ROLE OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICIES: THE CASE OF UN

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Abstract: Recognizing the fact that policy decisions have differentiated outcomes on men and women is the first step to promoting a gender equal environment which, in turn catalyses sustainable economic development. Gender mainstreaming, as a concept, emerges from this recognition – policies have gender differentiated outcomes and thus, gender differences shape policy processes. This concept was established as a global strategy to achieve gender equality in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action ratified by all United Nations member states. It is now incumbent upon nation-states and international organizations to carry out gender mainstreaming. Since then, there has been mainly three sets of people who have helped carry forward the discussion on gender mainstreaming: scholars, feminist policymakers and feminist activists. One of the major participants who constitute the political link to policymakers are the feminist and gender equality activist movements witnessing high mass participation from the civil society. Once such a collective movement takes birth, they have a capability to overthrow an entire government. Under such circumstances, it is important to analyse the role played by activists in ensuring that gender differences as perceived by the group whose demands they are advocating for, are translated into policy decisions.

This paper thus seeks to answer two questions, First, 'Why are gender mainstreaming policies not a success in international organizations?' and secondly, 'To what extent has feminist movements contributed to gender mainstreaming policies in United Nations?'

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Equality, International Organizations, Feminist Activism, United Nations

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, Cynthia Enloe, one of the leading feminist scholars in International Relations, in her book, 'Bananas, Beaches and Bases' asked a very important question, 'Where are the Women?'. She pointed out how women have played only a minimal role in international politics and how their voices and opinion could change the way international politics is shaped. Almost 30 years have passed and the question of women playing a greater role in international politics still is debated. Although monumental reforms have been introduced to promote gender equality and including women into the decision-making process, yet, the results haven't shown much progress.

Recognizing the fact that policy decisions have differentiated outcomes on men and women is the first step to promoting a gender equal environment which, in turn catalyses sustainable economic development. Gender mainstreaming, as a concept, emerges from this recognition – policies have gender differentiated outcomes and thus, gender differences shape policy processes. This concept was established as a global strategy to achieve gender equality in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action ratified by all United Nations member states, according to which nation-states are expected and international organizations are mandated to carry out gender mainstreaming. (United Nations 1995)

On 18th July, 1997, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), adopted the draft which concluded, in agreement with all nations, that in order to foster the effective empowerment and advancement of women, it was essential to design, implement and monitor gender sensitive policies and programmes, and thus there was a need to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. According to the definition given by ECOSOC,

'Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.' (The Economic and Social Council 1997)

In this regard, gender mainstreaming becomes a very different policy tool than any of the anti-discrimination laws and policies in practice. On one hand, the latter deals with those policies that **restrict all kinds of institutional barriers** to achieving gender equality, such as Equal Pay policies, or laws against Sexual Harassment at work. On the other hand, the former emphasizes on those policies and innovations that, by understanding gender differences, helps is **transforming the patriarchal social system** which recognizes masculine as the norm. (True, Mainstreaming Gender in Global Public Policy 2003)

At this point, it is also important to understand how gender mainstreaming in institutional practices is merely a set of policies which takes into consideration the differences found between men and women, and how well such differences can be implemented into the devising of policies so that no woman or, in fact, man is denied any opportunities and responsibilities because of their gender. However, gender balance is very different in the sense that it points towards the actual number of men and women who hold certain positions in an institution, especially senior positions, and ensuring that this number implies balance in the decision-making body.

Over the past decade the understanding of, and commitment to, gender mainstreaming has increased significantly within the United Nations. Across the United Nations system policies on gender equality and strategies for implementing gender mainstreaming have been developed; research on gender perspectives in different areas and the sex-disaggregation of data has increased; considerable knowledge of the gender perspectives in different areas of work of the United Nations has been documented; and important institutional measures have been adopted to increase the awareness, knowledge, and capacity of professional staff for

implementing gender mainstreaming, including training programmes and gender focal point systems. (Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview 2002)

The purpose of this paper is to analyse – to what extent feminist activism at the ground level has played a role in mainstreaming gender in policymaking, with a special attention given to policymaking in United Nations and its sister agencies. With the advent of global activist movements through social media such as the Me Too movement, greater attention needs to be paid to the demands of such movements, so that the perspectives of both men and women gets mainstreamed into the policies appropriately.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender mainstreaming as a concept was first introduced in the 1980s, when feminist scholars challenged the existing Women in Development (WID) approach to inclusion of women by arguing that it focused more on what development could get from women, rather than incorporating women perspectives into the development policies. Thus, during this time it was found that policy goals with women perspectives would be more effective only when it is combined with an overarching goal of mainstream development concerns. (Razavi and Miller 1995)

This moved on to a larger Gender and Development Framework that analysed the impact of gender relations on policies, questioned the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women, and challenged the existing gender roles. (Reeves and Baden 2000). It was in this phase that **the role of women's rights scholars and activists, as well as women's and feminist movements accentuated, and was crucial for addressing the root cause of gender inequality and discrimination** which was the power given to men and the system of patriarchy which catalyses this inequality.

