INFLUENCING NATIONAL POLICIES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY THROUGH GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Prof. Elishiba Kimani and Prof. Wanjiku Kabira
Influencing national policies towards sustainable food security through gender mainstreaming

1Prof. Elishiba Kimani and 2Prof. Wanjiku Kabira

1Department of Gender and Development Studies, Kenyatta University, P.O Box 43844-00100, Nairobi, Kenya.
Email: elishbakimani@yahoo.com

2African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi. P.O. Box 30197-00100, Nairobi– Kenya
Email: wkabira@yahoo.com

Accepted 24th August, 2014

Gender mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that the needs, interests, perspectives and knowledge of women and men are taken on board in the development of policy and its implementation. It is a process that recognizes that men and women have different needs and interests that have to be deliberately identified through gender analysis and the development of strategic interventions. Because traditional policy and planning processes have not taken the gender variable into consideration, mainstreaming gender in policies, programmes and institutions has always been an uphill task. A look at our African region shows the various institutional frameworks that keep being established and dissolved almost with equal speed. Often they only succeed in mainstreaming women into oblivion. This has often been because of the lack of appropriate tools and the fact that gender mainstreaming challenges many traditional, social-economic policies and theories. In the context of food security, every person is entitled to be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality. The same is affirmed in the Kenya Constitution (2010 Bill of Rights Article 43 (1) (c) and similar laws in other African countries. Appreciating that women's perspectives, knowledge and experiences have not been utilized in developing policies to address food security in Africa, this paper takes cognizance of the fact that food insecurity has a feminine face and that women carry the burden of food security at the households. In recognition of this problem, the paper shares tools that could be useful in mainstreaming gender in policies and programmes, on food security.

Key words: Influencing, policies, food security, gender mainstreaming

INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action so that the needs, concerns and experiences of both genders become an integral part of any policy and/or programme/project design, implementation and monitoring (Richard, 1998, Kabira etal., 2012). Gender mainstreaming as a process is about ensuring that the interests, perspectives and knowledge of men and women are taken on board during formulation and implementation of policies and programmes. It is in this context that the principal of Affirmative Action for women's representation in all decision making positions and other structures and processes as stipulated in the Constitution of Kenya,2010, and recognised globally becomes an important strategy in mainstreaming the women's agenda in the decision making structures and processes. Similarly, the constitutional provisions give considerations to other marginalized groups, among them persons with disability and minority communities where women and girls are often doubly disadvantaged. In the context of food security policies, representation of these groups in decision making is critical in ensuring that their perspectives influence policies and programmes' implementation. In addition, it has been established that...
women’s perspectives and experiences can enrich the process of policy making and programming in food security. Introducing gender perspectives to policy and programming in food security allows the raising of questions such as whether or not women’s and men’s responsibilities, activities, interests, and priorities are different and how their experiences or problems may differ, how to obtain data and analyze the experiences of both men and women separately and find out whether or not various policy options will affect women and men differently in policies and strategies to ensure food security for all. In this respect, generation and utilization of sex disaggregated data and analytical information is critical in identifying the different needs and concerns as well as gaps to inform the policy formulation and implementation processes (Cheryl et. al, 2008).

The need for gender mainstreaming in food security
The primary objective of gender-based policy analysis is to render the existing and proposed legislation and policies more useful and efficient to both the private and public sectors. In the long-term, gender and policy analysis is a more efficient process because it foresees which particular sectors of the population are affected by governmental policies and to what extent. The integration of gender-based analysis into policies produces both equality and efficiency and promotes national economic growth (Tony Beck and Alexander Rajani, 1996). It is clear that most policies do not take gender variables as an important factor in the planning, programming and implementation process which, in turn, makes the policies inefficient and unable to address the needs of men and women. Currently, 46 percent of Kenya’s population lives below the poverty line (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2006) and food in many African families is considered a women’s business. In addition, feminization of poverty has been widely recognized, hence the need to ensure gender mainstreaming in food security policies (AWSC, 2013). Experiences with the women’s struggle in Kenya show that policy can be utilized to ensure social engineering in order to transform institutions and unleash the potential of women and men towards social transformation.

A good example is the struggle for affirmative action for women and marginalized groups which have seen transformative provisions in the Constitution (Kabira et al., 2011). In this regard, it is important to search for analytical tools that are creative enough to capture what the search for knowledge and policy formulation has not been able to do in the past. This desire leads to a consideration that gender and policy analysis is a form of accountability which national governments, academic institutions and other stakeholders need to address. This requires institutions and agencies to analyze both existing and proposed legislation and policies to ensure that they take into account their impacts on both women and men (Christopher, 1998, Diane, 1998). Further for effective mainstreaming process, the institutions must also have the capacity to capture the experiences and knowledge of African women.

