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# Untangling gender mainstreaming: how to positively change organisations

## 1. Introduction

This paper, produced by the Gender and Development Network (GADN) Gender Mainstreaming Working Group, explores the concept and practicalities of gender mainstreaming. It elaborates a Theory of Change for organisational change synthesising learning from nine UK-based international non-government organisations (INGOs), and concludes with specific learning points relating to the terminology of gender mainstreaming, results and expectations of change, the importance of locally-driven processes of change, and the role of donors.

The aim is to contribute to debates on gender mainstreaming, support and improve implementation and scale-up, and assist communications and complementary working relationships between those campaigning for gender equality and women's rights in wider society and those promoting change within mainstream development organisations.

### Background to this paper

Almost 20 years after the UN International Conference on Women in Beijing where gender mainstreaming was agreed as a strategy for achieving gender equality and women's rights, the global development community and women's movements are still struggling with its implementation. Whilst arguably there have been some successes – nearly every development organisation today engages in some form of gender mainstreaming - the critique, particularly from some members of the women's movement, has been harsh. It has even been suggested that gender mainstreaming has been a complete failure and should be abandoned.

In 2011, GADN set up a Gender Mainstreaming Working Group as a support and learning network for people responsible for mainstreaming gender in the UK-based headquarters of international NGOs. In 2012, we analysed the nine case studies of gender mainstreaming our members had presented and discussed up until that time for emerging trends and learning. The case studies further reinforces the need for both gender mainstreaming work within mainstream development organisations as well as targeted work to support girls' and women's rights by women's rights organisations. . Women's organisations and women and girl focused projects on their own are limited

in their ability to bring about fundamental change for women and girls. Complementary efforts are needed to influence the culture and functioning of mainstream development organisations, and to ensure that all development policy making and spending takes women's rights and gender equality into account.

Our experience was that the gender mainstreaming efforts we were analysing were making a significant difference in terms of organisational change. Whilst progress could be slow, halting and sometimes in the wrong direction, in all nine organisations we were seeing important changes in organisational commitment to and action on gender equality and women's rights. In several instances, as a result of mainstreaming efforts over many years, gender equality and women's rights were being strongly championed from the highest levels of our organisations. This was resulting in attention to gender equality, women and girls being promoted in mainstream policy, spending and programmes, and also increasing targeted support to women's organisations and projects for women and girls. We wrote up this analysis in an article, "Gender Mainstreaming: Recognising and Building on Progress: Views from the UK Gender and Development Network" that was published in a special issue of the *Oxfam Gender and Development Journal* "Beyond Gender Mainstreaming" in November 2012. Research is needed in how this increased commitment is translating into actual improvements in the lives of women and girls.

Our participation in discussions with feminist activists and development practitioners leading up to publication of "Beyond Gender Mainstreaming" demonstrated that implementation of gender mainstreaming remained challenging in many contexts and disappointing to many. This raised questions for us about expectations of change in challenging contexts, and illustrated the complexity and even obscurity of gender mainstreaming as a concept and as a practical tool. To a large extent "gender mainstreaming" appeared as a sort of "black box" of activity taking place within development organisations which was opaque and alienating to those outside. Informed and constructive debate between those directly engaged in gender mainstreaming and those campaigning for gender equality and women's rights in wider society was at times inhibited by misapprehensions and strikingly different conceptualisations.

Following and inspired by our participation in these discussions, we spent time reflecting on and distilling our own conceptualisations, practical approaches and experiences of gender mainstreaming into a coherent Theory of Change designed to be applicable in all contexts. We found this exercise immensely useful for our own thinking and practice. This paper shares our Theory of Change, reflections and learning.

## 2. The history and definition of gender mainstreaming

### History

Up until the late 1980s, government, donor and NGO support to poor women in developing countries was provided entirely through women's projects. These had very small budgets in comparison to aid programmes as a whole, and their impact was limited and isolated. They left the 'mainstream' of development policy and spending – which often affected women's lives far more – wholly untouched.

In response to this situation, in 1995, at the UN International Conference on Women held in Beijing, women's organisations, feminist academics and development practitioners successfully campaigned for 'gender mainstreaming' to be established as one of the key strategies for governments and development organisations to promote gender equality. This was about moving gender equality and women's rights from the margins of development to the mainstream, as a complement to strategic projects for women and girls addressing specific gender gaps and promoting women's and girls' rights.

