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Gender mainstreaming as a pathway to empowerment: the case of Namibia

This paper draws on research on gender responsive natural resource management in the context of agricultural extension in Namibia to interrogate gender mainstreaming (GM) as a pathway towards empowerment. It addresses several of the colloquium's key issues, namely institutional capacity building for empowerment and making policy responses more effective.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Beijing Platform of Action (1995) was hailed a significant victory for feminists globally, signalling universal recognition of the importance of bringing gender centre stage within the development agenda. The term 'gender mainstreaming' was introduced as the key strategy for achieving gender equality resulting in a proliferation of governments, national and international bilateral organisations and NGOs championing it as an essential development objective (World Bank, 2003; UN, 2002; Goetz, 1997). Ten years later, a review[84] of progress on the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action reported an ambivalent record and a general atmosphere of discontent and disillusionment (Molyneux & Razavi, 2005a: 983; Molyneux & Razavi, 2005b; Moser & Moser, 2005; Molyneux, 2004). In spite of progress for women on a number of development indicators, there has been an overall persistence and sometimes aggravation of gendered inequalities (Molyneux & Razavi, 2005ab). This has put the success of gender mainstreaming under question causing many to argue that gender mainstreaming is in crisis and had failed to shift policy "in favour of women's empowerment" (Eyben, 2010:54). With the recent establishment the UN-Women gender entity and the start of Beijing Plus Fifteen, gender equality and women's empowerment have re-emerged as serious policy goals. This has put gender mainstreaming back under the spotlight and raised important questions about the overall value of policy change leading towards womens' empowerment. In particular, the tensions between the transformative and instrumentalist (integrationist) agenda of GM have been highlighted as a key area of concern.

This paper argues there is a need to move beyond the debate of whether GM should be transformative or instrumentalist/integrationist that implicitly assumes that the former is 'good' and the latter is 'bad'. Rather, the reality is far more complex and we need to be open to the potential contradictions; particularly when progress is being achieved through an instrumentalist approach. In response, I argue that there is a need to focus on revisiting existing examples of gender mainstreaming implementation in order

84 Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World, UNRISD, 2005

to identify practically what it means for women's empowerment. Moser and Moser (2005) note that there has been a lack of research on understanding the outcomes and impact of implementation of gender mainstreaming on the ground. As a result, there is a need to dismantle the various processes of change and understand these in context (Subrahmanian, 2004). This paper explores these issues in the context of gender mainstreaming in Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD) in Namibia. It argues that more attention should be given to the implementation of gender mainstreaming with special attention towards the roles that institutions and organisations (i.e. their structures, practices, norms and cultures) have in enforcing this process of social change). A key conclusion of the research was that policy makers should focus more on how development intervention is internalised at the development interface to allow more local and relevant strategies against vulnerability to evolve that are more inclusive to all members of communities.

The paper begins with a brief overview of the key debates on gender mainstreaming more generally and then focuses on gender mainstreaming within Namibia. The discussion then turns to a detailed exploration of the difficulties of translating policy into practice through the case study of the MAWRD with a focus on the Farming Systems and Research and Extension (FSRE) approach, gender training and monitoring mechanisms in place. It concludes with a discussion of the implications of the latter for gender mainstreaming and details some initial policy recommendations specific to Namibia and gender mainstreaming more generally.

2. Gender mainstreaming at an impasse: what is the debate?

Gender mainstreaming is used to describe both the process of institutionalising gender equality within the development context (Goetz, 1997) and the strategy of assessing the effects of policies on women and men through gender planning (Saunders, 2002; Bell et al, 2002; UNDP, 2000, 2003; Byrne et al, 1996; UN, 1997). Under the influence of Gender and Development (GAD), gender mainstreaming is interpreted as seeking to produce "transformatory processes and practices that will concern, engage and benefit women and men equally by systematically integrating explicit attention to issues of sex and gender into all aspects of an organisation's work" (Woodford-Berger, 2004:66). This redirected attention away from increasing women's participation towards looking for ways to transform the development agenda itself.

There is a general consensus that gender equality concerns can be mainstreamed in two interdependent ways: integrationist and transformative or agenda setting (Jahan, 1995; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Kanji, 2003). An 'integrationist' approach focuses on the supply side (or technical side) of GM by ensuring that "gender equality concerns are integrated in the analysis of problems faced by the particular sector" which is then used to inform policy and practice using targets that are measured using a range of sophisticated monitoring and evaluation tools, frameworks and check-

lists (Mukhopadhyay, 2004: 96). The latter stem from the rigorous academic and theoretical background of GAD advocates who intended to strengthen technical[85] capacity to enforce the incorporation of gender equality concerns into all aspects of development policy and practice (Mukhopadhyay, 2004).

In contrast, the 'transformative' approach focuses on changing the development agenda itself by creating the demand for change with the introduction of women's concerns in relation to their position[86]. This involves a deeper understanding of the context in which this change is to be enforced such as state-society relationships, political society characteristics and the influence of international development and financial institutions on policy making and practice (Mukhopadhyay, 2004). This moves GM beyond a technical exercise to include a political process whereby agendas, institutions and organisations are changed; analysis shifts towards relations of power and inequality rather than gender roles; and intervention is broadened beyond projects to include programmes, partnerships, policy processes and agencies themselves (Kanji, 2003).

To date, most attempts to mainstream gender have focused on using an integrationist approach as it has proved to be more readily acceptable by development institutions because advocates have stressed the instrumental argument that gender mainstreaming can further other official development priorities (Mukhopadhyay, 2004). As a result it is sometimes also called the 'instrumentalist' argument for gender mainstreaming. Enforcing a 'transformative' approach has proved much more difficult because it challenges the very foundations of the institutions and organisations delegated with this responsibility. In spite of the widespread recognition of the importance of incorporating gender equity concerns, the task of translating the inherently political nature of GM (i.e. the project of social transformation) into practice has not been easy and has proved to be the main source of discontent[87] for feminists and gender and development advocates (Molyneux & Razavi, 2005ab; Moser & Moser, 2005, Cornwall et al, 2004).

A key criticism is that the 'political project' (i.e. the transformative dimension) of gender mainstreaming has been diluted because of the manner in which it has been approached (Cornwall et al, 2004; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Standing, 2004; Molyneux, 2004). Some state that GM has been reduced to a 'technical fix' through the proliferation of tools, approaches and frameworks and the 'professionalisation of gender and development'[88] which has simplified the complexity of gender and loosened its links to feminism

85 The technical often refers to the processes of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects. It further refers to how to get things done in a specific timeframe and with set objectives. It relies on models, frameworks and tools for getting things done" (Mukhopadhyay, 2004: 102).