However, the Gender and Development paradigm threatened to replace the programmes that were directed to women's needs.

In 1995, this was taken a step further with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which launched gender mainstreaming on to the global stage, by stating, 'governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men, respectively.' (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995)

Since then, a number of approaches and strategies have been suggested and implemented by international organizations and governments all around the world. They can be broadly categorized into 'Agenda Setting' or 'Integrationist'. Integrationist approaches are those that introduce a gender perspective without challenging the existing policy paradigm, instead 'selling' gender mainstreaming as a way of more effectively achieving existing policy goals. On the other hand, an agenda-setting approach will involve greater attention to the strategic positioning of gender concerns in a period of change. Women will have to play an important role facilitated by a change in the status quo, making current decision-making structures more inclusive. (Jahan and Mumtaz 1996)

Current literature has taken broadly three types of discussion on gender mainstreaming: (True and Parisi, Gender Mainstreaming Strategies in International Organizations 2013)

1. Theoretical and definitional debates regarding the meanings of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming such as in Reeves & Baden (2000). Some of them have a discursive perspective that is concerned with the forms of power in different policy processes. This could be seen in a number of works published by Bacchi (2005), Walby (2005), etc. (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2010)

2. In-depth caste studies of particular NGOs, regional governance structures, and intergovernmental organizations which focuses on the varied translation of global mainstreaming norms in local, national or regional policymaking settings and the interaction between feminist movements and gender mainstreaming organizations.

3. Analysis on what political factors and economic incentives that need to be put in place for organizations/governments to pursue gender mainstreaming strategies. This also deals with studying organizations adopting gender mainstreaming strategies on how successful it was in promoting gender equality. (Campo 2012)

One of the major participants who constitute the political link to policymakers are the feminist and gender equality activist movements witnessing high mass participation from the civil society. Once such a collective movement takes birth, they have a capability to overthrow an entire government. Under such circumstances, it is important to analyse the role played by activists in ensuring that gender differences as perceived by the group whose demands they are advocating for, are translated into policy decisions. Women's movements have driven global and national action on gender equality. In countries and localities, activists often have the greatest understanding of the deficiencies that women and girls face, and essential knowledge of how to advance their rights, and play an important role in transforming them in the political arena.

'In Albania, UN Women helped mobilize grassroots women and civil society organizations to develop community-based scorecards. Nearly 2,000 people across seven regions—90 per cent of whom were women—participated in rating how well their communities are doing in involving women in public decision-making, stopping gender-based violence, advancing women's economic well-being and providing social services. The scores were typically low, averaging between one and two on a scale of five, indicating just how little has been done to stop pervasive gender discrimination.'

This paper thus seeks to answer two questions, First, 'Why are gender mainstreaming policies not a success in international organizations?' and secondly, 'To what extent has feminist movements contributed to gender mainstreaming policies in United Nations?'

Of course, such a question cannot be answered in one sentence or even through one example; there are considerable amount of complex processes and norms which needs to be analysed, before we can even begin to answer.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AS A POLICY TOOL

All the scholarly analysis undertaken in the policy world, with respect to gender mainstreaming, point towards the fact that such a technique usually dominates the positivist side of research. In the recent decades, the area of policy studies has been transformed by the emergence and dominance of 'evidence-based policy research' making the whole domain more coherent and realistic. This mainly deals with the kind of research which sees the world as it is, and not how it should. As far as gender mainstreaming is concerned, policy research shows that including gendered perspectives in policymaking produces rational and objective solutions to problems.

Feminist political theory scholar, Carol Bachhi, in her books *Women, Policy and Politics* and *Analysing Policy,* argues that while analysing policy, it is important to see how the problem (here, gender differences) is represented in policy practice. This can help in providing solutions to future problems and issues. When we mainstream gender differences and gender perspectives into policymaking, it drives away the aspect of intentionality from a policy – that is, what the policymaker intends to do. While a policy maker may 'believe' in a certain approach or course of action, these 'beliefs' will not necessarily lodge within the problem representation. (Bachhi 1999) Instead, when feminist scholars and activists bring the necessary gendered issues to the decision-making process, they necessarily result in an objective solution.