### Definition

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines gender mainstreaming as follows:

*"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality."*

### Location

Our experience is that gender mainstreaming is a set of activities to promote gender equality and women's and girls' rights that happen within mainstream development organisations i.e. organisations which don't have women's and girls' rights and gender equality as their primary goal. Gender mainstreaming relates to mainstream development organisations of all kinds and scales – from governments and multi-national organisations with programmes in many countries, to community level service providers such as primary schools and clinics. It relates to all sectors and activities which impact on people's lives, and all aspects of these organisations' work including their policies, programmes and projects, and support services including fundraising, procurement, and communications.

The implication of this definition – and our experience supports this – is that organisations working exclusively for women’s and girls’ rights do not do gender mainstreaming, as their entire focus is to promote women’s and girls’ rights and more equal gender relations. Gender mainstreaming is also not a strategy for direct engagement with women and men at community level.

## 3. The GADN Gender Mainstreaming Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change has 3 related parts:

- 1) **Gender mainstreaming - vision and results**
- 2) **Gender mainstreaming - technical planning processes**
- 3) **Gender mainstreaming - organisational commitment**

### 1) Gender mainstreaming – vision and results

Gender mainstreaming is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

The ultimate vision is realisation of women’s and girls’ rights, and equitable power relationships between women and men and girls and boys, in society as a whole. Clearly many factors – planned and unplanned – influence progress towards this ambitious vision. Our Theory of Change indicates how individual organisations can contribute to this vision.

As gender mainstreaming is a strategy employed by mainstream development organisations to improve the lives of women and girls, more tangible short-term and medium-term results focus on the particular contribution of development organisations’ policies, programmes and projects towards this ultimate vision of change. This contribution will vary with context, but will generally encompass aspects of one or more of the following:

- Women’s and girls’ (as well as men’s and boys’) lives and experiences visible and counted (e.g. improved systems in national statistics offices for systematic collection and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data)
- Women’s and girls’ (as well as men’s and boys’) voices heard, listened to and exercising influence at all levels from household to international
- Women and girls getting fair/equitable access to and benefit from resources, services and opportunities supported by the organisation (e.g. women getting more equal access to employment and business development opportunities). This would also include targeted support for women’s and girls to address the structural barriers to access.

- Women's and girls' needs and rights upheld through complementary, strategic, targeted interventions supported by the organisation (e.g. reduction in the incidence of gender based violence against women, and improved support services for those experiencing gender based violence)

## 2) Gender mainstreaming – technical planning processes

The above development organisation results are achieved through a set of gender sensitive and transformative technical planning processes, which should be systematically integrated into the organisation's regular policy, programme and project planning cycles.

These technical planning processes are:

- **Sex disaggregated data:** systematic collection and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data to understand if and how any particular issue affects women and girls and men and boys differently and/or unequally
- **Gender analytical information:** systematic gender analysis to explore and explain gender differences and inequalities in relation to any particular issue
- **Consultation and advocacy processes:** efforts to understand women's and girls' (as well as men's and boys') experiences, concerns and priorities in relation to any particular issue, through consultation with women and girls and engagement with groups representing their interests
- **Gender sensitive/transformative policy and project design:** policy and project design processes that draw on the above information, to promote gender equality and uphold women's and girls' rights in policy/project/programme interventions. These should consider *mainstream and targeted interventions* – a “twin track” approach -, and *gender sensitive and gender transformative action* (see below), backing up planned action with budgets and appropriate indicators of change.
- **Implementation: action, budgets and indicators to promote gender equality and women's rights:** implementation of plans designed to promote gender equality and uphold women's and girls' rights
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Systematic monitoring and evaluation of results – examining intended and unintended impact on women's and men's lives, including impact on gender equality, and women's rights

## Box. 1 A twin track approach

- Mainstream action: Ensuring that women and girls get an equitable share of all services, opportunities, resources and influencing opportunities supported by the organisation (e.g. action to promote equal access and equal achievement for girls and boys in school; action to extend credit and financial and business support services equitably to female as well as male entrepreneurs)
- Targeted initiatives and programme components: Strategic targeted initiatives or programme components to promote particular aspects of women's rights or address specific gender gaps. (E.g. A targeted support programme for female head teachers, recognising and addressing their severe under-representation in school management; a credit programme targeted at women recognising their exclusion from formal banking services.)

## Box 2. Gender sensitive/gender transformative action

### Gender aware/gender sensitive

These interventions provide practical support to assist women and men in the context of their existing roles, drawing on information about divisions of labour and responsibilities between women and men and girls and boys.