86 These are often referred to as strategic gender interests that are identified through women's unequal access to power relations (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1993)

87 This discontent has been voiced in the recent review of the Beijing Platform of Action and Beijing Declaration at an intergovernmental meeting (Beijing Plus Ten) held in New York organised by the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (Molyneux & Razavi, 2005ab). The disillusion with GM is also well documented in the recent IDS Bulletin titled "Repositioning feminisms in development" (2004).

88 Used by Win (2004) to describe how new people are given responsibility of gender mainstreaming when they have not been part of feminist analysis, and therefore approach the work as technocrats, rather then engaging with the politics of the issue. It is also used to describe the growing trend of young professionals making a career in providing consultancy advice on gender and development.

(Cornwall et al, 2004, Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2004; Standing, 2004). Although the tools stem from a rigorous academic background, Mukhopadhyay (2004) argues that there are no institutional mechanisms for checking failures. Perhaps more damming is the claim that in the absence of mechanisms of accountability, GM has become a technical exercise without political outcomes (Mukhopadhyay, 2004: 1000). Others claim there is a general fatigue with gender and women's programmes, and criticisms that institutions are just paying frequent lip service to GM with little attention to what it means or how to do it (Molyneux, 2004). Some blame this on the top down nature in how it has been approached, particularly when it is driven by external donors and consultants (Subrahmanian, 2004) whilst others blame the reliance on sector bureaucracies (Standing, 2004). The result is that GM has become perceived elusive and nebulous (Woodford-Berger, 2004) lacking a clear agenda of transformative action, thus producing diverse strategies to mainstreaming based on patchy understandings of what these processes are meant to achieve (Subrahmanian, 2004). Today, the debate has shifted to a focus on whether the success of GM should be determined by its ability to work within existing paradigms and structures or to change them (Eyben, 2010). Eyben (2010:55) summaries this tension in two key questions below:

- "Is it possible to secure the desired policy action by 'infusing' gender into existing ways of doing and organising things-and by so doing to incrementally secure real gains for women?
- "Or will transformative policies for women's empowerment only be achieved through discursive and organisational transformation?"

Eyben (2010) notes that the key GM strategy adopted to date is instrumentalist whereby the focus has been upon offering incentives and new procedures rather than changing power relations, discourses and values. This approach, which can be considered integrationist, has caused concern amongst feminists because of the view that the political vision at the heart of GM has been co-opted and neutralised. However, my research illustrates that the situation is not so clear-cut and that important progress can be made through an integrationist approach. Often, such an approach can be an important precursor for transformative change.

3. Institutionalisation of gender within the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD)

The rise of gender equality discourse within the MAWRD cannot be understood without situating it within the broader policy environment following independence in Namibia in 1990. Post independence` Namibia made concentrated efforts to overcome gender inequalities of the past originating from an inherently pre-colonial patriarchal society that were perpetuated during the period of colonial rule by the Germans and the South

politics of the issue. It is also used to describe the growing trend of young professionals making a career in providing consultancy advice on gender and development.

Africans. Specific attention was given to overcoming inequality caused by the legacy of racism and sexism enforced during South African rule resulting in the implementation of the Namibian Constitution (Cooper, 1997; Iipinge & LeBeau, 1997; Marcus & Baden, 1992; Hubbard, 2001). Its emphasis on human rights, calls for equality of all persons and prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex (Article 10) gained it the label of "one of the most democratic in Africa and the World" (Bauer, 2001: 37) and one of the few constitutions in the world couched in gender-neutral language with an explicit prohibition of gender based discrimination (Hubbard, 2000; Cooper, 1997).

Gender equality came to the forefront of the Namibian development agenda after CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) in 1981, which was later reinforced by the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 (UN, 2002). This legally bound Namibia to "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 on women and men, respectively" (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, para 79). The latter together with the support of the State President and the ruling political party[89] resulted in the creation of a national women's machinery[90] in the form of the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) under the Office of the President in 1991 which was later transformed into the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare in 2000 (Marcus & Baden, 1992). These played a key role in enforcing the National Gender Policy (1997) and National Gender Plan of Action (1998) which culminated in the allocation of gender focal points[91] within each line Ministry with the responsibility of overseeing that all policies and programmes within their respective Ministries and governmental institutions at national, regional and local levels are gender focused. This set the scene for the implementation of numerous policies with the conviction that gender equality achieved through a process of gender mainstreaming was a prerequisite for sustainable development, as was recognised by the MAWRD.

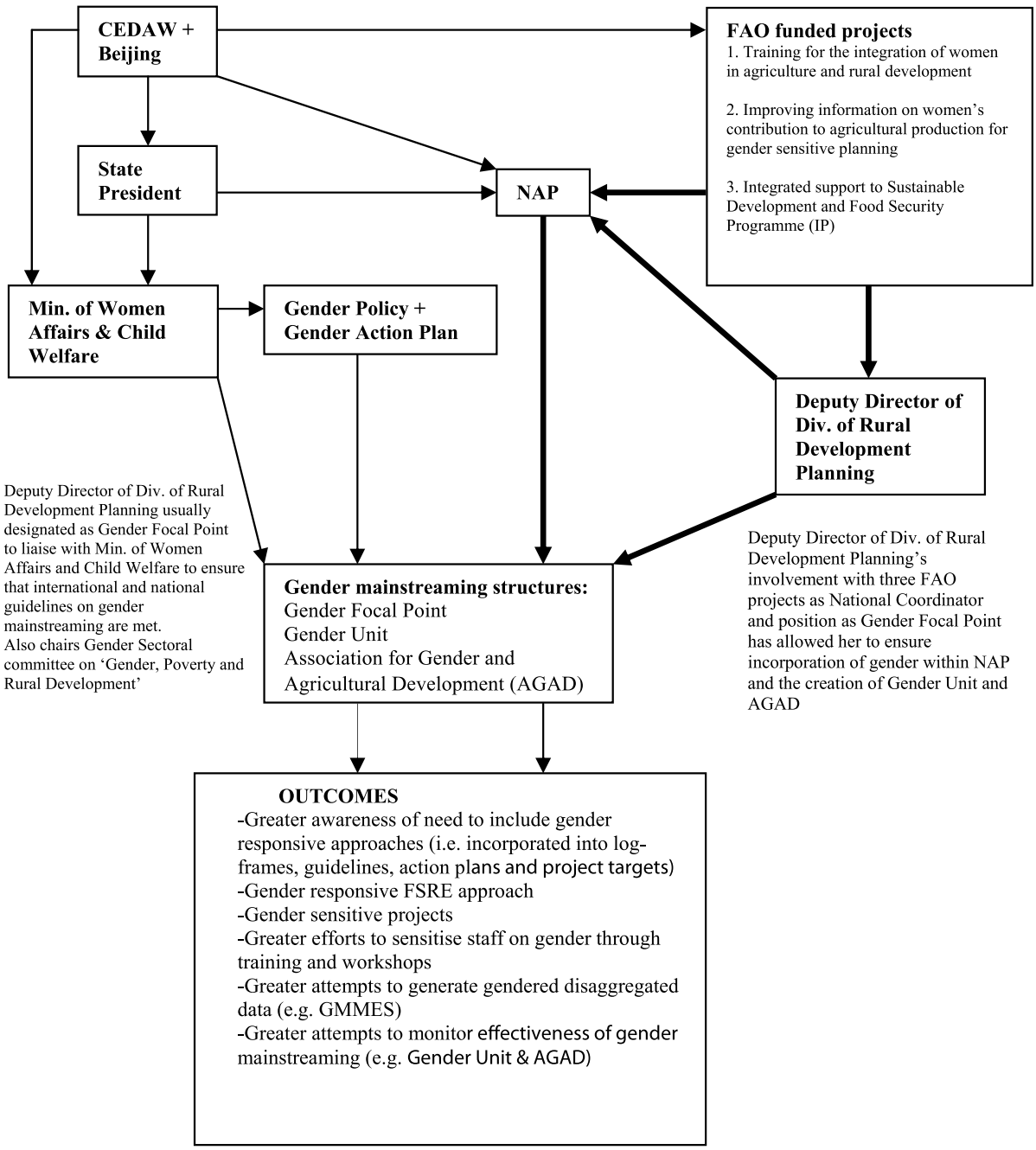
Although the prevailing policy context was important, Figure 1 demonstrates that the driving forces for the institutionalisation of gender within the MAWRD were: the National Agricultural Policy (NAP), intervention from the FAO and creation of gender mainstreaming structures mediated by key individuals.

