

Reflection on Experiences of Evaluating Gender Equality

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Preface

The present study reflects on the experiences of a previous evaluation of Sida's strategy for mainstreaming gender equality ("Mainstreaming Gender Equality", a Sida Evaluation Report 02/01) from a methodological point of view. The study is a contribution to future evaluations of gender equality or similar evaluations of Sida's policies and strategies, as well as to the ongoing work on approaches to evaluate gender equality by DAC's Working Party on Aid Evaluation.

The study identifies a general methodological challenge when measuring changes related to gender equality. For example the team had developed a conceptual and analytical framework, the application of which might have prevented a more participatory evaluation process.

The evaluation covered case studies of country strategies and projects in Bangladesh, Nicaragua and South Africa, and found that the mainstreaming strategy was still in its embryonic stages. One conclusion of the evaluation is that there is a gap between the written policy (Sida's Action Programme for Gender Equality, 1997) and the work on gender equality in practice. The lack of clear objectives makes it difficult to assess whether the achievements are in line with expectations.

Eva Lithman
Director
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Abbreviations

ASK	Ain o Shalish Kendro (Bangladesh NGO), Human Rights and Legal Aid Resource Centre
BURO	NGO in Bangladesh
CAST	Change Assessment and Scoring Tool
CS	Country Strategy
CUP	Comprehensive Urban Plan (South Africa)
DAC	Development Assistance Co-operation
DNFE 2	Department of Non-Formal Education – Literacy Training Programme for Adults and Youth (Bangladesh)
DNFE 3	Department of Non-Formal Education – Literacy Programme for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (Bangladesh)
ET	Evaluation Team
GDI	Gender Related Development Index
GE	Gender Equality
GEE	Gender Equality Evaluation
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
HDI	Human Development Index
IR	Inception Report
LGDSP	Local Government Development Support Programme (South Africa)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PFA	Beijing Platform for Action
PRA	Participatory Rural Assessment
PRODEL	Programme for Local (urban) Development (Nicaragua)
Sida	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
STD	Steps Towards Development (Bangladesh NGO)
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPL	Trees, Paving and Lighting (South Africa)
UTV	Sekretariatet för Utvärdering och Intern Revision (Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit)
WID	Women in Development

Executive Summary

Sida's Action Programme for Gender Equality, passed in 1997, and the prospects of its revision, constituted the basis for UTV's Terms of Reference for the evaluation of "Mainstreaming Gender Equality – Sida's support for the promotion of gender equality in partner countries". The evaluation team took these as valid points of departure and prepared detailed evaluation methods which were negotiated and agreed with UTV prior to the evaluation work gender equality in Country Strategies and in four interventions in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh.

The current post-evaluation report has been commissioned with the purpose to learn lessons from the evaluation approach and methodology itself. The report summarises frank reflections by eight of the evaluation team members. A separate Annex 2: "Taking a Closer Look", by one of the team members, contains a basic critique of how the global strategy for mainstreaming gender equality has been adopted by donors and partner countries as universalised goals without the necessary context sensitivity. The Annex is a contribution to the debate on gender mainstreaming and reflects on implications for evaluation of gender equality. Several issues raised warrant research and studies of more depth than what can be expected of most evaluations, but which would deepen the understanding of opportunities and constraints on changes towards gender equality and the evaluation of these.

Comparisons with team members' experience from other evaluations proved to be of somewhat limited scope. Either the methodologies of phasing, and sample case evaluations and tracking changes had been rather similar to the current evaluation and posed the same kind of considerations of sample selection and measurement, or the evaluations had been much more narrow in scope and did not warrant comparison.

"Assessing progress in the mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective is a bit like picking up mercury. It all too quickly slips through your fingers. There is often no agreement on what to look for, how to measure progress, how 'high the bar should be'. Until organisations have clear objectives and targets of what they hope to achieve and how they will monitor and measure those achievements, it will be up to evaluators to sort out what they are looking for." This comment by a team member characterised the nature of the subject under evaluation which prompted a particularly careful preparation of evaluation methods and tools. Key among these were Concept Papers and Prompt Sheets, Analytical Frameworks of

Study Objects for document reviews and field investigations containing key questions, indicators and means of verification, Comprehensive Planning Notes for field visits, and a variety of tools for analysing key aspects of the evaluation such as dialogue, participation and poverty interpretations. Specific tools (scales) were developed to capture the main objective of the evaluation: Changes in gender equality – and mainstreaming (see Annex 4 and 5).

The detailed preparation of evaluation methodology jointly by most of the team members provided the three country teams with a basic common understanding of the evaluation objectives and ensured an optimal uniformity of approach – hence comparability. However, what was gained in uniformity and level of common understanding through the comprehensive preparation of approach was somewhat ‘lost’ in participatory evaluation process. Thus, key evaluation issues and perspectives on gender equality and mainstreaming were largely defined by the evaluation team, and not in co-operation with national primary and secondary stakeholders. ‘Participatory’ workshops, focus group discussions and selected in-depth individual interviews in some cases reversed the perspectives but would not support the claim that this evaluation was undertaken as a fully participatory exercise.

In retrospect it is concluded, that a significantly more participatory evaluation process would have required a different approach than what was possible within the mandate for the Gender Equality Evaluation. Self-evaluations by different stakeholder groups – women, men and youth and secondary stakeholder implementers – would be a possible approach, but require careful facilitation not to be hijacked by powerful groups. And self-evaluations to be successful normally require that participatory approaches have been applied already in planning and implementation of interventions, which had generally not been the case in the interventions under evaluation. Another device to make the evaluation process more participatory would have been a closer scrutiny of local interpretations of social inequality and gender (in)equality – of causes and conflicting interests and of actual and possible remedies – by different groups. Both of these approaches would require considerably more time than three weeks in each country, but could be initiated by national facilitators in close consultation with the evaluation team leaders, prior to the country evaluations.

Related to assessment of participation in policy formulation and planning and decisions about interventions is evaluation of the quality of dialogue. Dialogue is seen as one of the most important tools in Swedish development co-operation – in this case dialogue about gender equality policy and strategy at national level and in interventions. These had continuously to be scrutinised in view of gender equality policies and strategies in the part-

ner countries and in the partner organisations. The evaluation team was continuously confronted with the dilemma of gaps between stated policies, interpretations and practices. Thus the Beijing Platform for Action policy on mainstreaming gender equality was endorsed by Sweden as well as all three partner countries, but both within the partner organisations and within Sida itself there were stark contrasts in how individuals thought the gender equality action programme should be implemented.

An important approach to investigate these different and conflicting viewpoints on how to implement gender equality – a policy on which there is widespread consensus – was the study of dialogue. A simple tool of studying dialogue as government-to-government, at intervention level and dialogue with civil society revealed that Sida should think of specifying how ‘good’ dialogue is to be assessed. Some suggestions put forward are: To focus on who initiates dialogue, how is it recorded, and what is done when disagreement appears over policies and strategies? Conflict resolution should be seen as part of dialogue, when dialogue is declared to be one of the most important tools for Sweden to pursue partnership and national ownership of seemingly shared interests – in gender equality and poverty reduction.

The evaluation team believes that a combination of formal and informal criteria are preferable for assessing the quality of dialogue on issues like gender equality and poverty reduction, which in some contexts and points in time are sensitive topics. The evaluation used this approach, but the method can be more developed in future evaluations.

When studying gender equality with regard to practical and strategic changes, the evaluation team used a combination of methods, including own observations and interviews with different stakeholders. Interestingly, primary stakeholders, i.e. women and men participating in the projects saw the meeting of practical gender needs as essential to the broader goal of addressing strategic interests. They repeatedly pointed to the link between more immediate needs for economic and personal security – freedom from violence, sexual abuse, hunger, etc. – and the ability to influence the life of the community in political and cultural terms. In general the study of changes had to rely on observations and stories by different stakeholder individuals and groups, amongst whom national team members themselves were important resource persons. While the team focused on assessing real changes another perspective was on potential changes and missed opportunities with regard to changes in gender equality.

An issue of much debate is the selection of cases for evaluation. The four case studies in each country were selected by UTV on the assumption that they meet one or both of the criteria: 1) gender equality has been ‘mainstreamed’ initially or during implementation, or 2) interventions may have

contributed to practical or strategic changes with regard to gender equality. In retrospect it is evident that there were more dilemmas related to the case study approach than could be anticipated at the time of the consultants' preparation of evaluation methodology. That the sample cases fulfilled the selection criteria proved difficult to verify – traces of gender mainstreaming and practical and strategic gender changes were more limited than anticipated.

Selection of sample interventions to be included in an evaluation raises the difficult issue of relevant knowledge about each intervention – what should be known in advance, at the point of sample selection, and what is to be highlighted through the evaluation? In this case gender mainstreaming. Had more information been available on the forms and 'degree' of mainstreaming in the interventions, e.g. from monitoring of the interventions, this would help the selection of cases from which maximum lessons could be learnt. But none of the interventions studied had regular monitoring of mainstreaming elements and gender equality changes, if systematic monitoring at all. In order to make up for short-comings in sample selection complementary methodologies have been suggested for consideration in future evaluations. Some of these have implications for how projects are monitored. E.g. the idea of a simple 'tick-off' checklist review of mainstreaming elements in project designs and implementation of large number of interventions would be a useful monitoring device which would also help sample selection for evaluations. Another suggestion is in-depth case studies of 'light-house' WID and gender projects to be compared with more general projects where gender mainstreaming can be expected. The risk of finding few 'light-house' cases is known from previous evaluations. The cost and time implications will in most cases determine what is possible.

An important lesson for evaluation methodology is that since the key gender concepts such as gender equality, poverty reduction, mainstreaming, empowerment, male roles and masculinities, stakeholder participation, and practical and strategic changes are very broad concepts and their use is subject to ongoing debate amongst researchers and practitioners, it is necessary to establish a minimum of common understanding of these and of their strategic use in an evaluation team. We went to considerable length in this respect – in some cases perhaps being over-specific in our attempt to understand concepts and not making sufficient use of existing tools and prompt sheets, for example. In other cases our approach would have gained from more preparation, e.g. attempting to establish the links between the concepts and their use, as done by one team member in an earlier evaluation. Also, practicing of various participatory tools prior to field work would have facilitated the use of a wider range of methods.

The attempt to make a scale for degrees of mainstreaming (Annex 4) was an invention by the team. The scale went from ‘Zero or Pro Forma Mainstreaming’ to ‘Mainstreaming Included in Monitoring and Evaluation’. Confronted with the concrete interventions, however, it turned out that mainstreaming does not follow an incremental development as the scale would suggest. Operating with different forms and degrees of mainstreaming may still be useful, but will be optimal only if it relates to agencies’ and partners’ defined strategies.

The evaluation has been an attempt to respond to challenges in evaluating a cross-cutting policy and strategy, i.e. the goal of gender equality through a mainstreaming strategy. Sida’s policy has been in focus, but in perspective of how it tallies with local policies and interpretations. The evaluation team identified and analysed a set of challenges ‘over and above’ the methodological challenges of measuring changes in gender equality. These were a) Unclear allocation of responsibility and resources for implementing gender mainstreaming within and between Sida and its partners, leaves unsolved the question “who owns gender mainstreaming if it is not working?”, b) Multiple policy priorities which tend to push gender equality aside in the explicit trade-offs – but most often trade-offs made by default, since the necessary question to make in such a trade-off had rarely been asked by responsible implementers, c) Differences in understanding and actions among key stakeholders, and d) Integrating local priorities in a partnership model.

For the possible revision of the Action Programme on Gender Equality and future evaluations, the challenge for Sida is to establish reasonable expectations to mainstreaming gender equality for the purpose of changes in gender inequalities: “How high the bar?”. The evaluation team itself was not always successful in raising realistic expectations and elicited defensive reactions from several staff and stakeholders – some in defence of the global Beijing gender mainstreaming policy. Others reacted against findings that suggested the agency had not acted vigorously to implement the core strategy behind a critically important policy decisions. Imbedded in these conflicts are: 1) that time to implement the strategy has been short. The evaluation team hence recommended that mainstreaming gender equality is still worthwhile as a five-year period is short to evaluate results, 2) that trade-offs in time allocation for different aspects and for different stakeholder groups in an evaluation of this complexity inevitably imply under-representation of some key players.

Evaluation of the revised Action Programme after another five years will be able to address the key question, whether the Mainstreaming Gender Equality policy as such is expedient and can be implemented, or whether it is the way in which it is being implemented by donors and partners which requires adjustments.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Evaluations of policies, strategies and interventions such as the Evaluation of Mainstreaming Gender Equality, commissioned by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, UTV in 2001, are undertaken to account for 'what happened' and to learn lessons which will help to improve the quality of development assistance.

UTV has been very concerned about the learning opportunity from the gender equality evaluation. This is reflected in the design of the ToR for the evaluation and in the highly interactive evaluation process facilitated by UTV. At an early stage it was agreed that the focus of the evaluation would be on learning lessons from the country strategy process and from interventions in particular, rather than detailed accounts of departmental Action Plans for promoting gender equality. Thus "*lessons* from the evaluation are hoped to take the gender equality debate within development co-operation a step further".¹

The current post-evaluation report is an additional contribution to learning from the comprehensive Gender Equality Evaluation (see Annex 1: ToR). This time the purpose is to learn lessons from the evaluation approach and methodology itself, which is a highly pertinent objective in view of the complex and cross-cutting nature of the gender equality goal. The gist of what this involves is captured in the following quote from a reflection response by one of the evaluation team's resource persons, Beth Woroniuk:

"Assessing progress in the mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective is a bit like picking up mercury with your fingers. It all too quickly slips through your fingers. It is illusive on a number of counts. First there is the difficult and often indirect relationship of development cooperation to changes in something as gender relations/inequalities in partner countries. Gender roles, relations, inequalities, etc. are long-standing, multifaceted, complex and slow to change. As well, development cooperation is only one element in the mix of factors that influence these relationships – it is only a small lever for change. And we must be careful not to over-estimate its effectiveness or potency. Second, we (as in the development co-operation community in general) are only slowly understanding what 'mainstreaming

¹ Inception Report: Mainstreaming Gender Equality, Sida's support for the promotion of gender equality in partner countries. UTV Working Paper 2002:1, Annex 2, Agreed minutes, December 8, 2000.

a gender equality perspective' means in country strategies and specific interventions. There is often no agreement on what to look for, how to measure progress, how 'high the bar should be', etc.

Until organizations have clear objectives and targets of what they hope to achieve and how they will monitor/measure those achievements, it will be up to evaluators to sort out what they are looking for (i.e. how will we judge whether or not a gender perspective has been included in a country strategy). This is a difficult and often contentious task."

The current study, *Reflection on Experiences of Evaluating Gender Equality*, addresses these issues in different ways: It presents and reflects on the usefulness, strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation methods and tools for evaluating Sida's (with partners) approach to mainstreaming gender equality and to assess changes in terms of gender equality. Chapter 2 summarises team members' reflections on the evaluation methodology as it was prepared, presented in the Inception Report (IR), and applied in the field. The second part (Chapter 3) lifts the reflections to a 'higher' level and addresses dilemmas involved in evaluating a policy and strategy of a cross-cutting thematic priority like gender mainstreaming and of evaluating processes and assessing changes. Chapter 4 sums up on lessons on evaluation methodology for future gender equality evaluations.

The report has been compiled and edited by Ted Freeman (GGI) and Britha Mikkelsen (COWI), based on their own experiences from the designing the methodology, implementing, analysing and synthesising the GEE. An important input has been reflection notes received from evaluation team members. The reflections include comparative perspectives from other (gender equality) evaluations. These comparisons are generally kept to particular issues (e.g. selection of sample cases, and application of PRA tools in impact evaluation). The overall impression is that comprehensive evaluations of cross-cutting issues in which team members had participated, and which permit comparison with Sida's Gender Equality Evaluation, were often moulded into similar frameworks with 3–4 country cases and a selection of 4–5 interventions in each country, a phased approach like the GEE with documentary studies, field and synthesis studies, conducted by multi-disciplinary and international teams. Alternatively evaluations had been limited to single interventions, projects and sectors with less scope for comparison.

Altogether systematic comparisons between the GEE and other evaluations are limited in this study, as such comparisons would require substantial explanations and qualifications.

Eight national and international evaluation team members have contributed with their reflections on the approach and methodology. They represent all three country teams, Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh.

A separate Annex 2: “Taking a Closer Look”, by one of the team members, Susanne Possing, contains a basic critique of how the global strategy for mainstreaming gender equality has been adopted by donors and partner countries as universalised goals without the necessary context sensitivity. The Annex is a contribution to the debate on gender mainstreaming and reflects on implications for evaluation of gender equality. Several issues raised warrant research and studies of more depth than what can be expected of most evaluations, but which would deepen the understanding of opportunities and constraints on changes towards gender equality and the evaluation of these. We have chosen to include the full note “Taking a Closer Look” as an Annex 2 of its own, since bringing more elements of it than is already done into the main report would require a major rethinking as to how its implications could be reflected throughout the document. We would rather give the reader the chance to compare and contrast our rather conventional view of evaluation and gender with the alternative views expressed by Susanne Possing. We believe the contrast between the report and the Annex could make a very good talking point in the debate about mainstreaming gender equality and evaluation of this.

From the outset, when preparing the Technical Proposal for the approach to the evaluation, and in the subsequent agreed Inception Report where the approach, methods, techniques and tools are spelled out in detail, the underlying assumption that a gender mainstreaming strategy is valid was not questioned. But we believe that the evaluation captured a lot of the critique, while the main conclusion of the evaluation remains that it is worthwhile still to pursue a mainstreaming strategy. The dilemmas of gender mainstreaming – and of the perfect programme planning process which does not exist – and the methodological implications for measuring changes are further discussed in Chapter 3.

For full appreciation of the Reflection Study reference is made to the Inception Report, UTV Working Paper 2002:1 which outlines the approach and methods used in the GEE and to the Synthesis Report, Mainstreaming Gender Equality. Sida’s Support to the Promotion of Gender Equality in Partner Countries, Sida Evaluation Report 02/01, and the three country reports with the same title – Bangladesh 02/01:1, Nicaragua 02/01:2, and South Africa 02/01:3.

Chapter 2

Approach and Methods Applied in the Gender Equality Evaluation – Presentation and Assessment

2.1 Explicit and Implicit Methodological Assumptions in ToR

A number of explicit and implicit requirements to how the consultants would undertake the evaluation were laid down in the ToR: a) Evaluation in *three countries of Sida's country strategy process and dialogue*; b) a focus on cases – a *sample of four interventions* in each country, *representing different sectors*, c) within these, analysis of expected effect on *practical and strategic changes with regard to gender equality*, d) *examination of interpretations of key gender concepts* by different *stakeholders*, e) analysis of *stakeholder participation*, f) *identification of objectives and indicators and gender disaggregated data*, g) *synergies with other Sida policy goals*, in particular *poverty reduction*, h) application of *documentary studies, interviews and workshops*. These were spelled out as the more important methodological parameters in the ToR.