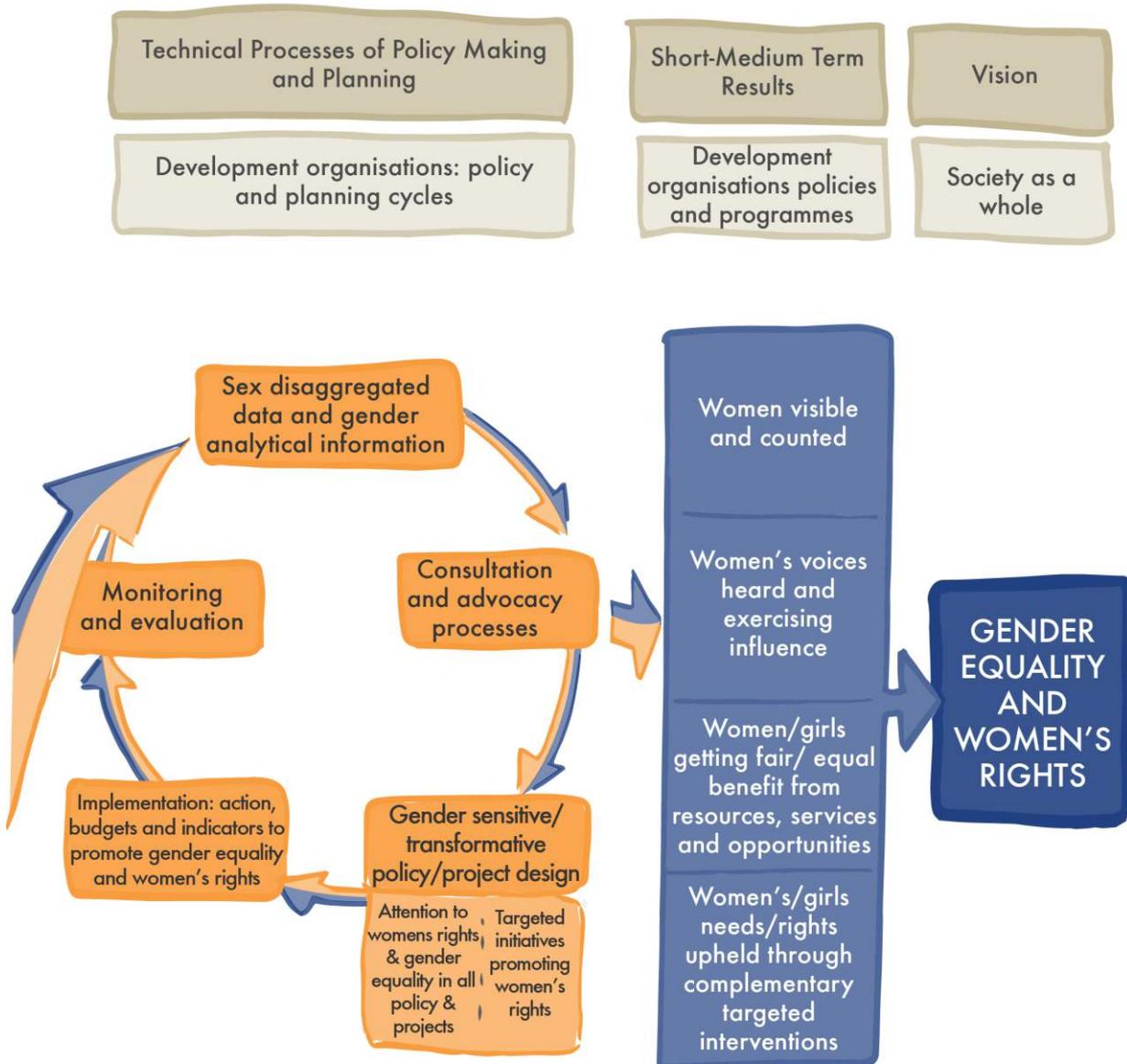
### Gender transformative

These interventions seek to promote women's rights and greater equality in women's and men's roles and responsibilities, status, and access to and control over resources, services and influence – drawing on analysis of unequal power relations between women and men.

Both kinds of intervention are important, and priorities should always be determined in consultation with the women and girls who are intended to benefit.

Figure 1, below, sets out the technical planning cycle of gender mainstreaming, short and medium term results, and the longer term vision of change which organisations will contribute to as described above.

**Figure 1: Gender mainstreaming: technical planning processes, results and vision of change**



### 3) Gender mainstreaming – organisational commitment

The technical processes of gender mainstreaming set out above are not in themselves difficult. The challenge lies in promoting and sustaining sufficient organisational commitment to the vision of gender equality and women's rights to ensure that these

technical processes happen in any particular development organisation effectively, systematically and sustainably.

The ideal is for gender equality and women's and girl's rights to be championed actively by senior management, and for technical mainstreaming processes to be promoted through sufficient resources for staff awareness raising, skills development, monitoring and accountability processes.

Spearheading, supporting and sustaining this level of organisational commitment to gender equality and women's rights – and all the steps along the way - is a complex, long-term and ongoing process. Progress is all too easily lost as well as hard gained.