89 SWAPO: South West African People's Organisation

90 These are institutions allocated with the responsibility for supporting the mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas (UN, 1995)

91 Gender focal points are allocated for each Ministry to oversee that all policies and programmes developed in the Ministries and other governmental institutions and bodies at national, regional and local levels are gender focused (National Gender Policy, 1997)

Figure 1: Institutionalisation of gender within Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development



Source: Newton (2006)

This overall context resulted in extensive efforts to move towards gender responsive agricultural extension through a Farming System and Research Extension (FSRE) approach promoting participation of all farmers within the communal lands of Namibia in which the majority of the rural population, who are female and dependent on agriculture, reside.

The NAP (1995) was considered a 'unique' document at its time of publication because of its focus on the "plight of the poor and vulnerable in both the communal and commercial set-up, obliging key stakeholders to adopt gender sensitive approaches" (Awases, 1997: 88). Although it was formulated with the overall aim of increasing agricultural productivity, real farm incomes and national and household food security, it gave specific emphasis to recognising women as "farmers in their own right" and the need to reorientate agricultural extension to "take gender issues fully into account" to develop "gender-specific strategies for increased household food security (NAP, 1995: iii).This represented explicit recognition of the necessity of addressing the needs of the majority of the Namibian rural population, who are female and dependent on agriculture. While it was embedded within WID terminology that linked sustainable development to the integration of women its potential implications for women were significant considering the NAP was the "guiding document" for the whole Ministry.

At the national level, the NAP together with support from the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) resulted in numerous programmes to train agricultural extension staff at multiple levels in the basics of gender responsive extension[92]. This was supported by the creation of gender mainstreaming structures (Gender Unit and Association for Gender in Agricultural Development) at the national headquarters to facilitate gender mainstreaming throughout the MAWRD. The latter was heavily influenced by the Deputy Director of the Division of Rural Development Planning who was the designated 'Gender Focal Point' for the MAWRD and the coordinator for the FAO projects. She had a pivotal role in the incorporation of gender concerns within the NAP and additional gender mainstreaming structures within the MAWRD. Often the agency of key individuals within these bureaucratic structures is ignored. Yet, their manoeuvring of organisational structures highlight how important transformative goals can be achieved through more subversive means (Eyben, 2010).

4. Translating gender mainstreaming policy into practice

In spite of the institutionalisation of gender within agricultural policy exemplified through the creation of specific structures and programmes, the translation of its goals into practice has been hampered by structural and conceptual issues. The research revealed the following as the most problematic areas of implementation: incorporation within the FSRE approach, gender training and the monitoring mechanisms in place. These will now be discussed in turn and are summarised in Figure 1 in the Appendix.

4.1. Internalisation of gender responsive agricultural extension at the local level.

The transition towards a more gender responsive agricultural extension signalled the adoption of a Farming System and Research Extension (FSRE)[93]

92 "Training for the integration of women in agriculture and rural development" funded by the FAO and "Improving information on women's contribution to agricultural production for gender sensitive planning" funded by the Norwegian government.

approach within Namibia. This advocated that agricultural research should be carried out by extension workers with farmers (i.e. as a learning process), as opposed to limited interaction with farmers and on-station based research, to develop new technologies that were directly in line with the needs of farmers identified by themselves (Vigne & Oates, 1992; Cornwall et al, 1994). At the time of the research, the FSRE approach was implemented through two interdependent channels in North Central Namibia: Farming Systems and Research Extension (FSRE) Unit at divisional headquarters and Farming Systems and Extension (FSE) teams spread throughout the four regions[94] of North Central. The FSRE Unit combines the expertise of a small group of specialist researchers from Directorate of Agricultural Research and Training (DART) with the technical training of the Directorate of Extension and Engineering Services (DEES) to develop new technologies that is then disseminated through FSE teams.

FSE teams are the main form of extension that relies on a tripartite relationship between farmers, Agricultural Extension Technicians (AETS) and Farmer Extension Development (FED) groups. Over fifty AETs operate from Agricultural Rural Development Centres (ARDCs) dispersed throughout North Central and are responsible for assisting the identification of farmer's objectives and needs, disseminating technical options regarding cultivation and livestock issues and monitoring the adoption of new technologies (Midgard 3, 2000). AETs also organise exposure trips, disperse trial seeds and conduct demonstrations on new agricultural technologies such as drought tolerant seeds or new ploughing technologies. Although information and new technologies are passed through a variety of means ranging from individual visits to homesteads to open meetings with communities, the main mechanism of information transfer is intended to be through the FED groups.

