



ARTICLE

ARE WE THERE YET?**An Evaluation of the impact of the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in Zimbabwe**

Lexington Matonhodze * and Tobias Guzura **

Lupane State University and Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Abstract:

The year 2014 marks the 10th anniversary of the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (hereinafter referred to as the gender policy). In celebrating this milestone, it is prudent to evaluate how the gender policy has influenced gender mainstreaming. The paper addresses three fundamental questions viz; what are the changes (if any) that have occurred over the past decade? What are the challenges confronting gender mainstreaming efforts; and lastly what should be done to address the arising challenges? The above questions were answered through an analysis of the various sectors in Zimbabwe. Whilst acknowledging that the gender policy has kick started the mammoth process towards gender equality and equity, the paper recognises the challenges being faced and the great work lying ahead; it thus concludes that indeed Zimbabwe has taken off but is not yet there with regards gender equality and equity in all the sectors in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Zimbabwe – Gender – Domestic Violence - Health

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (hereinafter referred to as the gender policy) in mainstreaming gender into development has been characterised with mixed fortunes ever since its promulgation in 2004. It should be emphasised that the gender policy has had a profound positive impact economically, politically and socially. Some of the important milestones reached include the re-introduction of a gender oriented ministry namely the Ministry of Women, Gender and Community Development (MoWGCD) in 2005 to champion gender mainstream-

ing into development; the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No 17 (2005) to create a conducive environment for gender equality; the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act (2007); the creation of gender focal points in all line ministries, Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee, Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender, the UN Thematic group all to ensure gender mainstreaming into development and the recognition of gender rights in the new constitution. Increased representation of women in decision making positions in most sectors, gender parity in primary and lower secondary school attainment, in-



creased economic participation by women (mines, agriculture, cottage and home industry), among others are positive benefits of gender mainstreaming into development. However, the dual system of law, persistence of discriminatory practices, lack of coordination of the gender management system and inadequate implementation of the gender policy are some stumbling blocks hindering the success of gender mainstreaming. Sectors such as Land, Agriculture and Resettlement; Industry, Commerce and Employment; Education and Training; Mining, Energy, Environment and Tourism; Democracy, Human Rights and Justice Delivery; Housing, Water and Information and Media shall be discussed in an attempt to explore the impact of the gender policy. While the gender policy has made significant contribution in achieving development, it will be reiterated that, although laws and legislation have been put in place, it should not be an end in itself. Laws and policies provide the essential foundation for gender mainstreaming, but in reality it goes beyond these and depend more on women's socio-economic empowerment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper uses the Social Relations Approach (SRA) or Framework in analysing the impact of the gender policy. The three

essential components of the Social Relations Approach are: the goal of development as human well-being; the concept of social relations and institutional analysis. Its aims are to analyse existing gender inequalities in the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power and to design policies which enable women to be agents in their own development. Concepts rather than tools are used in this framework in order to focus on the relationships between people, and their relationship to resources and activities, and how they are re-worked through institutions

Looking at the first component of the framework, the definition of development in the Social Relations Approach is about increasing human well-being and not just about economic growth or increased productivity. The core elements of human well-being are survival, security and autonomy. Development interventions must be assessed on the extent to which they contribute to human well-being as well as what they contribute in terms of technical efficiency. Production therefore includes not only market production, but encompasses a wide range of tasks that people perform, in order to reproduce human labour, to survive and to safeguard the environment.



In this framework “social relations are understood as the way in which different groups of people are positioned in relation to resources”. Social relations determine people’s roles, responsibilities and claims, as well as the rights and control they have over their own lives and those of others. Social relations include gender relations, class, ethnicity, and race. Social relations are not static; they can change over time and are influenced by changes at the macro level. The access people and groups have to material and intangible resources are also determined by social relations.

