

## **MAINSTREAMING TRUE GENDER EQUALITY INTO THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF VISION 20/2020**

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### **Abstract**

The challenge of Gender Equality in Nigeria is really tough. This is probably because we are much on paperwork in this country but never put the doing into work. The task of including gender equality into national development is not guesswork. It requires a lot of planning and policymaking. However, this paper starts by taking a look at the etymology of the word Gender and postulating that “gender” means much more than just woman or sex. The paper defines ‘gender equality’ as equality for all where one group of people are not preferred or discriminated over others, in the distribution of ‘food, shelter, healthcare, education, job training and professional opportunities’. The paper then suggests that mainstreaming gender equality into mainstream policies of government is of great social and economic value to a transiting country like Nigeria. It is imperative that targeted policies be made so that every single Nigerian can contribute to national development regardless of their “gender”. Since, simply put gender mainstreaming is adapting gender equality into mainstream policies and systems; we need to re-invent our national policies and systems if we are going to achieve the national development goal of Vision 20/2020. Some suggestions were made like conducting gender impact assessments, national policy on gender equality, among others. Empowerment is for all. Equal opportunities ensure that everyone gets a chance to contribute their quota to national development. This in turn adds to the strength of the nation.

### **Introduction**

While researching for this paper, it hit me how the English language has mutated over the years. It is almost not the same language any more, so much so that some usage are called ‘ancient English’, ‘middle English’, contemporary English’, ‘colloquial English’, ‘pidgin English’ and all kinds of other adjectives attached. Have you noticed how the English dictionaries of old differ from the ones available today? Once you could hide away an English dictionary in your trouser pocket, now you can barely lift one up. And some come in encyclopaedic volumes. There seems to be more English words than there are ants. New words are created every day and old words derive new meanings. No wonder the Dictionary is getting fearfully fatter every year.

According to Joan W. Scott, ‘Those who would codify the meanings of words fight a losing battle, for words, like the ideas and things they are meant to signify, have a history. Neither Oxford dons nor the Académie Française have been entirely able to stem the tide, to capture and fix meanings free of play of human invention and imagination’’. (Scott, 2001) Of course, all languages suffer this same fate, but since we are communicating in the, so popular, English language, I think I will restrict myself therein: and more restrictively to the ‘basic word’ in my topic, ‘Gender’. (Before I start an encyclopaedia on the mutation of the English language and bore you to death).

The mutation of the word ‘Gender’ is totally amazing. According to the first edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED1, Volume 4, 1900), the original meaning of the word had already become obsolete. Not the word, mind you, just its original meaning. (Just imagine what this has done to the English Dictionary). **Interpretation:** *what the word ‘gender’ was originally intended to mean is no longer what it is used for.* This goes on to suggest that something has been lost along the way and a horrific mutation has taken place to distort the true meaning of the word. And if Joan Scott is right, this mutation is the handiwork of ‘human invention and imagination’. And she rightfully concludes that it is near impossible to prevent such mutations from occurring. I agree. But, I would like to use this opportunity to do a retro-mutation, if you don’t mind, by resurrecting the ‘original meaning’ of the word so as to give life and sense to my paper. So .....

### **Etymology of Gender**

“In its most recent usage, “gender” seems to have first appeared among American feminists who wanted to insist on the fundamentally social equality of distinctions based on sex. The word denoted a rejection of the biological

determinism implicit in the use of such terms as “sex” or “sexual difference”. “Gender” also stressed the relational aspect of normative definitions of femininity,” (Scott, 2001). The feminists considered the use of ‘gender’ in the separation of the sexes (male and female) as socio-cultural which is distinctively not the same as in the biological sense.