FED groups consist of groups of farmers (both women and men) selected by the community to work closely with the AET through demos and trials and are responsible for transmitting information to the rest of the community through open meetings. Approximately 300 FED groups were in existence within North Central at the time of research (FSRE Task Force, 2001). Working with groups is perceived to be more participatory and an effective way of fostering community based organisations to facilitate the "delivery of extension and other supportive services, and ultimately contribute to broader empowerment objectives" (Vigne, 1997: 14). FED groups also alleviate the multiple tasks of the AETs by taking over some of the dissemination responsibilities. FED group members are intended to become key sources of agricultural information and advice for the rest of the community in order to take over the responsibilities of AETs and increase the overall efficiency of extension by reaching more farmers (i.e. increasing accessibility). Information on farmer's needs is then fed back to the FSRE

93 The FSRE approach emerged within the development arena during the 1970s with the rise of populist approaches as a more 'sustainable' and 'participatory' alternative to the 'Transfer of Technology' approach adopted during the Green Revolution (Whiteside, 1998; Scoones & Thompson, 1994). It was valued because it recognised the "diversity and complexity of the small holder farming system" including appreciation of the agro-ecological context in which agriculture takes place (Whiteside, 1998: 19).

94 Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshikoto

unit to inform the development of new agricultural technologies which will eventually be disseminated back to farmers through the FSE teams. AETs and FED groups are consequently key components of agricultural extension because they constitute the 'development interface' between agricultural policy at the national (macro) scale and people at the grassroots (micro) level. It is through these channels that a more gender responsive agricultural extension is intended to be delivered. In practice, the research revealed that this did not take place due to difficulties with understanding the concept of gender and the implementation of FSRE itself.

Key respondents involved in agricultural extension on the ground in North Central confessed they had a general understanding of the gendered division of labour and its effect on agricultural production, but lacked a 'deep understanding' of the power dynamics between men and women that ultimately influence who benefits from various agricultural interventions introduced through agricultural extension. This analysis is purportedly left to academics or foreign consultants that often leave the country with limited feedback when their projects end. Rarely, is the information used to inform future policy making and consequently hinders the appropriate conceptual understanding of what is meant by gender and how it can facilitate more responsive agricultural intervention.

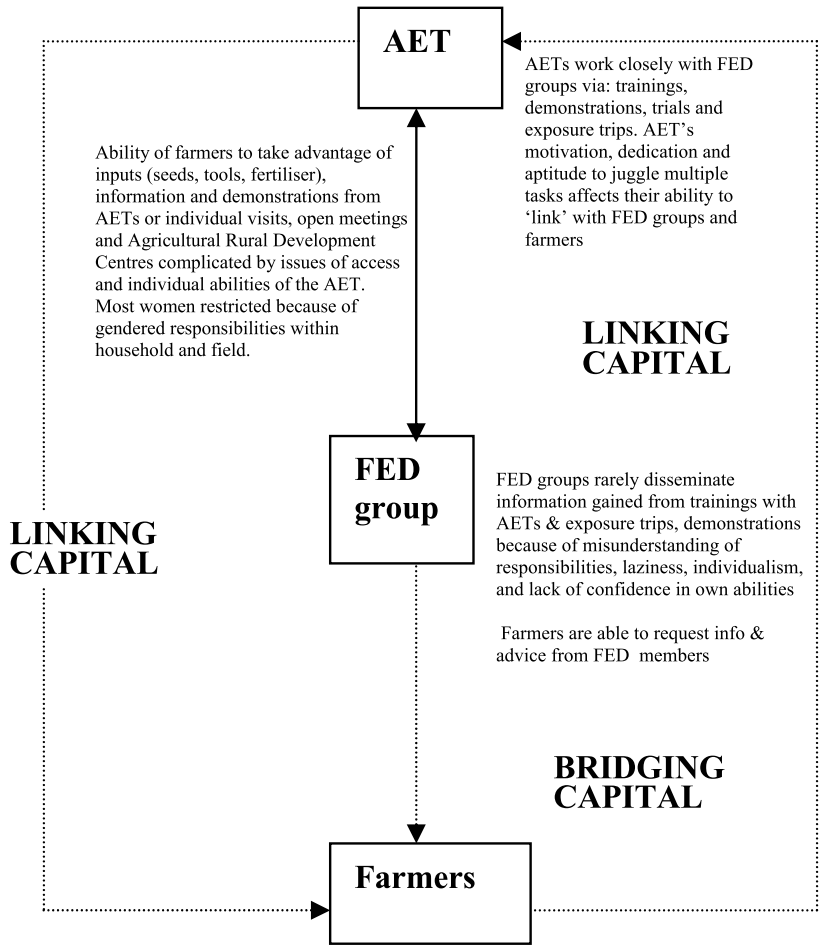
The research revealed that although the new approach to agricultural extension was meeting women's practical gender needs in their roles as food producers (i.e. providing access to improved seeds), it was not addressing strategic gender interests through a significant transformative impact that challenges women's unequal access to power and resources (Newton, 2006). To some extent, this can be attributed to problems with the internalisation of the FSRE approach at the local level (Newton, 2006). The MAWRD's interpretation of a 'participatory' FSRE approach involved AETs working closely with Farmer Extension Development (FED) groups[95] who were supposed to disseminate their knowledge to other farmers within the community. Contrary to the intended channels of agricultural extension implementation, the research revealed that this transfer of knowledge between these different actors was hampered by weak linking and bridging social capital networks[96] (Woolcock, 1998; Pelling, 2003; Pretty, 2003) which are summarised in Figure 2 overleaf.

In summary, a key constraint was the failure of AETs to recognise how gendered responsibilities in the field and household were key constraints to women's abilities to take advantage of agricultural extension services. Moreover, the FED groups were failing to disseminate information from the AETs as intended and interrupted the feedback mechanisms between AETs, farmers and the FED groups. In practice, information

95 Farmer Extension Development (FED) groups consist of groups of farmers (both women and men) selected by the community to work closely with the AET through demonstrations and trials and they are responsible for transmitting information to the rest of the community through open meetings.
96 ***Bridging social capital*** consists of the weaker and more cross-cutting relationships between people within and outside a community (i.e. between neighbours and friends in the same village or in other localities). Linking social capital refers to the hierarchical relationships between people of different status of power. Tends to be used to describe the patron-client relationship between community based organisations and NGOs or governmental bodies (Woolcock, 1998; Pelling, 2003; Pretty, 2003).

was being shared through more informal and ad hoc mechanisms such as visits to the church, local shops and homes). This finding supports Cleaver's (2001a) observation that there is a danger that imposed committees and groups can serve as 'empty shells ' as the more meaningful participation takes place outside of these spaces. This suggests that policymakers should pay more attention to how interventions are internalised and supports the argument that it is the more partial and intermittent forms of daily interactions that are arguably more effective mechanism for information exchange that could focus on gender (Cleaver, 2001).