The factors which produce gender inequalities are not found solely in the family but exist across a wide range of institutions, including the international community, the state and the market place. An institution is defined by Kabeer

in March et al (1999) as a framework of rules for achieving particular economic or social goals. Social difference and inequalities are created and perpetuated by institutions. Organisations are defined as the specific structural forms that institutions take. Gender-awareness necessitates an analysis of the way these institutions create and reproduce inequalities.

The Social Relations Approach identifies four key institutions: the state, the market, the community, and the family/ kinship around which an analysis of the impact of the gender policy in Zimbabwe can be evaluated.

CONCEPTUALISING GENDER, GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND DEVELOPMENT

Gender mainstreaming is defined as; the process of assessing the

INSTITUTIONAL LOCATION	ORGANISATIONAL / STRUCTURALFORM
State	Legal, military, administrative organisations
Market	Firms, financial corporations, farming-enterprises, Multinationals, etc
Community	Village tribunals, voluntary associations, informal networks, patron-client relationships, NGO's
Family / kinship	Household, extended families, lineage groupings etc

Adapted from March et al (1999)



implications for women and men of any planning action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs, in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (ECOSOC, 1997:2).

On the other hand development refers to a, qualitative and quantitative measure of progress in a given community or country at a particular stage. It is the process of expanding freedoms that people enjoy. It entails removing the barriers to human freedom such as poverty, unaccountable government, social derivation, lack of functioning infrastructure, tyranny, repression etc (Sen, 2001). As such the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy launched in 2004 is the overarching instrument designed to guide the implementation of gender sensitive legislation and socio-economic policies, programs and projects. Its overall objective is to mainstream gender in all sectors in order eliminate all political, economic, social and cultural practices that impede equality of all sexes. Therefore, the general goal of gender policies is to achieve gender

equality and equity in all sectors and at all levels taking cognisance of the nexus between gender and development.

Following the above, it therefore stands to reason that, Zimbabwe's gender policy was drawn up and adopted to provide guidelines and the institutional framework to engender all sectoral policies, programs, projects and activities at all levels of society and economy (Kanyenze, 2011 p.225). For purposes of this discussion the assessment of the gender policy impact shall be looked at with bias towards four critical areas which were prioritised by the government namely; education and training, women in politics and decision making, women and health and institutional mechanism for the advancement of women. The National Gender Policy was implemented through the National Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Workplan (2008-2012). Literature reviewed indicated that while women constitute over 52 per cent of the total population of Zimbabwe, their participation in the economy is confined largely to agricultural production for domestic consumption and labour intensive tasks essential for household survival such as child rearing, fetching water and firewood. The National Gender Policy recognises the fact that women constitute more than 52 per cent of the population of Zimbabwe thus,



their representation and participation in the development process should be commensurate with this numerical reality (National Gender Policy, 2004).

The establishment of an institutional mechanism to spearhead gender mainstreaming into development is the cornerstone of the gender policy. As such, the fulfillment through the creation of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MoWAGCD) in 2005 can be hailed as the key impact of the gender policy. Kanyenze, (2011: 232), noted that, the ministry's mandate is to advance women and to promote gender equality and community and it seeks to address gender inequality in a multi-sectoral and integrated manner. In order to monitor and evaluate progress, Gender Focal Persons (GFPs) and Gender Committees were created. However, there are no feedback mechanisms for quarterly reports submitted to the ministry, inadequate training on gender mainstreaming and the exclusion of the focal persons (GFPs) from senior management and policy planning meetings has reduced the potential impact.

