

**WORKSHOP 3: Gender equality and gender mainstreaming techniques:  
SMART and Gender Impact Assessment**

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Since 1995 (4th World Conference on Women, Beijing) gender mainstreaming has been adopted as a strategy for gender equality in all member states of the European Union and by quite a number of the countries that are candidates to join the European Union. For the candidate states however, the introduction of gender mainstreaming encounters specific obstacles, opportunities and dilemmas.

The aim of gender mainstreaming is to incorporate a gender perspective in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making. This means gender-mainstreaming should be a normal, daily policy routine. It implies organising specific procedures and routines, responsibilities and capacities that will guarantee that attention will be paid to gender. In the actual situation, despite the various efforts that have been done to integrate gender, existing institutions and policy machineries still do not adequately deal with gender. Many of the existing procedures and routines have been found to be gender-blind or gender-biased. Policy plans and programmes often do not recognise gender differentials. Also, they often include (sometimes unconscious) assumptions that favour the existing unequal gender relations. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy is meant to actively counteract this, and to use the normal mandate of policy makers to promote more equitable relations between women and men.

In different countries efforts have been undertaken to develop tools and instruments to overcome the problems mentioned. In my presentation I will present two of these instruments: SMART (a Simple Method to Assess the Relevance of Policies To gender) and Gender Impact Assessment (GIA).

**Why is it important to know and apply these instruments?**

- It opens the perspective of policy makers and others involved to the diverse situations and needs of women and men. It may stimulate the awareness of the intended and unintended consequences of policies for the daily lives of women and men. It also may cause a more inclusive approach that stimulates diversity between people without creating inequalities.
- It helps to make a better use of all available human resources

- Better policies and better government: Gender Mainstreaming instrument help to increase the transparency and openness of policy making
- It helps to create awareness and gender-expertise among policy-makers
- It helps to generate data on the situations, positions and resources of men and women in many different policy domains

### **Gender Impact Assessment instruments**

Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) has its roots in the environmental sector. The instrument for Environmental Impact Assessment has been adapted for the use of gender mainstreaming. Pioneering work has been done in the field of women and development. In the Netherlands an instrument was developed by Mieke Verloo and myself at the request from the government in the early 1990s (Verloo & Roggeband, 1994). The aim of the project was to construct an instrument that could assess the impact on gender relations of any policy proposal at the national level. The GIA is a so-called ex-ante evaluation, which means that a proposal is screened to evaluate its impact on gender relations before the proposal is accepted or implemented. The instrument allows for the screening of a given policy proposal, in order to detect and assess its differential impact or effects on women and men and gender relations. This previous screening has the advantage that the probable negative effects can be prevented before the proposal is endorsed. An analysis from a gender-perspective helps to see whether the needs of women and men are equally taken into account and served by the policy proposal.

The GIA is designed to fit all policy proposals in every possible policy area. In the Netherlands the instrument has been used in the field of education, justice, taxes, agriculture, infrastructure among others. GIA has also been applied at the regional and local level. An evaluation of the instrument in 1999 (Graaf, Mossink & Gröflin, 1999) demonstrated that the instrument has proven to be useful. In some cases, policy proposals have been changed to counter potential negative effects on gender relations.

### **Experience of Gender Impact Assessment: when to apply it and in what areas?**

Which moments in the policy process are important for gender-mainstreaming and what instruments can be applied? One can either choose between an "ex-ante" evaluation, that is an evaluation in the policy preparing stage, before any decision is taken and before the policy is implemented, or a "post" evaluation

after the policy has been implemented. Of course, the latter type of evaluation makes it far more easy to see the impact of a policy (a precondition is that it has to be assured that the situation before the implementation is known too). However, if effects prove to be negative the harm is done already. Therefore an ex-ante evaluation, although more complex, has important advantages. First, the proposal can be changed before implementation and thus, negative effects can be prevented. Second, it makes policy makers and decision takers more aware of their objectives, rationale and assumptions when designing policies or taking decisions. They are more adequately able to perceive and calculate the costs and benefits of gender-mainstreaming. Third, there can be an open discussion about how we want gender-relations to change.

The Dutch experience has demonstrated the importance of a systematic procedure that will guarantee its use at a specific moment in the policy process (which still lacks in the Netherlands). The best would be that the instrument is always applied –if relevant of course- before a policy proposal or plan is send to the Council of Ministers. Also, the experiences have taught us that instruments like these have to be actively promoted inside the bureaucracy and civil servants have to be trained how to use the instrument. Most important is a political commitment on all levels, not only from the leaders, but particularly from policy-makers and planners. Monitoring can also be in the hands of the Parliament, as this is conform its task to control the government.

Which areas and fields are important for gender mainstreaming? Practically all policy areas are relevant for applying Gender Impact Assessment, because directly or indirectly most policies have an impact on the concrete lives of women and men. To decide whether a specific policy proposal is relevant to gender inequality a very simple instrument called SMART has been designed, which we will see later in more detail. In practice it is far to ambitious to start with all policy proposals that according to the SMART instrument are relevant. In stead different strategies can be chosen. It might be useful and an important eye-opener to start with policy areas that most people consider neutral, such a transport, tourism or urban planning. A Gender Impact Assessment will probably demonstrate that the effects of these policies are far from neutral, but will either reproduce, or worse strengthen, gender-inequalities.

An easier, but less challenging strategy is to take policy areas that are already well known to be important for gender relations such as labour, education or family policies. Experiences in the Netherlands have shown that in these policy

areas, despite the existing expertise, awareness and efforts to end gender inequalities, still policies are designed that have negative effects for the position of women.