Figure 2: Agricultural Extension in Namibia



Source: Newton (2006)

Of far greater significance is the fact that the MAWRD's adaptation of the FSRE approach as outlined earlier is not as 'participatory' and 'responsive' to the diverse needs of female and male farmers. This dilemma is not entirely new and has been explored within broader criticisms of the integration of participatory approaches within mainstream development (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). This exposes a fundamental paradox at the heart of the FSRE approach: how can it be responsive to the needs of both women and men if it does not understand these differences to start with? This highlights the

crucial importance of understanding the roles, responsibilities and mandates of the organisations and institutions involved in the implementation of gender responsive approaches. It also suggests that there is a need to collect accurate gender disaggregated data prior to intervention.

In this case, structural and organisational difficulties related to the way that the FSRE approach is implemented at the local level are largely to blame. The involvement of two directorates in the FSRE unit has created the problem of 'double line of command', whereby the Agricultural Extension Officers under DEES and Agricultural Research Officers (ARO) under DART are accountable to different directorates with different guidelines and priorities. This has been exacerbated by poor communication between the FSRE Unit and the AETs preventing valuable information gathered from regular interaction with farmers from being 'fed back' to inform future technology development. Poor collaboration between the two directorates has hindered new technology development within the FSRE unit by creating internal struggles when deciding what areas of research are performed. This has implications to what forms of technology are disseminated to farmers. It comes as no surprise, that considering these dynamics, that the implementation of gender responsive agricultural extension is problematic considering 'gender' is not a high priority of DART. This reinforces Mukhopadhyay's (2004:100) argument that it is a "near impossible task" to integrate gender equality concerns into policy agendas when it is not their mandate to commence with. This highlights the importance of understanding the context and the dynamic relationships and interactions between existing structures and organisations tasked with gender mainstreaming and how this fits with the overall mandate of the line Ministry. This is essential in order to understand how a gender responsive approach can be implemented. It also alludes to the value of an integrationist approach as an important precursor for a transformative approach that will ultimately lead to the empowerment of women.

4.2. Gender training: quick fix or transformative process?

At the time of research, gender training was the main mechanism of raising gender awareness within all aspects of the MAWRD's work. However, with the exception of a report commissioned by the Association for Gender in Agricultural Development AGAD, there has been little assessment or monitoring of its overall effectiveness[97].

A key finding was that many of the original 'master' trainers from the FAO projects were not being utilised by their supervisors to train other agricultural extension technicians within their respective regions. Because they did not have 'gender training' in their terms of reference and were not paid for any gender training they undertook, there was little incentive to commit time and energy to training workshops. Even if they wished to conduct training, they had limited time because of the responsibilities that

97 The Gender Training Impact Assessment Report' (2002) was completed after the fieldwork period and had not yet been distributed to the main stakeholders. Its preliminary findings provided valuable insights into the constraints of gender mainstreaming.

were included in their job description.

Although the AGAD report claims that there is a supportive "institutional context" for gender mainstreaming from senior management (i.e. supervisors, deputy directors etc), my research revealed the contrary in North Central. Those who had been trained to become 'gender trainers' claimed that it was "uncomfortable" or "not good" for junior staff to train senior staff on 'sensitive' issues such as gender. As a result, there have been few gender sensitisation courses organised by existing master trainers for both senior staff and AETs within North Central. When these do take place, most senior staff send their female deputies because of the perception that 'gender' is a 'women's issue'. This problem was also highlighted by the consultants involved in the FAO projects who reported that attendance to gender sensitisation workshops organised for senior level policy makers and supervisors was poor. My research also revealed poor collaboration between the Division of Training under DART and other divisions and directorates within the MAWRD was resulting in an ad hoc approach to gender training. Although supervisors and directors across the Ministry are responsible for "spearheading" gender training, a key respondent revealed that there is little incentive to do so unless the directive came from top level management, partly because it is perceived as a "woman's thing" and also because the Division itself has no specific mandate over gender training. This suggests that internal power dynamics within the Ministry and the personal attitudes of senior management can either act as a catalyst or obstacle for gender mainstreaming within their respective divisions and directorates. Often the politicised nature of these institutions is ignored by external stakeholders (i.e. donors and consultants) seeking to enforce the transformative agenda of gender mainstreaming (Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2004; Razavi, 1997).

These findings suggest that the structural and organisational problems outlined above are not mutually exclusive from broader conceptual difficulties with the term gender itself. Gender training does not necessarily guarantee that someone has either understood that gender is not exclusively about 'women' or grasped its transformative agenda. Often this is down to the use of Eurocentric or technical terms with little relevance to local realities; hence the importance of locally specific case study examples that relate to the reality of the implementers lives and work. This explains why the "support" of supervisory staff is essential for legitimising and authorising gender mainstreaming and "overseeing" the activities of "frontline extension" as this is where gender responsive agricultural extension is "put into practice". For example, this research revealed that many AETs believe that it is not their responsibility to 'preach' about gender equality as it is considered a 'woman's issue' and consequently the "job" of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare. Alternatively, those who have been trained may not be "confident enough" because it can be likened to "attacking peoples' cultural roots and what people believe in". This resonates with Porter and Smyth's (1998) emphasis on how gender training is often perceived as a 'quick fix' technical solution rather than a 'transformative' process involving a fundamental change in attitudes amongst the

trainer and receiver that ultimately affects how gender is understood and implemented. This supports the earlier work of Goetz (1995ab) who emphasised that the gendered nature of institutions themselves (and also the beliefs of the actors within them) requires fundamental change if gender equity is to be achieved.

Further analysis revealed that an additional factor explaining why the transformative goals of gender training was not being fulfilled was because it has been approached in a way that has perpetuated the view that gender is a necessary "add on" to secure funding and meet the requirements of international forums and agreements as well as national policies such as the National Agricultural Policy and National Gender Policy. This reinforces the argument that it is the top down way in which external actors have imposed change which is largely to blame (Subrahmanian, 2004). Indeed, the first FAO supported project was a response to a more general request for assistance to reorientate its extension services to be more responsive to needs of small-scale farmers. This has also contributed to the view that gender equality is prerequisite for getting development 'right' for women, thus causing policy makers to equate gender with a woman's issue. The emphasis on visible outputs also fails to appreciate the length of time required to tackle what is essentially a 'taboo' subject embedded in cultural attitudes and norms of behaviour. Clearly, bilateral organisations have a significant role over the institutionalisation of gender. However, their involvement can create potential problems for the long-term sustainability of gender mainstreaming. This highlights the importance of problematising the way in gender is used.