However, most commonly, ‘gender’ is applied to the general differences between men and women, without any assumptions regarding biology or sociology. But, in a usage shift that occurred mainly between the 1950s – 1980s, the word was increasingly used to refer to socially constructed aspects, in contrast to biologically determined, using the word sex for the latter. (Maven’s Word of the Day, June 12, 1998, assessed November 5, 2008). In the 1900s, this usage was considered jocular. Fowler’s *Modern English Usage* in 1926, suggested that “gender ... is a grammatical term only. To talk of persons ... of the masculine or feminine (gender), meaning of the male or female sex, is either a jocularity (permissible or not according to context) or a blunder.” (cited in Maven’s Word of the Day, June 12, 1998, assessed November 5, 2008). But in spite of this, use of ‘gender’ in place of ‘sex’ has become more common, perhaps due to the influence of the very vocal and forceful feminist movement or the United Nations definition of the word.

Some have suggested that this usage is merely euphemistic. Considering that the mutation of the word ‘sex’ has been reduced to the act of intercourse, many are embarrassed by the word. This probably explains the preference for the word ‘gender’ instead of ‘sex’ and the complete take over. These days ‘sex’ is reserved for reference to the biological categories, while ‘gender’ refers to the socio-cultural categories. [God help the English Dictionary!] For example, “What is the sex of the baby?” and “Gender roles need to be clearly defined in water governance”. Of course, this interchange is not always the case.

According to Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, Protagoras, was the first person to classify nouns in terms of masculine, feminine and neuter, thus introducing the concept of grammatical gender. “It is thought that in the (hypothetical) Indo-European language, from which all modern European languages are derived, all male things belonged to the masculine gender, all female things to the feminine gender and all inanimate objects were of the neuter gender. This is no longer the case; however, as all inanimate objects in the Romance languages are now either masculine or feminine”. (Issue 31, Take Our Word For It, March 8, 1999)

But, all these are lost in any case, because, according to Joan Scott, due to the overpowering influence of the feminists, today, “gender is a synonym for “women”, (Scott, 2001). You will agree with me that when you hear the word “gender”, you think ‘woman’. Of course, the UN and some others have tried to indicate that gender is just an implication of the differences between male and female, and therefore, could be man or woman, sincerely, the truth is that most times, it simply means “woman”.

### **The True Meaning of Gender**

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, gender is “1a: a subclass within a grammatical class (as noun, pronoun, adjective, or a verb) of a language that is partly arbitrary but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (as shape, social rank, manner of existence or sex) and that determines with and selection of other words or grammatical forms”. (“gender.” Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2008). The online Free Dictionary puts it more simply; “G. A grammatical category used in classification of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and in some languages, verbs that may be arbitrary or based on characteristics *such as* sex or animacy and that determines agreement with or selection of modifiers, referents or grammatical forms”. (*Italics mine*). (“gender.” The Free Dictionary, 2008)

This makes things really interesting. Most English Dictionaries, I found, are fair. They try not to lose the grammatical and original content while still being contemporary. (No wonder they are getting heavier. All these explanations make for high calories).

But, do join me in the following experiment I adopted from the *Power and Difference: Gender in Island South East Asia* by Jane Monning and Shelley Errington for Joint Committee on South East Asia, 1990.

*“Let us do a thought experiment, imagining what “gender” would look like not only without Sex but without sex. I think there are two possibilities. One is that, echoing its latin root, “gender” would mean simply “class” or “distinction” or “genre”. This is one of the ways the term has been used in linguistics. (see Shapiro 1989*

*on this use of “gender”) It would encompass any distinctions made in social life, from young to old and black to white, and none of those distinctions need be dualistic ones. So, men in different age-grade societies could be said to exhibit “gender” distinctions, if “gender” were used as equivalent to “classification”. This possibility may not likely appear=l to most feminists, who are usually interested in women in some form, not in just any culturally constructed distinctions”.*

I think, we can safely infer (my four year as a philosophy student are beginning to show) that the culprits of the most dangerous mutation to this historic word “gender” are the feminists. They irresponsibly and selfishly with assistance from the UN and its agencies reduced the many possibilities of the word to just one: **WOMAN**. And for many years, they have restricted national and international developments to the concept of *Women Equality* and *Empowerment* and called it *Gender*.