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy to promote gender equality has been adopted by national governments and international institutions all around the world after the Beijing Conference. Feminist scholar, Jacqui True has outlined three broad categories of actors who play significant roles in the rapid diffusion of such a strategy of gender mainstreaming (True 2003):

1. The most important factor which has contributed to spread of gender-sensitive policy decisions comes from the emergence of *multitude of feminist scholars and writers*. Through their work, **they have introduced conceptual frameworks and new language to the policy discussions which is radically different from the ones which marginalized gendered differences.**

     When the language with regard to women's rights and gender equality gets a social context, they can become drivers of social context. A very good example of this was seen when CEDAW was localized in a gang-rape case in India. in 1992, women's NGOs were able to have a local group of social workers arrested for gang-raping a woman colleague, despite the lack of a local sexual assault law. Since there was no set precedent in the national legal mechanism, they used the language of CEDAW, which India had ratified, to bring justice in this case.

     Apart from the feminist scholarship, international organizations such as United Nations have introduced mechanisms which is sensitive to gender issues. Governments report to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a United Nations body made up of judges from member states, that meets twice a year (in January and June) in New York to review member states' compliance with the CEDAW treaty. This reporting process both promotes the diffusion of the language of women's rights and encourages transnational collaboration among different actors, including governments, women's NGOs, activists, the United Nations and other global governance institutions. Such collaborations, in turn, further spurs the gender mainstreaming process in law and policy.

2. A second type relates to the increasing number of *'gender policy entrepreneurs'* who are, basically, the feminist oriented and gender-sensitive policy experts who occupy high (and even, low) positions in institutions of governance in both national and international political systems. They have acted as **internal advocates of change in terms of gender sensitive issues, who have been able to bring about real change** not only by providing their expert opinion, but by also persuading other agencies within the institution of the merits of gendered policymaking. These policymakers usually with support from outside actors such as feminist activists, scholars and even, other organizations who promote gender equality and bring forth gender sensitive issues.

     Even though they can be the policymakers themselves in certain situations, yet they usually play the role of a mediator between the civil society groups, NGOs and activists on the ground who assimilate the gender issues, and then bring them to the decision-making process with their own analysis. Their role is more often than not, in close association with the third type of actor, and which is one of the main focuses of this paper: feminist activists.

3. Finally, the most important category of actor is the *civil society groups*, which includes feminist activists, women's NGOs – both local and transnational – women's organizations, etc. **who work with the group of people who are affected by the policy decisions, and compile them to outline a set of demands and then through their movements, pressure the policymakers to bring about the change.** The wide range of scholarship on, not just gender mainstreaming but also on all types of gender issues, outline the importance of activist movements in bringing about change in the political system. Scholars point out that public sphere and civil society is becoming increasingly feminized, challenging the male dominated norm, through the contributions of women's activism. (Moghadam and Sadiqi 2006)

Others have argued that it is the 'transnational networking of women's organizations' which provided the political momentum and societal pressure for the establishment of gender mainstreaming institutions. (True and Mintrom, Transnational Networks and Policy Diffusion: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming 2001)

Although women have been organizing at the global level for more than 150 years, the United Nations International Women's Decade (1975–85) marked a new era in women's transnational activism. Thousands of women participated in the four UN women's conferences in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) – the largest United Nations world conference ever held.

Women's movements have been pioneers in extending the principles of the networked society to facilitate social change. Networking has brought women together from the grassroots to the national and global levels to share resources and information often unavailable to state bureaucracies, and to exchange 'best practice' strategies for mobilizing societies and pressuring governments.

There has been a widespread debate related to the extent to which gender mainstreaming has contributed to promoting gender equality. The literature shows three types of debate surfacing as far as mainstreaming gender in policies is concerned:

1. There are several critics who argue that mainstreaming gender into policies will, in fact, shift the attention from women's issues and might even lead to a reduction in policies and programmes specifically targeted at women.
2. Based on the experience of 20 years of using gender mainstreaming as a policy tool, there are several other critics who see a failure in implementation in terms of operations. While they agree that mainstreaming has shown considerable success in the internal organizational dimensions such as staffing and policies, these critics believe that there should be mainstreaming in entrepreneurial and strategic dimensions. (Mehra and Gupta 2006)
3. A third type of debate emerges from the political nature of the term 'gender' which was opposed by critics claiming that by using this term, 'feminist policy ambitions are sacrificed to the imperative of ease of institutionalization.' (Goetz and Baden 1997)

     However, the advocates of such a policy tool have accepted the fact that although gender mainstreaming does not overthrow the existing system – and in fact tolerates some aspects of existing framework such as consumerism and global capitalism – yet, it challenges certain norms and institutions at the right time. Thus, it can be considered a social movement for a greater change. (Ackerly 2001).