4.3 Monitoring mechanism: Gender mainstreaming structures operating inside a vacuum

Gender mainstreaming structures within the MAWRD at the national level faced a number of difficulties underpinned by the incompatibility of a gender responsive participatory approach to agricultural extension with the conventional hierarchy of top down planning of the MAWRD as whole.

The research revealed that the ability of the Gender Unit to fulfil its designated role was constrained by a shortage of staff in relation to its responsibilities and the overall size of the MAWRD. This has restricted its main activities to the national level and has hindered efforts to operate at the meso and micro levels. This is further exacerbated by poor cross-sectoral linkages and overall lack of coordination between the various directorates within the Ministry

However, its greatest constraint is inherently related to its low status within the MAWRD as a whole. Its legitimacy is compromised because of its position within the Division of Rural Development that is considered an "anomaly" according to key informants because of the crosscutting nature of its activities that overlap with those of other directorates within MAWRD and other line Ministries. These factors combined have

served to erode its status and authority, causing it to 'operate in a vacuum' with limited ability to enforce change. Indeed, key respondents within the various directorates of MAWRD at senior level were not even aware of the Gender Unit's existence let alone the Gender Focal Point. This is not an uncommon situation. Often, these positions are allocated to personnel at low levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy, thus making it difficult to impose orders on more senior personnel (Phillips, 1999). Although the position was given to someone with authority (i.e. Deputy Director) within the MAWRD, she still experienced difficulties interacting with senior management and enforcing the inclusion of gender sensitive approaches. These difficulties have their roots in the 'newness' of the concept of 'gender' where many remain unclear about its implications and regard gender mainstreaming as an attempt to 'include' women or meet NGO and bilateral organisation's funding requirements as discussed earlier. However, it is important not to disregard the progress that these key individuals have made within their own bureaucracies which can be environments hostile to social change (Subrahmanian, 2004; Eyben, 2010). Their roles as intermediaries are often a vital ingredient to gender mainstreaming. Indeed, Eyben (2010) notes that insufficient attention has been given to the actors and agency of individuals who have developed innovative strategies to manoeuvre and negotiate the dynamic institutional landscape of gender mainstreaming. This is also supported by Subrahmanian (2004) who adds that there is a need to stop criticising the women within gender machineries who serve as intermediaries and fight battles within their own bureaucracies.

It has also been difficult for the relatively young Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare to enforce politically challenging legislation onto other Ministries that are larger and older. These difficulties can also be traced to the sectoralisation and compartmentalisation of gender mainstreaming through various structures such as the Gender Focal Points and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare whose name itself reinforces the myth that gender is a 'woman's issue'. Byrne et al (1996) and Bell et al (2002) add that this is reinforced by the way in which these structures tend to be "ghettoised" within social and welfare sectors. Paradoxically, the focus on 'integrating' women has detracted from the fact that gender is a "cross cutting analytical" concept which can help various institutions or directorates within the MAWRD to "understand" their "subject matter" or "sector".

These observations support a growing literature highlighting the problematic way in which 'gender' is used within gender training and mainstreaming initiatives (El Bushra, 2000; Frischmuth, 1997; Cornwall 2003). Often, gender is 'grafted' onto existing institutional structures (Moser, 1993: 137) without taking into account the "deeply entrenched attitudes and stereotypes about gender differences held by both those who are trained and the decision makers at policy implementation level" (Kabeer, 1994: 265). In this case, effective gender training is conditional on the support and attitudes of individual senior supervisors and the individual motivations and opinions of the receivers themselves (i.e. AETs). This highlights the fundamental paradox of gender

mainstreaming attempts in Namibia in the respect that the very structures, which were created to introduce gender responsive approaches to development, are hindering its progress. It also raises important questions about GM more generally where critics are questioning whether it is unrealistic to rely on institutions with little ability to enforce change (Standing, 2004). In other words, should we be relying on bureaucracies, or are the pathways for transformation and therefore empowerment more successfully carried out by institutions external to bureaucracy such as civil society?

Exploring the agency of actors beyond the state has been a key emphasis of the Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme Consortium (RPC)[98]. They argue for the need to focus on the lived realities of women's lives (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010). RPC makes the case for exploring the 'hidden pathways' of women's empowerment which it characterises as what "women are doing for and by themselves to bring about changes in their own and other women's lives" (ibid, 1). Key dimensions and dilemmas concerning the empowerment of women raised by the programme are summarised in Box 1 below. These could be used as entry points to think about additional pathways for women's empowerment.

Box 1: Hidden pathways to empowerment

Context: Empowerment is contingent and contextual. Context is crucial for making sense of empowerment. This includes the historical shifts in societal and cultural norms and practices, economic and political institutions, the role of state, and role of women's institutions.

Choice: Empowerment is not just about enlarging boundaries of action, it is about extending the horizons of possibility of what people imagine themselves being able to be and do. It is simplistic to assume a linear connection between choice, action and outcome. Actions presumed to lead to empowerment can sustain women's unequal situation. What constitutes a potentially empowering 'choice' is context specific.

Narratives: How women are portrayed in literature, religion and the media deeply affects how they are perceived and treated. Notions of what a 'good girl' or 'good women' are powerful narratives.

Relationships matter: Mainstream empowerment narratives tend to neglect relationships, focusing on individual women's trajectories of self-improvement or on the bigger picture of society-wide economic change. But women's lived experiences of empowerment cannot be understood adequately by approaches that atomise women, abstracting them from the social and intimate relations that constrain and make possible their empowerment or disempowerment. Need to look at women in the context of the relational webs that constitute their social and economic lives. Research has noted the 'power with' that comes from being embedded in kin and community relationships (primarily with women) often give the power to act. Strategic importance for feminist action of

a multilayered constituency of potential allies, located within, as well as outside government and other agencies for policymaking and implementation. It is relationships rather than assets that bring about the kind of changes associated with 'empowerment'- such as growth in self-confidence, capabilities and consciousness and capacity to act collectively to demand rights and recognition.

Voice: Need to explore in more detail which women are beneficiaries of empowerment interventions, who they represent and what they voice. Need to look at the different arenas in which women's voices are elicited and listened to, and think critically about the extent to which opportunities to participate and influence in one arena are translated into broader willingness on the part of powerful institutions to listen to women. Need to look at different spaces in which women's voices are articulated.