Other methodological implications were implicit: On the one hand a hypothetical deductive approach was anticipated in the selection of case interventions in which “gender equality had been ‘mainstreamed’ either initially, during design or later during implementation” (ToR p.120). The hypothesis here was of course that mainstreaming of gender equality in an intervention would contribute to positive changes with regard to gender equality. On the other hand an inductive perspective was implicit when interventions had been selected on the assumption that they “may have contributed to practical or strategic changes with regard to gender equality (an alternative where ‘mainstreamed interventions’ has not been a possible selection criterion)” (ToR p.120). In this latter case the consultant would ‘inductively’ search for factors which might have contributed to changes – if any – in gender equality. The following quote from Bonnie Keller’s Reflection note illustrates the case:

“The selection of the four programmes and projects to be evaluated in South Africa had both strengths and weaknesses. Two programmes proved to be relevant and interesting case studies: LGDSP because it had an explicit gender equality objective which was linked to poverty reduction; and CUP because attempts had been made to pay attention to gender issues during implementation, even though this was not an explicit programme objective. The other two programmes, StatsSA and TPL, proved to be problematic choices in view of the Evaluation ToR, which asked i.a. for analysis of changes in gender relations, if possible attributed to the intervention.

The reasons for selection of programmes were not always self-evident to the consultants and were not stated in the ToR, except in the most general way. In the case of Statistics SA, one had to assume that this intervention was chosen because of the importance of sex-disaggregated statistics in documenting changes in women's strategic interests. However, even a cursory reading of programme documentation BEFORE beginning the field component of the evaluation revealed that Sida did not support the Gender Unit at StatsSA, because another Nordic donor had previously entered into an agreement with the institution on this.”

It is evident that the selection of cases with very different explicit, implicit or non-existent gender equality goals had implications for the evaluation methods, and in particular for the analysis and conclusions on lessons. This is discussed in the following sections and in Chapter 3. The evaluation team is of the opinion though that the sample was valid for learning lesson for revision of the Action Programme. After all Sida's gender equality work had been active for several decades before passing of the Action Programme in 1997. Neither did partners start from scratch in 1997.

2.2 Organisation and Overall Approach

2.2.1 Case Studies

The easiest thing was to agree that the evaluation would fall into three phases: Preparation, Field Studies in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh, and Synthesising findings and lessons learned. In each phase frequent consultations would be undertaken between the consultants and UTV and with the key stakeholders in Sweden and in the partner countries. National consultants – two in each country – complemented the international consultants. Each team was composed of both women and men in order to optimise balanced gender perspectives and minimise gender biased data collection and reactions from interviewees.

In retrospect it is evident there were more dilemmas related to the case study approach with predetermined sampling criteria for selecting the case interventions to be evaluated than could be anticipated at the time of the consultants' preparation of evaluation methodology. The hypothesis that gender equality had been mainstreamed into the interventions,

and if not, that practical and strategic changes in terms of gender equality could be – at least partially – attributed to aspects in the intervention strategies, proved difficult to verify. A small number of four very different cases in three country contexts as varied as Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh in itself raises substantial questions about the power of generalisation from the findings. Thus, the consultants' attempt to be true to the overall case study approach devised by the ToR led to an overall methodology not without problems for drawing out lessons from the evaluation.

Retrospectively it has therefore been proposed by an Evaluation Team member that an alternative approach might have been to focus on a few 'lighthouse' projects/programmes in terms of gender equality objectives and strategy and then to have unfolded the successful as well as the less expedient mechanism involved. Analysis of interventions designed with a less explicit gender equality – or WID – focus could complement the 'lighthouse' case examinations.

Focus on 'lighthouse' WID projects had been the approach in an evaluation of a bilateral donor's WID policy in which one of the consultants had participated. However, the problems then involved might very well have repeated itself in Sida's GEE, since the number of 'lighthouse' cases from which to choose might be extremely limited.

A related concern to the limited number of cases involved – 12 all together – is the concern about *duration* of the interventions and the country strategies under evaluation. One Embassy, the Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh, reacted strongly to the idea of having the GEE undertaken in 2001, since the Action Programme was of relatively new date (1997), and Sida's second Country Strategy in Bangladesh was still under a rather complicated preparation.

Strictly speaking the 1997 Action Programme had been adopted subsequent to the initiation of several of the case interventions proposed for evaluation in the ToR. However, since Sida had already worked with women in development and gender perspectives since the late 1970s there should nevertheless be significant traces of the gender perspective also in older interventions. This was the contention of the consultants who have experienced this classical dilemma in other evaluations of for example Health Sector support and of cross-cutting issues like Poverty Reduction. In the real world of development co-operation, policies change, for example towards Sector Programme Support, while individual interventions have been designed and implementation started prior to the adoption of the overall policy and strategy.

In the view of the consultants there is no straight-forward solution to this timing or sequencing issue and its implications for case sample selection.

The best solution may sometimes be to devise parallel evaluation approaches – e.g. including formal ‘tick-off’ of mainstreaming elements on a large number of interventions, self-evaluations, country specific detailed policy and strategy studies and in-depth case studies – and integrate and compare the results. The consultant is not aware of cases where this has been attempted, possibly because the cost implications of such an overall evaluation approach may be prohibitive.

2.2.2 Practical and Conceptual Guidance and Principles

One of the most important strengths of the Sida GEE was the lengthy preparatory process – to develop practical guidance for the entire process, to establish and explore basic principles, to reach common understanding of concepts and methods, and to develop useful evaluation tools.

A set of principles for conducting the evaluation were agreed. Key among them concerning the methods applied were: *Participatory process and tools*, and Triangulation. This meant that dialogue, consultations and direct involvement in assessment by different stakeholders and target groups were attempted throughout the evaluation process.

In reality semi-structured group interviews became the most common interaction method, and one team member reflects that the term “participatory workshops” in many cases was misleading. The scope of the workshops was generally set by the evaluation team and was not planned together with the participants. The application of participatory facilitation – in South Africa undertaken by the workshop facilitation method “Participlan” – helped to optimise a participatory atmosphere under the given time limitations, as illustrated by Kgotso Schoeman (see also Section 2.6 for more discussion on participatory methods), who also reflects on what worked, what did not work so well and on missed opportunities:

“Focus groups sessions were conducted using the Participlan group facilitation method. The approach was very useful for it allowed for the participation of everyone in the group sessions. Through this method we were able to extract real issues and challenges from people. It was a very powerful tool to generate ideas (both positives and negative) from informants.

Advantages (What worked)

- Allowed for open discussions and revealed real issues on peoples understanding and commitment on gender mainstreaming/equality issues;
- Identified gaps in knowledge and in skills required for the successful implementation of gender training programmes;
- Highlighted how programmes are implemented or were implemented (areas of blockages in the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies in institutions);

- It was used as training mechanism for informants because it allowed for debate in the understanding of issues and their implications around the need for gender mainstreaming policies and strategies;
- It revealed the level of capacity (skills, knowledge, and implementation) that existed within government and civil society organisations. The latter group was clearly more exposed to the hard realities on inequalities between men and women.

Disadvantages (What did not work so well)

- Raised expectation that more training and support was forthcoming from Sida;
- Time Limitations;
- Participation in the focused group was dominated by senior and junior managers (Kimberley municipality).

Missed Opportunities (What we should have done)

- We should have organised focused groups of lower level employees at Kimberley Municipality to verify whether the gender task team was reaching them. It is from people at this level that we could have learnt how gender relations are managed and understood in the workplace and in communities;
- A joint session of both officials and politicians (Kimberley municipality) would have assisted us to understand in more concrete terms the commitment and interrelation between policy and the implementation thereof” (K. Schoeman).

Triangulation, i.e. comparison of data from various sources (e.g. documentary reviews, interviews, observations) and stakeholders was undertaken throughout the evaluation to validate data, but as the reflections by Schoeman indicates, stakeholders such as lower level municipality staff and politicians could have been more actively involved in the evaluation. Their perspectives could have contributed to better understanding of the modalities between policy and implementation, and would thus have added a critical dimension to the triangulation.

2.3 Participation, Participatory Evaluation and Dialogue

2.3.1 Evaluating participation

Participation in the interventions, as well as participation being a principle for how to undertake the evaluation, played an important role in the evaluation team’s methodological preparations.

Gender equality and participation are closely linked, since increased participation of women in particular – in decision making, economic activities, social networks etc. – is one pre-condition for pursuing empower-

ment. Participation of women (and men) is a tool at different levels of the mainstreaming approach – participation in dialogue, in decisions about intervention strategies, in institutional mechanisms, etc.

At intervention level the team addressed **who** participates in **what** and **how** and for which purposes. The team's assessment of the different forms of participation through application of a scale (see Annex 5) – from top-down to empowering participation – showed that primary stakeholder participation in the interventions is ad hoc, and only a systematic approach in a few cases. Participatory workshops and sporadic participatory planning and review activities of the interventions were undertaken mainly through external facilitation. Participatory methods were integrated in the approach of for example STD in Bangladesh (which had its input to gender capacity building for DNFE staff terminated). A lesson is that the motivation to pursue gender equality in interventions seems to peak in connection with participatory activities and tends to fade off if not kept alive through participatory activities (e.g. gender awareness and capacity building in LGDSP, PRODEL and DNFE). Mainstreaming gender equality requires an 'optimal' participation (not necessarily maximum participation). This implies as a minimum that participatory activities, e.g. for capacity building in gender equality mainstreaming, are repeated or followed up in order to keep momentum of the memory on gender equality. The evaluation methodology facilitated that such lessons could be drawn on the relations between mainstreaming and participation. The methodology did not allow that far-fetched lessons were drawn on what comprehensive participatory approaches would look like in the individual interventions, since the elements of stakeholder participation were so relatively ad hoc and limited.

2.3.2 Participatory Evaluation

Throughout the design, development and implementation of the GE evaluation, the team struggled with the challenge of how to make the evaluation work as participatory as possible, especially with regard to participation by primary stakeholders in each of the interventions assessed. There were a number of constraining factors limiting the amount of participation possible under the circumstances of the evaluation. These include:

1. The specification of issues prior to field work;

A key element of a true participatory evaluation is the direct involvement of primary stakeholders in the definition of evaluation issues and questions. Since the main application of the evaluation results was intended for a corporate level at Sida, it is natural that the key issues were specified at that level and in advance of field work.

This was further reinforced by the need to develop a common analytical framework and detailed study object grids for each intervention prior to the field work itself. It meant that by the time contact was made with primary stakeholders, there was little room for customizing issues and questions to take account of their interests.

2. Limited contact time with each group of primary stakeholders;

Because of the basic structure of the work which included three country case studies with national level issues such as policy dialogue and strategy development to be tackled as well as detailed reviews of four initiatives in each country, there was very limited time available within the time and resource constraints of the evaluation for direct contact with primary stakeholders. This made it difficult to contact, organize, and facilitate a truly participatory exchange between primary stakeholders and evaluation team members. At most, the teams were able to conduct group interviews and some small workshops and SWOT analysis sessions with primary stakeholders if they were to have any chance to cover the geographically dispersed interventions chosen for analysis.

3. Practical issues of reporting which limited opportunities for non-evaluator inputs to results;

Again, with the time and resource constraints of the study there were few opportunities to involve primary stakeholders in the direct development and reporting of evaluation results. Efforts were made by the report authors to include examples of the voices of women and men primary stakeholders but these cannot adequately compensate for the lack of an active role by participants in shaping findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation teams did go to considerable efforts to share their findings with different stakeholder groups for the individual interventions before leaving the countries. In most cases the feedback workshops were limited to the central stakeholders, while others who had been involved in the evaluation process in the field could not be included. In some cases the workshops were useful for correcting misinterpretations on the side of the evaluation teams. But feedback sessions also sometimes revealed defensive attitudes on the side of the stakeholders responsible for implementing mainstreaming of gender equality. Often the feedback workshops contributed to constructive ideas for further pursuance of gender equality.

The draft country report and synthesis report were shared by Sida with the country authorities and did in some cases result in considerable and critical feedback. The evaluation team took note of the comments of which the exact origin is not always known. Draft reports are circulated to Sida HQ, Embassies and supposedly to project managers. But it is be-

yond the influence and knowledge of the Evaluation Team how widely reports are shared with concerned stakeholders.

2.3.3 Dialogue on Gender Equality

Dialogue is seen as one of the most important tools in Swedish development co-operation. Dialogue is the vehicle through which policies and strategies are discussed, first of all with partner governments, but also with other stakeholders and with the public at large. From the Swedish side the role of the Embassy is particularly important in dialogue with national partners about policies and about the strategy for mainstreaming gender equality, but also in dialogue about gender equality in interventions. There is no recipe given to Sida staff for how dialogue is undertaken. Yet unwritten definitions of dialogue develop, as the evaluation was to reveal.

The team spent considerable time on investigating **who** participates in dialogue, about **what**, **how** and **when**. The similarity between questions concerning participation and dialogue in the evaluation can be seen.

Our assessment tool of dialogue was designed to capture dialogue at three levels: Government-to-government, dialogue at intervention level, and dialogue with civil society. More specific criteria used were: a) records of dialogue on gender equality in minutes from important meetings, not least in annual negotiations, b) dialogue in different fora with participation of Embassy staff and representatives of government, civil society and other donors – frequency of participation in such meetings, c) dialogue on gender equality with the public at official gatherings, ceremonial events, in the media, etc. The importance of ‘dialogue with the public’ was pointed out to the evaluation team in Bangladesh, who had observed the diminishing resources at the embassy for keeping alive dialogue on gender equality (illustrated among others in the dormant gender focal point institution at the Embassy). This observation was countered by the Embassy which pointed to important aspects of the Embassy’s retention of dialogue on GE: 1) Dialogue in selected projects/programmes between retained, gender trained staff, 2) dialogue in gender fora (with other donors), however with less frequent Swedish participation than five years ago, 3) the Ambassador’s active approach to utilise public events and media to raise the issue of gender relations and mention the shared goal of gender equality between Sweden and Bangladesh.

The latter example in particular raises the question whether arbitrary interpretations of dialogue occur as factors such as (diminishing) gender analysis capacity and staff resources suggest.

In Nicaragua the evaluation also revealed arbitrary interpretations of what dialogue on gender equality entails. In this case the government-to-government dialogue had come to more or less a standstill, but was retained at other levels – with civil society and sector representatives.

The point is that the criteria for what constitutes good quality dialogue are unwritten and the intensity and quality of dialogue is affected by external (e.g. national political context) as well as internal factors of capacity and resources in participating agencies and institutions. In perspective of evaluation methodology some formal criteria can be set up as we did – i.e. reporting on and minutes of dialogue. These criteria need to be supplemented with stakeholders' subjective assessments of the quality of dialogue – as we also did.

The evaluation team believes that a combination of formal and informal criteria are preferable for assessing the quality of dialogue on an issue like gender equality, which in some contexts and points in time is a sensitive issue. The evaluation used this approach, but it is believed that the method could – and should – be more developed in future evaluations. Important indications of quality dialogue could be: who initiates the dialogue? How frequent is dialogue? How are disagreements dealt with, followed up and resolved?

2.4 Concept Papers and Prompt Sheets

Three concept papers were developed to clarify the key concepts of the evaluation. These were:

- The Goals of Gender Equality (including Empowerment and Mainstreaming)
- Gender Equality, Participation and Governance
- Practical and Strategic Changes in Relation to Gender Equality.

There was a general consent in the Evaluation Team (ET) that the Concept Papers served an important function in building common understanding of the concepts. To the degree possible the concept papers included interpretations from Sida Gender documents. However, the privilege of going through an exercise of reaching a common understanding of key gender concepts, including male roles and masculinities, could not be fully shared with many of the stakeholders whom the ET met, and the risk of imposing our interpretations had to be reckoned with.

Strengths and weaknesses of the Concept Papers are captured in the following quotes from Bonnie Keller:

“The main strength of the **Concept Papers** was that these provided a basic reference point for the diverse interventions evaluated in three widely differing

country contexts. The Concept Papers were useful during the analysis of findings and the drafting of the country report. I found that I frequently needed to 're-visit the basics' – i.e., to look again at definitions and parameters of the concepts used, to reflect on categorising and scaling specific interventions against the scales for gender mainstreaming and levels/types of participation, and to carry out a reality check, of what was found on the ground versus theoretical conceptualisation.

The Concept Papers would have been more useful if they had been shorter and integrated with each other – perhaps, in the end, one Concept Paper rather than three. The overall Evaluation Team intended to revise individual concept papers and to combine them in one paper. These good intentions were not implemented, primarily because of lack of time and – not least – because the field work and main drafting had by then already taken place.”

Working with the concepts of **practical and strategic gender changes** proved to be difficult. All team members had a rather clear understanding of Caroline Moser’s concepts, and agreed that the distinction is useful even if they are not mutually exclusive categories. Problems emanated when the teams tried to measure what had changed as a result of the interventions. The most important change which could be attributed to the interventions was generally ‘a positive change in attitude towards the goal of gender equality’. Whether this represents a practical or a strategic change is debatable, but with this, as with other examples of practical changes, the team concluded that change of attitude had the potential, when reinforced, to promote the strategic interests of women. The conclusion is that conceptualisation of practical and strategic needs and interests and assessment of changes in these require more theoretical work than what this evaluation could incorporate.

After reflecting on the concept papers and prompt sheets and their usefulness especially during the preparation phase “to lead us to a common understanding and because they force us to collect and update on the concepts and sector specific issues from other sources”, Ane Bonde adds:

“I think a weakness was that we did not manage to describe in a simple way the natural inter linkage between the concepts. Neither was it done in the reports (see my attempt below, inspired by a gender review I undertook in Paraguay). For instance, we talked about empowerment separated from strategic changes. We did not link participation (the highest degree of participation) to empowerment. We were too positive about the synergy between poverty reduction and gender equality, forgetting that gender equality in the access to credits, for instance, may improve women's living conditions and reduce gender related poverty but maintain women in the same subordinated position as always.”

She continues:

“... we used a lot of effort and thousands of words to describe our six concepts, and also to describe how complex it is and how inter linked everything is. But we did not manage to describe this inter linkage in a simple way – so I tried that:

A matrix of the inter linkage of the 6 concepts: Gender Equality, Empowerment of Women, Stakeholder Participation, Practical and Strategic Changes with Regard to Gender Equality, Mainstreaming

Practical gender needs (and changes) (within the existing gender roles)	Strategic gender interests (and changes) (a challenge of the existing gender roles)
Improvement of living conditions. (Abolition of gender related poverty)	Improvement of women's position in relation to men.
Access to the project's resources (credits, knowledge health services or what ever)	Women's empowerment New male roles and masculinities
Participation by consultation or for material incentives	Access to decision making forum Interactive participation
Gender equality (equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities) relates to both columns	
Mainstreaming is the strategy to achieve gender equality and thus relates to both practical and strategic needs/changes	

It was considered by the Evaluation Team that Sida's existing handbooks, guidelines and prompt sheets for gender mainstreaming did not sufficiently cover the interventions selected for this evaluation. Four prompt sheets were therefore prepared as background and awareness raising documents for the consultants. They address the sector/sub-sector or cross-cutting issue which were most relevant for the interventions being evaluated:

- Democratic Governance and Gender Equality
- Urban Development and Gender Equality
- Education and Gender Equality
- Health Systems/Sector and Gender Equality

While inspiration was taken from the existing Sida prompt sheets, shortcomings in their applicability are illustrated by Bonnie Keller:

“The four sectoral **Prompt Sheets** were perhaps the least useful of the practical and conceptual tools. Although they focused on the sectors in which the twelve interventions were situated, the individual prompt sheets were too general and broad to be of practical use in evaluating a particular intervention in its sectoral context.

In the case of the South African urban interventions, for example, the Prompt Sheet on Urban Development and Gender Equality would have been very useful to the designers and implementers of the interventions. Had such a prompt sheet been available and USED in programme planning, the two interventions (CUP and TPL) would have been mainstreamed to a much greater extent than was the case in practice. This Prompt Sheet mainly alerted us to what these interventions **COULD HAVE DONE** or **HAD NOT DONE**, but it did not contribute to the evaluation process very concretely.”