There are scholars who have accepted the shortcomings of mainstreaming gender in the policy analysis, however, they do not give up hope. In their work, they have given alternatives to how these shortcomings could be improved, such as how gender mainstreaming can better attend to narrowing the gender pay gap, enhancing community participation, addressing gendered family violence in a way that is sensitive to issues of race and culture, and contribute to an undermining of institutional racism through theoretical and methodological development. (Bacchi and Eveline 2010)

This discussion would be rendered incomplete without discussing the problems faced by gender mainstreaming as a policy tool. True has outlined two types of restraining factors which has hindered the growth of gender mainstreaming activities in the recent years.

1. <u>Theory – Practice Gap:</u> Based on the experience of the past 20 years, it is very clear that one of the major categories of shortcomings noticed is that there is a huge gap between what the feminist prescribes and what the institutional practice actually entails. While mainstreaming gender sensitivity into institutional practice, policymakers face other types of obstacles. Gendered differences occur not just at the policy outcome level, but also at the operations level through wrong assumptions about gender, ignoring the significance of ethnicity, class and professional capabilities and further victimizing them.

    For instance, in the post-civil war reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, assumptions of international humanitarian organizations about 'Bosnian women' as war-victims represents a missed opportunity by bypassing and underutilizing human resources which could be found in no other conflict affected countries. Rather than starting from the perspective that different groups of women may have different needs and a range of human capabilities, international donors primarily funded psychological counselling services and 'traditional female' training programmes over than income-generating projects or projects directed towards women's economic and political empowerment. The pool of skilled and educated Bosnian women should have represented an opportunity to incorporate gender by strategically drawing women into emergency and relief interventions as partners rather than as mere service providers and beneficiaries. (Walsh 1998)

    Another discrepancy in terms of theory and practice comes from new language created by feminist scholars by the use of word 'gender' in the policy world. There are several feminists who believe that by using the term 'gender', policies which are directed towards upliftment and empowerment of women gets marginalized. This comes as a hindrance to the policymakers who have to balance the demands of all sections of feminist scholars and groups.

2. <u>Deviation from neoliberal framework:</u> The feminist theoretical concepts and values have faced deep resistance from those countries and organizations with broader market ideological framework with strict gender-neutral, neoliberal, rational economic policy in place. Countries face a trade-off between directing their resources to funding gender mainstreamed policies and projects which will bring women to the global economy, and funding for basic infrastructure necessary for meeting human needs and achieving human development, such as clean water or free, quality education. All those countries which follows a strict neo-liberal framework will choose latter, while those countries committed to promotion of gender equality will choose the former.

    As far as gender mainstreaming United Nations is concerned, a number of persistent constraints remain to be addressed, including conceptual confusion, inadequate understanding of the linkages between gender perspectives and different agencies of the United Nations, and finally, gaps in capacity to address gender perspectives once identified. Strategies have been put in place to address these constraints, including fact sheets on the concepts underlying gender mainstreaming, briefing notes on the linkages between gender and different sectors and competence development programmes. The lack of understanding of *how* gender perspectives can be identified and addressed remains one of the most serious constraints.

FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND GENDER MAINSTREAMED POLICYMAKING
A Brief Analysis on UN and UN led projects

Given their influence, feminists contend that the institutional norms of global governance organizations need to reflect greater gender sensitivity and gender equality, before they become a part of the problem rather than the solution to global injustice. Some global governance organizations have been more receptive to feminist interventions than others. Some scholars argue that due to their more compatible worldviews, women's networks have had *greater success in working with United Nations social agencies* than with multilateral economic institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. There are others who contend that relatively centralized international organizations such as the World Bank have actually been more receptive to gender issues than decentralized organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme, where policy is influenced to a greater extent by aid-recipient governments.