Negotiation: Seeing empowerment as a process of negotiation- one that may consist of subtle acts that increase women's room for manoeuvre as well as the overt exercise of agency- opens up the possibility of recognising the 'empowering' elements of acts that might at first sight appear 'disempowering'. Empowerment emerged as something that is less about clear-cut choices that are transformed into actions and outcomes, but more something that is at once more provisional and dynamic. Contestation may provide women less scope for the exercise of agency than tactical accommodation and indeed compromise; choices that transgress societal norms may be especially hard to make, with risks that are particularly high for women who can least afford to take them. It is often necessary to work within existing strictures to achieve some positive gains, with the hope that these may eventually ripple out and bring about wider changes.

Source: Cornwall & Edwards (2010) Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme Consortium

5. "Policy doesn't drive actions": A discussion

In spite of the policies and structures in place dedicated to gender mainstreaming, the experience of the MAWRD has demonstrated that these are not enough to guarantee a transformative gender sensitive approach to agricultural extension on the ground. As one informant noted, "Policy doesn't drive actions". Rather, the research suggests that the current approach has been one that is best described as integrationist with mixed results. Efforts to mainstream gender at the time of research served to perpetuate uncertainty and misunderstanding of what GM entails and who is responsible for implementing it. As a result, many continue to equate it with making women visible rather than challenging the power relations underpinning gendered inequalities, thus undermining the transformative agenda of gender mainstreaming. This raises broader concerns about gender mainstreaming itself and whether it can be considered a pathway towards empowerment.

Yet, by taking a deeper look at what is happening in context, the research revealed that we should not be quick to dismiss what has been achieved, even if the approach has largely been integrationist. Indeed, the case study of gender mainstreaming within the Namibian MAWRD has revealed that the dualism between transformative and integrationist is not so clear-cut. By exploring the reality and context in which GM has been implemented within the MAWRD, the paper has demonstrated the value of understanding the roles and responsibilities of the structures and organisations in place (and their practices) and the spaces in which they operate. In doing so, it has responded to Razavi's (1997) call to look at the context in which organizational politics impose political imperatives and institutional constraints that impede gender mainstreaming. By focusing on implementation and how policy is internalised at different levels, this paper has revealed the importance of acknowledging how the integrationist and transformative dimensions of GM are fundamentally linked. Indeed, Eyben (2010: 60) argues that the "…contradictions between the instrumentalist and transformative agendas can be managed by using the instrumentalist agenda to make the status quo case for mainstreaming, while hoping and working towards more transformational goals, concerning which the activist stays silent except with co-conspirators". This is also emphasised by Cornwall and Edwards (2010) who recognise the need to work within existing structures in order to gain some positive results that may 'ripple out' to secure more transformative change.

There is much we can still learn from revisiting past attempts to mainstream gender. By focusing on the interface of gender mainstreaming, we will be better equipped to understand areas of opportunity and constraint; learn from where we have gone wrong which in turn can feed into suggestions for more effective GM which is context specific. In some circumstances, this may mean that we have to think about policy and social change in a way that "embraces rather than ignores the contradictions" and celebrates the "outflanking manoeuvres" and improvisation of actors within the gender machinery (Eyben, 2010: 60). This supports the work of a small group of gender and development advocates who acknowledge the importance of situating the process of GM within the realities or contexts in which implementers have to work (Razavi, 1997; Standing, 2004; Beall & Todes, 2004; Kanji, 2003; Moser & Moser, 2005). This involves an exploration of the policy domain and how gender and development advocates engage with it (Standing, 2004). With the exception of the work of Razavi (1997), Levy (1996), Menon-Sen (1999), Beall & Todes (2004), and Buchy & Basaznew (2005) there have been relatively few studies that have done this. This paper has begun to address this gap by focusing on the experience of GM within the MAWRD in Namibia. A number of provisional policy recommendations have been drawn from this case study and are detailed below. This is followed by more detailed recommendations made for Namibia at the time of research.

Provisional policy recommendations:

1. Secure a detailed understanding of gender relations at micro level

- Collected gender disaggregated data.
- Conduct gender situation analysis prior to intervention.
- Generate locally specific case studies that relate to the reality of implementers lives and work.

2. Understand the context in which GM structures operate: explore the roles, responsibilities and mandates of organisations and institutions tasked with implementing gender responsible approaches

- Explore the relationships between different line ministries in order to understand where best to incorporate an integrationist approach to GM within existing mandate of ministry.

3. Invest in more accountability and monitoring mechanisms to explore how GM is being implemented and internalised at different levels of governance

- Looking at how policy is internalised will provide important guidance for entry points for more transformative intervention.

4. Explore the interface between integrationist and transformative approaches to gender mainstreaming

- Recognise the value of integrationist approach as an entry point for more transformative change.
- Acknowledge the agency of key actors who devise tactics to manoeuvre institutional landscape. Document these stories and share with other gender advocates and activists.

5. Explore the role of actors beyond the state in securing pathways to empowerment.

- Engage grassroots gender organisations to promote conscientization.
- Explore hidden pathways of empowerment that are more relevant to lived realities of women's lives.

ENTRY POINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL GENDER MAINSTREAMING FOR NAMIBIA IN RELATION TO AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