## **Influencers of organisational commitment**

Three key factors inter-relate to influence organisational commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' rights: the enabling environment of the organisation, internal champions of change and external champions of change.

### **1) The enabling environment of the organisation**

Development organisations vary enormously in the extent to which they constitute a positive or negative enabling environment for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' rights. There can be huge variance even within the departments, country offices and programmes of the same organisation.

Development organisations often reflect discriminatory norms and negative gender stereotypes found in their wider cultural contexts. Consequently, organisations, offices and programmes based in contexts where more progress has been made on rights and gender equality, and those with more equal staffing between women and men with at least some women in leadership positions, tend to constitute a more conducive enabling environment for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' rights, than those which are not.

The attitude and commitment of management and senior staff to gender equality and women's rights is critically important. If the management – of whole organisations, their departments, country offices or particular programmes - consider gender equality and women's and girls' rights to be a priority, staff will take these issues seriously. On the other hand, if management is not on board, promotion of gender equality and women's rights tends to be confined to individuals with a personal interest.

### **2) Internal champions**

Organisations change in response to planned and unplanned internal and external influences.

The role of internal gender champions – known by different names in different organisations such as gender focal points, gender advisors, women's officers, equity

and inclusion officers and gender champions – is to influence their organisation to prioritise gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights through their policies and programmes. This involves supporting staff to understand and reflect on gender inequality and discrimination, reflect on gendered ways of thinking and behaviours which are embedded in the organisation’s culture and staffing, and identify ways to promote gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights through policy making, planning and monitoring processes.

In some organisations, internal champions are volunteers taking on this role in addition to their “day job”. In some, the internal champion role is a designated staff position or positions, with a budget. In organisations where there is a strong commitment to gender equality and women’s rights, the championing function tends to be moved up into the senior management tier of the organisational hierarchy, and split from a more junior technical support role.

Typical internal influencing activities include

- Conducting and commissioning gender reviews and audits to understand areas of strength and weakness in the technical planning processes of gender mainstreaming, determine blockages and where efforts might best be focused
- Activities to raise staff awareness of gender inequality and discrimination, and to develop staff knowledge, skills and confidence to promote gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights through their own behaviour and work
- Facilitating the development of gender policies, strategies and action plans for whole organisations or for particular departments and programmes
- Developing systems for gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and accountability

### 3) External champions

There are two key external influences on development organisations:

- Targeted advocacy from women’s organisations, women’s movements and gender equality advocates, including direct training and influencing in conjunction with internal champions
- Changes in the wider cultural environment relating to gender equality and women’s rights, including public, political and media engagement and debate

The promotion of gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights is a continuing process of influencing, struggle, break-through and set back which takes place uniquely in every cultural and organisational context. Effective, institutionalised and sustainable organisational commitment to gender equality and women’s rights is fostered by influencing processes from the local cultural context - driven by internal and external

champions working together, fully understanding informal as well as formal aspects of organisational culture, and promoting the responsiveness and accountability of development organisations to their own people.

Donors - including bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies and international NGOs - constitute a third and often overwhelmingly influential external champion in the context of international aid. Donors can play an important and positive role in championing gender equality and women's rights, but at times too much focus on short-term results and technical planning processes can undermine the kind of ownership and commitment in partner organisations that is essential to sustainable change.

## Stages of organisational commitment

There are discernible stages in processes of building and achieving organisational commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' rights, which are, in our experience, principally defined by and reflected in who or what is championing change internally.

Progression through these stages can be quick or can take many years. Organisations move backwards as well as forwards, and many never progress beyond Stage 1. In effect, these stages are a continuum, and the positioning of particular organisations ebbs and flows over time.

### Stage 0

Stage 0 is the status quo in many development organisations prior to the initiation of gender mainstreaming activities. At this stage, mainstream programming tends to be "gender blind", with benefit to women assumed rather than planned for and measured. Women's and girls' issues are addressed, if at all, through separate projects which tend to be ad hoc, small-scale, separate from mainstream sectors, and often based on a traditional image of women's and girls' perceived roles and contributions. There are no internal gender champions promoting attention to gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Women's organisations and gender equality advocates may be trying to influence the organisation through external advocacy and research activities.

### Stage 1

Stage 1 is the initial phase of gender mainstreaming in many organisations. Attention to gender equality and women's rights, and the need for gender mainstreaming, is championed by internal advocates taking on this role in addition to their existing job responsibilities. These staff may be volunteers - personally motivated to promote greater attention to gender equality and women's rights - or volunteered.