But, originally, the word “gender” comes from the Middle English “gender”, which in itself is a word borrowed from Old French. It first came through the latin word (like most English words) “genus”. They all mean “kind” “type”, or “sort” “class”, “race”, “origin”. They derive ultimately from a widely attested Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root gen, which is also the source of kin, kind, king and many other English words. It appears in Modern French as “genre”, meaning type, kind and is also related to the Greek root “gen-“ which means to produce, beget, procreate, birth, appearing in genesis, gene and oxygen. As a verb it means breed in the King James Bible.

*“Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind” – Leviticus 19:19 (“Gender”, 2008, “Etymology and Usage”, para. 2).*

Therefore the original meaning of “gender” can fairly and accurately be summarised to be “kind”, “type”, or “class”, and not a narrow “sex” or “woman-female”. “Sex”, in my opinion, or ‘woman’ for that matter, is just a distinction between types, kinds or classes, *or gender*. In this regard, we do not have a male or female gender, but a ‘sex gender’. We can also have a ‘political gender’, ‘tribal gender’, ‘social gender’, ‘vulnerable gender’, etc. regardless of being male or female. It is on this icon that I wish to anchor my paper.

I know that I may have to deal with some resistance from the feminists and proponents of women empowerment for betraying the sisterhood as they see it. But, with all due deference and respect for the opinion of others but without apologies, I wish to state boldly that I am not a feminist and can never be one. I do not believe that women are oppressed by the men and I do not believe that women empowerment should be placed above all else to ensure national development. I most certainly do not believe that spending more money on the girl-child will make our countries or the world a better and more prosperous place. Forgive my audacity but as a student of history, I have learnt that men and women have faced all kinds of challenges that were not any less tough because of their sexes. Also every society has its different forms of discrimination and it is not restricted to women, in fact, men are increasingly suffering discrimination in our societies. For example, in Nigeria and most other countries, we have the Ministry of Women Affairs or whatever it is called. Pray tell me who speaks for the men. Does it not seem fair and right to balance the equation? I have often said that we also need – Ministry for Men Affairs to equal the numbers. But, what we really need, if at all, is a Ministry of Gender Equality. After all, what we are all after is ‘equality’.

And, that is what I do believe. I believe that all people are born equal, regardless of their race, sex, occupation, skin, abilities, birth, language, inclinations, preferences, etc. I believe that all people deserve equal opportunities and chances, and should not be deprived deliberately or indeliberately. I believe that national governments, world bodies and indeed societies should make concrete efforts to assure and ensure the equality of gender by mainstreaming the concept into all policies and norms. It is on this belief that I premise my conclusions in this presentation.

### **What is Gender Equality?**

A basic definition of equality is the idea of equal treatment, respect and rights. (Have you noticed how hopeless and daunting an English Dictionary, especially those encyclopaedic ones, can sometimes be? You ask for the meaning of a word, and it begins to spew even more headachy words at you that will have you desperately flipping the pages of the volume back and front. Absolutely aggravating! Usually, I just ignore it. But, if the dictionary were to be genderised as the feminists want it, (male or female); would it be a ‘he or a she’? Well from my point of view, definitely, a ‘he’. Men can be absolutely aggravating sometimes, and I know all women will agree. The men are entitled to their own opinion. And that is gender equality. You have a right to think as you like and I have every right to think as I like).

Anyway, if equality requires that all people should be treated equal and have the same political, economic, social, religious and civil rights, then gender equality could be said to be equality for all kinds of people, regardless of race, class, sex, age, social distinctions, origin, tribe or ability, under the law and society at large. “According to Andrew R. Edward, “at the level of the nation-state, equality address the fair distribution of such resources as food, affordable housing, health care, education, job training and professional opportunities. .... . Just and equitable resource allocation is not simply ethical but essential for the well-being of the larger community – in this case the entire world. (“Equality”, 2008, “Definition”, para. 1).