Gender analysis frameworks
Strategies towards mainstreaming gender in policies and programmes have benefited from frameworks that have been developed over time. These frameworks include, Sarah Longwe’s Gender Equality and Empowerment Framework (1994), a framework that focuses on different levels of women’s empowerment. The levels of empowerment include welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control, being the highest level of empowerment. This is important because in the effort to mainstream gender in policies and programmes. Longwe (1994) observes that welfare programmes deal with the basic needs and ignore how society can be transformed when the potential of both men and women is released. There is needed therefore to go to higher levels in handling gender mainstreaming, the framework thus provides us with a clear direction on how to move from welfare to empowerment. Caroline Moser’s framework, Gender planning in the third world, (1994), was born from the analysis of development planning in the third world and it addresses how women’s projects were again added on to projects which could not address poverty. Moser identifies the third world approaches to women in development as the: welfare approach, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment. She argues that these approaches have been tried and often co-exist and therefore it is important to locate the problems and to ensure that we address the women’s issues and interests as they are seen by the women themselves. This is important because gender analysis, a tool for gender mainstreaming, allows us to look for experiences, knowledge and women’s perspectives (Kabira, 2011).

Use of feminist methodologies to influence policies
Methodologically, feminist research differs from traditional research in the way that it: actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between the researcher and the subject. It takes the position that both the researcher and the interviewee are there to learn from each other (Dale, 1985, Spender, 1985). In addition, feminist research is politically motivated and has the major role of changing social inequality, it makes no pretences about its objectives and begins with the assertion that women know. Techniques used in feminist research are concerned with presenting the women’s perspective and are more likely to be, particularly at the earliest points of inquiry, ‘naturalistic and resemble the normal ways that women communicate, or involve sources accessible to women. The methodology includes conversations, focus group discussions and oral testimonies.

Using gender and policy analysis tools can help us to
address issues that are critical in addressing women’s
and men’s responsibilities, activities, interests and
priorities in food security. It is only after identifying them
that one is sure of promoting transformative development
that may lead to releasing the potential of our human
resources, addressing the issues of appropriate
technology, and utilizing the potential of all in the
community to ensure that benefits are accessible to all. In
addition, one is also able to identify any differences and
inequalities relevant to policy development, elements that
need further investigations, inequalities in access to
political power, inequalities within households,
differences in legal status and entitlements (for example,
security, land, inheritance, personal status, employment
opportunities, and so on – by law or practice), among
other issues. The process in turn helps to develop
policies that can address these gaps (Nicola and
Popovic, 2008).

Application of gender responsive methodology
to inform policy in food security
The exciting thing about carrying out a gender analysis is
the fact that you learn something new all the time, you
understand that gender is contextual so you have to look
at culture, history, the changes taking place, the
breakdown of stereotypes, changing perceptions and
relations among others. One can hardly hold on to a
specific position for too long because of the changing
nature of gender relations and the environment within
which policy development is located (Dale, 1985). The
other issues that arise when using gender analysis tools
is that the analysis has the power to shatter long held
assumptions and challenge academic ideas held for long
and to bring forth issues not thought of before and which
are important for policy formulation.

Gender and food security analysis tools
Article 43 (1) (c) of the Constitution of Kenya (2010)
states that every Kenyan has a right to enough food and
of good quality. Policies have been developed in order to
address food security in Kenya. The most recent one is
the “Food Security and Nutrition Policy.” In developing
these tools, agriculture which is the bedrock of food
security in Kenya has been used as an example. The
tools sought to get more information on the background
and context of specific programmes:\ implementation, the
management of projects, the benefits and outputs for
men and women, gender relations and livelihoods and
monitoring and evaluation. These tools sought to ensure
that, for instance, the agricultural policies capture the
interests, aspirations and interests of women and men in
their design. In the field of agriculture in particular, where
majority of the women derive a livelihood, it is important
to capture their interests, views on technology, working
conditions, their experiences and knowledge as the policy
is being designed. Men and women look at history,
management of the programmes, benefits, marketing, for
instance, differently. Taking these ideas into perspective
is critical in formulating policies and programmes and in
developing strategies for intervention (Harvard Analytical
Framework, 1999).