Championing activities at this stage are generally designed to influence staff "hearts and minds" (their personal understanding of and commitment to gender equality and women's rights) and to develop staff technical skills and understanding of gender sensitive planning processes. Championing activities typically include formation of

internal support and advocacy networks, gender policy development, staff training/awareness raising, and the development and dissemination of gender guidelines.

Stage 1 organisations often constitute an extremely challenging enabling environment for internal champions. They are required to exercise great skill in identifying appropriate entry points to build a constituency of support for gender equality and women's rights. For volunteer champions, lack of time and resources and lack of status within the organisation can be a major constraint on the extent and impact of influencing activities.

The impact of influencing activities on programmes (i.e. on mainstreaming gender into technical planning processes) and, through programmes, on women's and girls' lives tends to be barely discernable. Success at this stage is indicated through some individual attitude and behaviour change, and organisational progression to Stage 2.

## Stage 2

Stage 2 indicates some level of organisational commitment to increasing attention to gender equality and women's rights – and this in turn indicates and reflects a more conducive enabling environment. This Stage is indicated by the organisation funding and resourcing a “gender officer” post or posts, or possibly regular consultancy support, responsible for promoting attention to gender equality and women's rights through the organisation's work.

As in Stage 1, internal championing activities focus on “hearts and minds” as well as technical processes of gender sensitive planning in programmes. Paid gender officers have a mandate as well as at least some time and resources to engage in more systematic and sustained championing activities.

The impact of Stage 2 influencing activities on programmes (i.e. on mainstreaming gender into technical planning processes) and, through programmes, on women's and girls' lives tends to be patchy. Performance on gender sensitive planning in programmes and departments tends to reflect the personal motivation of individual members of staff, and the extent to which internal advocates have been able to influence practice. Gender sensitive planning systems tend to be somewhat ad hoc, with many staff still not taking action to promote gender equality and women's and girls' rights in a comprehensive way.

Success at Stage 2 is indicated through building the constituency of support for gender equality and women's rights within the organisation, some examples of good gender sensitive policy making and planning, and some examples of positive impact for women and girls evident in programme work – and organisational progression to Stage 3.

## Stage 3

Stage 3 represents a significant step change in the organisation's commitment, with management directly championing the importance of gender equality and women's and girls' rights, and gender staff shifting to more of a technical support role. Typical Stage 3 activities include management embedding commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' rights in corporate strategic objectives, possibly designating senior gender champions across all departments, and requiring programmes and departments to set their own gender equality objectives.

At this stage, mainstreaming gender into technical planning processes becomes much more widespread and embedded, with more examples of positive impact for women and girls.