The concept papers and prompt sheets provided guidance on how to understand and how to apply the gender concepts. Other instruments were developed to help the evaluation process of data collection and analysis. The following provide retrospective reflections by the evaluation team.

2.5 Planning Notes, Document Reviews, Analytical Frameworks and Study Objects

A great deal of preparatory work was invested in the Planning Notes, document reviews and development of the Analytical Frameworks – Study Objects and Study Objects Grids – for each intervention. The preparatory process fostered participation by, and collaboration among, most members of country evaluation teams, and gave all of us a sound basis for identifying the most important areas for the evaluation to focus on and how we would go about it.

The **Planning Note** for each country team proved to be essential in working out the complex details of who in each Evaluation Team would share responsibility for each intervention and how the fieldwork would be divided – who would do what, where and when. Although each team had to make some ad hoc adjustments as the teams engaged in fieldwork, to accommodate local partners, information gaps, logistics, etc. the original schedule outlined in the Planning Notes provided sufficient guidance as to what should be covered.

The Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit at Sida provided the country Evaluation Teams with Country Strategies, programme designs and reviews and other important documents well in advance (which often does not happen in evaluations) of fieldwork. The documentation was of sufficient depth and breath to justify coverage in the preparatory phase of documentary studies. This enabled extensive Document Reviews to be undertaken and allowed the teams to have a good overview of country programmes and individual interventions, before meeting them in-country. The **Document Review** provided sufficient information for the development of Analytical Frameworks in what was named the Study Objects Grids, both for the Country Strategy as well as for each intervention.

During the fieldwork the **Analytical Frameworks** or **Study Objects Grids** (see example Annex 3) were crucial as guides to topics that should be interrogated and enabled revisions/additions to be included as the field work progressed. The Grid matrix composed of Key Evaluation Issues, Specific Questions, Geographical or Institutional Concentration, Key Informants, and Data Collection and Analysis Methods. Each intervention was then assessed and analysed according to: **What** are the key

gender equality issues? **How** have they been addressed? **Which** changes have occurred? In all three country contexts these Analytical Frameworks were so “on-target” that little revision was necessary.

While this framework in itself was ambitious, Sarah Forti has a point of general concern for attribution in evaluations, not least of cross-cutting issues like gender equality (and poverty reduction). She observes:

“The **Why** question was missing altogether from the study objects and from the ToR which focused unrealistically on the impact and result of a policy which in most cases had been implemented at a very nominal level.”

The statement may be a bit categorical, since the evaluation team certainly did try to identify causal factors and to find answers to why mainstreaming gender equality had been relatively limited and in some cases absent in the interventions studied. Neither was the ‘why’ question missing in the ToR. But the reflective statement illustrates a dilemma, which needs to be reckoned with when questions concerning analysis of the gender issues and the ways they have been dealt with in themselves are many and time is limited. The Evaluation Team did identify a number of external, contextual factors such as political climate and persistent male roles and masculinities which influenced changes or acted as constraints on changes in gender equality. Likewise ‘internal’ factors relating to institutional factors, capacity and skills, commitment and responsibility were identified as causal explanations.

An important lesson from the use of the Analytical Framework model is that detailed preparation, and careful thinking about specific areas of investigation (based on the ToR), provide a basis for subsequent analysis of data, formulation of the Table of Contents and report drafting.

2.6 Indicators, Tools and Instruments

When attempting to measure effects and impacts as well as progress and process it is necessary to have a ‘measuring stick’. To describe and measure changes in complex phenomena and situations such as gender equality and mainstreaming, it is unavoidable to use indicators. Indicators are proxies for complex phenomena. The challenge in this evaluation was to identify indicators which capture the complexities in a simple way and still are sufficiently precise to represent the multifaceted phenomena of mainstreaming and participation (processes), gender equality and poverty reduction.

Concerning **gender equality** the Gender Related Development Index, GDI, and the Gender Empowerment Measure, GEM, contain internationally recognised sex disaggregated statistical indicators: Life expectancy at birth, Adult literacy of 15 years old and above, Combined Primary,

Secondary and Tertiary gross enrolment ratio, seats in parliament held by women and estimated earned income to mention the most central indicators. The team used these indicators from UNDP's annual Human Development Report to form a comparative overview between the three countries, Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh, and found these indexes useful for national comparisons.

When it comes to assessment of either practical or strategic changes which may be caused by specific interventions or at least be linked to these, then statistical indexes like the GDI and GEM are not available at levels below national aggregations. To make evaluation of interventions possible, indicators closer to the interventions need to be identified, and preferably with primary stakeholders.

Expressions of individual women's and men's or specific groups' experiences are legitimate as qualitative indications in narrative form, and examples were used as illustrative boxes in the synthesised analysis. Semi-structured or graduated indicators are recognised as preferable to generalised experience statements, and the evaluation team did attempt to develop instruments that would capture 'levels' and 'degrees' as indicators of change. For two of the key concepts – mainstreaming and participation – the team developed instruments to measure depth/degrees and change. In both cases the tool was a scale: A mainstreaming scale (Annex 4) and a Scale of Participation (Annex 5). These tools turned out to be very helpful, as expressed by most team members "... for looking at very different interventions and having to compare, also with data collected from different sub teams, the graduation/scaling proved very useful".

Different levels of Participation have been described by other development researchers and practitioners, including Sida's, in slightly different ways than the 7 point scale (Annex 5) ranging from passive and top-down participation to "self mobilisation" (which we did not observe in any of the interventions).

However, the attempt to make a scale for degrees of mainstreaming (Annex 4) was an invention by the team. The scale/degrees went from 'Zero or Pro Forma Mainstreaming' to 'Mainstreaming Included in Monitoring and Evaluation'. However, confronted with the concrete interventions it turned out that mainstreaming does not follow an incremental development as the scale would suggest. In PRODEL, for instance, we found pro forma mentioning of gender (degree 1), and counting (monitoring) male and female participation (degree 6), but nothing in between. This has to be taken into consideration before other evaluations can use "our" scale of mainstreaming, while operating with different degrees of mainstreaming may still be useful.

A future attempt of developing instruments for measuring mainstreaming may try selectively to develop, refine and incorporate indicators which relate to the elements of mainstreaming the Evaluation Team continuously addressed: explicit gender equality goal, gender analysis, gender analysis capacity and competence, gender training, gender disaggregated data, mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, and monitoring of mainstreaming gender equality.

In addition to the scales for measuring degrees/forms of Participation and Mainstreaming of Gender Equality, the team had hoped to apply more vigorously than what turned out to be practical, participatory methods and tools which could help to assess changes. Team members had experience with different participatory instruments and tools from other evaluations. Mirza Huda reports from Bangladesh how Participatory Rural Assessment, PRA, tools had been useful in a Gender Impact Assessment of BURO Tangail's Financial Services – conducted for the British High Commission in Dhaka in 1998:

“The purpose of the study was to develop and test a set of methods to assess the effect of the NGO's (BURO) activities upon gender relations within the woman group member's households as well as within the community. A very effective methodology adopted was the extensive use of PRA tools for sessions at the villages with homogenous groups of the NGO clients (loanees), group members, who had not yet taken loan, non-members, other household members and community persons. Outputs obtained from the various sessions included changing trends in resources and decision making, information on members who were unable and/or unwilling to take loans, value of services as perceived by the members, households and community; role of clients (loanees) in management and use of services; and future dream of improved services to women.”

The GEE team did not directly apply PRA tools. However, it was anticipated that a participatory, semi-structured, impact monitoring tool, the Change Assessment and Scoring Tool, CAST, would have been applicable in this evaluation, as it had been in an evaluation on Poverty Reduction and in a Health Sector evaluation undertaken by a team member. The idea of the tool is to have indicators identified by 'beneficiaries' or specified target groups, e.g. women groups and male groups. Of course, the evaluation team can 'cut corners' and identify what the team thinks are relevant indicators in the tool. But then central information may be lost.

Why the CAST tool turned out not to be useful relates to Ane Bonde's reflection. She sees two levels of explanation:

1. “During the preparation phase we did not develop the specific indicators under each key area that were needed to convert or modify the example of a Health CAST into a Gender Equality CAST.

2. Even if we had tried to do that (and with beneficiaries in a pilot exercise), we might have found that the CAST is not apt to evaluate gender equality as an aspect, where it is not a direct or explicit goal of the intervention, which was the case in our interventions. I think the strength of CAST, and what it was originally developed for, is to assess changes and effects of specific interventions on living conditions in general.”

On the same note Bonnie Keller also comments on the necessary time required to interact with primary stakeholders and a more concerted effort to practice the use of less familiar participatory tools by the team members prior to application:

“Had we had more extensive and prolonged contact and interaction with groups of primary stakeholders, it would have been useful to have one-day workshops in which the same group could work with both Participan and the CAST tool.”

The stakeholder maps which were initially drafted for each intervention and found useful for selecting interviewees could have been a help in promoting the use of the CAST tool with different and possibly sex-disaggregated stakeholder groups (refer to Section 2.2.2 for more about the use of participatory methods).

One team member rates the individual interview with primary stakeholders as the best method of all, given the sensitivity of the issue of gender equality. Some people are shy to share their experience and feel further uncomfortable in conference rooms with white board and peer pressure. Says Sarah Forti:

“The most striking learning experience was the interview with the male Nicaraguan leader of a male role and masculinities group in the slum areas of urban Nicaragua. The fact that we entered his hut and sat down on the floor with the chicken and cockroaches made him feel sufficiently confident to talk about his experience as well as creating the adequate ambiance to hold an interview of qualitative depth.

Equally in South Africa, having found that the only woman in the task force of Garies had been excluded from the task force and that our access to her was made increasingly difficult, we made everything possible to have someone drive to the isolated site where she was living. That interview was more informative than the whole two days spent with the leader of the Task force.

The conclusion is that the methodologies need to be laid out in sufficiently flexible and broad terms to adapt them to the realities in the field. In fact ultimately the field realities are the ones which are shaping the way the evaluators go about collecting data and analysing it. Surely going around and finding such crucial individual key informants can be time consuming and expensive. However these were the interviews that most gave meaning to the participatory approaches and enhanced by far the quality of the findings of the evaluation. Ideally in future evaluations the time spent with the primary stakeholders should be prioritised whilst the time with middle management more effectively used to have access to formal documents and institutional set up.”

Methodologically evaluation teams are often forced to make trade offs between application of different methods, for example between group sessions with more or less participatory approaches and individual interviews. While this is much a question of data collection instruments and adequate analytical tools it is also a question of time and is addressed in Section 2.8 on work programme.

2.7 Assessing Changes in Gender Equality

Much of the work done by the evaluation team in developing the methodological tools used during the evaluation (mission planning notes, document reviews, analytical frameworks, study objects etc.) was concerned with establishing a structure for team members intended to achieve two analytical tasks:

- a) to establish the type of changes in gender equality which could reasonably be expected to result from the interventions being studied; and
- b) to develop a framework in which we could classify the changes which were actually observable, especially relating to the concept of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests.

Conceptually, the evaluation team was committed to relying on several different categories of information on changes in gender equality. It is worth considering each different type of information and its analysis.

1. Objectively verifiable quantitative information on gender differences, mainly in outcomes, gathered by the monitoring systems of the interventions being studied.

It seems reasonable to expect, given the prior history of GE policy at SIDA, that interventions in education, health, institutional development and urban development as were selected for study during the evaluation would have developed information on the quantitative differences in participation rates and outcomes experienced by women and men, and by youth of both sexes. In fact, this type of data was very rare. As an example, the urban development project examined in Nicaragua did have raw information on the split in the number of loans made to men and women but nothing on differences in the average size of loans or on differential rates of loan loss, successful payback rates or, especially, of the ultimate use and utility of the funds loaned. This was a general problem throughout the interventions studied although it was not unanticipated.

2. Observations of key informants who represented secondary stakeholders in the interventions involved. Typically project staff, organisational staff in the participating agencies, workers in clinics or teachers

in schools as well as researchers or NGO staff collaborating with the programs.

This group, or rather groups since they varied in size, scope and composition from country to country and intervention to intervention, might have been expected to be positively biased and likely to claim changes not borne out by other evidence but this risk did not materialise during the evaluation. Rather, these secondary stakeholders proved, in almost all instances, to be very acute observers of what kind of changes in GE were actually either taking place already or likely to take place in the future. The biggest methodological problem with this group was the need to have a discussion first of what constituted real change in GE as opposed to the attainment of a specific target such as participation rates. When these topics were discussed the groups usually showed themselves very capable of being both realistic as to what was occurring and sophisticated in differentiating between embryonic and more significant changes. DNFE staff, for example, was quite aware that the participation of female and male, girls and boys in literacy would gain more significance with job-related follow-on activities and if curriculum was significantly gender adjusted. And ASK stakeholders distinguished between legal aid cases which changed the situation of individual women and cases which entailed perspectives of strategic changes for larger groups of women.

3. Observations by evaluation team members of structural changes in institutions and/or apparent changes in the treatment, attitude, and self-awareness of women and men in relation to changes in gender equality.

Obviously this is an information set that had to be analysed with some care, most importantly to ensure that the teams were consistent in their analysis of what was observed and its actual meaning. For example, the team in Nicaragua felt that the attitudes, statements, confidence level and the way in which women and men police cadets responded to questions regarding rights and responsibilities reflected a real change in gender equality at the institutional level. It was essential given this impression that the investigators assessing the project first presented and discussed the evidence within the larger Nicaragua team and, subsequently, that this was discussed across the broader group of investigators to ensure that it was acceptable as an interpretation.

4. Changes in gender equality as perceived, experienced, and related to the evaluation team by women and men participating in the interventions studied.

This ultimately proved to be perhaps the most important source of information on changes in gender equality gathered by the team. There was

some concern that these effects would be over-reported by women and men who had a stake in the interventions or that changes would be attributed to the project when they occurred for other reasons. There was also a fear that economic change would be the predominant focus of respondents and that other important aspects of gender equality would go unreported. In fact, neither fear was borne out by the experience of the evaluation teams. The women and men (and youth) interviewed by the team members, or those participating in some small-scale workshops, proved fully capable of assessing their situation from a gender relations perspective before, during, and after the intervention period. They often were careful to point out, for example, if other projects were more likely to have had an impact on gender relations.

A typical example of how astutely the project participants were able to assess the influence of different activities on gender relations was provided in the case of the Non-Formal Education 2 Intervention in Bangladesh. During a visit to a village literacy training project under this intervention, evaluation team members engaged in a dialogue on the content of training materials and whether they might have had an influence on attitudes to women's rights among participants and in the community at large. The women in the meeting were very quick to point out that the most dramatic influence on their own attitudes and those of villagers was the forceful message presented by family planning workers who were not part of the project under evaluation.

A further interesting result of consultations with primary stakeholders (women and men as well as youth of both sexes) was the exploration of differences between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests. From the perspective of the primary stakeholders there did not seem to be a major distinction between these two categories of changes. That is, women and men participating in the projects saw the meeting of practical gender needs as essential to the broader goal of addressing strategic interests. They repeatedly pointed out to team members the link between more immediate needs for economic and personal security – freedom from violence, sexual abuse, hunger, etc. – and an ability to fully participate in the life of the community in political or cultural terms. Hence, the evaluation team had to adjust the pre-conceived expected dichotomous changes. – In general the study of changes had to rely on observations and stories by different stakeholder individuals and groups, amongst whom national team members themselves were important resource persons with previous knowledge of the 'subject matter' and a sufficient historical memory. While the team focused on assessing real changes another perspective was on potential changes and missed opportunities with regards to changes in gender equality. It is probably in the area of change and potential change that evaluations could particularly benefit from

more in-depth research on the conditions under which donor agencies and their partners promote gender equality.

2.8 Work Programme, Evaluation Team and Reporting

2.8.1 Learning Atmosphere

The evaluation process, timing and division of work and responsibility are crucial elements for a successful evaluation.

A spirit of learning, participation and sharing was laid out by UTV from the formulation of ToR for the GEE and the initial meetings when agreement was reached on how to approach the evaluation till the follow-up workshops for sharing the findings with larger groups of evaluators and gender specialists (e.g. DAC, October 2002). This has been conducive to a good evaluation! The learning and participatory spirit has influenced the process to a higher degree than what the evaluation team has experienced in previous evaluations. There were many expressions of this: a) Frequent exchanges of lessons between the evaluation team and stakeholders within and outside Sida in Sweden, b) Application of participatory methods for data collection and analysis to the degree possible, and c) Participation of UTV staff in one country study.

This is not to say that the situation was always ideal. Retrospective reflections point to several limitations and areas for improvement:

The initial team workshop for clarification of concepts and agreement on approach and detailed planning for field studies was extremely useful. A weakness was that only one of the two national consultants from each of the countries Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh participated. The difficult challenge of catching up when the team met in South Africa was expressed by Pethu Serote. She points to other limitations in the participatory process, i.e. feedback to interviewees:

“The meetings that we had with the interviewees were well thought through and questions structured to elicit the necessary information. The team members conducted the interviews both professionally and ethically and ensured that they paid attention to the sensitivity required by the situation.

There was an attempt, not always successful due to time constraints, to report back preliminary findings to the interviewees. This is important as it assures the interviewees that they were heard.”

The participation of UTV staff, who are seriously engaged in the evaluation and have prior competence in the ‘subject matter’, contributes to the continuous learning and sharing process. Experience from two UTV

staffs' participation in the South Africa field visit, does however, point to an important issue of roles by UTV and ET in preparation, implementation and drawing out lessons. Since UTV staff are not fully involved in the preparation work of guidelines and tools and practising these, to involve them ad-hoc in interviews in the field may cause uneasiness on both sides. A solution to consider, with substantial consequences for UTV staff time, is: That UTV staff participate fully as independent evaluators in the full evaluation, with shared responsibilities and equal participation in preparation, data collection and analysis and reporting. It is known that Sida has practiced this in smaller evaluations. It may not be possible in larger evaluations running over a year or more. Alternatively, the roles of UTV and ET staff need to be spelled out early in the process and be made clear within the team and for Embassy staff in countries to be visited. The balance between impartiality of external evaluation consultants and the interest in learning from evaluation processes by UTV staff need to be carefully managed.

2.8.2 Time Factor

Given the time factor which always constrains evaluation teams there were different ideas in the team about how to prioritise. Overall, preparation in terms of reaching common understanding of concepts and approach was given high priority in this evaluation. All team members have rated this priority very high – except for those members who unfortunately were not involved in the preparation but had to jump on the moving train.

Reflections by most team members delve on the limited time for in-depth evaluations in the field, i.e. ca. three weeks in each country. Dividing time between capital and regions does not always make it possible to optimise inputs from Embassy and partner agencies at central level. Complaints were received that the evaluations teams did not fully appreciate the conditions under which Embassy staff worked with gender equality. Yet, staff found it difficult to allocate much time for the evaluation team (see also Section 3.2.1).

That each team composed of male and female consultants – 2–3 international consultants with thorough experience of gender analysis, evaluations and team work, and 2 national consultants who on top of the above had the in-depth national experience – was experienced as optimal given the design of the evaluation. There were, nevertheless, different views on the allocation of time between various tasks and application of different methods in the field studies.

Time constraints in evaluating gender equality changes cannot easily be solved. Ideally longitudinal information from primary stakeholders,

women, men and youth – and from project/programme staff and other secondary stakeholders – is warranted given the topic of changes which take time to manifest themselves. This is where continuous monitoring would help to improve evaluation quality.