In simple terms, ‘gender equality’ is equality for all where one group of people are not preferred or discriminated over others, in the distribution of ‘food, shelter, healthcare, education, job training and professional opportunities’. It is a case whereby every group or individual is subject to the same laws, with no individual or group having special privileges. It means-equal rights under the law, such as security, voting rights, access to education and healthcare, safety, respect, assembly, property rights and privileges as all others in the society. It means that everyone regardless of human limitations and circumstances of birth should enjoy the same rights and privileges as all others in the society. Every member of society, regardless of age, sex, race, class, income, language, tribe, education, property, religion, conviction, opinions, health or disability deserve equal treatment under the law and should not be unjustifiably deprived of their privileges to make their lives better. It also means that every member of society is equally responsible for the well-being of the society and should be expected and allowed to contribute their quota to national development. And, it definitely means that all members of the community, regardless of what group they are classified into, must be involved in the decision making process of the country.

According to Hilary Anderson (Anderson, 2004),

*“It is possible to achieve all 8 of the MDGs at the national level while still leaving behind significant sections of the population, and indeed this is exactly what has happened in several regions. The MDGs lack a diversity perspective that focuses specifically on the needs of certain populations such as indigenous peoples, children, adolescents, people with disabilities, and older persons, ----. Achieving MDG 3, for example, without a specific focus on indigenous peoples means that though gender parity in education may become a reality, indigenous peoples overall access to education may not have changed.*

Where is equality if you say, for instance, that more girls are now enrolled in schools, while 80% of Fulani children do not go to school as compared to probably 80% Yoruba children who go to school? Statistics show that as the enrolment of girls in school increases, the rate of dropout of boys increases. Is this equality? We should stop elevating a group of society above the others in the name of gender equality. Let us go back to the root meaning of “gender” and practise real “gender equality” by ensuring that all peoples in our country and communities are treated right. We can achieve this by mainstreaming gender equality into all our policies and plan for national development and teaching it as a societal norm. We do not need new policy and legislative machineries to eat into the budget. We can put all vulnerable groups under a “gender equality” programme which will guide “gender responsive budgeting”.

My focus in this paper are persons with disabilities, children, youth and older persons; and yes women and men too. There are international agenda for these groups of people and if we are going to reach out to them, them we must put them in the “gender equality” programme.

### **What is Gender Mainstreaming?**

There are too many aspects of inequality in our societies. We have often focused on the obvious like women and children and attempt to erase these dividing lines by creating equal opportunities for men and women, the boy-child and the girl-child. But, the dividing lines of inequality are much deeper and wider than that.

The United Nations and its various agencies are most guilty of propounding this narrow view of gender equality, and many others have taken after them.

The Office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary – General on Gender issues and the Advancement of Women defines gender mainstreaming thus:

*“Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.”*

(I like this one because it can be taken wholly even in an expanded definition of ‘gender’.)

The European Commission defines ‘gender mainstreaming’ as

*“The integration of the gender perspectives into every stage of policy processes-design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation - with a view to promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men and taking responsibility to re-address them if necessary. This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men creating space for everyone within organisations as well as in communities – to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality.” (EC, 1995).*

The Council of Europe defines “gender mainstreaming as

*“the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking.” (COP, 1998)*

The above definitions are suitable if we remove the restrictions of ‘women’ and ‘men’. The mainstreaming of equal opportunities was first mentioned in the framework of the UN in the 70s. The concept of mainstreaming equal opportunities was premised on the fact that not all groups or individuals in society have the same ease in accessing opportunities (namely women, specific ethnic groups, the disabled, etc). in order for all groups to be able to access services and facilities equally, mainstream policies need to take account of the different capacities, situations and resources of different groups and of how it affects their ability to benefit and participate fully in social and economic life. (Irish NDP, 2000-06)

Gender mainstreaming was first suggested at the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi. All United Nations development agencies and partners strive to practice gender mainstreaming. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing made a formal commitment to “gender mainstreaming” as it concerns the disparity between ‘men’ and ‘women’, with a focus on women. This probably explains the replacement of “women” with “gender” with a global acceptability.