## Stage 4

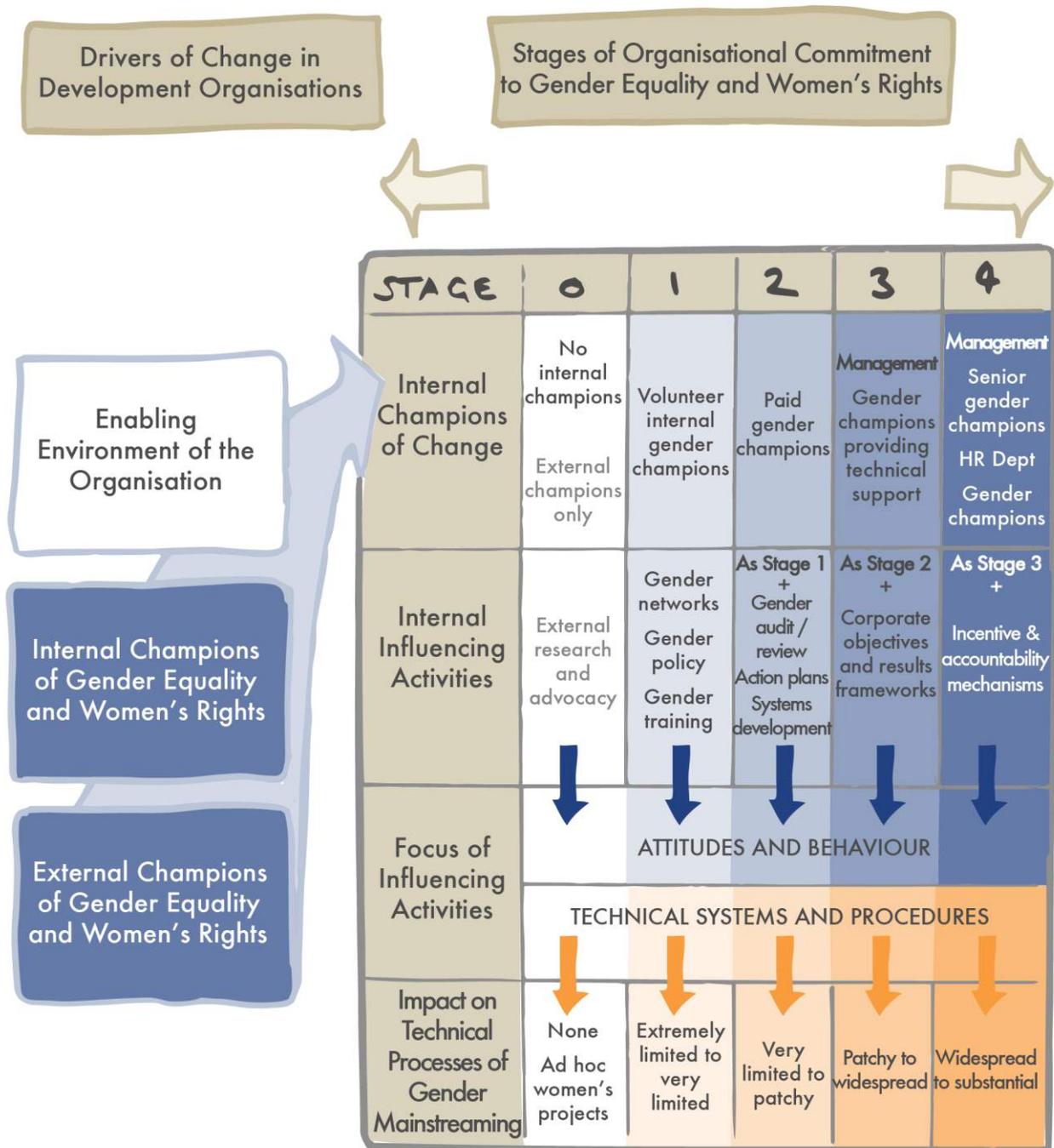
Stage 4 is the advanced stage of embedding attention to gender equality and women's and girls' rights in all aspects of the organisation's culture and staffing, policy making, planning, implementation of programmes as well as monitoring and evaluation - with management continuing to provide leadership. Typical Stage 4 activities include introducing incentives and accountability mechanisms for all staff; embedding commitment to gender equality and women's rights in staff recruitment, performance objectives and appraisal; paying systematic attention to gender equality and women's and girl's right in results and monitoring; and promoting gender equality and women's rights in all aspects of the organisation's own culture and staffing.

By this stage, the organisation constitutes a very positive enabling environment for promoting gender equality and women's rights, and gender sensitive programming is accepted practice. There are many examples of positive outcomes for women and girls as well as positive influencing of partner development organisations.

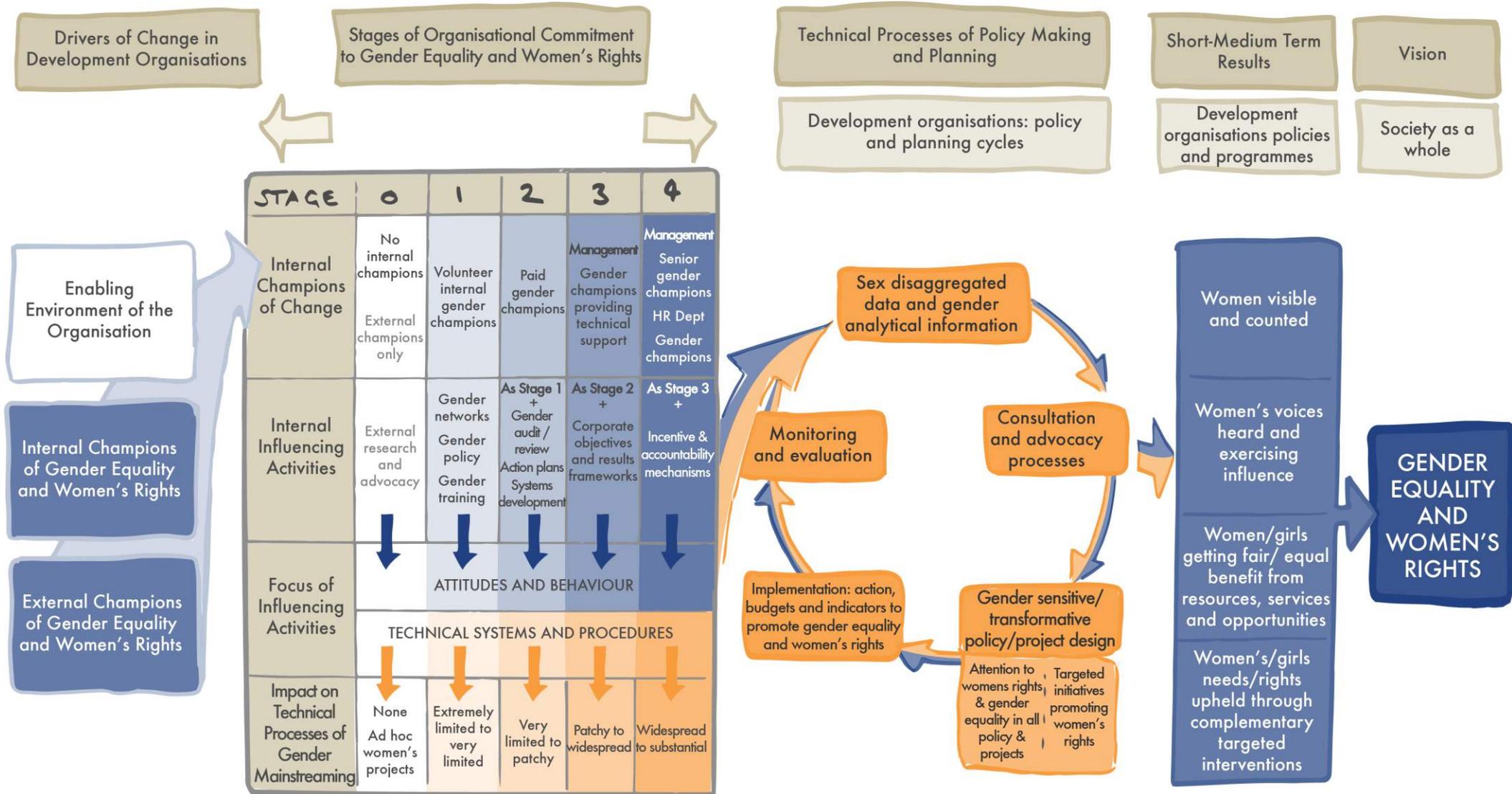
Figure 2 sets out the organisational commitment aspects of gender mainstreaming – the drivers of change and the stages of change – as described above.