In addition, the Women Parliamentary Caucus responsible for promoting the gender agenda in parliament was formulated, as one arm of the institutional mechanism required to promote

mainstream gender into development. To compliment such efforts, Parliament established the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on gender which assesses progress and monitors the activities and implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment policies in the country. Responsible for coordination are the UN Gender Thematic Group and the Inter-ministerial Committee Gender both of which are chaired by the MoWAGCD. It should be emphasised that the creation of the above stated mechanism all aimed at gender mainstreaming has been a notable impact of the gender policy in Zimbabwe. During the recent constitutional reform process from 2009 to 2012, the Women Parliamentary Caucus was very active in the constitution making process (ZWRNC, 2012:6). Unfortunately by 2009; the Inter-ministerial Committee had not been put in place. According to Kanyenze et al (2011:23), for the committee to be effective it should ensure it provides adequate space for the participation of non-state actors such as the civil society organisations, non-governmental organisation, trade unions and development partners to exercise their role as strategic partners in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, the capacity of the MoWAGCD officers to implement gender



mainstreaming effectively at provincial and district level largely remains limited, thus impacting adversely on the progress of the gender policy. The establishment of Gender Focal Points in all line ministries supported by the MoWAGCD through capacity building programs, has been another plausible impact of the gender policy in mainstreaming gender into development. Their mandate is to mainstream gender in all ministries, however, 'no accountability mechanism has been established by the ministry to determine their effectiveness (Zimbabwe, 2009b: 12). However, there is a draw-back clause that allows for discrimination on the basis of customary law, which is a challenge to women, who more often are adversely affected by customary practices and norms. Thus although policies and legislation have been put in place, it is not an end in itself, achieving gender equality encompass not only the adoption of specific laws but their implementation.

Reduction of gender disparities in the education and training sector has also been another commendable impact of the gender policy. The nexus between education and development cannot be exaggerated. According to Ncube (1987:106), education stands as the major means through which development can be achieved. Echoing the same, the gender policy summarised education as the foundation of eco-

nomie and social development. Through the gender policy influence, net-enrolment ratios (NER) by gender at primary school level, peaked at 98.5% in 2006, decreased to 96% in 2007 and by 2009 it stood at 91% (MDGs Report, 2010). Statistics of the Net-Enrolment Ratio, according to the same source, indicate that at lower secondary there was a near gender parity though it noted that girls comprise only 35 percent of pupils in Upper secondary and secondary school completion is higher for boys. Increase in literacy levels among girls and women is crucial in promoting development since it also reduces child and maternal mortality rate as well as reducing poverty in the long term.

Moreover, in an attempt to address gender disparities in terms of the subjects taken by females and males at high schools, and with the motive of encouraging females to take up sciences and technical subjects, mathematics and science camps have been introduced at selected schools (Zimbabwe, 2009b). At higher institutes of learning the government introduced an affirmative action policy which meant to increase female enrolment. The policy stipulates that, females are allowed to enroll in degree programmes at universities with one or two points fewer than males doing the same degree (Kanyenze, 2011: 223). In line with this motive of in-



creasing women's education at higher institution, the Women University in Africa was established. Although this has created space for females to attain degrees, they remain concentrated in the non-technical programmes such as arts and commerce, few are venturing into science programmes. However this reflects the choice of the subjects they had taken at high school.

Furthermore, the gender policy made a landmark impact by providing facilities and a policy framework to enable girls who fall pregnant to continue with their education. In addressing the problem of pregnant girls and education, the then Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) put in place Policy Circular No 35, which provided pregnant pupils to return to school after delivery (MoESAC Report, 2005). According to the MDG Report (2010), on Zimbabwe, the literacy rate of 15-24 year olds by gender reached 99 percent for both males and females in this group. Female university student enrolment increased from 23 percent to 37 percent in 2007 (Kanyenze et al, 2011:235). Thus one can argue that, though gender parity has not been reached, particularly at tertiary levels of education commendable improvements have been witnessed.

According to Kanyenze et al (2011:235), the low representation of women at secondary school and university level has also affected their holding positions in both the public and private sector. Hence there is a corresponding relationship between attainment of tertiary education and holding decision making positions. The gender policy has also managed to promote participation and representation of women in decision making positions in all sectors and at all levels. The percentage share of women in parliament increased from 14% in 1990-1995, to 16% in 2005, to 18,5 % in the 2008 elections (14% in the Lower House and 33% in the Upper House (MDG Report, 2010: 21). Zimbabwe has had a female Vice-President since 2005 and had a female Deputy Prime Minister during the duration of the Government of National Unity between 2009 and 2013, President of the Senate, Deputy Speaker of House of Assembly and Judge President of the High Court between 2006 -2010. Considering that 52% of the population in Zimbabwe is female, the above statistics clearly indicate that women are disproportionately represented in politics and other decision making bodies.