The definition that guides most definitions of “gender mainstreaming” is the UN Economic and Social Council definition which says:

*“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, 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 programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (ECOSOC, 1997)*

### **Gender Mainstreaming In National Development**

The justification of gender equality, whether in its narrow or broad sense, is very obviously morale, because it is an issue of fairness. But, the aspect that is often overlooked is the economic value that comes with equality of all genders.

*“It is beneficial to society as a whole that the potential of all its components, no matter sex, religion, race, etc., be fully exploited.” (Irish NDP, 2000-06)*

It is imperative that targeted policies be made so that every single Nigerian can contribute to national development regardless of their “gender”. Since, simply put gender mainstreaming is adapting gender equality into mainstream policies and systems; we need to re-invent our national policies and systems if we are going to achieve the national development goal of Vision 20/2020. Most of our national and state policies and legislations are still living in the 60s and 70s, while the people and technology have moved on to the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. We need to upgrade them to include gender equality in its broad sense as I have indicated in this paper. This means that policies shall be made to benefit all “gender” without having to refer to so many concepts. This will benefit the lives of individual Nigerians and the nation as a whole.

*The question then is, ‘how do we mainstream gender equality into our national development?’*

1. We can do this by assessing mainstream policies, legislations and systems to determine how the different ‘genders’ benefit from them; and then where necessary, re-inventing to achieve equal opportunities and privileges for all.
2. We must ensure that everyone – from key decision-makers, political parties, ministries, civil servants, National Assembly, States and their Houses of Assembly, key support personnel of the national government – responsible for the design implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes, projects and budgets are aware of the essence of mainstreaming gender.
3. Gender equality must be a national policy with specific commitment from apex leadership.
4. We must go beyond collecting sex dis-aggregated data to collecting data on all vulnerable groups and genders in the country. This will act as a guide for policy-makers.
5. We need gender impact assessment policies. This assessment will provide information on how different genders are affected by policies of governments and development projects. With this data, policy-makers and legislators can adjust policies and legislations in line with equal rights and privileges for all.
6. We need real serious monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed at all levels.
7. We need to set specific time-bound targets and ensure that they are met.
8. It is vital that gender mainstreaming issues are included in budget planning before budgetary allocation. Projects for gender equality must be mainstreamed into the budget from the beginning in order to avoid the confusion of re-assigning budgetary allotment which can cause conflict. For instance, building of special ramps for wheelchair users at public places like airports, hotels, schools, etc, should be included in the budget from the beginning and not as an after-thought.
9. It is important to focus on the impact of policies on people and not on the number of projects carried out. In essence, it is not how many hospitals were built but how many poor diabetics received the treatment they desperately needed. It is not just how many schools were built but how many physically and mentally challenged children got a chance to get some education.
10. There must be a system of accountability where someone can be held responsible for the failure of gender mainstreaming in a particular system. It is a good idea to also include incentives and rewards for a well-mainstreamed system.

*‘Who do we need to mainstream?’*

In Nigeria, the most vulnerable genders are people with disabilities, children, youth and the aged. Women have received so much attention to the detriment of the above group of people. My postulation is that these groups of people be given the same attention given to ‘women’ regardless of their sex.

Below are some international statements as it concerns these groups of people.

*On older persons*

### **Guiding principle**

*“Mainstreaming ageing into global agendas is essential. A concerted effort is required to move towards a wide and equitable approach to policy integration. The task is to link ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights... It is essential to recognize the ability of older persons to contribute to society by taking the lead not only in their own betterment but also in that of society as a whole.” (Para. 15 of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing)*

The proportion of older persons (those aged 60 years and over) rose to 10% of the world population in 2000. It is projected that in the next 50 years the proportion of older persons will double, reaching 21%. The overall number of older persons will increase from 606 million in 2000 to 1.9 billion in 2050. 394 million older persons will live in the developed countries by 2050, up from 232 million in 2000. In the developing regions of the world the number will reach 1.5 billion in 2050, a fourfold increase from 375 million in 2000". (cited in *Mainstreaming the concerns of older persons into the social development agenda*, Robert Venne, 2008)