Figure 3 sets out our whole Theory of Change on gender mainstreaming: the long term vision of change; the kinds of short and medium term results that development programmes contribute towards this vision; the technical planning cycle of gender mainstreaming; and the drivers and stages of organisational commitment required for these technical planning processes to take place effectively and systematically.

Figure 2: Gender Mainstreaming: organisational commitment



**Figure 3: Gender Mainstreaming: Theory of Change.** This diagram sets out the relationship between the 3 components of gender mainstreaming: organisational commitment, technical planning processes and results.



## Learning and recommendations

### Unpacking the term “gender mainstreaming”

The term “gender mainstreaming” is a confusing one – amounting to a sort of “black box” of activity taking place within development organisations to promote gender equality and women’s rights.

We recommend unpacking the term gender mainstreaming and referring instead to its constituent parts, as described in our Theory of Change.

- The **vision of gender equality and realisation of women’s and girls’ rights**, and associated development organisation results demonstrating some progress towards this long-term vision.
- Continuing **processes of organisational influencing** designed to build organisational commitment to and leadership on the vision of gender equality and realisation of women’s rights.
- The **technical processes of gender sensitive planning** designed to “mainstream” gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights into all policymaking, programmes, budgets and monitoring, and provide targeted funding for women’s organisations and programmes for women and girls.

This unpacking would serve multiple purposes. It would aid communications and facilitate constructive debate and joint work between internal and external champions; it would facilitate planning and implementation of gender mainstreaming overall; and it would enable much more precise identification of what is blocking and what is enabling progress.

### Results and expectations of change

Typically, evaluations of gender mainstreaming have taken the vision of gender equality and women’s rights, and the technical processes of gender sensitive planning, as the starting point, and examined shortfall from these ideals. With most development organisations at Stage 1 or 2 of commitment to gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights, inevitably impact and practice generally falls far short of these expectations. All too easily, gender mainstreaming appears to have failed.

Our Theory of Change should assist in developing a more sophisticated approach to defining appropriate results, and measuring effectiveness. Defining achievable and meaningful results is about understanding not only what is desirable, but also what is possible and achievable in a specific context.

Our experience is that at each stage of organisational commitment, there is, in effect, a “glass ceiling” on the extent of gender mainstreaming practice. Until and unless management come on board, it is simply not possible for internal and external champions to establish gender mainstreaming practice across the board. Recognising this helps us to be realistic about what change is possible at these various stages, set realistic targets, measure progress against this baseline, and value achievement. This requires planning to be based on gender analysis not only of gender difference and inequality in women’s and men’s lives – but also of the development organisation enabling environment. This also helps to focus efforts on the real obstacles to progress on gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights - organisational commitment and leadership.

