

DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY AND GENDER

Governments have expressed their commitment to creating a new development paradigm that integrates environmental sustainability with gender equality and justice within and between generations
(UN Beijing Platform of Action 1995 para 249)

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of sustainability and gender. It covers the theoretical framework for inclusion of gender considerations in policy, and points to tools for best practice. Suggestions are also given as to how gender can be integrated into the State Sustainability Strategy in Western Australia.

What is gender?

Gender is the 'social construction of the different roles, attitudes, values, relationships and responsibilities of women and men in all societies.' Sex refers to the biological differences between women and men. Gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, gender proofing and gender impact assessment are all terms which describe the process of ensuring that gender equity principles are observed, and that the different needs and perspectives of women are taken into account.

Gender analysis in policy

Gender analysis is an important tool for government. Policy and legislative processes are not gender-neutral. Integrating a 'gender lens' into every aspect of public policy formulation will ensure that the differing experiences of women and men are acknowledged, and reflected in programs and services.

Gender Based Analysis (GBA) is used increasingly by governments around the world to ensure that policies and practices have equally beneficial effects on women and men. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) endorsed gender mainstreaming as a key strategy in its Platform for Action. Since then, many countries have adopted the principle, and integrated gender assessment tools into the policy and legislative process.¹

Gender analysis is not as simple as evaluating impacts of policies or programs on women and men, post-implementation. It is not merely an 'add-on' to existing policy processes. The Council of Europe, for example, has adopted gender mainstreaming as a best practice model in government. Prerequisite tools are statistics disaggregated by sex, and gender analysis in policy formulation.

"Gender mainstreaming should start as early as possible, because the earlier a gender equality perspective is integrated in the policy process, the more probable it is

¹ NSW Department for Women, *Annotated Bibliography*, 2001

that policies will really take gender into account and not just add a gender paragraph at a later stage.”²

Gender impact assessment (GIA) allows for the screening of a given policy proposal, in order to detect and assess its differential impact or effects on women and men, so that these imbalances can be redressed before the proposal is endorsed. GIA can be applied to legislation, policy plans, policy programs, budgets, concrete actions, bills and reports or calls for research.³

For example, when thinking about responding to a health issue, whether by developing a policy or planning a program, it is important to look closely at who you are working with and who is not represented. Understanding the demographics of the area and being aware of the people or groups who are not currently using the service is essential to good and inclusive practice. Having identified who the service should be reaching, it is important to understand the gender issues, women are 51% of the population and belong to different cultural, racial, ethnic and other marginalised groups. Not all women and men are the same, gender issues differ according to age, culture and experience.

Gender influences the way in which services are delivered, how providers view consumers, and ultimately the effectiveness and degree to which services respond to consumers needs. For policy to be effective it is essential to recognise gender inequalities and plan to address the issues that arise from these. For example, ***The WA Water Corporation found that it increased its rate of payment once it identified women paid most of the household bills and changed its opening hours to suite women.***

Sustainability and gender

Every person is entitled to enjoy a clean, healthy environment and share with government a duty to maintain that environment. Environmental sustainability development requires, and can only succeed with, the participation of the whole society... and women have a vital role to play in environmental management and development., their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development (UN, 1992 Rio Principle 20 of chapter 24)

There is a plethora of material available on the intersection of sustainability and gender, principally in discussions of developing countries (see below), but also among feminist analyses of the environment problem in the developed world. The Beijing Declaration of 1995 included an entire section on women and the environment:

Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management. (246)

Women remain largely absent at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making in natural resource and environmental management, conservation, protection and rehabilitation, and their experience and skills in advocacy for and monitoring of

² Council of Europe, 1998, p.24

³ Council of Europe, p.29

proper natural resource management too often remain marginalized in policy-making and decision-making bodies, as well as in educational institutions and environment-related agencies at the managerial level.

Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development. (16)

In terms of preparing sustainability plans in developed countries, women are active participants in the community, and 50% of the 'social dimension' of sustainability defined as "meeting the needs of current and future generations through simultaneous environmental, social and economic improvement" (State Sustainability Strategy, p.16).

As Martine and Villarreal suggest in their paper "*Gender and Sustainability: reassessing linkages and Issues*" (see FAO website), 'both men and women will have to work hard at developing the values and fostering the attitudes and behaviour patterns consonant with more sustainable forms of development'.