In the Defense Forces, the gender policy seems to have had insignificant impact with regard to women holding



decision making positions. Kanyenze et al (2011:228) noted that, there are no women at brigadier general level and above, there are 7% women Colonels, 6% Lieutenant-Colonels, 5% Group Captains, 13% Wing Commanders and 15% Flight Lieutenant. In the Prison Services, there is a brighter picture with 50% women Assistant Commissioners and 19% Superintendents. Generally, the impact of the gender policy in as far as women participation in decision making in all sectors, shows a slight increase. With the exception of a co-Minister at the Home Affairs during the Government of National Unity and an acting Defence minister in 2001 there is an observation that, female ministers are found in what might be termed 'soft' ministries such as those dealing with gender, social services and small-to-medium enterprises. As such there is need for greater qualitative and quantitative representation by women in decision making positions in the public and private sectors. Low representation of women in the public sector in turn influence their participation in all development hence the arguable assertion that, the achievement of MDG No 3 is the sine qua non to attaining all the other MDGs.

Better representation of women in high level and decision making positions assist in getting women into the econom-

ic mainstream. Considering that access to land separated the rich and the poor in the traditional society and continuous to define the economic status of people in both rural and urban areas, the gender policy has had little impact in addressing gender equality regarding land access, control and ownership. Women constitute only 18% of those allocated land under A1 Model and 12% of those under A2, despite the fact that the 2003 Committee had recommended a quota of 40% of land allocations, especially A1 to women and that 40% of the funding reserved for women (ZWRCN, and SARDC-WIDSAA, 2005). Thus the majority of women continue to have secondary-use rights, especially under the communal tenure system. Since 86% of women in Zimbabwe live in the rural areas, where they depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and families, women play a key role in agriculture. However, the lack of gender sensitivity in the implementation of the programme resulted in no significant change in women access to land.

In addition, the policy had shifted from a social justice approach to a political reward system, thus very few women benefited. Apart from politicisation of the land issue, the gender policy failed to eliminate discrimination, as summarised, 'a key barrier to gender equality is the discrimination stemming from dual system



of law, where customary law continue to disadvantage women' (UNDP, 2012). Article 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, however the issue of land lies more within the domain of traditional leaders, who are the 'gate-keepers' of patriarchy, hence further complicates access to land by women. Kanyenze (2011) noted that, the marginalisation of women's access to land was perpetuated by gender imbalances in terms of traditional leaders in the rural areas. Zimbabwe has 266 chiefs, of whom 5 are women 474 headmen, of whom 5% are women, meaning that when unmarried women take their husbands to these leaders, only a few may sympathise with them because they are also women.

Moreover, the gender policy has also resulted in mild attempts to demystify the mining sector and also formulate, develop and adopt gender sensitive policies that enhance equitable and equal participation of women and men in mining, energy, tourism and environment. As the custodians of gender mainstreaming into development, the MoWAGCD has encouraged for the involvement of women in the mining sector through the window called 'women in mining' (Maturure, 2008). The Broad Based Women's Economic Empowerment Framework (BBWEEF) of 2012 seeks to empower women in three eco-

nomic sectors which are Mining, Tourism and Agriculture and to eliminate gender discrimination, promote equality between men and women, ensure a comprehensive approach to women economic empowerment and ensure harmonisation of affirmative action programming. However, the formation of such grouping has been on a partisan, thus discrediting by location and freedom to choice of association. Such influence tends to hinder/limit participation of those who would like to benefit from the mining project but are not interested in the politics of the day.