### On persons with disabilities

Differences in definitions, both within countries and among countries make it very difficult to estimate the number of persons with disabilities. However, according to WHO estimates, the figure of disabled people in the world is 500 million, 140 million of them being children. Among 300 million people are living in developing countries thus having rarely access to assistance, rehabilitation and appropriate services. Wars all over the world leave - amongst all the destruction - a lot of people disabled; on top of it the poverty also increases disability as a social and individual irreversible fact. In the Western world the high figures of unemployment together with great changes in the social welfare system do not facilitate - to say the least - the reduction of the impact of disability of the individual life. (*Government Action on Disability Policy: A Global Survey*, Dimitris Michailakis 1997)

#### *Purpose and content of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*

13. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities have been developed on the basis of the experience gained during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992). The International Bill of Human Rights, comprising the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, constitute the political and moral foundation for the Rules. (Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/48/96, 85 th plenary meeting, 20 December 1993)

### On the child

#### *Principle 2*

The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration. (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Resolution 1386(XIV) of 20 November 1959)

#### *PART I, Article 3*

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989)

### On the youth

Today's youth number over one billion, or 18 per cent of the people inhabiting the Earth. Even though society depends on youth for its continual renewal and prosperity in many ways, the policy-making process does not reflect this.

*How is youth defined?*

Youth generally refers to the transition period from childhood to adulthood. Though variations exist in the circumstances, difficulties, and culture of young people around the world, the physical, psychological, intellectual and emotional changes are universal.

The United Nations and this Guide define youth as all people aged 15 to 24 years old, though each country may define youth according to its unique situation. For the purposes of this guide, "youth" and "young people" are used interchangeably.

*Poverty and hunger:* Over 200 million young people, or 18 per cent of all youth, live on less than one dollar a day, and 515 million on less than two dollars a day. Data on income poverty do not accurately capture the situation of youth. Youth experience poverty not only through financial limitations, but also through limitations in access to public services and non-fulfilment of, and a lack of protection of fundamental human rights. Poverty is inextricably linked to a lack of access to or control over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections. Without these resources, people have limited access to institutions, markets, employment and public services. Hunger and malnutrition remain among the most serious and intractable threats to humanity, often preventing youth and children from taking part in society. (Guide to the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, United Nations, 2006)

The social and economic well-being of our nation depends on pulling everyone into the centre to contribute their quota and enjoy their own part in this our beloved country.

*'What areas do we really need mainstreaming?'*

Gender equality should be mainstreamed into all policies of government. However, there are vital areas that concern national development which requires special and focused attention. They include, but are in no wise limited to, the following:

- a) Education
- b) Health
- c) Decent Work
- d) Entrepreneurship
- e) Legal Rights
- f) Social Status
- g) Opportunities and Privileges

*The following was adopted from the Guide for integrating gender equality in the evaluation of the Irish NDP: Volume 1*

*2.1.2 An approach to policy-making and delivery*

Mainstreaming is not only a strategy for the achievement of (gender) equality but is also an approach to policy-making and delivery. As such it requires a number of tools.

The pre-requisite for implementing a mainstreaming strategy is the existence of political commitment and widespread ownership of the strategy among policy implementers and beneficiaries; moreover, there must be an effective and not just nominal commitment, involving the allocation of resources to operate the strategy, both in terms of financial allocations and personnel. The tools of the approach consist of the following:

*Policy development and design* - (i) the explicit incorporation of an equality perspective into policy development through gender-disaggregated data-gathering processes and through involvement of broad gender-sensitive partnerships; (ii) the identification of connections of gender relevance, for example through standardised procedures of gender proofing; (iii) the development of clear and unequivocal contextual and policy-specific targets and indicators; (iv) the implementation of standardised gender impact forecasting procedures;