Policy formulation and design
In formulating food policy, one may want to ask the
questions that ensure that information gathered in the
background study will be used to facilitate the
participation of women, men and other specific groups
are involved in policy design and formulation. Some of
the critical questions to be raised could be: Does the
policy on the agriculture sector: incorporate equity and
equality measures for women in agriculture, taking into
account their interest, needs and priorities? What are the
differences between women and men farmers? Does the
policy recognize differences in needs and priorities of
women farmers from different categories of households,
agriculture sub-sectors and agro-economic zones? Does
the policy provide a framework for future planning,
programming and resource allocation? Does the policy
explore local level resource allocations? Has the policy
design recognized the role of men and women in this
policy? Have these roles informed the policy design?
How many women and men are involved in the design of
the policy? What have been their roles? Have women’s
reproductive roles been taken to consideration? Have the
views of men and women been sought? Have they been
used in the policy design? Is gender desegregated data
available? Has it been adequately utilized in the policy
design? These are critical questions that if answered
would make the strategies adopted more effective and
gender responsive.

Designing policy goal
The goal of the policy should be to uphold gender equity
principles. It must recognize for instance, the affirmative
action principles that would promote specific strategies to
address the gaps identified. This is because if gender
issues are not captured at this level, it will be difficult for
them to be captured in subsequent sections of the policy.
The overall goal must have the interests of the gender
with the intention to promote gender equality. This then
leads to the formulation of gender specific objectives,
followed by interventions.

Developing policy objectives
In designing agricultural policies and any other food
security related policy interventions, one takes
cognizance of the fact that policy objectives are the
means through which gender specific objectives must,
like all other objectives, be specific, measurable,
achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). Lack of
gender specific objectives can make it difficult to have
gender specific interventions. These objectives are also
based on the gaps identified in the background analysis and needs assessment.

Identifying thematic priorities
Thematic priorities are closely tied to the objectives. Policy interventions in the agricultural sector may be gender specific interventions for example, in the field of research, capturing the experiences of men and women and utilizing affirmative action principles, among others. It is imperative to treat gender issues and other strategic interventions seriously and allocate adequate resources for these interventions. Priorities addressing strategic gender needs and interests are important because they have long term impacts on transforming gender relations and the development process. Practical gender needs address the manifestation of our structural problems rather than, the problems themselves.

Food security programmes and projects management
One of the very great benefits of gender aware policy formulation, programming and implementation in food security issues is that, the process helps in dealing with structural barriers such as the gender division of labour, which have a major impact on how the project or policy changes our situations. It also helps in addressing the existing gender relations, which are a major hindrance to the development processes and to the efficient utilization of human and other resources, across all sectors. It is now common knowledge that the question of power relations in our societies, if not addressed continues to hinder progress. Sheila et al. (2004) in her work “If Women Ruled the World” observes that, “Having men and women at all stages of our policy formulation, planning, can help to “create a different world shifting the burden from male shoulders and allowing the diversity of thought to transform our solutions.” (P xviii). This is particularly true in issues related to food security, which are at the core of this paper.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
The invisibility of women’s perspectives in policy formulation and implementation in the development processes has been for a long time a major concern to many stake holders (Moser 1993). Studies reveal that women’s perspectives and experiences need to be utilized to ensure social engineering to transform institutions and set free the potential of women and men towards social transformation in many areas of human needs, including food security. The primary objective of gender policy analysis is to render existing and proposed legislation and policies more useful and efficient to all, including the private and public sectors, (Republic of Kenya, 2011). In the long-term, gender and policy analysis is a more efficient process because it foresees which, and to what extent, particular sectors of the population are affected by governmental and other development policies. The process streamlines the policies by targeting budgets and other resources’ allocation to produce the desired results. Thus incorporation of a gender perspective in policy analysis is an important strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in all political, economic and social spheres so that, women and men benefit equally and that the inequality is not perpetuated. In addition, the use of gender analysis tools in gender mainstreaming brings into focus the perspectives of all development targets; utilizing men and women’s knowledge and experiences to enrich the policies and programmes (Richard and Poser, 2008; Kabira, 2012).

This paper argues for a need to move away from the fallacy that all members of societies will benefit from economic policies and economic growth without planning for that to happen (Richard, 1998). This is important in all sectors and especially in those that women are mostly in access and control as in food security policies. However, the gender mainstreaming agenda must be accompanied by institutional structures, operational procedures and capacity enhancement of policy makers and planners as well as continuous vigilance from women, men and especially those struggling for transformative policy implementation and practices. Further there must be budgetary allocation commitment from the governments to ensure continuous support and commitment.

REFERENCES
African Women Studies Centre (AWSC). 2013. Promoting and Advocating for the Implementation of Article 43 (1)(c) of Kenyan constitution on food security. AWSC, USAID and UKAID.
Cheryl, Hendricks and Lauren, Hutton, 2008. Defence Reform and Gender: Gender and SSR Toolkit, Tool 3. DCAF, OSCE/OHCHR, UN-INSTRAW.


Nicola, P., 2008. Security Sector Reform Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation and Gender: Gender and SSR Toolkit, Tool 11. DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UNINSTRAW.