The time demand on stakeholders in connection with the Gender Equality Evaluation, on primary stakeholders in particular, was sometimes met by a variety of excuses. Precautions in terms of early appointments through national team members prior to arrival of the full Evaluation Team is not always a guarantee that stakeholders turn up for agreed interviews, workshops, field-visits etc. Evaluation teams need to operate with some flexibility for alternative appointments. A good way of motivating stakeholders to participate actively in evaluations is that they are already familiar with self-monitoring or self-evaluation of the interventions and the explicit and implicit goals such as gender equality. Such self-evaluations were not practised. The evaluation team also felt that secondary and key stakeholders considered the GEE as a not very welcome burden on their time. This was expressed very directly on several occasions. Not until evaluations are incorporated as fully accepted learning processes is this attitude likely to undergo a more conducive change. UTV is an important actor in helping this to happen.

It has already been mentioned that the careful preparation of the Analytical Framework facilitated structuring of the Country Reports and the Synthesis Report. Meticulous reading of draft reports by UTV staff added to a constructive dialogue about the evaluation findings.

With these considerations of pros and cons on the methods, tools and instruments and principles applied in this evaluation, Chapter 3 turns to reflections at a ‘higher level’ of evaluating a policy and a strategy.

Chapter 3

Evaluating a Policy and Strategy

3.1 Evaluating a Policy

3.1.1 Some Challenges

The organizational context for the Evaluation of Sida's Support to Development Co-operation for the Promotion of Gender Equality was largely set by a series of steps taken by the Swedish Government in 1996. These actions were consistent with the Beijing Platform of Action adopted by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. In May 1996, the Swedish Parliament established the promotion of gender equality between men and women in partner countries as a goal for development co-operation between Sweden and partner countries.

In June of the same year, the Swedish government established guidelines for promoting gender equality in Swedish international development co-operation. These were evident in Sida's Action Programme for Promoting Gender Equality adopted in April 1997. The Action Programme encompassed a policy, an experience analysis and an action plan. The key strategy adopted by the Action Programme was the same strategy endorsed by the Beijing Conference: mainstreaming gender equality into all development co-operation programmes.

Thus the GEE presented a formidable methodological challenge for the Evaluation Team in that it focused on two very distinct but related phenomena;

- a) How the Action Programme may or may not have influenced the content of Sida/host country development co-operation programming; and
- b) What was the result of Sida/host country development co-operation programming in terms of advancing or changing the situation regarding gender equality in the countries concerned.

The Terms of Reference suggested that the problem of determining how Swedish government (and Sida) policies on gender equality were being reflected in development co-operation could best be examined through country case studies in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh.

Not surprisingly, the ToR also suggested that policy influence could best be examined at three levels:

- The Country Strategy;
- Dialogue Between Sida and the host government; and
- Specific interventions or projects supported by Sida in each of the three sample countries.

Rather more surprising was the decision **not** to examine the link between the Country Strategy and the content of each of the interventions chosen for review since it seemed to the Evaluation Team Members that having the GE policy reflected in the content of the Country Strategy would be just the first step in influencing the content of interventions. This relates to the question how interventions evolve over time. The evaluation team observed that older interventions had changed incrementally over time. One may expect that where national sector programmes exist it will be attempted to adjust interventions to sector policies. The interventions that were chosen for the evaluation were ‘isolated’ projects and did not belong to sector programmes, but the team was aware that in Bangladesh Sida is considering to focus its support on sector programmes. In the absence of nationally owned sector programmes to which donor supported interventions in principle belong, the Country Strategy is anticipated to define the strategic framework for single projects. How the CS tallies with national policies and is reflected in interventions would be an important study area to determine the parameters of ownership by the partner government (see also Section 3.2.1).

At a more global level the evaluation of a policy and priority in development co-operation, such as the promotion of gender equality, presents a set of important challenges for evaluators. At a minimum, these challenges include:

- Allocation of responsibility and resources for gender mainstreaming is unclear.

Unless policy goals are sectoral in nature (primary health care, water and sanitation, education, infrastructure, transport, etc.) they rarely come with significant dedicated resources attached. It is impossible, for example, to track the Sida supported investment in GE in the Nicaragua programme because, in theory at least, GE has been mainstreamed into all current development co-operation programmes. In reality, the actual investment tends to be very small.

- The interplay of policies and priorities which need not be resolved at a headquarters level, but which become acute in the design of country programmes and interventions.

Bilateral development agencies generate a number of high profile policy goals. These are not, in and of themselves, contradictory or in competition with each other. Gender equality, good governance, improved access to education, sustainable environments, human security, and above all, poverty alleviation can all be shown to fit into a supportive inter-relationship of means and ends.

Problems begin to occur at the country programme level not because of inherent conflicts but because of limitations on the time, skill, human resource capacity and financial resources of Sida and its partner agencies inside and outside government. Trade-offs are made and expediencies accepted in the pursuit of the operational goal of designing and funding projects capable of being implemented in a reasonable time frame by organizations with limited capacities and with a reasonable chance to attain a specified set of objectives.

Evaluators when confronted by trade-offs of this type have no fixed standard to determine whether or not a specific decision was legitimate under the circumstances and are thus forced into what are very transparently judgement calls. This in turn, calls into question the ability of evaluation teams to maintain consistency and credibility from team to team and country to country.

- Differences in understanding among individuals in the network of key stakeholders who must be activated by Sida as an organization if a policy like GE is to be successful at the country level.

It is normally fairly easy to identify the key stakeholders for implementing a program or project in pursuit of specified objectives. While there may be variations in the degree of commitment to a program/project and its objectives at different levels and organizational nodes within Sida, there is usually a reasonable consensus on the relevance of those objectives. In conducting the GEE evaluation, team members found significant differences at key points in the organization over the relevance of specific issues in the pursuit of gender equality. There were very significant variations – both from headquarters to country office level and across different embassies or headquarters units at the same level – in the extent to which Sida officers and others felt that the question of GE should be or could be addressed with any degree of clarity and specificity.

- The ongoing problem of how to integrate local priorities and concepts in a partnership model when implementing a policy relating to values.

Despite the international consensus achieved at Beijing and after, the policy of promoting gender equality involves Sida and its partners in developing countries in a dialogue over values, shared or otherwise. This is not a dialogue which can be resolved in primarily technical terms, although gender analysis provides a technical dimension to the discussions.

Thus, in evaluation terms, it becomes difficult to resolve the issue of how firm should Sida be in the presentation of how it “values” gender equality as a goal and how it would make such a goal operational when national and local values may differ.

Such differences clearly exist in other areas such as primary health, water and sanitation, education, agriculture, etc, but they can often be finessed or obscured through discussions of technical matters. The “technical” criteria may include cost recovery, the effectiveness of specific service delivery modes, decentralization of management authority, accountability, etc. One might argue, in fact, that the clarity of GE as a value rather than a primarily technical matter represents an advantage from an evaluation point of view.

Precisely because the promotion of gender equality so directly concerns shared, or not shared, values across many dimensions of partnership, there is no temptation to cast the evaluation in purely technical terms. In other fields, evaluators often find the absence of consensus among stakeholders about goals is transferred into “technical” terms and divisions are obscured.

What seems to happen in the case of gender equality is qualitatively different. Stakeholders are ready to reach a consensus on the general goal of gender equality but not on the sub-goals or objectives which might mark progress on the way. In other words, some stakeholders resist the specification of goals and objectives which would require action while expressing their contentment with the basic idea of gender equality.

3.1.2 Responding to the Challenge of Evaluating a Policy

It is worth considering briefly how the Gender Equality Evaluation teams went about addressing each of the challenges noted above:

a) Unclear allocation of responsibility and resources for implementing gender mainstreaming

Strictly speaking, of course, there were some financial resources and personnel allocated to GE at both the headquarters and field levels of Sida, including gender equality focal points in all departments, two advisors at the Policy division and the GE focal points in the embassies. The teams were careful to interview these persons regarding their roles and responsi-

bilities and their success in enlisting other Sida personnel in efforts to promote GE. But focal points cannot necessarily substitute for resources that are fully designated to the gender equality course.

An intervening question throughout the evaluation regarding responsibility for mainstreaming gender equality relates to the correspondence between Sida and partner country policies. Although the evaluation team has emphasised the importance for successful pursuance of the gender equality goal that national partner governments share the goal with Sida, in reality responsibility for implementing mainstreaming by a national government and by donor with limited input must necessarily differ. Sida can support its partner governments and civil society to pursue gender mainstreaming. The main responsibility rests with the national partners (see also discussion in Section 3.2.1). The evaluation team used various criteria to assess the seriousness of the partner government to pursue gender mainstreaming in correspondence with Sida's policy. These were for example: a) Whether partners were signatories to international gender equality conventions, mainly Platform for Action and CEDAW, b) National policies on gender equality and empowerment endorsed as independent and as sector policies, c) Whether mechanisms and institutions had been established to oversee and monitor the policy, such as the Office on the Status of Women in South Africa, d) Willingness to maintain dialogue on the GE goal (low in Nicaragua at national – macro – level), and e) Capacity/willingness to implement gender mainstreaming at programme – meso – level (e.g. waning capacity in DNFE Bangladesh).

In addition, the evaluation team relied on a step-wise approach to assessing the seriousness of Sida's investment in supporting GE:

- Team members reviewed the material on GE developed at considerable expense and effort by Sida including policy development work leading up to the Action Programme for Gender Equality and its constituent parts;
- Team members reviewed the process by which the GE policy was incorporated into Country Strategies in the three case study countries. This included a review of the support documents for each strategy as well as headquarters and embassy level interviews on the process of developing the CS. Finally, team members interviewed key stakeholders in each country regarding their participation in the CS process and the relevance of that process and its results to GE. This was normally done over two cycles of CS so that any trends in the GE content of the CS could be seen.
- Team members analysed the organization of development programming work within each embassy and from headquarters to embassy level (including external consultants), to see how the policy was com-

municated to Sida staff and consultants and what were the perceived roles and responsibilities for implementing the GE policy.

The evaluation team members then compared their findings across the three countries (the above methods were agreed to at the team workshop held in March 2000, prior to undertaking all three case studies) to see whether findings were consistent across the three cases and what overall conclusions might be captured for the synthesis report.

In summary, in the absence of a large flow of resources dedicated to GE, the evaluation team was able to combine an analysis of the documented results of the GE policy at the Country Strategy level with an analysis of the actions taken by Sida to ensure the policy was enacted. The latter was then supplemented by a review of the perceived roles of different personnel and their differing perceptions of what the policy required of them. The perceived roles rather than formal roles were as close as the evaluation could get to the form of responsibility for ensuring that the GE goal was pursued and monitored.

b) Multiple Policy Priorities

Evaluation team members were pleasantly surprised by the lack of **direct** conflict between Sida's policies and priorities at country level. What was encountered, as noted, was a strong tendency to focus on a limited set of priorities: often excluding GE or including it in a fairly superficial way. The problem for the evaluators was how to judge whether trade-offs made for reasons of lack of resource or capability were legitimate given the expedient goal of implementing reasonably successful interventions.

In fact, this became less of a problem the closer the evaluation teams investigated each intervention. While some stakeholders put forward the case of the necessary trade-off between GE and other priorities, this trade-off was more theoretical than real simply because the necessary questions to make such a trade-off had never been asked. When the evaluation teams probed key stakeholders on when and how decisions had been taken which seemed to marginalize GE in a given project, the answer was almost always that no decision was ever taken, that it happened by default. In this way, the evaluation teams were able to focus not on why GE lost out in a balanced analysis of its place in a given intervention but why such an analysis often did not take place.

c) Differences in Understanding Among Key Stakeholders

One of the key measures of success of any policy or priority within an organization or system has to be how clearly the policy or priority is understood. Another way to put this question is how extensively a "shared vision" of what the policy means permeates the organization. The fact

that the GEE Terms of Reference explicitly asked the team to test different concepts in GE (gender equality itself, women's empowerment, mainstreaming, etc.) proved to be a powerful tool for addressing this question. Since the evaluation team members were continuously testing for how these concepts were understood by stakeholders, they were able to map out similarities and differences throughout the network of individuals and organizations involved.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the team members found a reasonably high degree of consensus within Sida and among its closest partners as to the meaning and relevance of Gender Equality as a concept and a priority. On the other hand, the team encountered serious differences of opinion on how best to pursue GE in the context of particular interventions. Indeed, there was no clear agreement that GE was relevant in each specific intervention (as opposed to as a general concept) and even less understanding of how much effort should be expended on analysing the GE situation of each intervention in order to design support to the priority.

d) Integrating Local Priorities in a Partnership Model

Susanne Possing in her *Taking a Closer Look* (see Annex 2) provides a very clear-eyed critique of the basic assumption implicit in the approach of the GE Evaluation: that GE as a global priority should somehow take precedence over locally developed coalitions or models which may address power relations in non-gender terms (class or ethnicity being the two most common).

She also points out that GE may be in danger, as a concept, of being subsumed into developed country efforts to increase the pace of globalization. In this metamorphosis, GE becomes one means of improving participation rates and economic efficiency while access to markets becomes a pre-requisite for economic liberalization and greater participation by women in the economy.

These two cautionary arguments are well taken and it would be interesting to see in the three case studies whether or not the evaluation teams could point to competing models or paradigms of social change which phrased something like a GE priority but in very different terms. After all, for the critique to be valid one would need to find evidence of a different model put forward by either governments or civil society.

Possing points to divergent interpretations by civil society groups and the Government in South Africa. The national SA GE policies are translations of UN platforms etc. and do not reflect the gendered realities of the SA society.

This is exactly an area where more substantive analysis prior to the main evaluation would help to broaden the importance of the national context.

The gender analysis which is an element in the mainstreaming strategy would be a most relevant tool to analyse national ‘models’ for gender equality policy. In terms of evaluation methodology, such initial analysis of gender equality ‘models’ could be made subject to more substantive follow-up studies to the benefit of the national partners and other donors.

While elements of different GE interpretations by civil society groups and the Government were clearly described in the South Africa report and re-emphasised by Pethu in her reflections, the Bangladesh and Nicaragua case studies gave no evidence that **governments** had ever put forward an alternative vision of social change in support of GE. In fact, the Government of Nicaragua seemed to be actively hostile to efforts to promote GE goals; whether they originated internationally or among Nicaraguan national and regional civil society organizations. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, a formal national commitment to GE seemed to lack substantive follow through.

3.2 Evaluating a Strategy: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming

In concert with the Beijing Platform for Action and in a manner consistent with most bilateral and multilateral development agencies, Sida has adopted a mainstreaming strategy as its main instrument for supporting GE in development co-operation interventions. This results in challenges to Sida as an organization in supporting GE as well as to evaluators attempting to assess the effectiveness of that support.

3.2.1 Challenges in Implementing a Mainstreaming Strategy

There are three particularly acute problems in the implementation of a mainstreaming strategy. They in turn have the effect of making it difficult to carry out an effective evaluation of a mainstreaming strategy:

- The challenge of rolling-out the strategy across a large set of programs and interventions;

Mainstreaming as a strategy is normally meant to be universal in its application. Thus once enacted or endorsed it should apply equally to all interventions across the agency’s portfolio. In practical terms, however, this is not possible.

Country Strategies and Interventions have their own life-cycles which don’t necessarily correspond with the timing of the strategy. In addition, staff must be trained in the application of mainstreaming and methods for analysis and design of mainstreamed projects need to be developed and communicated. Very importantly, indicators of GE need to be identified and integrated into programme monitoring and

evaluation models. While this can be done centrally in an organization, it cannot be communicated at the same pace to all elements in the organization and agreed with its partners on a global basis.

As a result of this fact, it becomes difficult to evaluate the extent to which a mainstreaming strategy has been applied in a given intervention. When was the intervention designed? What resources (tools, experts, consultant advice) were made available in support of mainstreaming? How, specifically, was the mainstreaming strategy communicated to program and project developers? What was required of them? How would we recognize its successful achievement? How much mainstreaming, in the eyes of the organization as a whole, would be enough? These were very difficult questions for each of the evaluation teams to address and we were only partially successful.

- The challenge of ensuring that all levels in the organization have a shared commitment to implementing the strategy;

While Sida as a whole has made a clear and public commitment to the strategy of mainstreaming, it is not clear that this commitment is shared throughout the organization. One can identify a cadre of committed specialists and policy analysts, supported by a number of operational staff at all levels with a clear interest and commitment to mainstreaming as a strategy. The problem seems to be that beyond that group, however, it is not clear that officers at Sida feel that it is necessarily in their direct interest and concern that the strategy of mainstreaming should succeed. This feeling is reinforced as national partners rarely insist on targeting gender equality.

This is not just a problem of individual taste and commitment but one of organizational structure and the systems motivating and rewarding Sida personnel (and the personnel of other bilateral and multilateral development co-operation agencies).

In plain terms, it is clear that Sida officers are dedicated professionals committed to the development and implementation of successful development co-operation projects and programs. The problem is that the success of those projects and programs is not essentially bound up, in their own experience of what the agency rewards, with the question of mainstreaming gender equality.

Like all development co-operation agencies, Sida faces very difficult hurdles in the process of identifying, agreeing on, designing, committing to, implementing and evaluating development co-operation programs. Line managers are prized for their capacity to meet operational deadlines with projects which are, on balance, reasonably successful within very specific boundaries. It is a rare senior manager, indeed, who is likely to put more value on a subordinate's capacity to implement a well executed mainstreaming strategy than on the achieve-

ment of more technical goals within a project delivered more or less on time and within budget.

From an evaluation perspective, this causes problems when line managers at Sida and its partner agencies have very real difficulties with what they perceive as the lack of “realism” in the expectations of evaluators regarding mainstreaming.

- The problem of ownership and accountability. Who owns gender mainstreaming if it is not working?

Given the geographic and sectoral organization and structure of development co-operation agencies and their programs, the implementation of a specific intervention or even a country programme has limited risks for the organization and its personnel. If an intervention in one country is not effective, others in the same country may offset its impact so that the “portfolio” of interventions on balance represents a good investment for Sweden and the host country. National partners, in co-operation with other donors for example, may calculate with the same sort of trade-offs between different programmes, sectors, etc. Also the ‘right’ timing of a targeted intervention in favour of gender equality is likely to influence national policy priorities. At a global level, some Sida Country Programmes will clearly be more effective than others.

From an evaluation perspective, the advantage is that negative (or positive) findings will be localised in their impact and the managers accountable for specific interventions and country programmes can be identified and can respond to suggestions for change.

If a strategy is not being effectively implemented it immediately raises two important questions:

Is the strategy itself flawed and perhaps incapable of being effectively implemented? or, alternatively,

Has the agency failed to put in place the proper systems and procedures to implement the strategy?

This places the agency in a very difficult situation regarding the constructive use of any critical evaluation findings on mainstreaming as a strategy. If they are accepted these findings either call into question the relevance and efficacy of the strategy (to the detriment of efforts to promote GE) or they underline the inability of agency management at the highest level to secure effective implementation of a strategy endorsed by Parliament. As a result, evaluators are apt to encounter vigorous opposition to any critical results reported concerning gender mainstreaming.

Partner countries and the ownership of mainstreaming

We have seen that it becomes problematic where one locates ultimate responsibility for a strategy within a single organization such as Sida. There are similar difficulties in evaluating a strategy such as mainstreaming if it encounters resistance at the level of the partner government and its agencies.

This problem raises very real questions about the nature of global commitments to international conventions and to strategies adopted by international conferences. Developed and developing countries alike endorsed the mainstreaming strategy in the Beijing Platform for Action. On the other hand, one can question the commitment of some nations in either group.

In general terms, the evaluation teams did not encounter much evidence of direct resistance to mainstreaming as a strategy by the developing countries in the case studies. Rather, there was a lack of resources, energy, concern and commitment as countries and agencies struggled with a range of technical, developmental and political priorities in the design, financing, and implementation of projects (South Africa was the exception to this rule).

