in May 2003 commissioned a study to assess the capacity needs of the Secretariat and National Machineries for gender equality in 10 SADC Member states. The findings of the study at the Secretariat confirmed that there is awareness on gender issues among SADC staff members in all Directorates. Member States were urged to implement the recommendations to address the challenges, which the

study pointed out in the respective countries. The Secretariat was also directed to implement the recommendations that are directed at the regional level.

A Gender Audit Study was also commissioned in 2000 targeted at Sector Coordinating Units (before restructuring), to assess the extent of integration of gender equality concerns in programming under the SADC Programme of Action. The results of the study enabled Secretariat to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming

- vii. **Monitoring and Evaluation** of implementation of programmes is an important activity to measure progress made in implementing gender mainstreaming. SADC has developed a Gender Monitoring Tool that is used to collect data on progress made by SADC Member States in implementing the SADC Gender Commitments, including Gender Mainstreaming. Progress is also measured at Secretariat level.

3. LESSONS LEARNT IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING THAT IS USEFUL FOR TRADE;

- Establishment of the supportive institutional machinery is essential in gender mainstreaming as it serves as a strong back up to implementation;
- Development of Policies and frameworks is important in ensuring an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming;
- Development of clear gender mainstreaming guidelines for Trade experts often works to simplify the process of gender mainstreaming thus resulting in real progress;
- Capacity development and training of stakeholders is essential for sustainability and continuity of gender mainstreaming efforts;
- Toolkits must be developed: Mainstreaming continues to remain highly technicalised and 'untouchable'. There is need to simplify, and demystify gender mainstreaming as a way of ensuring greater involvement for all Trade Experts
- Gender mainstreaming is a long and slow process; results may not be visible in the short term but
- Use of research and study results is useful in assessing progress, re-shaping focus and even guiding the way forward. It is also important to utilize the results of the already available studies
- Regular monitoring and evaluation to follow up implementation of commitments is essential. Therefore development of user friendly tools, indicators and checklists is also critical to help measure progress and strategize for way forward.

4. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS:

- Lack of appropriate institutional machineries both at national and local levels;
- Failure to fully implement of the declarations and protocols;
- Limited human resources; Shortage of staff especially in the area of gender continues to be a trend that surely impedes progress;
- Limited technical capacity in gender mainstreaming; as stated above, the concept seems to be very difficult to comprehend, even within the national gender machineries that are expected to lead the process;
- Limited investment in institutional structures to deal with gender equality.

5. IN CONCLUSION:

Gender mainstreaming in SADC is not new. SADC has been involved in various activities to mainstream sectors since the early late 80's. The debate as well actions carried out overtime compound as a great investment for gender equality and equity. There is need to safeguard the investments and use the benefits to advance the current efforts. There are also opportunities for strengthening current efforts.

What has also worked for SADC and played a critical role in the adoption of Policy frameworks and instruments necessary for gender mainstreaming is the Political Will. This has to be advanced further by ensuring policy translates to action.

Despite major achievements noted, several gaps require closing, including the lack of a coherent mechanism running through the different levels of the SADC structures and institutions to systematically address the integration and sustenance of gender issues in organisational systems and procedures, structures, planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the work being done.