Training media persons to be gender sensitive to facilitate positive portrayal of women by the media has been another area, where the gender policy focused. However, it has not managed to significantly influence Zimbabweans to transform perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. Media plays an integral part in the communication system of all societies. According to Gender and the Media (2011), not only does the media influence and shape policy formulation, it also sways the public conception of gender roles and responsibilities. It should however, be indicated that efforts have been made to discourage the media from degrading or exploiting women especially in the area of entertainment and advertising, and undermining their role and positions in so-



ciety and reinforcing gender oppression and stereotypes. A landmark impact was the Delta Beverages advert, depicting an almost nude woman, which was removed on air on ZTV.

Training personnel to be gender sensitive can facilitate a positive portrayal of women in the media and society at large is another contribution of the gender policy (Zimbabwe, 2009b:16). Civil society and non-governmental organisations have already done commendable work in that direction. Examples include the UNFPA training of media personnel in gender sensitive reporting on HIV/AIDS and the empowerment of women on programmes like Gender Diaries. However, despite such notable impact of the gender policy in gender mainstreaming, the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (2011) report illustrates that women remain at the periphery of the news, either appearing in limited roles or simply invisible.

The Health industry is another sector where the gender policy has made notable footprints, following the 'feminisation' of HIV/AIDS. As such the relationship between gender, HIV/AIDS and poverty has been understood in a way that informs policy and encourages the adoption and implementation of practical strategies that empower communities to actively and effectively to the diverse impacts of

the epidemic. However, women have limited control over their sexual and reproductive health, as such the enactment of Sexual Offences Act which criminalises, intentional, deliberate, willing-full and knowing exposure or transfer of HIV/AIDS. Marital rape is also another significant achievement of the gender policy, though it remains very controversial.

Due to poor economic base women are exposed to risky behavior, which increase their vulnerability to Gender Based Violence and HIV/AIDS (Gender and HIV/AIDS, 2009). The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act (2007) can also be hailed as another milestone made by the gender policy. The Act's main purpose is to afford maximum protection to victims and survivors of domestic violence and also to act as a preventative measure on domestic violence. However, the Africa MDGs report on Zimbabwe, noted that violence against women remains a challenge and is sustained by prevailing negative socio-cultural practices, attitudes, values, norms and beliefs as well as weak implementation of laws and policies (MDGs Report, 2012).

Related to health, the gender policy also recognises the fact that water is cross-cutting and that it impacts on all sectors of the society and economy. While the gender has managed to make reforms



in the Water Act to ensure fair access by all Zimbabweans as well as creating awareness of the importance of water through the Sustainable Strategy for the National Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. The strategy recommends measures to enhance women participation including traditionally male-dominated chores such as latrine building. According to Mulenga et al (2007), the Zimbabwe gender policy gives comprehensive strategies for water supply but sanitation is not mentioned. Another challenge of the water policy is the failure to recognise urban informal settlements which are still considered illegal.

In Zimbabwe, industry and commerce is the domain of men who own most businesses in all sectors (Gender Policy, 2004). The levels of women's participation in industry and commerce and business entrepreneurship are low, possibly due to the traditional bread-winning status accredited to men, when it comes to access to employment, women and men usually do not operate on an equal footing. The MDGs Report (2010) revealed that, in 2009 the Public Service Commission had 67% women commissioners, in 2010 women comprise 20% of cabinet ministers and 26% of Permanent Secretaries, while in Government 26% of Principal Directors were women, 33 % Directors

and 28% Deputy Directors. Thus the gender policy influenced policy reforms which saw women attaining senior positions.