Similarly, the general commitment of some host governments to gender equality at a national level often seems to have evaporated at the operational level of project implementation. Perhaps more importantly, governments and their departments and agencies may have a real commitment to the goal of gender equality and, at the same time, have a very limited acceptance of the strategy of mainstreaming as the best means to achieve it.

The solution to this dilemma must be to fall back on the test of practical application and results. If mainstreaming as a strategy fails either because of a lack of commitment by development organizations or because of limited acceptance and follow through by developing country governments, then its utility as a strategy will need to be seriously questioned.

3.2.2 The Evaluation Team's Response to the Challenges of Evaluating Mainstreaming as a Strategy

a) Establishing Reasonable Expectations

This problem has three very significant dimensions: the time frame problem (when was an intervention designed in relation to the GE policy and strategy?); the understanding problem (what does mainstreaming mean?); and the support problem (how was mainstreaming supposed to happen? what tools and capacities were put in place to assist in mainstreaming?).

The time frame problem was dealt with by selecting interventions which had either been developed after 1996 or which had entered into a new phase since 1996. In either case there was a reasonable expectation that either the new intervention or the new phase would show signs of responding to a mainstreaming strategy.

The understanding problem was dealt with by the development of a scale which would allow each team to categorize the extent to which mainstreaming had been achieved in each intervention. This scale was developed prior to the field-work and shared among the teams prior to its application. It was also calibrated by sharing the draft case studies among the team leaders.

Finally, the support problem was addressed by examining the availability of trained personnel, consultants, supporting tools and checklists and local expertise which might have assisted in mainstreaming GE in each intervention.

In summary, the evaluation teams were each able to develop a strong sense of confidence and a consensus about the application of the mainstreaming strategy in each of the 12 interventions studied. What was perhaps more difficult was conveying this understanding to the key stakeholders who will implement the evaluation results.

Beth Woroniuk in her reflections piece has argued that the in-depth study of 12 cases might not represent the best test of a mainstreaming strategy across the agency since the small number of cases makes it difficult to argue they are representative. She makes the case that a simpler test (a checklist review of the project designs and evaluations for example) carried out across a much larger number of interventions might give a much more definitive answer on the question of how is the mainstreaming strategy working.

We do not suggest that this would substitute for the evaluation methodology based on in-depth case analysis with a focus on results, processes and mechanisms. But such a simpler monitoring approach could be part of a test of a mainstreaming strategy. Since larger evaluations like the current GEE are not carried out very often, the 'tick-off' method could be applied at intermediary points in time. The approach could also provide comparative results with other agencies if arranged with that perspective in mind, e.g. by adaptation of DAC approaches.

b) The Ownership Problem: Making Critical Findings at a Strategic Level Constructive

In a real sense, this was one of the most difficult challenges faced by the evaluation team. Preliminary findings at the level of the three country case studies communicated a very real sense that mainstreaming had not

been applied in the concrete terms expected by the evaluation team (and by many at Sida) at the time the evaluation was commissioned.

Evaluation team members and Sida staff had expected very concrete lessons about what can be achieved in GE through mainstreaming. In reality, the evaluation was providing lessons on why interventions did not reflect the application of the mainstreaming strategy; at least to the extent expected.

Those most concerned with the promotion of GE at Sida were very reluctant to endorse findings and conclusions calling into question the key strategy chosen at Beijing and endorsed by Sida for its achievement. Others were equally reluctant to accept a very strong finding that seemed to imply the agency had not acted vigorously to implement the core strategy behind a critically important policy decision.

The solution to this problem was found in the fact that the interventions examined represented the first generation of Sida supported development projects to be implemented under the GE policy and strategy. Thus the evaluators were able to point out that the lessons learned on the difficulty of effectively applying a mainstreaming strategy could be incorporated into refinements to the strategy for the ongoing review of Sida policies. This left unanswered the question of whether or not one can reasonably expect that subsequent generations of Sida supported projects will be more effective in the mainstreaming of gender equality. The evaluation's overall conclusion was that mainstreaming gender equality is still worthwhile as a five-year period is a short time to implement a strategy with many dispersed elements. As the Action Programme is currently under revision it remains to be seen whether the Swedish Government decides to give the mainstreaming strategy a chance into a second 'generation'.

3.3 Real versus Theoretical Processes in Project Development

A feature of the mainstreaming strategy for supporting Gender Equality is its direct relationship to the process of identifying, developing, designing, implementing, and evaluating bilateral development co-operation projects. This applies to all bilateral development agencies pursuing a mainstreaming strategy, not only to Sida.

In evaluating the effectiveness of mainstreaming as a strategy, evaluation team members were drawn to the formal, rational and detailed process in use for developing bilateral projects at Sida and described in various Sida documents such as Sida at Work. Conceptually, at least, team members pre-supposed a process with specific concrete points in project design and

development allowing for the application of a gender analysis and the careful modification of program elements and goals to allow for a concrete contribution to gender equality. Further, it was expected that the most influential persons in this process would be Sida staff and their developing country counterparts.

In fact, the evaluation teams often encountered projects which challenged the reality of this “ideal process” with the result that key stakeholders in each of the three countries sometimes felt that the team’s findings and conclusions were not sufficiently “realistic” in the context of the political economy of project development. Some examples of how interventions did not conform to any pre-set notion of how they were designed, developed and implemented included:

- The support by Sida to the Department of Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh

Sida’s support to DNFE 2 and DNFE 3 illustrates quite strongly how bilateral aid agencies are often involved in support of very large, established programmes with their own history of evolution and with the support of strong bureaucratic interests. No one donor agency, or even a consortium of donors is apt to exert a decisive influence on project design at a single point in time (including during project renewal). Thus, Sida, like other donors has tried through a continuous technical presence and continuous dialogue to address the need for quality improvements in the design and delivery of DNFE programmes. In this dialogue, GE is one among a number of competing priorities and Sida’s influence seems quite limited. One technical expert interviewed by the Bangladesh team described the very large, donor supported DNFE programmes as ‘a moving train’ which agencies boarded so as to influence incrementally over time with no one agency ever able to have a major influence on direction.

In such a context, the evaluation team could be accused of naïve expectations if they felt that a strategy of mainstreaming was likely to be decisive in raising the question of GE. In the evaluation team’s view the ‘moving train’ of literacy programmes for adults and for urban working children under DNFE provide a variety of possible entry points for mainstreaming gender equality in the longer run. Some of these have already been tried out with mixed success, for example by asking STD to help build gender analysis capacity in DNFE. It would be equally naïve to take a static view on a mass education programme, and once and for all decide that quantity is at the expense of both quality and sensitivity to issues such as gender equality.

- The Support to Democratic Development on the Atlantic Coast in Nicaragua

This large project was entering its third, four-year phase at the time of the evaluation mission to Nicaragua in March 2001. It was first implemented in the immediate aftermath of the Nicaraguan civil war with a strong focus on post-conflict political reconciliation. Subsequently the project has evolved to take account of the changing nature of political and economic autonomy in the Atlantic Region of Nicaragua and has had to deal with ethnic tensions, political machinations among the mainstream parties, tensions and conflict over environment, land and natural resource exploitation, and a host of other “crisis” in the democratic development of the region.

In this ongoing adaptation, other contingencies seemed often to take precedence over a concern for gender equality (although this has begun to change recently). It was difficult for the evaluation team to ‘reconstruct’ the historical/political evolution of the project in a way which would support a judgement as to whether mainstreaming could and should have been pursued more vigorously in the project.

- The Support to the National Police Academy in Nicaragua

If the two prior examples illustrate how projects may evolve in ways which make mainstreaming more difficult, the support to the National Police Academy in Nicaragua seems to illustrate that sometimes a partner institution incorporates the goal of GE in ways not envisaged or even promoted by Sida or by its contracted project executing agency. In this case, the National Police in Nicaragua had incorporated goals and structures which sustained a drive to improve GE within and outside the police force (although the ultimate results of this drive are still to be determined).

The point which all three interventions seem to illustrate is that the road to project design, implementation and evaluation is a great deal more complex than the formal “road maps” of bilateral programming seem to imply. There are times when Sida’s influence on the direction taken is actually quite limited. One limiting factor, for example, is the short period of time any one Sida officer is likely to spend managing Sweden’s support of a given project. For two of the three projects listed above, international technical consultants have been involved over much longer durations than has any single Sida staff person. The consultants’ “vision” of the direction and shape of the project has proved to be a very powerful influence on the choices made as to which activities will be supported over time.

The response of the evaluation team when presented with the “realities” of project design as described above had two major components. In the first place, team members examined specific constraints key stakeholders had listed as limiting the possibilities for mainstreaming.

In the Atlantic Coast project, for example, some stakeholders pointed out the lack of indigenous capacity in the region for representing gender interests or undertaking gender analysis as a factor limiting mainstreaming. The evaluation team was able to clearly document the local capacity in academia and civil society in the region for undertaking analysis and supporting gender equality initiatives in local government. Similarly, the team was able to point to the key role played by indigenous women's organizations in reaching a peace accord between the (at the time) Sandinista government and the local indigenous people.

The second response of the evaluation team to the charge of lack of realism was much simpler and, in the end, more difficult to refute. The question raised by the team was how and when were these judgements made? How did the project designers come to the conclusion that the political economy of development co-operation in this specific context made the promotion of gender equality either irrelevant or overly difficult? In almost every instance, the response was the question had never been asked. In other words, project designers either did not consider GE at all or they assumed a lack of capacity or interest on the part of national and local counterparts. Once again, it seemed that mainstreaming as a strategy had not been fully attempted.

Chapter 4

Lessons on Evaluation Methodology for Future Gender Equality Evaluations

From the above reflections on evaluation methodology a number of lessons stand out:

Gender Equality Evaluation – Evaluation Process and Methods

- Donor investment in a comprehensive preparatory process leading up to the field work phase of an evaluation is necessary and worthwhile. This is all the more so, when the evaluation team is large and there is a need for common understanding of concepts as broad as mainstreaming, gender equality, stakeholder participation and poverty reduction.
- On the other hand, pre-field mission specification of issues, analytical frameworks, concepts, and data collection instruments can have the effect of limiting the scope for use of participatory evaluation techniques. These would require that more of the “core” elements of evaluation planning take place in the developing countries with implications for the cost and duration of the study.
- It is essential that the evaluation team members engaged in country studies take part in a common workshop allowing for full discussion of the concepts relating to gender equality and methods to be used in the evaluation, to establish a common understanding across all field teams of evaluators. Adjustments can then be made for local understanding of these concepts and context specific use of evaluation methods.
- One well-known but continuing weakness in evaluation is the lack of or inadequacy and relevance of sex-disaggregated and gender relevant statistics and data in programmes and in national/regional statistical coverage. Evaluations cannot be improved until programme design and implementation includes sex-disaggregated and context-specific baseline data.
- M&E (monitoring and evaluation) systems in programmes or host institutions must be in place and must include a few basic and relevant quantitative indicators on gender status and gender relations, and on outcomes and impacts (not just inputs – “participation”), if evaluation

methods are to include the use of quantitative indicators in any rigorous way. Good monitoring data – both quanti- and qualitative – could dramatically help to focus evaluation questions on changes – and causes – in gender equality and reduce the time required for initial preparation.

- Identification and use of process and experience indicators provide a depth to evaluation analysis of what has happened, what has changed, and why – and how different categories of stakeholders have understood and experienced unequal gender relations, their personal potential or motivation for change, and the structured gendered constraints to change that they face.
- The learning perspective has been important in the GEE. Active involvement of Sida's Evaluation and Audit Department, UTV, in the evaluation process and in commenting in detail on the evaluation reports was a strength of the GEE. The role of UTV staff when participating in field studies needs to be clarified. A possible option of full participation in the evaluation by UTV staff will require equal participation in preparation and reporting and sharing responsibilities with the ET.
- When evaluations are to cover both Country Strategies and government to government dialogue on cross-cutting policies such as gender equality and poverty reduction, and a number of specific interventions, it is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient time and opportunity scheduled to explore with different stakeholders the processes that have led to the current situation of gender mainstreaming.
- The evaluation process may benefit from being stretched over a longer time and consider space for the following elements: a) Preparation of evaluation methodology and joint sharing by full team, b) preparatory desk studies in parallel with local participatory self-evaluation exercises, c) complementary 'tick-off' desk studies of mainstreaming evidence, d) consecutive country studies allowing for more overlap of team members, e) more time for consultations and feed-back with embassy staff and national partners responsible for Gender Equality Policy. However, the Evaluation Team appreciates the need to keep the evaluation process as concentrated as possible and wants to emphasise that the current approach has been acceptable and compares favourably with related evaluations in which ET members have participated.

Evaluating Participation, Participatory Evaluation and Dialogue

Evaluating participation is interlinked with assessing empowerment – participation in decision-making in economic and social life etc. The 7-point scale of participation was a good tool for evaluating participation – which was in most cases embryonic only.

- While it was possible to take steps to bring other voices into the evaluation process and to improve the consultative basis of the evaluation and its findings, it was not possible for the evaluation team within the time and resource constraints of the study and given the degree of pre-specification of issues, to develop and implement a truly participatory evaluation methodology. If a truly participatory evaluation process is desired in the future the major constraining factor to be eased is not only the pressure of time, but also the requirement for participatory planning and implementation on which participatory self-evaluation rests.
- A significantly more participatory evaluation of gender equality would need to be structured to include the following elements;
 - limited pre-specification of issues (as in ToR and the evaluation team’s preparation) or issue simplification. The evaluation questions would need to be more simply phrased and more open to local interpretation and modification. The evaluation would need to be open to the possibility of primary stakeholders identifying some quite different issues to be addressed alongside those determined centrally;
 - evaluation operations at field level over a longer time frame. Evaluators would need to be present in the communities concerned over a matter of longer time instead of days in order to develop a rapport with primary stakeholders, to understand more fully the context of the project and to devise methods for primary stakeholders to undertake their own evaluation exercises;
 - a structured process to allow primary stakeholders to gather information, conduct an analysis and report their own findings. Inspiration may be collected from current Participatory Poverty Assessments;
 - a more participatory process for synthesising results from initiatives and country case studies at a global level. Perhaps a national workshop in each country to consider and develop findings, beyond the feed-back and wind-up workshops which were conducted.
- The important overall lesson from the evaluation regarding participatory methods concerns the fact that a truly participatory evaluation would need to be planned as such from the beginning. The design features of such an evaluation suggest a very different approach to contracting and managing consultants since it would need to be done in a much more decentralized way and over a longer time frame.
- It will continue to be difficult to evaluate dialogue on gender equality, if this has not been well documented. An evaluation model for assessing content, depth and results of dialogue on gender equality will be

helpful. Who initiates dialogue – donor or partner – and how disagreements are dealt with and resolved should be part of the evaluating dialogue on gender equality.

Assessing Changes in Gender Equality

- Despite the continued emphasis on gender equality in Sida programming, there is little systematic gathering of information on gender differences in the outcomes of programs. Assessing gender changes at this point in time thus requires either the reconstruction of such data where possible or reliance on other indicators and other information sources;
- The strongest observable changes in gender equality always seemed to occur within a confined social space. That is to say, the evaluation team members were able to identify changes in gender equality at an institutional level (Police Academy in Nicaragua), at the level of an organizational unit (Statistics South Africa), within a workplace or at the level of a small community (Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh). This raises a much larger question of whether these interventions can be expected to contribute to change in GE in a larger social context;
- Observation, key informant interviews and self-reporting of experience combine to provide a fairly strong portrait of changes in gender equality. Provided that the evaluators neither impose a pre-conceived definition of change in gender equality nor accept a superficial treatment of the question, the mix of observers, project staff and participants (primary stakeholders) does provide a good system of checks and balances on change assessment. More often than not, participants are able to illuminate dimensions of change outside the pre-constructed framework of the evaluation team;
- The distinction between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests becomes much less clear at the project level. Participants have difficulty distinguishing between practical needs and strategic interests and evaluators often reach different conclusions regarding classification.

Evaluating a Policy

- In evaluating the effect of a policy on development co-operation activities it is essential to develop a model which incorporates the national as well as Sida's policy. Secondly how the policy was intended to be disseminated throughout the organization and coordinated with its partners. This is essential regarding a cross-cutting policy such as gender equality and its synergy with poverty reduction! This needs to include both a timeline for dissemination of the policy and an inventory of the institutional tools used to disseminate the policy.

- National and local partner organizations may have their own priority statements and may have developed models for addressing inequalities which encompass but are not limited to gender equality. They may frame inequality in poverty, class, regional, ethnic, or other terms while addressing gender equality within that framework. Evaluators need to take care to understand how local organizations are framing the problem of inequality and to understand if and how gender equality can be addressed effectively within those frameworks. Participatory methods of evaluation may allow for a better understanding of these local models of inequality.
- In evaluating the effect of a gender equality policy, evaluators must be prepared to document the different roles of agency headquarters staff, agency developing country staff, partner agencies and consultants in disseminating the policy and in acting on its recommendations.
- The process of trading off or ranking policy priorities, including gender equality is almost never explicit in programming processes. Evaluators need to go to considerable effort to examine implicit tradeoffs made during project design which enhance or impede gender equality and to attempt to trace with key stakeholders the reasons why gender equality was or was not acknowledged in these processes.

Mainstreaming gender equality is an approach defined to include elements such as a gender equality goal, disaggregated data, capacity for gender analysis, gender training and monitoring as defined by PFA. The evaluation methodology, while detailed in many respects, necessarily reflects arbitrary perspectives as does the mainstreaming strategy itself.

Evaluating a Strategy: The Case of Mainstreaming Gender Equality

- It is essential to select for evaluation those interventions and projects which can reasonably be expected to have been subject to the “new” strategy of mainstreaming gender equality during their design phase. On the other hand it must be recognized that projects change in an evolutionary way and need not only be reviewed and re-designed at the end of 3–5 year phases in their design. There is significant evidence from the evaluation of incremental positive design changes from a GE perspective occurring between project milestones.
- Evaluation ToR need to include more justification for selecting specific intervention case studies, with selection based on assessment of available documentation to ensure that the time and effort to be invested in particular cases will be warranted.
- Care needs to be taken in the method used for selecting interventions or projects for study. If a selected sample of projects is used, it should concentrate on projects with a strong probability of having at least at-

tempted a mainstreaming strategy so that the problems inherent in the application of the strategy can be studied. If no such attempt has been made in an intervention chosen for study, there is a very limited possibility of positive learning.

- It may be appropriate, at times, to review a much wider set of projects using a template approach and investing less time in each project so that a wider picture of the use of mainstreaming can be developed across the agency in question. This could be part of intermediary monitoring and be a supplement to in-depth case studies optimising the use of national gender experience.
- It is important in evaluating mainstreaming as a strategy to retain an evolutionary perspective. This implies the selection of countries where interventions and country strategies have been developed over more than one cycle of programming and under the application of the mainstreaming strategy. This was done in the GEE and seemed to imply a higher level of effort in the first generation of country strategies (but perhaps not in interventions) following the development of the GE action programme.
- It is essential in evaluating a strategy such as mainstreaming gender equality to differentiate between problems in implementing the strategy and problems arising from a lack of application of the strategy. There is a high risk that the strategy of mainstreaming may be discredited by findings when in fact the problem may lie in low levels of organizational investment in and commitment to the strategy itself.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference for a Reflection on Experiences of Evaluating Gender Equality

Background

In 1996, the Swedish Parliament established the promotion of equality between women and men in partner countries as a goal for Swedish development co-operation. Sida developed an Action Programme for promoting gender equality, which was adopted in 1997. As the Action Programme is planned to be revised, an evaluation² was carried out in order to bring lessons for its next phase and report on the results of the efforts to promote gender equality. The evaluation is based on three country case studies: Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh. The Swedish country strategies for these countries and a dozen projects are evaluated.