Suggested interventions in the draft Strategy

The State Sustainability Strategy currently holds a number of opportunities for the inclusion of gender equity principles. They include ensuring that:

- ◆ gender assessment is integrated into models of sustainability assessment and audits, to show what impact policies have on equality between women and men
- ◆ all data to be desegregated by gender (taking into account the diversity of women)
- ◆ gender is integrated into the foundation principles, the Sustainability Code of Practice, proposed Action Plan guiding principles, indicators and process principles for sustainability
- ◆ gender equity and diversity principles (taking account of the diversity of women) apply in all appointments and chairpersons to proposed sustainability planning groups (eg. Regional Roundtables, Indigenous, Industry groups and especially women headed households)
- ◆ women are recognised as key consumers, and important decision makers in families and communities, especially where change is required
- ◆ gender analyse the impact of environmental health risks (different health risks for women and men given different biological makeup)
- ◆ the impact of urban planning and design of settlements on women (eg. use of public transport, safety issues, schools) is addressed
- ◆ the needs and aspirations of young women and girls are taken into account (eg. in school education programs, traineeships)
- ◆ women in industry and small business are engaged in sustainability projects and partnerships
- ◆ mainstreaming a gender perspective into water resources levels, the shift of focus to date is very much a shift from a technical to an economic focus, which will not necessarily imply a positive change for women. A new vision for water resource management is needed e.g. to give adequate consideration to the roles, needs,

access to and control over resources and decision-making of both women and men

- ◆ wet land development -production systems around wetlands include fishing, hunting, gathering and, agriculture. Failure to take gender roles and responsibilities in to consideration can lead to displacement of women. It can be negative for households if men take over women's resources without taking over responsibility for the family welfare. Gender-blind investments in the fishing industry, in terms of capital, extension and training does not only cause problems for women, but also for the fishing industry. Women, who fish in shallow water where the fish breed, are rarely involved in "educational programs" on fish conservation.⁴ (UNDP)
- ◆ women tend to participate as volunteers in community environmental projects, this reflects the differences in the day to day lives of women and men
- ◆ the EPA develops best practice international gendered approach to environmental policy
- ◆ ensure further research and development into gender and sustainable development
- ◆ environmental degradation impacts on the most socio-economically disadvantaged members of the community and women are disproportionately more financially disadvantaged than men for a whole range of reasons but more specifically because more women are sole parents and more women work part-time
- ◆ profile women's environmental groups, statistics of women and men involved in environmental action groups and relevant women's best practice projects (showing the diversity of women) eg UK Real Nappy Project
- ◆ See Appendix 2 for examples of Environment and Waste: Some Gender Issues

The OWP's Gender Assessment Project (GAP)

Gender assessment as a tool of the Western Australian Government is in project proposal stage through the Office for Women's Policy (OWP).

OWP is planning to develop a gendering impact assessment tool for use initially in three government agencies, with the potential for application across governments in two States. The project will involve researchers from UWA assessing the current literature on GBA and developing a draft policy framework to pilot in several government agencies. Assoc Prof Carol Bacchi and Dr Joan Eveline will lead the project. At this stage, the project partners include: Office for Women's Policy, Department for Community Development and Department of Health in Western Australia. An approach may be made to include a third large agency, such as the Water Corporation. The Office of the Status of Women in South Australia is also involved, and will pilot the project with a similar number of agencies in SA.

Conclusion

If gender analysis is not fully included in the WA State Sustainability Strategy this could contribute to both indirect discrimination and/or policy failure. Failure to

⁴ UNDP Gender Equality Unit 2000

incorporate gender analysis into policy advice is likely to present several other risks, including:

reducing the predictability of outcomes, and therefore contributing to policy being ineffective and inefficient

reducing the accuracy of costing and projections in relation to take-up of programmes or benefits

undervaluing the contribution women make to the economic and social fabric of WA, especially in unpaid and voluntary work

increasing inequality between women and men.⁵⁶

In particular, advice that does not incorporate gender analysis will be ineffective in meeting the needs of Indigenous women and men.

Without gender analysis, policy advice risks being based on untested assumptions about women's and men's lives. It is risky to assume that women's and men's experiences and expectations will be the same, and therefore to use information which is not disaggregated by gender to inform policy development. Without gender analysis, advice and decisions are based on untested assumptions about men and women's lives. Aggregated experiences are not good enough to enable policies to be effective. If governments are to meet their objectives the different life experiences of men and women at different life stages will need to be factored into policy development.⁷

⁵Ministry of Women's Affairs, New Zealand, 2000

⁶ Ministry of Women's Affairs, New Zealand, 2000

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APPENDIX

Best practice in gender analysis

The following quick reference guide to best practice in gender analysis was prepared by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services in British Columbia, Canada (see http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/womens_services/):

- ❖ Have you considered how the issue you are seeking to address affects women and men?
- ❖ Does your research information include both women and men? Is it broken down by gender?
- ❖ If you consulted, have you considered women and men's perspectives and how they differ?
- ❖ Have you identified how each option may affect women and men differently, and the disadvantages and benefits for both?
- ❖ If the recommended option has disadvantages for women or men that may need to be mitigated, have you considered how this will be achieved?
- ❖ If you will communicate the policy or program, have you included strategies to reach both women and men? Have you highlighted the impacts to each?
- ❖ Have you considered how you will evaluate the policy or program to identify impacts to women and men (e.g. Collecting data and statistics that take account of women and men?)