### **Basic structure of GIA and SMART: What is it and how does it work?**

The conceptual frame work of the GIA identifies the basic *structures* and *mechanisms* that are central to gender inequality.

First, the two basic structures are the division of labour (we refer to all norms and values, institutions and organisations regarding paid and unpaid labour and decision-making) and the organisation of intimacy (here we refer to all norms and values, institutions and organisation of how and with whom people live, reproduction and sexuality). We call this *structures* because of the structural inequalities that exist between men and women and in the norms and values concerning masculinity and femininity in both domains.

Second, the basic processes that constitute and reproduce gender inequalities are the distribution and access to resources (both material and immaterial), and the existence and application of (formal or informal) gender rules. The possession of and access to resources is fundamental for the position of each individual. Few resources means a weak position and less access to power and decision-making. Women and other disadvantaged groups often have less access to material or immaterial resources. Rules are important for our perception and definition of reality and our decisions how to act and what behaviour is appropriate or allowed. Gender rules define what we see as the basic norms and values of masculinity or femininity: what we define as masculine or feminine. In their daily interaction people behave according to certain (often informal or even unconscious) rules and these are also used to value the behaviour of others. Inappropriate or queer behaviour is often sanctioned subtle or by explicit condemnation. Gender rules are internalised through education and experience. Although most gender rules are informal, there can be formal rules as well that may either reproduce or alter gender relations. This is the case if regulations or laws differentiate between men and women, for example when men are defined as head of the family.

The GIA also sets two criteria to decide whether impacts will be positive or negative: policies ought to promote gender equality (equal rights and equal treatment) and autonomy (the possibility for women and men to decide about their own lives).

The GIA is a procedure that consists of 4 steps.

*Step 1* consists of an instrument to assess the gender relevance of a policy proposal. This instrument has been called later the SMART-tool. SMART, as its name suggest, is a very simple instrument that can be used without specific expertise on gender issues, but not without some basic data on the situation of women and men in the policy field. SMART consists of two questions:

- is the policy proposal directed at one or more target groups (like for example farmers, ethnic minorities, car-drivers, disabled people, etc.)?
- are there differences between women and man in the field of the policy proposal (with regard to rights, resources, positions, representation, values and norms)?

When a policy proposal is directed at targeted groups, it will always imply the (re)distribution of resources and/or the application of rules or regulations. As many resources are still unequally distributed between women and men, and rules are often connected to rules of gender, all policies directed at target groups are to be considered relevant to gender.

Existing differences between the sexes are almost always connected to differences in resources or differences in values about masculinity or femininity. Therefore, sex differences in a policy field are a good indicator for gender relevance.

So, if one of these two questions can be answered positively, attention should be paid to gender aspects.

This is where the SMART instrument finishes, it does not explain what to do when a policy proposal is evaluated to be gender-relevant. It only asks to present some data as evidence that a proposal is or is not gender-related. The GIA goes further and actually tries to calculate or estimate the probable impact of the policy proposal.

*Step 2.* The next step after the deciding that the proposal is relevant, is to describe the current situation of gender relations in the policy field. How are (policy-relevant) positions, resources, etc. actually distributed between women and men. Which formal or informal rules about masculinity or femininity do exist (like how are women and men supposed or expected to behave in a certain field)? We could take the example of urban planning which seems to be mainly about the planning of buildings, roads, etc. However, urban planning, the location of buildings, roads and services, regulates the daily lives of people.

Does the existing infrastructure help or obstruct their daily living? Can women and men easily combine work, having children or other dependents, and other activities? Does the infrastructure help people to organise their lives in an efficient way? Is the built environment safe for women to walk on the streets alone at night? Are the houses only designed for a "standard" family with two children or are other living forms also taken into account? Are there more resources for some groups than for others? And many more relevant questions with regard to gender relations can be asked. So this step aims to raise relevant questions about the policy topic and describe the actual situation of the gender relations in a specific area. This description should be in terms of the conceptual framework, this means we should try to identify which structures and mechanisms are at stake.

It is also relevant not only describe the actual situations, but also to try to calculate trends: is the actual situation stable or changing and in which direction? This helps us to predict what would happen without intervention and compare this to the effects of intervention.

*Step 3.* This next step consists of an analysis of the policy proposal. This consists of a schematic analysis of the problem definition (what situation or problem do policy makers seek to change or solve by this plan), the basic objectives, rationales, motivations and means of the policy proposal. It is checked how far the situation of women and men is mentioned or accounted for in the policy proposal. Then it tries to estimate the effects of the proposal on the situation of women and men. Does it affect the basic gender structures (the organisation of labour and/or intimacy)? And will it affect the existing mechanisms (the actual distribution of resources and the existing gender norms). The two established criteria (equality and autonomy) are used to decide if the policy proposal will have a positive or negative impact on gender relations.

*Step 4* The final step is to compare the probable effects of the policy proposal with the actual situation and calculated trends. Does the policy proposal intervene with possible positive or negative trends? Will it cause other positive or negative effects? How can possible negative effects of the policy proposal be intercepted and what alternatives that promote gender-equality can be formulated?

### **Practical applications**

A practical application of the SMART-instrument will be given at the workshop

**What does an organisation need to apply the instrument?**

- political will
- a good knowledge of the policy process (knowing when to make each step)
- awareness and “gender-sensitivity” of policy makers
- control mechanisms as to assure that SMART is applied to all proposals
- data about men and women and gender relations in all different policy fields (state or other authority should start a data base which will be extended by every application of SMART or GIA)
- necessary funds and resources (SMART; very low costs involved. Funds needed to create database and make it online available for organisation)