Within Sida there is an interest in improving evaluation work from a gender equality perspective. Other members of DAC's Working Party on Aid Evaluation (WP-EV) share this interest and one of the themes of WP-EV's future work on gender equality is on improving the gender equality dimension in evaluation methods and processes. Following from the above, the study outlined in these terms of reference, asks the consultants to revisit the approach and methods used in the gender equality evaluation commissioned by Sida, as well as other experiences the consultants have of evaluating gender equality. The aim is to draw lessons for the future.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is for the consultants that carried out the gender equality evaluation (COWI and Goss Gilroy) for Sida to discuss approaches and methods used when evaluating gender equality, in order to bring lessons for future evaluations. Primary users of the study are the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and the Division for Policy and Socio-Economic Analysis at Sida. The study will also feed into the work of DAC's Working Party on Aid Evaluation.

² The evaluation was commissioned by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. It was carried out by COWI in Denmark, in co-operation with Goss Gilroy in Canada.

The assignment

The consultants shall discuss the following issues from a gender equality perspective in more detail than what was possible in the gender equality evaluation commissioned by Sida:

1. **The approaches and methods for the evaluation as presented in the consultants' inception report and as developed and used during the course of the evaluation**

The consultants shall give a *brief* description of the approaches and methods in their inception report³. How did these develop and change as the evaluation design 'met reality'?

2. **Usefulness, strengths and weaknesses of approaches and methods used in the gender equality evaluation commissioned by Sida**

The consultants shall in discussions explore the approaches and methods used for evaluating gender equality both in projects that have gender equality as a primary or secondary objective and projects that do not have it as a stated objective. What was the usefulness as well as strengths and weaknesses of the approaches and methods when it comes to *evaluating policy, processes, assessing changes* and *attributing changes*?

The consultants shall discuss usefulness, strengths and weaknesses in relation to *factors that are* given when the evaluation process starts, e.g. project designs, different national contexts etc, but also in relation to factors in the *evaluation process* such as evaluation design as presented in the terms of reference and roles and responsibilities of actors during the evaluation process. Specifically, what did the strong focus on participation in the terms of reference imply?

3. **The consultants' experiences in relation to other evaluations of gender equality and lessons for the future**

The consultants shall use their experiences from other evaluations of gender equality that they have carried out. They shall relate the findings under 1 and 2 above to these experiences. What are the differences and similarities? What are the main lessons for future evaluations of gender equality?

³ Outline and approach and methods as per the inception report:

Organisation and overall approach: Overall approach and e.g. issues such as case studies and selection of case studies

Principles: Participatory process and tools; triangulation; sex-disaggregated data; early dissemination of findings and lessons; lessons for the future

Concept papers and prompt sheets/checklists: practical guidance of the evaluation work, clarification of the concepts; working tools for the team to have a common understanding of the concepts; living documents that will be revised during the evaluation process

Study Objects: planning documents, specific questions for the intervention; geographic or institutional focus of the evaluation; key informant, focus group, participants; data collection and analysis methods

Indicators: triangulation – quantitative indicators, process indicators, experience indicators

Tools: stakeholder maps; semistructured interviews; participatory methods with beneficiaries; CAST Tool

Work programme and reporting: e.g. length of field trips

Work plan and reporting

The study is envisaged to require 4 weeks. The consultants and Sida should agree on number of pages before the consultants start writing. A study of not more than 20–30 pages is envisaged. Within three weeks after receiving Sida's comments on the draft report, a final version in two copies and by e-mail shall be submitted to Sida. Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published and distributed as a publication within the Sida Studies in Evaluation series. The evaluation report shall be written in Word 6.0 for windows (or in a compatible format) and should be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing.

The evaluation assignment also includes the completion of Sida Evaluations Data Work Sheet. The separate summary and a completed Data Work Sheet (Annex 1) shall be submitted to Sida along with the final report.

Annex 2

“Taking a Closer Look”

Reflections on Methodology of the GEE with a View to African Realities and Practices of Sida’s Development Co-operation

By Susanne Possing

Team member GEE, South Africa Country Study

“There is money in gender, but little passion.”

Kamla Bhasin⁴

“Respect and cultural sensitivity on the part of donors are advocated (...) Assuming a role in protecting cultures from changes in gender relations is an outside imposition, as much as the imposition of change based on our own cultural values. A more respectful approach is to consult with women and equality advocates to learn how they are defining issues and what they see as potential ways forward.”

CIDA, *Questions About Culture, Gender Equality and Development Cooperation*, 2001⁵

“The engendered development model, though aiming to widen choices for both men and women, should not predetermine how different cultures and different societies exercise these choices. What is important is that equal opportunities to make a choice exist for both women and men.”

UNDP, *Human Development Report 1995*⁶

In these few sentences UNDP describes the complexity related to gender and development efforts. How to ensure that choices are widened for all citizens, including women and girls, without imposing Western gender equality structures, norms and values on people and countries in the South?

⁴ Kamla Bhasin, *Gender and Gender Workshops: Sharing Some Thoughts, Concerns and Experiences*, 1998.

⁵ CIDA, *Questions About Culture, Gender Equality and Development Cooperation*, February 2001, p.9.

⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1995*, New York 1995. Available on-line: <http://www.undp.org/hdro/1995/95.htm>

This dilemma is currently being discussed in international development and research communities.⁷ During the last decade even more attention has been paid to the issue following the emergence of a ‘rights based approach to development’, in the wake of UN conferences of the 1990’s⁸ now advocated by all major donor agencies and international women’s organisations. Sida’s Policy on Gender Equality is no exception, although it limits itself to general statements that designate gender equality “a matter of human rights” as well as a “precondition for effective and sustainable people-centred development”.⁹

The notion of a ‘rights based approach’ is almost as charged with meanings, as are the concepts of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming. By the end of the 20th century the international community rightly recognises women’s rights as human rights. However, with growing trans-national networking and globalisation of policies a less productive side-effect has evolved: Women’s human rights, originally distinctly defined, have been functionalised to serve as *planning instruments* in order to become applicable to development needs of a broad variety of agencies (UN and other multilateral institutions, governments, global advocacy and lobbying networks, national women’s organisations, INGOs, etc.).

Unfortunately (but most likely inevitably), the ‘rights based approach’ for many has proved to represent yet another, abstract buzzword, and has thus added to the confusion and mystification that has already been observed in the international debate on gender and development. To meet professional purposes, the concepts of gender, gender equality and gender analysis have been subject to generalisation and in many cases reduced to merely technical categories.

Evaluating Policy

The GEE makes Sida’s Policy, Programme and Action Plan for promoting GE a major starting point. The GEE does not reflect much on the art and nature of the relation between gender equality and women’s human rights efforts. On the other hand it emphasizes the need to localise gender equality concepts, whereby it encourages twin-track approaches, i.e. aiming to pay justice to self-determination of cultures and societies as well as to establishment of equal opportunities for all. The approach of the GEE has the potential of rethinking the coherence between these two aims. I shall discuss how this potential could be developed and expanded more.

⁷ See for instance U Narayan, *Essence of Culture and a Sense of History*, in: Hypatia, Special Issue: Border Crossings: Multicultural and Postcolonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy, Part 1, 13 (2), 1998, p. 86-107; S Schech and J Haggis, *Culture and Development*, Blackwell 2000; CIDA, *Questions About Culture, Gender Equality and Development Cooperation*, CIDA, February 2001; UNESCO *website on culture and development*: www.unesco.org/culture/development/index.shtml S Possing, *African Realities – Does Gender Discourse Respond?*, Danida Fellowship Centre, Copenhagen 2000.

⁸ Rio 1992 (Sustainable Development), Vienna 1993 (Human Rights), Cairo 1994 (Population), the Copenhagen Social Summit (Social Development) and Beijing (Women), both 1995.

⁹ Sida’s *Policy for Promoting Gender Equality between Women and Men in Partner Countries, Policy*, April 1997, p.2.

Context-specific versus Universalized Goals of Gender Equality

In the course of the evaluation attention has been paid to “the social, economic, and policy context of gender equality in each of the three countries (as a guide to what was possible in the national context” (02/01: 134). And a key conclusion concerns “The importance of context-specific (national, regional, stakeholder) definitions and use of concepts so as to improve intervention design, especially goals and clarity of what results can be expected” (02/01: 101).

By and large the GEE bases its choice of evaluation methods on concepts, tools and approaches developed within the framework of development co-operation in general, and within Sida in particular. This is advantageous as it ensures coherence between the concepts and wordings of Sida and the GEE. It is justified as much as evaluation methods must reflect the policies and programmes which are subject to evaluation. However, the choice to operate mainly within the perspective of (government) donors’ development co-operation lays down certain limitations on scope and depth of the GEE.¹⁰ I shall comment further on this below.

Referring to “extensive international discussions around appropriate definitions as well as countless attempts to work out what the concept means in practice for countries, organisations and individuals” (Inception Report (IR):34, on gender and gender equality) the GEE reflects the complexities involved in international Gender & Development efforts (GAD). The team prepared for conceptual clarification and evaluation methods that would serve the double purpose:

- to provide the three country teams with a strong common conceptual background, and
- to translate this common understanding into operational plans which could be implemented at field level (GEE 02/01:132).

Refraining from “the finer points of definitions” in order not to “be paralysed by the search for the perfect definition” the team found it “more important to see how these concepts play out in practice, how they are used and whether or not they facilitate actual changes in the lives of women and men in partner countries” (IR: 39).¹¹ A list of advice to be respected in the course of the evaluation reflects this concern:

¹⁰ Operating *within* the perspective of donors’ development co-operation also has a certain ‘seductive’ effect in terms of language. At times the GEE makes use of wording and concepts that are often not very well defined, such as ‘gender changes’, ‘mainstreaming’, ‘structural inequalities’, ‘transformative’, etc. The term ‘transformative’ (“to eliminate all inherited structures and practices of injustice and inequality” (GEE 02/01: 165)) is clearly positively connoted; yet, the economic and political preconditions and implications of ‘transformation’ are not reflected; in most cases the term is not further defined, in others it is equated with ‘strategic’. Women NGOs originally introduced the term in opposition to policy approaches whereby the gender analysis was being functionalised to serve merely as planning instruments. Used by women NGOs a ‘transformative’ approach aims to basically change societal structures, norms and values in favour of emancipation of women and other marginalized and dispossessed people.

¹¹ With this decision the GEE team refrained from critically discussing key developments of the international debate on gender and development, methodological and political implications of the concepts of gender equality, gender equity, women’s empowerment, politics of difference, diversity etc.

Don't assume that interlocutors share your meaning of key terms – Check to see how people are using words and what they mean – Don't expect all women to speak with one voice or try to minimise differences – Don't reduce gender issues to one sector or dimension – Recognize the limits of development co-operation as one factor in influencing the lives of women and men in partner countries (IR: 39–40).

These are all concerns raised to ensure that the GEE would be able to manoeuvre adequately in the dilemma described by UNDP above. In the wording of the GEE: to be sensitive to specific “national and cultural contexts, at the same time as promoting GE by keeping in mind that international agreements and commitments offer basic guiding as to how gender equality concepts can be defined and used” (GEE 02/01).

These steps proved to be relevant and successful. A key finding of the GEE suggests that openness and cultural sensitivity towards local meanings and usage of the gender equality concept would improve chances of local appreciation of GE as a universal goal. Moreover – and this has not been considered by the GEE – local meanings could entail potentials to qualify and offer useful corrections or amendments to the globalised understandings of GE.¹²

In the case of South Africa the GEE/SA team found differences – and in quite a few cases also tensions – between GE policies of government and locally constructed meanings that advocate distinctly for policies to address gender inequalities, poverty and discrimination based on race.

The former are largely in accordance with Sida (as well as with the mainstream of Western donors and multilateral organisations on promotion of universal GE policies); whereas the latter are of concern and were expressed by primary (GEE reports: ‘beneficiaries’) and some secondary stakeholders (including NGOs).

The black majority of the South African population is faced with a daily struggle, characterized by intrinsic relations between extreme poverty, ‘left-over’ from the apartheid era, i.e. little attention towards policies in favour of black poor communities, let alone black poor women (rural as well as urban), gender inequality and violence against woman. These realities are not paid full justice in current gender equality policies, neither by the South African government nor by Sida's programmes in South Africa.¹³

The GEE does reflect differences between national GE policies and locally perceived understandings. It is said that “meanings for (...) those who previously suf-

¹² For the history of theories and policies of gender and gender equality, see for instance Susanne Possing, *Gender Mainstreaming – store ord, sovepude eller?*, paper for NORAD workshop: ‘Integration of Gender Perspectives In Development Co-operation’, Oslo 16 Mai 2002.

¹³ This concern is expressed not only by stakeholders and civil society informants in the course of the GEE, but also documented in current economic and social research on SA. See for instance Vivienne Taylor, Anne Mager & Paula Cardoso (eds.), *Cracks in the Edifice – Critical African Feminist Perspectives on Women and Governance*, DAWN, Cape Town 2000; Caroline Skinner & Imraan Valodia, *Globalisation and Women's Work in South Africa: National and Local Approaches to Economic Transformation*, in *Agenda*, 48/2001.

ferred social exclusion and gender inequalities are linked to race and class” (GEE 02/01:167). And that “Issues of difference evoke a number of paradoxes for participatory development. An obvious issue is the extent to which a singular voice of ‘women’ masks the multiple voices of elite, illiterate, rich, young, poor, religious or ethnic majority or minority women. The exclusionary character of many participatory interventions compound exclusion of both poor women and poor men” (02/01: 63).

These are important findings, and they may contribute to de-mystification of concepts of gender equality and to inform key orientations of development co-operation. Used in development policies ‘gender’ is weighted with unexamined, yet vigorous normative meanings and political assumptions. By and large these are being entrenched and confirmed by virtue of uncritical use and demands for expedient shorthand use (for instance several informants in Sida (HQ and embassy staff) identified time constraints and limited gender training as obstacles to their work).

With a view to the need of pointing out *conflicts of interests* between various stakeholders that have been expressed in the international debate on mainstreaming of GE in recent years¹⁴, evaluation methods must take into account potential divergences. The GEE describes different ‘opinions’ and ‘understandings’ (02/01: 133–34), but does not elaborate further on such differences. I suggest that GE evaluations as a starting point prepare more elaborated analyses, not only of the various GE understandings, but also of *the political implications of prevailing GE policies*.

Evaluations could ask questions such as: when SA’s national GE policies make reference to UN commitments in particular, and to globalised, universal GE goals and women’s rights in general:

- To which extent do they promote Western-like, white, middle class images of GE – policies that have proved to materialise first of all in some, slow progress in participation of better-off, educated women in prevailing economic, social and political structures?
- To which extent do GE policies address economic and social conditions of poor and marginalized men and women?
- Do national and local governments take cognisance of specific experiences and the history of the communities they are elected to serve when designing GE policies?

The GEE/SA study found that a main effect of the interventions studied was a certain change in attitudes, i.e. an increased awareness of overall gender in-

¹⁴ See for instance Kamla Bhasin, *Gender and Gender Workshops: Sharing Some Thoughts, Concerns and Experiences*, 1998, I.Guijt and M.Kaul Shah, *The Myth of Community*, London 1998, Andrea Cornwall, *Making a Difference? Gender and Participatory Development*, IDS Discussion Paper 378", Institute of Development Studies 2000, S Possing, *African Realities – Does Gender Discourse Respond?*, Danida Fellowship Centre, Copenhagen 2000 and Fenella Porter, Ines Smyth, Caroline Sweetmann (eds.), *Gender Works*, Oxfam/GB 1999. ToR for a *Danida WID Revision 2001* explicitly called for attention to the issue of political conflicts masked by mainstreaming efforts.

equalities among educated planners and implementers of development initiatives, most of whom are white male and female civil servants (key stakeholders of LGDSP, CUP/TPL at KCC).

With a view to the general conclusion of the GEE regarding methodological issues and challenges faced, these findings are interesting: “Evaluating changes in gender equality proved somewhat difficult in that interventions lacked specific goals and targets relating to gender equality and thus were deficient in monitoring and evaluating gender equality results. In this environment the most reliable and valid guide has been the felt experience of primary stakeholders, including women, men and youth” (02/01: 137).

This conclusion could have been qualified and analysed further in depth, had the GEE included current analyses on globalisation of gender policies and their implications for establishing changes in economic, social and political conditions of poor men and women in the three countries studied.¹⁵

Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction

Furthermore such analysis could have added value to the discussion raised by the GEE on how to establish linkages and synergies between gender equality and the overarching goal of poverty reduction. The need for clarity and convergence is repeatedly emphasized, and it is recommended that the “revision of the Action Programme should accept the challenge of establishing a link between gender equality and poverty reduction while maintaining the value of gender equality as goal in itself” (GEE 02/01: 108).

The GEE is concerned about the “crowded nature” of Sida’s policy agenda whereby Sida staff and partners tend to see development goals and policies as mutually exclusive. “An emphasis on one is seen as diminishing the emphasis of another” (GEE 02/01: 108). While these concerns and recommendations are justified, the GEE does not discuss the art and nature of the global macroeconomic development that currently determines conditions for poverty reduction policies. This has essential implications for scope and depth of the GEE analysis.

¹⁵ From the 1990’s to date the world has witnessed an increase of primarily middle class women (and some men) engaged in development organisations, occupied with gender programme development, gender training advocacy and lobby on women’s rights and gender issues. At the same time, massive inequalities in conditions for women and men prevail, in some of their forms they have even deepened, and conditions for girls, younger as well as older women living in poverty or as refugees have deteriorated to an extent whereby millions are left with nothing but their own imagination when it comes to sheer survival. See UNDP, *Human Development Reports*: 1995, 1998, 2001, UNFPA, *The State of the World Population, The Right to Choose: Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health* 1997, UNFPA, *The State of the World Population, The New Generations* 1998, UNHCR, *Protecting Refugees, Refugee Women*, 2001, World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. See also Linzi Manicom, Globalising ‘Gender’ in or as Governance? Questioning the Terms of Local Translations, in *Agenda*, 48/2001; Ilse Lenz, *Geschlecht, Herrschaft und internationale Ungleichheit*, in: R Becker-Schmidt & Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (eds.), *Das Geschlechterverhältnis als Gegenstand der Sozialwissenschaften*, Campus Verlag 1995 and S Feldman, *Conceptualising Change and Equality in the Third World Contexts*, in N Stromquist (ed) *Women in the Third World; An Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Issues*, Garland Press, New York 1998.

Developed world donors, most prominently represented by the World Bank, are increasingly setting the development agenda in Third World countries. Thus, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes initiated in many developing countries have major influence on the daily life of millions of people. With the report *Engendering Development*¹⁶ the World Bank has further strengthened its position as perhaps the most dominant trendsetter, even for current efforts to address gender inequalities.

By arguing for gender mainstreaming as a means to development, the World Bank takes the perspective of the globalised economy: liberalisation of markets, economic growth, population control, education of girls and women, increased participation of females in the labour force, reforming institutions to establish equal opportunities for women, etc. All of this is little – if at all – contested within the current neo-liberal discourse that sets today's agenda in the international development community.