Appendix 2 : - Some Gender Issues

AREA	DIFFERENCE
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<p>Who Does What in the Household?</p>	<p>Women make 75% of food purchases and have a major influence on packaging (WDS, 2001), (IWEN, 2002).</p> <p>Women tend to do more of the cleaning, food preparation, laundry and take primary responsibility for family health. Women are responsible for 75% of food purchases. Sex inequalities in the way resources are distributed within the household, leave women at risk of poverty (Conlon, 1999).</p> <p>Women and men are likely to view domestic waste and its disposal differently, given that women do more of the food preparation and are more likely to handle the fresh produce.</p> <p>In order to create equality in household tasks and responsibilities, different approaches to waste management need to be tried.</p>
<p>Household Workloads</p>	<p>Since women do more of the housework, they often have limited time to deal with waste disposal issues. Because they are less likely than men to have access to a car, women have been found to prefer a greater number of smaller, more accessible disposal or recycling facilities than one central disposal or recycling points. (SIDA, 1998a).</p>
<p>Priorities</p>	<p>The What Women Want Survey, (Vallely, 1996) showed that women and men differed in their attitude to the environmental issues. More recent studies have re-affirmed this and one such study that shows that women have a significantly higher level of concern for waste issues than men (MORI, 2002).</p> <p>Other studies have shown that men are more likely to advocate sophisticated technical solutions to problems and women may prefer what appears the simpler solution which would have an immediate yet lasting impact. (SIDA, 1998b).</p>
<p>Participation in Community Decision-Making</p>	<p>Women tend to be more active at the local level in community projects whereas men are more likely to have access to and be part of the</p>

	<p>institutions, which take decisions on municipal waste infrastructure.</p> <p>Household bliss for utilities are likely to be paid by a particular member of a household and it will be important to know this information when it comes to encouraging specific behaviour. A Western Australian water authority found that when it identified that women paid most of the bills, it increased the payment rate and altered its opening hours, (New Zealand Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1996)</p>
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Source: Based on SIDA (1988a) (1988b)

² *SIDA is a Swedish governmental organisation set up to focus on international development and create conditions conducive to socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development.*

The effectiveness of environment and waste-disposal initiatives depends on an understanding of the gendered nature of the household activities. These initiatives need to be implemented in such a way so as to provide more equality between women and men in terms of household activities. Waste-disposal projects can provide support for women and ease their work burden.

Websites on gender and sustainability

<http://www.watervision.org/>
<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sba1.pdf>
<http://www.wsp.org/english/publications/authorlist.html>
[www.bmu.de/english/download/sustainability/
b_geschlechtergerechtigkeit_uk.php?vers=text](http://www.bmu.de/english/download/sustainability/b_geschlechtergerechtigkeit_uk.php?vers=text)

[www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/SUSTDEV/ WPdirect/WPan0020.htm](http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/SUSTDEV/WPdirect/WPan0020.htm)
www.ztg.tu-berlin.de/reg004003026_en.shtml
[www.rio-10.de/rioprozess/bilanzpapiere/ bilanz_gender_engl.PDF](http://www.rio-10.de/rioprozess/bilanzpapiere/bilanz_gender_engl.PDF)
www.unfpa.org/sustainable/popups/action6.htm
[www.rsvp.nrel.gov/vpconference/vp2000/gender_workshop/
gender_lisa_buttner_challenges.pdf](http://www.rsvp.nrel.gov/vpconference/vp2000/gender_workshop/gender_lisa_buttner_challenges.pdf)

www.iucn.org/themes/pmns/topics/castanda.html
[www.sppe.ch/kurzfassungen/pdf/dev_and_env_p2/ wacker_7_14b.pdf](http://www.sppe.ch/kurzfassungen/pdf/dev_and_env_p2/wacker_7_14b.pdf)
[www.verenenicolas.org/publications/ women-sustainability.htm](http://www.verenenicolas.org/publications/women-sustainability.htm)
www.traveldirectorynet.co.uk/books/code/RNFpart167/
www.panasia.org.sg/nird/clic/Rrd154.htm
<http://www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=168&a=5265>