Before we delve deeper into analysis, it is important to understand what does feminist activism involve? Feminist activism basically involves all those movements which fight for equal rights for women in terms of reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, etc. It is very difficult to define what comes under a movement. On the one hand there are clearly identifiable women's movements which, have or had a leadership, a membership, a broader following, and a political programme, like the women's suffrage movements. On the other hand, there are more use forms of political activity which can also qualify as a movement, or distinct from other forms of solidarity such as those based on networks, clubs or groups. The definitional boundaries are complicated by the fact that networks or clubs sometimes develop into or form part of social movements. (Molyneux 1998)

The diffusion of gender mainstreaming strategies across the world has been made possible by the networking of feminist activist movements with each other as well as with organizations pertaining to gender issues. As argued earlier, such movements have played a major role in aggregation of demands and issues in response to gender neutral policy outcomes and providing a framework to the gender policy entrepreneurs who, in turn, help in translating these demands into policies.

- An important example of feminist activists working along with policymakers to bring about social change would be that of World Bank president James Wolfensohn, who after attending the Beijing Conference in 1995 – which was, in fact, the first time for a World Bank President to do so – networked with the multitude of civil society groups and women's movements and accepted petitions from them for various kinds gender-oriented reforms at the Bank. He responded by setting up the External Gender Consultative Group, composed of fourteen women from women's movements all around the world. (O'Brien, et al. 2000)

- Another example which portrays the significance of women's movements in mobilising gendered differences into policymaking is outlined in a ground-breaking study conducted by Lauren Holden and Mala Htun in which it was found that the presence of a strong autonomous women's movement was the most important and consistent factor mobilising progressive change and influencing and achieving a broad range of government responses to violence against women. The presence of such a movement made more of a difference than the number of women legislators, left-wing parties, or national wealth. Their study also showed that the presence of local feminist movements reinforced the importance of domestic and international treaties regarding gender equality, and the absence of it actually had a negative impact – which means, where a strong, independent feminist movement was absent, inequalities were exacerbated, where this absence stalled the transformative change the policies intended. (Weldon and Htun 2013)

One important reason why local and national feminist movements work is because when these activists come together, *as women who had been victims to gender inequality, and gendered differences,* and *for women who are unwilling or hesitant to talk about their incidents,* then they are able to understand and prioritise issues that 'gender-specific', and can, thus, concentrate on those experiences, needs and contributions which are separate from the broader issues that are not specifically gender oriented.

Since 1997, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women has been charged with supporting and overseeing the implementation of the policy mandates. *The mandate of the Special Adviser on gender mainstreaming covers the whole United Nations system, and the role of UN Women in this respect is, of necessity, largely a supportive and advisory one.*

In an occasional paper written by Alexandra Pittman in 2014 which sought to measure the changes brought about by UNDP's gender mainstreaming policies of the years 2008-13, several interesting ideas have come to the forefront. After its poor rating in the 2006 gender mainstreaming evaluation, it adopted several strategies to address the key gaps its policies, of which the most important was the Gender Equality Strategy of 2008-13. It outlined 8-pointer plan which draws strategic direction from international aid effectiveness agreements. It also focused on strengthening senior management in leadership and advocacy around gender equality. The paper also outlines that activist movements across the globe has actually played an important role in bringing out the shortcomings in the agency's gender mainstreaming policies. One of the questions that needs to be addressed while evaluating the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies is related to the extent to which UNDP been an ally in the support of progressive movements and networks of change in the field of gender, such as feminist and women's rights movements and organizations?

However, the paper has given out a very abstract conclusion as to whether these activist movements have actually helped in contributing to the gender mainstreaming policies, or whether UNDP has, in fact, achieved measurable changes in gender inequality through its gender mainstreaming policies. (Pittman 2014)

Analysis

So, the question remains, 'Why are gender mainstreaming policies not a success in international organizations, and in this case, the United Nations?'

All agencies of United Nations have, since 1997, adopted gender mainstreaming policies and have considered gendered dimensions of policies very seriously into their decision-making. Yet, they fail to deliver results; all research scholars and analysts who have studied the effects and consequences of such policies have come at a collective conclusion that things have not improved in the United Nations since 1997. The issues pointed out by these scholars were mainly in the implementation of these policies, and how despite all the policies in place, there is a lack of coordination which is important for the proper operation of such policies. Unlike the sovereign states, international organizations such the United Nations does not have an executive body which oversees the implementation of its policies. The only way how UN can enforce its policies is through the consent and support from its member states. Since UN is employing contracted officers from the member states, it is only logical that these member states should directly involve themselves by ensuring that their own domestic institutions welcome gender mainstreaming. Thus, the execution part of their policies is mainly the responsibility of the member states, who should take an initiative to prepare an action plan and commit to implementing it in their states.