Development agencies of Western donor countries make key reference to the Bank in setting their agendas for gender mainstreaming. 'Investing in women' has become a popular slogan, inspired by the underscoring of the Bank, that "societies that discriminate on the basis of gender pay a significant price – in more poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance, and in lower quality of life."¹⁷ The analyses of the Bank deal with gender equality first of all as instrumental to economic growth, poverty reduction and effective governance.

This has turned out to be an attractive position to development agencies that for years have been struggling with the feminist connotations of the GAD.¹⁸ Development agencies increasingly aim to link efforts to promote gender equality with poverty reduction policies. Gender equality in this (universalized) form has actually proven to be of little, or at least limited challenge to prevailing institutional structures and power relations. Although 'gender equality' may cover a wide variety of goals, from access to education and control of land and property to equal participation of men and women in political fora, one of the most predominant results aimed at by development agencies has been the idea of involving women in existing decision making fora (in organisations, corporations, political parties, etc.).

This is perfectly possible within the contradictory reality of the modern nation state. As pointed out by Ilse Lenz, the political 'Vergesellschaftung' of the state

¹⁶ See World Bank, Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes, 1999 and World Bank, *Engendering Development*. 2001.

¹⁷ World Bank, op.cit., 2001.

¹⁸ Examples are recent policies of CIDA, DFID; Danida and Sida. See CIDA, *CIDA's Policy in Gender Equality*, Mars 1999, DFID, *DFID Strategy Paper: Poverty Elimination and the Empowerment of Women*, February 2000, Danida, *Gender Equality in Danish Development Co-operation*. Working paper 10, May 2000 and Sida, *Action Programme for Promoting Equality Between Women And Men In Partner Countries*, 1997. Government agencies have adjusted policies in this direction, more so than have development NGOs. Among the latter many have raised voices against the neo-liberal economic perspectives of gender policies of the Bank, against its top-down approach, the mere rhetoric of popular participation, etc.

may well entail recognition of women as citizens and political actors at the same time as it fosters exclusion and marginalisation of the majority of women.¹⁹

Taking a closer look at efforts to link gender equality and poverty reduction policies, they seem to offer no basically different perspective from that of the prevailing universalized Gender and Development paradigm. The strategies to 'mainstream gender' into poverty reduction policies explicitly (or implicitly) build on GAD thinking. Key concepts of the gender analysis are brought in to analyse relations between poverty and gender inequalities.²⁰ The perspectives of GAD, i.e. the goals of gender equality, in fact coincide very well with those of Western poverty reduction policies. As stated by CIDA with a leadership position among Western governments: Development results cannot be maximised and sustained without explicit attention to the different needs and interests of women and men. If the realities and voices of half of the population are not fully recognised, CIDA's objectives to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world will not be met. (...) For poverty reduction to be achieved, the constraints that women and girls face must be eliminated. These constraints include lack of mobility, low self esteem, lack of access to and control over resources, lack of access to basic social services, to training and capacity development opportunities, to information and technology, as well as to decision-making in the state, the judiciary, development and private sector organisations, and in communities and households.²¹

The model is that of Western democracies, i.e. societies based on the capitalist mode of production and the emergence of modern welfare systems, the latter more or less subsidised by the state. The overall perspective points to prevailing gender inequalities as constraints to poverty reduction.²² In so doing the policy is in fact perfectly in line with the focus of GAD that regards women's subordination and the lack of opportunities for women and girls key constraints to women's empowerment.

The GEE gives evidence how this connection is far from always perceived as such by development agencies and gender advocates. On the contrary, many regard the two goals either as mutually exclusive, or they fear that GE efforts may evaporate as they are being reduced to a sub-set of overarching poverty reduction policies. Nevertheless, the GAD framework in most cases pursues similar understandings as do current Western poverty reduction policies:

Within *poverty reduction policies* women are addressed first of all in their role as (potential) labour force or as producers to the market. As is repeatedly underlined by the World Bank, provisions of women's education and (reproductive) health must be ensured: Better educated women bear fewer children than less educated women. (...) They marry later and have fewer years of childbearing. They have better

¹⁹ I Lenz, *Geschlecht, Herrschaft und Internationale Ungleichheit*, 1995, p. 38.

²⁰ See also Sally Baden et.al., *Gender Inequality and Poverty: Trends, Linkage, Analysis and Policy Implications*, 1998 and Bridge, *Briefing Paper on the Feminisation of Poverty*, 2001.

²¹ CIDA 1999, p. 6.

²² In line with other Western governments, including Sida, the policies of CIDA relates to guidelines recommended by the development committee of OECD, the DAC-OECD 1996.

knowledge of ways to control fertility. (...) They have higher aspirations for their children and recognize the tradeoffs between realizing such aspirations and having many children. They have more opportunities for work outside the home.²³

The *GAD approach* is occupied with strengthening of women's opportunities not only related to the 'productive sphere' but at all levels of societal life. The fact that women must find ways of balancing the 'triple roles of productive, reproductive and community work' is regarded a key constraint to women's equal participation in development. These are addressed first of all as obstacles to empowerment of women: for instance, the workload of women in the household is seen as a female 'double burden' that should be taken off the shoulders of the women.

"In many societies women do almost all of the reproductive and much of the productive work. (...) Women's workload can prevent them from participating in development projects. When they do participate, extra time spent on farming, producing, training or meeting, means less time for other tasks, such as childcare or food preparation. (...) When addressed, strategic gender needs, such as abolition of the sexual division of labour and alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare should lead to the transformation of the gender division of labour."²⁴

Sharing the broad goal of gender equality and women's empowerment²⁵ poverty reduction policies and the *GAD approach* strive towards reducing the influence of factors that would disturb women's access to market, the involvement of women in production and in local and national governance. A popular 'tool' is the recommendation of alleviation of the 'double burden' on women caused by household and other 'duties' related to reproduction.

However, in Third World countries women are the main responsible persons for sustaining families and communities, in particular in poor rural and urban areas. Major parts of women's lives take place within the broad area of reproduction, including cultural obligations as life cycle-ceremonies (birth, initiation, transition rites, burials etc.).

By defining women's access to and participation in productive and public activities *outside* the private sphere as a major goal, i.e. 'liberated' from household and other reproductive 'burdens', poverty reduction as well as gender equality policies end up approaching activities within the area of reproduction as *inferior*. Of less importance and little value. In so doing they contribute to reproducing the hegemony of prevailing cultural perceptions of gender in society (which is in fact opposite to intended goals). In this way biased *against* key areas of women's life, but *for* promotion of women to participate at par with men in productive and

²³ World Bank, 2001, p. 34.

²⁴ Suzanne Williams et.al., *The Oxfam Gender Training Manual*, p. 191.

²⁵ The concept of empowerment has demonstrated its strength as a key designation of socialising and democratising efforts of modern development policies in general, although – or perhaps more correctly: – *because* it has being adopted by development planners as little specified. See also Gita Sen, *Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty*, 1997.

public life²⁶, the GAD thinking goes perfectly well hand in hand with the prevailing discourse – and practices of donor’s poverty reduction policies.

Considering how donors, including Sida, are increasingly adjusting development policies to the neo-liberal agenda as defined by the World Bank, it may be useful to discuss which would be the implications of the modern dogma of linking gender equality and poverty reduction policies. The Southern based women’s network DAWN has this description: “Given that poor women operate largely outside the mainstream markets, and that market respond to needs with cash, the emerging state market relationships perpetuate the exclusion of poor women from mainstream economic and social activities. (...) Current trends indicate that states are being reorganised to serve the interests of market forces, and these do not coincide with the interests of the dispossessed”.²⁷

Evaluating Processes

Turning to the issue of localisation the GEE reports aim to ensure that both GE concepts, programmes and results are developed on the basis of a sensitivity to “the ‘gender environment’, i.e. a sound knowledge of political and social developments relating to GE in the country” (02/01: XV). However, at times this awareness of the need for localisation does not coincide fully with the understanding of GE as a set of general, universal definitions.

In the course of the evaluation, as well as in the final GEE reports, I find a certain lack of clarity on the issue of localisation versus universalized gender equality policies, in casu those of Sida. One example: At times it is recommended to make (better) use of existing Sida manuals and documents available for training, planning and design of gender issues in interventions. At the same time it is concluded that this material is not (fully) developed to be able to comprise local realities, rather it is held in general and overall (read: universalized) terms. The same is true for manuals and approaches applied by TAs contracted by Sida.

It is suggested that “training should not focus on the transfer of rigid ‘frameworks’, but rather aim to convey the basic ideas and insights behind specific concepts and encourage staff to explore what these mean within the specific contexts and to specific interlocutors” (02/01:98). Or it is proposed that: “a gender analysis based on locally available sex-aggregated statistics and gender data would have made mainstreaming efforts more focused” (02/01: 167).

However, this does not fully solve the problem entailed in the conclusions:

- that “locally important meanings of gender equality vary” (from representativity (‘issue of numbers’) to social positioning, women’s rights, women’s empowerment, intersection: gender-race-class, etc.),

²⁶ A common ‘tool’ applied in African countries since mid 1990’s is to encourage women to vocational training, qualifying them to take on traditionally male jobs, such as carpenters, miners, mechanics etc. This was also found in the South Africa Country Study (KCC, LGSDP, CUP, TPL).

²⁷ Cf. Vivienne Taylor a.o., op.cit. 1999, p. 18.

- that “culturally important attributes of equality, exemplified by the importance of respect, dignity and tolerance in the South African case should influence the way in which Sida discusses the gender equality goal with partners” (02/01:3: 86), or
- that gender “training should be supported, made as specific to intervention issues as possible (...) National gender/poverty expertise as well as use of locally produced guidelines and m/s tools can increase the relevance of training” (02/01:3: 87),
- “An imposed universal definition of gender equality is, however, not appropriate in cases where the concept has a concrete and particular resonance with stakeholders in specific cultural contexts.
- Investigation of local meanings and of usage of the gender equality concept in the specific context in which interventions are located can open up windows of opportunity for local appreciation of this universal goal” (02/01: 96).

The message seems to be the following: Take into account, and support locally constructed meanings to the extent they comply with national, universal GE goals, and to the extent they include a human rights perspective, empowerment of women and transformative social changes – all presumably unquestionable and sympathetic goals.

But the approach does not pay justice to the diverse needs expressed in local development projects; rather it seems to pursue goals of implementers (or as in this case, evaluation team members?). As pointed out by Andrea Cornwall: “At the community level, the myth of female solidarity can often wear thin. Female participants in participatory development project committees may not identify themselves primarily, or even at all, with other women. To assume so is to dislocate women from their social and affective networks. It also, rather ironically, masks women’s agency in the pursuit of projects of their own that may be based on other lines of connectedness and difference. Equally, there is no reason to assume that enabling women to have more of a voice in fora like development committees will necessarily make any contribution to transforming gender relations.”²⁸

At one occasion I find variations that might entail deviations from the general universalized understanding of GE, that is which reflect attempts of cultural sensitivity towards unexpected, local perceptions: namely in the reference repeatedly made to voices of women, men and youth beneficiaries. As for instance in the SA study: “The way in which poor urban women were able to articulate these links (GE/PR linkages, SP) demonstrates that it is possible to go beyond general statements and build on the perceptions of deprivation of primary stakeholder groups” (02/01: 168).

In my own preparation for the joint team meeting in March 2001 (discussions at Sida HQ with Core team and Sida representatives) I noted down a few points that I thought were missing in the Inception Report’s list mentioned above (IR: 39–40). Going back to my notes today, I find that these points are still valid, and

²⁸ Andrea Cornwall, *op.cit.* 2000, p. 13.

that their relevance has been underlined by experiences made in the course of the evaluation. The most important are:

- **Be open for locally defined perceptions and experiences of stakeholders** – they might qualify/refine concepts – and in addition they might complement or even question content and directions of national and international development goals. Such information may be crucial in assessing how – and whether or not – Sida interventions might help establish equal opportunities for women and men in the three countries.
- **Be aware of potential conflicts** – not only between male and female stakeholders, but also between actors at different levels: national/local government, civil society organisations, CBOs, poor men and women in intervention areas. Interests of different stakeholders may not only be based on gender; economic and social privileges, poverty, racial discrimination or political priorities (ANC or other party interests) may intersect with gender inequalities. In other words: watch out for conflicting interests. Towards all stakeholders, make sure to include questions that address the issue: In whose interest are gender issues considered?
- **Be aware of hierarchies and asymmetries in the donor-recipient relationship**, as well in the relationship between evaluation team, Sida representatives and partners. I.e. consider explicitly our role as evaluation team; aim to strike the delicate balance, make sure the various roles of donors, ‘recipients’, programme planners, evaluators, ‘beneficiaries’, etc. are clearly reflected in meetings, interviews, focus groups etc. Communicate roles and responsibilities clearly and overtly. – These considerations are rooted in experiences with development programmes that – in spite of donor’s self-perceptions and current development rhetoric of ‘partnership’, ‘capacity building’, ‘empowerment of women’, etc. – have actually ignored problems and perceptions of local stakeholders, and thereby in fact contributed to undermining local capacities.²⁹ In the GEE critical findings of the GEE/SA team point in similar directions (CUP, TPL at KCC). Such asymmetries in the donor-recipient relationship should be identified and discussed critically, also in gender equality evaluations.
- **Dialogue – or disguised monologue?** On the donor-recipient relationship the Inception Report underlines (IR: 41ff, 2.0 Participation and Partnership) how “there is a clear requirement to assess the way in which partnership as a mode of development co-operation impeded or facilitated the pursuit of gender equality goals” (IR: 43). “The process of partnering will necessitate a dialogue in which agreement is reached among partners as to the meaning of Sida’s gender equality goal in the context of a specific intervention, the extent

²⁹ UNDP recently recognized the need to reconsider current development practice, and “examine further the basic assumptions that underlie the old model of technical co-operation”, including “the belief that it is possible for donors ultimately to control the process and yet consider the recipients to be equal partners”. See S Fukuda-Parr, C Lopes & K Malik (eds.), *Capacity for Development – New Solutions to Old Problems*, UNDP 2002 (p. 8).

the goal is shared by the partners, and how the intervention should reflect this shared understanding of the gender equality goal. (...) A critical question will concern the level of effort by Sida to firmly but respectfully transmit to partners the seriousness of the gender equality goal and the ultimate effect of that effort on the interventions themselves” (IR: 43).

Following this advice is key, however, to make sure ‘dialogue’ is in fact not practiced as a one-way process, whereby mainly the goals of Sida are pursued, the evaluation team should pay attention to, and acknowledge understandings, policies and efforts by national/local partners and civil society stakeholders. Even though these might differ from GE goals of Sida, they must be listened to and included in a genuine dialogue. If, rather one-sided, only the above advice is reflected crucial inputs and information of the gendered realities in the three countries may be lost, and the ‘dialogue’ will materialize as a disguised monologue – with Sida basically pursuing its own (universalized) GE policies, not taking into account historical experiences and existing perceptions and capacities of national/local partners.

Lessons learnt in the course of the evaluation:

- Interviews and meetings at Sida HQ actually confirmed that such considerations are critical: among civil servants it was widely agreed, and practiced, that focus lies on Sida policies first of all, rather than on socio-economic, gendered realities and the specific political environment in countries of development co-operation. In that respect essential findings of the GEE confirm the need for a general change in attitudes and development practices of donors.
- On a similar line the participation of national consultants in the GEE must be emphasized: South African members of the SA team played a positive role in drawing attention of other consultants to the historical experiences and realities of the people of South Africa; likewise they were excellent in drawing the attention of team members from the North whenever we would fall into the error of euro-centric or even paternalistic behavior or use of language.
- In other words: Not only South partners need to develop: ‘capacity development’ of donors, in terms of capacity for cultural and political sensitivity towards South partners and their realities is at least as important as are donor’s efforts to build capacity in developing countries. In the case of the GEE, Sida efforts cannot be limited to “transmit to partners the seriousness of the gender equality goal” (IR: 43); Sida (and the GEE team) itself must consider how to sensitize itself, i.e. planners, advisers and implementers, how to respect experiences as well as norms, values and efforts of South partners. Even though these might differ at crucial points from those of the donor, they must be accounted for and comprised in the development dialogue – establishing equal opportunities and ensuring women’s rights basically is dependent on involvement of national/local partners and civil society.
- Don’t limit yourself to ask for gender inequalities in terms of ‘problems’ (read: women being in a subordinate position, marginalized by prevailing so-

cietal structures): Be aware also of ‘potentials’ (read: although acting within prevailing patterns of socially ascribed gender roles, women may display strength and develop survival strategies that cannot be entailed within the standardised categories of the gender analysis). (See later comments on concepts: Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Interests.)

- Regard women, not only as victims in need of ‘development’, but as actors of already ongoing development; poor women contribute to development by virtue of the daily struggle for survival and sustaining of families and communities – and important: they do so whether donors are present with a GE programme or not. [The Analytical Framework for assessing linkages, synergies or conflicts between the poverty goal and the gender equality goal developed in the GEE is one example of indicators that include gendered realities to the extent they reflect women as victims (of poverty, deprivation etc. (GEE 02/01: 36–37, table 4.2), more so than as actors of development.]
- Regard not only different opportunities of men and women (as in standard gender analysis), but be aware that particularly poor women gain diverse experiences by virtue of the responsibility to balance out contradictory demands – evolving of the broad variety of obligations on women: of both economic production and social care (as producers, vendors, market women, employees, etc. but also as mothers, caretakers, wives, aunts, daughters, cousins etc.).

Assessing changes in terms of Gender Equality

I mentioned how the GEE operates mainly within conceptualisation, frameworks and perspectives of current development co-operation. My discussion below of some of the key methodological issues of the GEE is concerned with this observation: the risk that is embedded in all evaluation work of being caught up in and thereby limited by the thinking and perspectives as set out and defined by development co-operation is present, also in the case of GEE.

Gender equality – Gender

The strategy of GAD and gender mainstreaming can be traced back to the globalisation supported and facilitated by the UN conferences of the 1990’s (by some called the ‘UNesque feminism’). This has given rise to a well justified extension of GE efforts, but also to considerable confusion (evolving to the extent of ‘gender fatigue’ in many countries), and to a certain lack of specificity of implications of gender equality efforts. Examples of this can be found in the GEE.

The GEE encourages methods to comprise ‘locally constructed meanings’. These are observed and also in many cases found to actually question the conventional interpretation of ‘gender’ as social constructions of binary sex differences – yet the GEE sees local meanings of interest mainly to the extent these can “open windows of opportunities for local appreciation of this universal goal” [i.e. a “deeper understanding of gender equality goals and of mainstreaming elements and processes”] (GEE 02/01: 96).

On a similar line, the GEE warns not to conflate gender with “women”: “there is still a tendency by diverse stakeholders to equate gender equality with promoting women’s participation, in isolation of the context of gender inequalities” (GEE 02/01: 168), yet the analyses of the GEE refer to the universalised concepts of gender and GE, whereby the binary differences between men/women, male/female are made the key distinction applied to comprise gender inequalities. The GEE argues that equating women’s participation with GE does not pay justice to the structural inequalities comprised in the concept of gender. The normative and political sub-texts of ‘gender’ have nevertheless proved to be supportive of this idea of increasing participation or involvement of women, explicitly expressed or not.

Practical and Strategic Gender Changes

The Terms of Reference for Sida’s Gender Equality Evaluation follows the practice in the GAD literature of referring to practical gender needs and strategic gender interests as developed by C. Moser (PGN and SGI). Based on these, the ToR formulated the concepts practical gender changes and strategic gender changes (PGC and SGC) in order to be able to evaluate whether and how needs have been met and interests promoted.