## **Internal and external champions working together**

The critical factor determining the extent, effectiveness, institutionalisation and sustainability of gender sensitive planning processes – and positive impacts for women and girls – is the level of organisational commitment to gender equality and women’s rights. This is about political will and leadership.

The promotion of organisational commitment to gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights is a continuing process of influencing, struggle and negotiation which takes place uniquely in every cultural and organisational context. Progress derives from influencing processes embedded within the organisation and its wider culture, driven by internal and external champions working together, fully understanding informal as well as formal aspects of organisational culture, recognising and making use of entry points appropriate to local contexts, and promoting the responsiveness and accountability of development organisations to their own people.

## **The role of donors**

Donors, including bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies, and INGOs constitute an often overwhelmingly influential external champion of gender equality and women’s rights in the context of international aid.

Some donors play a critical role in supporting gender equality and women’s rights. This includes providing support and funding for local champions of gender equality and women’s rights; holding government and NGO partners to account for their international commitments to gender equality and women’s rights; creating entry points and space for internal and external advocates of gender equality to influence development decision making, debates and spending; supporting sex disaggregated information systems and research – as well as funding mainstream and targeted initiatives promoting gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights.

However, in their requirement for short-term tangible results, it is all too easy for donors to be heavy-handed and overly interventionist in their championing of gender equality

and women's rights. This can lead to focusing on technical planning processes at the expense of longer-term processes of organisational change; using international consultants and sub-contractors to drive change as opposed supporting and building on culturally embedded internal and external champions and networks; and focusing on short-term short-lived results as opposed to longer-term and sustainable trends. This approach can undermine ownership and commitment in partner organisations and provoke backlash and resistance not only from partner development organisations, but also from the local women's organisations and gender equality advocates who should be natural allies.

To promote sustainable change, donors need to support locally-owned and locally-driven processes of change. They need to support women's organisations and gender equality advocates representing the interests of their own citizens to work with internal champions, facilitating a "home grown" dynamic of social change. In terms of our theory of change, this means donors standing behind and supporting the internal and local external champions championing change in partner organisations, as well as directly influencing the "enabling environment" of partner organisations to create entry points and leverage.

## **Attitudes and behaviour v. incentives and accountability**

At Stages 1 and 2, internal champions tend to focus on influencing attitudes and behaviour to build a constituency of support amongst staff and management for gender equality and women's rights – and at these Stages, examples of good practice tend to be driven by staff with personal commitment.

At Stages 3 and 4, mechanisms are often introduced by management which require and incentivise staff to promote gender equality and women's rights through agreed technical procedures. This leads to more widespread activity, but there is a danger of token gesture responses if staff are not personally convinced of the need for and importance of promoting gender equality and women's rights. Incentives and accountability mechanisms are important, particularly when they operate at management level and create an improved enabling environment for motivated staff to promote gender equality and women's rights through their work. But effective practice requires continuing support to staff to build their understanding, reflection and skills even when incentives, mandates and accountability mechanisms are in place.

## **Concluding remarks**

In this briefing, based on our experience of gender mainstreaming in 9 UK based INGOs we have put forward evidence that the main driver to implement gender mainstreaming successfully is political will, demonstrated in leadership and resources, in the INGOs themselves. By extension, we see the main challenge for the development sector as a whole is gaining the political leadership required meaningfully

to promote women's and girls' rights and gender equality as a means to reduce poverty and strive for social justice.

Only by combining these two - *political will and technical processes* - can we expect to see the necessary re-focusing of the efforts of the development sector. This combination will ensure that women and girls benefit equally with men and boys from development and are brought in from the margins of development aid. It is also required to make sure international development efforts don't reinforce the gender based-discrimination that is holding progress back in many aspects.

Technical tools - not even the most brilliant ones - on their own are simply not enough.

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The Gender & Development Network (GADN) brings together expert NGOs, consultants, academics and individuals committed to working on gender, development and women's rights issues. Our vision is of a world where social justice and gender equality prevail and where all women and girls are able to realise their rights free from discrimination. Our goal is to ensure that international development policy and practice promotes gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Our role is to support our members by sharing information and expertise, to undertake and disseminate research, and to provide expert advice and comment on government policies and projects.

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**Working groups**

GADN brings together development practitioners, experts and academics working on thematic issues through working groups. The Gender Mainstreaming Working Group, set up in 2011, is made up of 'Gender Advocates', who are responsible for promoting gender equality and women's rights in the UK-based headquarters of international NGOs. Through members presenting to the group case studies of their own experiences, the group aims to facilitate mutual learning and support; share strategies, challenges and resources; and build knowledge through collecting a body of evidence on good practice.

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