In a research conducted by Tibor Kozma, he outlined a pattern which showed that some countries have made no progress at all in gender mainstreaming policies, and in some cases, while law enforcement strategies may exist but no gender mainstreaming is simply ignored. On the other hand, there are countries which have recognized gender mainstreaming as an important tool and have outlined strategies and programs which incorporates gender mainstreaming in their policies. The former countries are mainly the developing countries of the world, and the latter are the developed countries such as Spain and Sweden, and other Western European countries. (Kozma 2012)

Coming to the second part of the analysis, 'To what extent has feminist movements contributed to gender mainstreaming policies in United Nations?

Feminist activism has increased a lot in this social media era. One of the most impactful forms of activism which has surfaced in the past decade is the Hashtag activism, which uses social media as a tool to promote women's rights to the forefront of political agendas, bringing attention to issues often under-reported by mainstream media. Activists have always been the bridge between the policymakers and the civil society who are the consumers of these policies. Although social media was not a popular tool of voicing their experiences when gender mainstreaming became a norm in the United Nations back in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, over the last few years, men and women have revolutionized the use of social media by sharing their experiences and inputs through Twitter, Facebook, etc.

One of the consequences of this social media boom has been the #MeToo movement which surfaced over the last few months bringing out the sexual harassment experiences of both men and women which has led to the conviction of their predators at phenomenal speed all over the world.

However, the scholars and activists have been unanimous in admitting that the extent to which physical protests and women's movements, as well as online engagement has translated into policy change or practical action remains unclear, especially in the UN. Although, there are reports and documents pointing towards the use of feminist activism as a partner to UN agencies, especially UN women, the results of the same has been very vague. [1]

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[1] http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/8/news-event-south-africa-supporting-social-movements

CONCLUSION

Gender Mainstreaming was supposed to be one of the more transformative of the policies introduced by the United Nations, because policies which are gender-mainstreamed has obligated governments, as well as businesses and other institutions, to systematically introduce a gender-oriented perspective for every political and economic decision. It has compelled them to consider basic differences that the same policy has on men and women, thus destructing the concept of gender-neutrality in policymaking. Every sector and industry in the economy, whether tax or other fiscal policies, foreign affairs or security policy, labour market or healthcare policy, needs to mainstream gendered perspectives into it in order to contribute to doing away with the gender inequality.

The institutionalisation of women and gender policies was able to provide a impetus for political initiatives that have improved the legal framework for women's equality in many countries around the world. However, 21 years on, we still have long battle ahead of us. Discrimination, disadvantages and violence are still defining factors for the living situations of millions of women in all regions around the globe. There are hardly any international documents, nor international (women's) conferences that do not confirm that the structural inequality between the genders has more likely been increased, rather than decreased in many societies. However, men are also affected more than ever by unemployment, violence and marginalisation.

There are several reasons which comes out from the research: first, there is a lack of clarity in the understanding of concept and goals which becomes one of the major hurdles of proper implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy. It is important to fully understand that gender is a concept, gender equality is the goal, and gender mainstreaming is a strategy.

Secondly, as discussed, member countries have to take up the responsibility of properly implement the policies in their own domestic policies, so as to fully reflect in international organizations. This can be ensured by linking gender mainstreaming strategies to development policies of particular countries. Thus, domestic development policies and strategies can be merged with gender mainstreaming policies to ensure proper execution in countries.

Thirdly, and finally, it's not just institutions alone, which can make gender mainstreaming easier, and gender equality, a reality. Although, we do need well-functioning institutions that implement such transformative policies, we also need a society-wide movement from the grassroots level, we need political pressure from the society at large, so that these institutions transform themselves. Whether in South Africa, Kenya, in Mexico or Brazil, women's political organisations have been able to take advantage of political upheavals in their countries during particular transition phases and successfully introduce the principles of gender mainstreaming as found in the Beijing Platform for Action.

So, this is the answer for advocates of gender mainstreaming today – the need to become fully aware of what gender mainstreaming is and how big its impact can be, if fully implemented. This can be only ensured if the member countries themselves take the initiatives, by fully involving themselves and understanding that, ultimately, they are the stakeholders in this entire process. In order to make it worthwhile for the government to implement gender mainstreaming as a strategy in their domestic policies, they need the assurance from the society in the form of activist movements and social gatherings which demand and shout for their needs and their rights.

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