The Inception Report discusses the understanding and use of these concepts. Crucial reservations are made on two major points:

A) “The demarcation between practical needs and strategic interests is not sharp, nor do these concepts imply a choice, in any particular case, between one or the other. An intervention may relate to a practical gender need, but the way it is addressed and how decisions are taken might have strategic implications” (IR: 51). In general, there is a tendency to play down the importance of practical gender change for women, even though such change has the potential to provide women with the time, space and resources they need to transform their awareness and to work towards strategic change.

“Because practical and strategic gender needs and interests appear, on the surface, to be easy to understand, there is often a tendency to generalize. (...) In general, the complexities of people’s lives cannot be captured in a simple dichotomy of ‘practical’ and ‘strategic’” (IR: 53–54).

These are critical precautions. In the course of the GEE evaluation process, though, we ended up ‘forgetting’ some of them. In order to assess and attribute ‘gender changes’ the SA team made a brainstorm exercise whereby we wanted to categorize the various changes observed. Although aware of the risks we ended up by generalizing, hence in fact reducing observed changing processes to fit in with dichotomies of PGC and SGC.

For an immediate overview the exercise definitely was fruitful, however, a risk remains that the analysis of results ends up excluding relevant observations, and playing down the importance of practical gender change. Another risk is that the analysis lacks clarity of focus and misses important conclusions on lessons that

would be crucial for Sida.³⁰ The analysis of women and girls participating in literacy programs in Bangladesh can serve as one example (GEE 02/01: 135):

The GEE rises the question: Did the improved knowledge and capacity to pursue their rights as observed by the BD team stem from the literacy programs – or may they rather be attributed to village level health workers working in the area providing messages concerning women’s rights relating to sexual violence and reproductive health? It is concluded that “In such a context it is very difficult to establish a direct causal link from one intervention to the changes reported, i.e. can behavioral changes be attributed to the education programme, to health service messages, to both or to other factors” (GEE 02/01: 135).

To me this raises the question whether it is appropriate to look for ‘causal links’ at all? It seems that what might be the case is that the PGC and SGC show their clear limitations in operating with sharp demarcations, ‘seducing’ the GEE to operate with causalities where none exist? Could it be that interviews, focus groups or consultative workshops with the relevant stakeholders might unravel even more precise information, if the issue of how literacy program participants perceived training course contents vis-à-vis experiences they have with village health workers had been followed through?

This would imply a way of planning and conducting focus groups/workshops that, regardless of preconceptions – or even of prejudice, emphasizes listening to experiences of participants (read: not just asking for ‘needs and interests’) – before trying to categorize findings according to GAD assumptions such as PGC and SGC. It would emphasize analysis of the practical social experiences of women and girls, rather than focusing exclusively on the need of attributing changes to one interventions or the other.

This leads on to the second major point, the issue of participation. About the PGC and SGC the Inception Report says:

Participation and Changes

B) “These concepts were popularized as planning tools and became associated with a top-down approach to planning. That is, outsiders or “experts” determined what someone else’s needs or interests were. Planners could make a gender analysis, identifying women’s and men’s needs and interests, and the changes that should be aimed for in interventions, without ever consulting the people concerned. (...) Participatory approaches to capture the views of those enmeshed in structured systems of discrimination and inequality (based on race, class and gender) have been developed by some NGOs but are still rarely used in bilateral de-

³⁰ For instance: The analytical framework developed by the GEE to comprise ‘linkages between poverty reduction and gender equality goals’ correlates poverty alleviation and PGC, and poverty reduction and SGC (GEE 02/01: 39). Yet, in a key conclusion this categorization is not followed through: “...key stakeholders (...) have identified real or potential interfaces or linkages between poverty reduction and gender equality”. Considering the findings that Sida needs to more clearly ensure convergence of GE and PR efforts, I assume a more consequent conclusion would be that ‘poverty reduction’ be substituted with ‘poverty alleviation’.

velopment co-operation interventions. Although women and men may express their needs when a development intervention is being designed, the short term perspective of most interventions means that creating an environment for primary stakeholders, especially women, to have time and space to consciously explore their own needs and interests is rarely done” (IR: 53).

Does the fact that participatory approaches ‘are still rarely used in bilateral development co-operation interventions’ imply that evaluations would not be able to gain from encouraging ‘those enmeshed in structured systems of discrimination and inequality (based on race, class and gender)’ to express their views in workshops? Taking the BD example I would assume that this would indeed be possible.

In South Africa the team gained critical information and positive results from such attempts. These were made by conducting focus groups – giving them the form of ‘Participlan’³¹, a method based on principles similar to those of the Future Workshop.³² Both methods follow a set of ‘rules’, developed to facilitate processes of change based on collective experiencing and imagination in communities.

The GEE refers to “the felt experience of primary stakeholders, including women, men and youth” among beneficiaries as the most reliable and valid guide (02/01: 137) in assessment of changes in gender equality. Such conclusions could be strengthened by systematically planned preparation of focus groups/consultative workshops³³, based on the Participlan/Future Workshops. This could also add value to the information collected among beneficiaries. Especially the principles to include collective imagination have potential by enhancing the scope and depth of the analysis of opportunities for change.

Experiences from a workshop arranged by SA team members in the township Galeshewe (Kimberley) may serve as an example. Fifteen women, all mothers, were present. They were asked to spontaneously answer two major questions:

1. Which are the most difficult problems in your daily life?
2. If you would have all the power to decide how would you like to see things change?

Severe poverty and unemployment was the number one score among problems while women-led small-scale production (chicken, vegetables or other) was a primary wish in terms of change. Two women in few sentences expressed the message of the women:

³¹ SA team member Kgotso Schoeman may be contacted for literature references.

³² Future Workshops were developed by Dr. Robert Jungk as a way of facilitating change in grassroots movements, dating back to experiences of social movements in Austria and Germany in the 1930’s. The future workshop has later been developed as a method in action research by Kurt Aagaard Nielsen & Birger Steen Nielsen. See Kurt Aagaard Nielsen, *Arbejdets sociale organisering*, Forlaget Sociologi, København 1996.

³³ Is ‘consultative workshops’ the designation of the GEE of workshops, facilitated as Participlan?

“Poverty is more of a woman’s problem – men always expect things to be done for them, even if you discuss poverty problem in the house, the man expects you as a woman to deal with the situation. (...)

There is a need to change the phrase that the man is the head of the house, to that of a woman is the head of the house. Because both the children and the man depend on the woman.

Poverty is a problem for everyone in the house, but the woman is the only one who takes responsibility to solve the problem. Children expect the mother to solve, not the father. They know he will sit at home the whole day doing nothing.

When women earn money they put food on the table, and when men earn money they drink to ignore their poverty problem.”

As mothers these women would take responsibility (for both children and husbands) – they cannot be seen as simply victimised by the double burden of their productive/reproductive duties. They are aware who sustain families and who do not. And they perceive themselves qualified to be entitled ‘heads of households’.

The women participants of this workshop brought with them experiences, capabilities and change potentials that should be recognised.³⁴ Stakeholders involved in the area might consider supporting proposed initiatives of the women, let alone engage themselves in collaboration with the women to create economic and social environments conducive to establishing women employment opportunities.

Listening to and taking cognisance of the specific ways the women take responsibility can encourage opportunities for change that would otherwise remain hidden. The temporary ‘free social space’ created by Participlan/Future workshops entails such processes and opportunities.

Conclusion – Some Suggestions for Consideration

Based on the above reflections a number of issues regarding development co-operation that strives towards promotion of gender equality stand out:

Point of Departure and Choice of Framework

- The gendered, socio-economic realities and the specific cultural and political environment in countries of development co-operation to be the starting point in the analysis of interventions. Current GAD and womens-rights frameworks should be critically scrutinized against this background. The same is true for gender policies of the donor agency, Sida being the case in point.
- Evaluations should take into account current analyses on globalisation of gender policies, i.e. as set by the World Bank/IMF, UN agencies and other

³⁴ By focusing first of all on the *subordination* aspect, the GEE misses the opportunity of including such potentials (“...they experienced the links between gender inequalities and vulnerability to poverty in their own lives”, GEE 02/01:3: 57–58).

institutions, and should consider their implications for GE and womens-rights policies of governments as well as for local civil societies' initiatives.

- Based on above analyses assessments of national GE policies: to which extent would they be translations of, i.e. in accordance with universalised GE goals, and/or to which extent can potential divergences between universalised GE goals and those set out in national GE policies be identified. To the degree possible, assessments should be made as to which extent national GE policies on poverty reduction, education, (sexual & reproductive) health etc. are conducive to improvement of opportunities and conditions of life of the poor majorities of men and women – or whether and how GE policies might have detrimental effects.
- Similarly assessments of policy consequences for various groups of women, i.e. distinctions be made according to class, race, ethnicity, tribe, age, religion, level of education as well as to urban/rural settings of citizens involved. These assessments would benefit from being guided by understandings of the historical and specific intersections of gender (binary differences between men/women) with class, caste and race etc. in the particular country or community.
- Analysis to take into account local GE initiatives taken by civil society, incl. women's NGOs, health, education, environment, human rights and other NGOs, and expertise involved in GE and women's rights' policies and programmes. Some of these would explicitly target gender issues; others would address gender inequalities and power relations in non-gender terms (as for instance economic inequality, racial discrimination, HIV/AIDS pandemic, etc.), yet the programmes may have considerable potentials in terms of promotion of equal opportunities. Hence, they should be (i) acknowledged and (ii) built upon, both in design and implementation of policies as well as when assessing GE changes in the country. They are a key factor in development, no matter whether GE initiatives of donor agencies are at place or not.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – In Whose Interest?

- Key concepts and approaches applied in gender mainstreaming to be critically scrutinized, also taking into consideration the economic and political role of the donor agency in the particular 'partner' country. Concepts such as 'empowerment', 'transformative', 'participation', 'structural inequalities', 'strategic changes' need clear and specific definitions. The very adoption of current buzzword language does not ensure productive use. It should be critically reflected how these concepts, based on specific analysis of local contexts, may or may not fit in with other goals of the donor agency – or whether they might conflict with, or even question those.
- Analysis should be made of how concepts such as gender, gender equality, gender analysis, women's rights, women's empowerment, gender changes, transformative changes, participation, etc. relate to current neo-liberal agendas of development co-operation. Potentially conflicting, or even contradictory, interests involved in applying a gender mainstreaming strategy to be assessed.

- To support such efforts, stakeholder analysis could be made, not only by mapping of stakeholders' involvement in regard to donor and 'partner' interventions. National and local government, civil society organisations and men and women citizens engage in development of their country (with obviously varying interests and objectives), and they do so whether Western donors are present or not. Hence, any intervention that strives to intersect with these realities should take into account that stakeholders pursue different, often conflicting, and even contradictory interests.
- When identifying contradictory interests within the same overall development policy, such as for instance between support to national GE policies supporting neo-liberal policies of economic growth and local government (and civil society) initiatives in rural or poor rural areas, evaluations could investigate the various options at hand, and draw up the economic, social and political implications of the various policies. Donor agencies should make choices as to which extent their GE policies support universalised GE goals, and in which ways these may differ from locally prioritised goals. Choices should include drawing up scenarios of the various consequences for living conditions of men and women citizens in the country in either case.

Context-specific versus Universalised Goals of Gender Equality and Women's Rights

- Development agencies increasingly acknowledge the need for taking account of local understandings and priorities of GE. This should be done with the dual aim of examining (i) how or to which extent local priorities would point to context-specific solutions³⁵, and (ii) how and to which extent local priorities might entail opportunities for appreciation of universal goals of GE and women's rights.
- In developing countries a variety of goals, meanings and priorities are currently emerging, many of which are in fact questioning the national translations of universalised GE and women's rights goals. National applications give rise to public debate, and in many countries this is characterized by considerable differences – and at times severe tensions between goals pursued by national and local government, by government and civil society organisations, within civil society itself, between urban based (women's) NGOs and rural communities, etc.
- Rather than replicating donor perceptions of the mainstream road to GE, or seeking for a competing local model of GE goals – evaluations may recognize the political nature embedded in local efforts to fight gender inequalities and promote social change. By taking account of the various interests at stake, evaluators (and donors) might consider how to relate to these developments – setting their priorities and policies accordingly.

³⁵ Examples could be: support to self-organised initiatives of refugee women to ensure sanitation or protection of girls/young women against rape and other forms of violence; job creation programmes for impoverished groups of racial or ethnic groupings; support to civil society initiatives striving to support efforts of poor rural and urban communities to take control of and sustain their own development.

- At times support to national GE and women's rights' goals may be conducive to strengthening major local stakeholders. In other cases national GE policies can be found to counteract local initiatives, for instance by reproducing policies that have already proved detrimental to social change, i.e. by use of mystifying gender rhetoric, or even by exacerbating prevailing inequalities, based on gender, race, class, ethnicity etc. Evaluations should take account of the various risks and options involved.

Relation between Donor Agencies and Partner Organisations

- The donor/partner relationship is – notwithstanding global discourse and rhetoric of ‘partnership’ – characterized by asymmetries and inequalities. Rooted in historic North/South divides, and in the economic hegemony of the North, more often than usually recognized, they are shaped not only by genuine efforts of delivering appropriate development assistance, but also by ethnocentric practices and attitudes on the part of Western donor agencies etc.
- Not the least in evaluations of donors' efforts to promote equal opportunities for all, donors should critically, and on a continuous basis, revisit assumptions, missions and goals of policies and programmes. Donors could consider to which extent Western gender equality structures are promoted (e.g. emphasizing legal frameworks in support of women's equal economic and political participation³⁶ and economic, educational and social activities related to mainstream markets). Donor agencies may also consider how and to what extent they engage in equity and gender justice agendas which are set, defined and developed by South based agencies and organisations (e.g. emphasizing equal opportunities for all, at the same time as recognizing the particular diversity of poor women's experiences, incl. norms and values such as social responsibility, respect, human dignity and tolerance).
- In particular; donors should consider how to increase awareness of the role they themselves play vis-à-vis partners in promoting gender equality goals. As a minimum donors should be able to distinguish between Western notions/ideals of gender equality and women's empowerment and the history and conceptualisations of man- and womanhood, motherhood, masculinity/femininity, male and female economic and social roles and responsibilities that are rooted in three world countries. Such roles include women's / mothers' activities related to areas outside market forces, i.e. subsistence economies, a broad range of reproductive and cultural duties, carried mainly by women/mothers, current processes faced by poor men of economic, social and psychological disempowerment, etc.
- There is a considerable need for evaluators and donors to strengthen their own capacities in order to meet the constantly changing realities of the South (including the impact they have on the North/South partner relationships). Capacity building, in particular within donor organisations would emphasize

³⁶ Asking questions such as those discussed p. 55 in this paper may serve as important examples.

skills such as cultural sensitivity, empathy, patience and the ability to carefully scrutinize perceptions, priorities and policies of key stakeholders.

- In interviews, focus group discussions and other meetings it is suggested for evaluators and donors to listen carefully – without regard to preconceived understandings based on prejudice, academic assumptions, universalist/culturalist attitudes etc. Crucial information of the diversity of attitudes, orientations and directions of GE and women’s rights in a specific country can be obtained by making space for local stakeholders to express and articulate their understandings of current debates on issues regarding economic, social and gender based injustice.

It is realised that all Gender Equality Evaluations may not be able to address all of the above-mentioned issues. The emphasis may be placed differently in individual evaluations. If more or all of these issues were subjected to research this would provide a strong basis for future Gender Equality Evaluations.

Annex 3

Analytical Framework I

Analytical Framework I – At Intervention Level				
	Study Objects	Intervention Level		
		Specific questions	Geographical or institutional concentration of evaluation	Key informants, focus group participants, etc.
	Methods and tools			
WHAT?	<p>Gender Equality goal reflected in intervention design and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacles and missed opportunities? <p>Poverty reduction – links/synergies/ conflicts with Gender Equality</p>			
HOW?	<p>Stakeholder Participation (including dialogue with Sida)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacles and missed opportunities? <p>Mainstreaming strategy – degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero evidence? • Pro Forma? • Analytical? • Design Integration? • Implementation? • Evaluation and Monitoring <p>Links to Other Gender Equality Initiatives in Policing</p>			
WHICH CHANGES?	<p>Effects of intervention on Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical gender needs/strategic gender interests and changes • Men and Male roles • Effects of intervention on women's empowerment • Intended/unintended/ and missed opportunities 			

Annex 4

Gender Mainstreaming: Checklist

1. **Zero** mainstreaming, meaning that there is zero evidence for and no mention of gender mainstreaming in the CS, lip service
2. **Pro Forma** mainstreaming, meaning that there were only a token mention of m/s, short paragraph on m/s, little or no evidence of either gender analysis or meaningful design change
3. **Integrated**, meaning that a gender analysis was done or some written evidence of an effort to mainstream including some gender analysis reference but quality of analysis subject to question and no evidence that analysis influenced project design. We must distinguish 2 types of gender analysis: a) one that documents the status quo (e.g. gives sex-disaggregated data on who participated in an activity) and b) one that allows us to analyse possible transformative changes (e.g. how did women/men participate? in what? including the quality, depth and meaningfulness of participation)
4. **Institutionalised**, meaning that the findings from the gender analysis were evident in some aspects of the project design and/or were integrated into the objectives of the intervention
5. **Implementation**, meaning gender sensitive elements of project as designed were actually implemented
6. **The m/s process also includes monitoring and evaluation**, meaning that monitoring and evaluation provide evidence that the intervention was implemented in a gender-relevant way (check Sida documentation).

Annex 5

Levels of Participation in Development Co-operation Programmes

Levels of Participation in Development Cooperation Programmes and Projects ³⁷	
Level	Description
1. Passive Participation	Women (and men) participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
2. Participation in information giving	Women (and men) participate by answering pre-set questions posed by researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. Women do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings as the findings of research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.
3. Participation by consultation	Women (and men) participate by being consulted and external agents listen to their views. These external agents defined both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of women's responses. Such a process does not concede any share in decision making. Professionals are under no obligation to take on board peoples views.
4. Participation for material incentives	Women (and men) participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash, or other material incentives. This is often called participation but women who participate may have no stake in prolonging activities when the direct incentives come to an end. For example, women engaged in sewing garments may not have any link to markets in the post-project period.

³⁷ Adapted from Pretty; J.N: *Alternative Systems of Inquiry for a Sustainable Agriculture*, London; IIED 1993 as referenced in OECD: *Developing Environmental Capacity – A Framework for Donor Involvement*, OECD 1995.

<p><i>Cont.</i></p>	
<p>5. Functional participation</p>	<p>Women (and men) participate by forming groups to meet pre-determined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organization. Such involvement does not tend to be at an early stage of project cycles and planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.</p>
<p>6. Interactive participation</p>	<p>Women (and men) participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. The groups take control over local decisions, and people have a stake in maintaining structures and practices.</p>
<p>7. Self-Mobilisation</p>	<p>Women (and men) participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. Such self-initiated mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable systems of wealth and power.</p>

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Ted Freeman, Britha Mikkelsen, et al.
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Reflection on Experiences of Evaluating Gender Equality

In the present report the evaluation team reflects critically on the methods and approaches applied in their previous evaluation “Mainstreaming Gender Equality” (Sida Evaluation 02/01). The aim of this post-evaluation study is to contribute lessons learnt to future evaluations of gender equality.

The evaluation team had made careful preparations for their evaluation of Sida’s policy of mainstreaming gender equality, developing a common conceptual framework as well as tools to capture changes in gender equality. As one of the lessons learnt the study points out the potential conflict between using pre-determined analytical frameworks and participatory evaluation techniques. It furthermore points to methodological challenges when evaluating policies and strategies, such as the lack of specific objectives and targets.



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