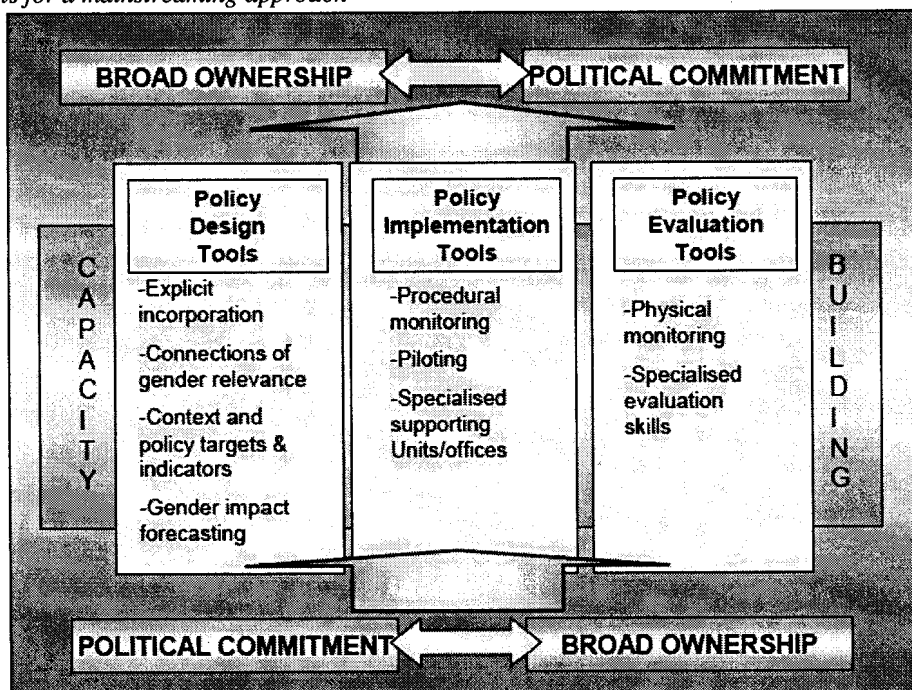
**Policy implementation** - (i) the design and implementation of monitoring indicators and systems capable of measuring procedural bottlenecks and efficiency; (ii) the piloting of mainstreaming approaches in a number of different sectoral policies; (iii) the creation of coordination and specialised units/offices within and between administrative departments;

**Policy evaluation** - (i) the design and implementation of monitoring indicators and systems capable of measuring achievements and progress made; (ii) the availability of adequate gender-related evaluation skills.

Cross cutting all three functions is the delivery of capacity building and training.

The figure below provides a visual representation of these tools and their contribution to effective mainstreaming: they underpin the mainstreaming strategy, but by no means constitute the strategy itself. Nor are they capable of advancing the objective of gender equality unless they are part of a virtuous cycle of intervention in the policymaking process. While underpinning legislation remains crucially important, mainstreaming requires a proactive focus – ensuring that the policy-making process builds in equality from the initial stage through to implementation.

*Figure 1: The tools for a mainstreaming approach*



*Source: Guide for integrating gender equality in the evaluation of the Irish NDP: Volume 1, 2002)*

**Conclusion**

Empowerment is for all. Equal opportunities ensure that everyone gets a chance to contribute their quota to national development. This in turn adds to the strength of the nation.

It is sad to note that our country does not have a National Development Plan to cover the 20/2020 vision we are aspiring for. We cannot rely on the NEEDS document because it was prepared with a different focus. We need an NDP that will reflect the Nigeria of today in realistic terms and ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in the national development process. In this regard, perhaps, it is a good thing that we do not have a Plan yet. Perhaps, the Committee or whatever, responsible for developing this Plan can be persuaded to mainstream gender equality that covers all genders into their work.

Personally, I look forward to a Nigeria where every individual and groups of persons will benefit in the joy of their rights and privileges and pride in their contribution regardless of their challenges.

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