Of the Small to Medium Enterprise Revolving Fund that was introduced September 2006 by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, it reflected an improved portion for women (Women and land in Zimbabwe, 2009). The report reveal that, of Z\$ 16 billion (US\$ 164 million) set aside only 27% had gone to women by March 2007. By August 2007 women's projects had received nearly Z\$ 14 billion (US\$ 56 million) which was almost about 44% of the total fund (Ibid). Thus there seem to be change in priority, in favour of women projects which in turn promote sustainable development. During the economic meltdown period 2002-2008, despite the collapse of the formal economy, government policies tended target the formal economy neglecting the informal and communal economies where the majority of people particularly women are located.

CONCLUSION

Having all the above information, one can argue that Zimbabwe's National Gender Policy has impacted positively in gender mainstreaming into development. A number of laws have been implemented such as the Domestic Violence



Act (2007), which seeks to protect women and prevent them from domestic violence orchestrated due to beliefs, attitudes and societal norms prevalent in the patriarchal communal communities. The creation of Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MoWAG-CD) as a national gender machinery to spearhead gender mainstreaming efforts reflects government commitment. However addressing gender equality and equity goes beyond the jurisdiction of the MoWAGCD, lack of coherence in terms of design and implementation is required. Good examples are laws pertaining to land, which are fragmented across different ministries and legal documents; there is also no solid coherence on land access, distribution and control, which leaves women with no legal protection whatsoever. In addition, reviewing and updating the National Gender Policy through inclusive process and establishment of the Gender Observatory to monitor its implementation remains crucial. There is also need to review the Electoral Act to ensure it contains the provisions of other international and regional laws on gender that have been ratified by Zimbabwe. Without legislated and effective implementation of a gender equity system, women will continue to be marginalised. Over and above the national gender policy remains largely unimplemented and therefore its objectives unrealised.

REFERENCES

- Gender and HIV/AIDS: An Analysis of Zimbabwe's National Policies and Programs on HIV/AIDS/STIs www.kubatana.net/html/archive/gen/2012.
- Gender and the Media: A 'Snapshot' Analysis www.mmpz.org/category/resource-center Gender Equality in Zimbabwe www.wikigender.org/index.php/gender-equality.
- Gender Mainstreaming: Zimbabwe Caught on the Wrong side (2012) www.nehandaradio.com/2012
- Kanyenze, G., Kondo, T., Chitambara, P. and Martens, J. (eds.) (2011) Beyond the Enclave: Towards a Pro-Poor and Inclusive Development Strategy for Zimbabwe, LEDRIS, Harare.
- March, C, Smyth, I. Mukhopadhyay, M. (1999) A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks, Oxfam, Oxford
- Maturure, M. (2008) Mining Sector Review: A Review of the legislative and Policy framework for Community Based Natural Resources Management in the Mining Sector www.zimbabwecbrm.com/index.
- 2010 Millennium Development Goals Status Report Zimbabwe.



MDG Report (2012) Assessing Progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals Emerging Perspectives from Africa on the post-2015 development agenda.

Mulenga, M., Manase, G., and Fawcett, B. (2010), Analysis of Sanitation Policies in Southern Africa: The Case of Gender Policies in Sanitation in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, University of Southampton, Southampton.

Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality and Equity: UN in Zimbabwe's Assistance Development Framework www.zw.one.un.org/togetherwedeliver/zim.

The National Gender Policy: Zimbabwe www.genderlinks.org.za.

Promoting Gender Equality and Protection of Women's Rights, UNFPA Zimbabwe www.countryoffice.unfpa.org/zim/201/01.

Zimbabwe 2009b. Progress Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) Harare: Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development), http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/acgd/beijingplus15/ ZWRN and SARDC-WIDSAA (2005) Beyond Inequalities : Women in Zimbabwe Harare: Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre and Network and Southern African Research and Documentation Centre – Women in Development in Southern Africa Awareness Programme

* Lexington Matonhodze is a Lecturer in Development Studies at Lupane State University and Zimbabwe Open University. He also has more than ten years experience of development work in rural Zimbabwe.

** Tobias Guzura is a Senior Lecturer in Conflict, Peace, Governance and Development with the Zimbabwe Open University.