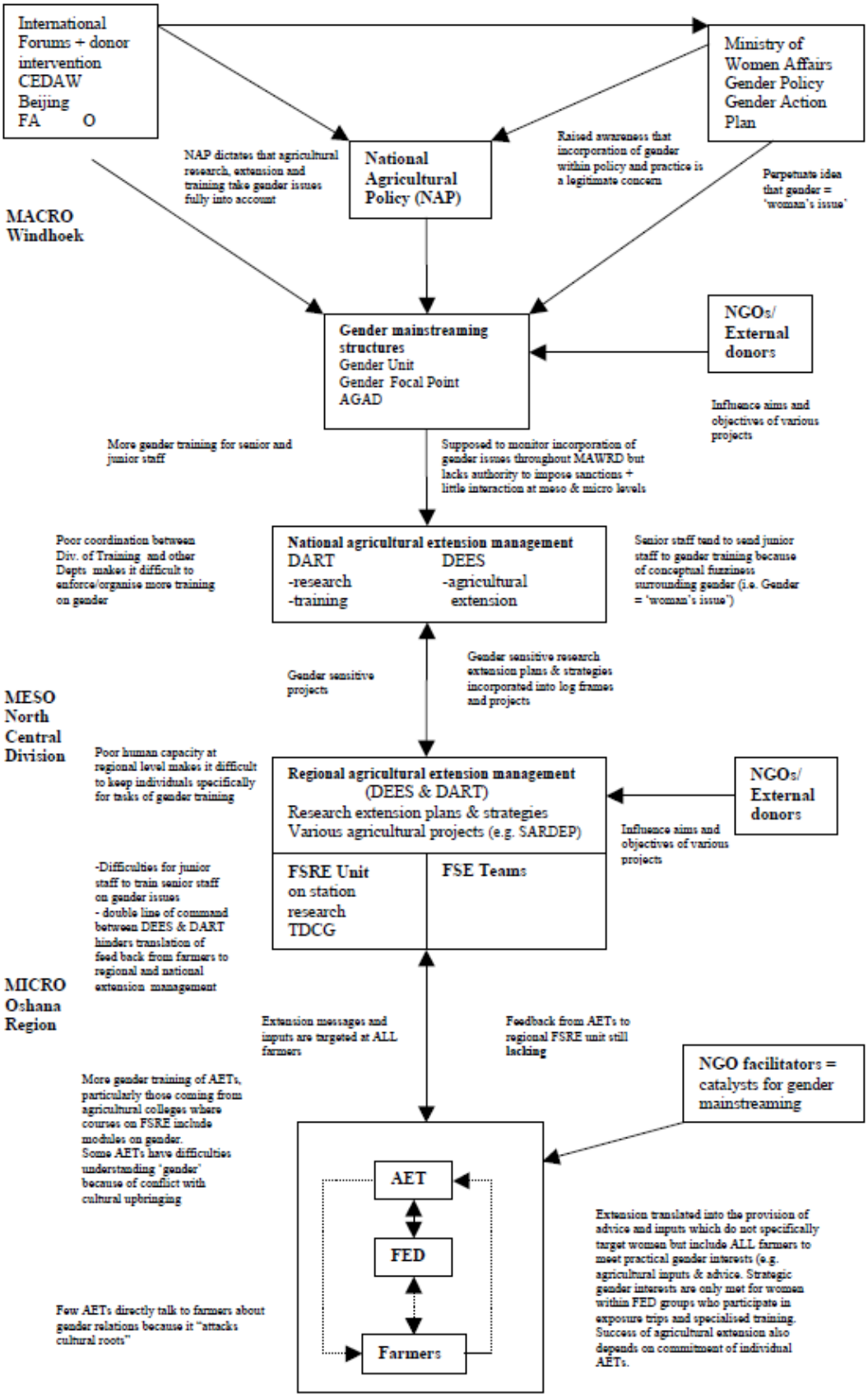
Constraint	Entry point	Justification
MACRO		
Conceptual clarity	Gender training. Gender disaggregated data. Top level management support & commitment. More groundwork research to generate case studies which are relevant to the Namibian situation Avoid use of the term 'women' in projects, interventions and structures responsible for gender mainstreaming. Engage support of male staff.	Information and sensitisation will overcome attitudinal resistance from implementers at all levels. This is particularly important for top management staff with power & authority to legitimise and institutionalise more gender mainstreaming attempts. Avoids stereotype that gender = "women's issue". Encourages more directors and supervisors to make use of staff trained in gender issues to train others Information which is 'culturally sensitive' to the Namibian situation will facilitate a greater understanding of gender issues and its cross-cutting characteristics which is relevant to all divisions. Facilitates more effective implementation and monitoring of gender responsive approaches. Necessary to confront resistance of both women and men in bureaucratic structures.
Limited authority of gender mainstreaming structures (e.g. Gender Focal Points, Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare)	Allocate responsibility to more senior management level personnel Introduce guidelines & checklists to monitor that gender mainstreaming initiatives are carried out. Impose structures of accountability (e.g. sanctions, incentives) to ensure these are carried out. Insert gender training into job descriptions. Larger budget.	Legitimises gender mainstreaming to other staff members if top management are taking these issues seriously. Need units to act as catalyst and watch dogs, can monitor and give out sanctions and incentives. Enforces the status of gender mainstreaming and facilitates their task of carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Avoids high staff turnover if they are being rewarded for carrying out trainings. Legitimises importance of gender mainstreaming. Necessary to have structures to act as watchdogs to avoid risk that it becomes "nobody's job".
Limited coordination and capacity building (fuzziness about who is responsible for gender mainstreaming within various directorates)	Strengthen intra-organizational networking between directorates and divisions within MAWRD. Strengthen inter-ministerial networking with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare More gender training of staff at all levels. Establish links with women organisations and NGOs. Encourage more information sharing. Strengthen the authority and mandate of existing inter ministerial coordinating committees by imposing stronger sanctions for non participation.	Facilitates greater awareness of the importance & relevance of gender as a concept that can be applied across numerous sectors. Avoid problems of duplication of interventions aimed at gender mainstreaming. Cuts cost of gender training if the expertise is readily available in other ministries. Facilitates the overall process of gender mainstreaming and legitimises gender mainstreaming as an issue of serious concern.
Putting institutional structures into practice	Introduce and explain gender concepts in all Ministry and sectoral polices (e.g. National Development Plan, National Agricultural Policy) Avoid WID discourse.	Generates greater awareness of importance of gender issues but need the effective functioning of gender mainstreaming structures in place to ensure that aims and objectives of these various policies are met. Special care needs to be taken to ensure conceptual clarity in order to avoid myth that gender = "women's issue".

MESO		
Top down FSRE approach	Improve interaction between farmers, FED groups, AETs, and the FSRE unit to ensure that research and intervention is being designed according to the needs of those who are affected the most. Continue to meet practical gender interests (e.g. agricultural inputs, advice and exposure trips etc).	Necessary to make the FSRE approach more bottom up, participatory and gender responsive. They are the meeting point between policy and people at the ground, therefore this interaction is very important. Develop more technologies which help women to meet their practical gender needs which are foundation for strategic gender interests.
MICRO		
Confrontational approach targeting women	Non confrontational approach which does not involve projects targeting women. Greater sensitivity to cultural context through gender disaggregated research and analysis which is context specific. Involve men as well as women. Encourage intervention which meets practical gender needs.	Direct approach too threatening to traditional/cultural status quo and both women and men. Need to build up confidence and capability slowly. Involve men in order to reduce resistance. Desire for change needs to come 'from within'. One way of developing this process of 'conscientization' is by targeting practical gender interests which are the foundation for the gradual realisation of more strategic gender interests.
Lack of information	Expose younger generations to concepts of gender equality. Involve men as well as women in information sharing forums and workshops.	Facilitates greater awareness of the importance of gender equality within the younger generations. Cooperation of men essential to change indicators Ovambo masculinity.
Over dependence on agriculture	Encourage AETs to introduce new forms of income generating activities to facilitate greater livelihood diversification.	Agricultural practices underpin the unequal gendered division of labour. By changing the role of agriculture to livelihoods, it may be possible to change gender roles and subsequently gender relations.

Source: Newton (2004)

APPENDIX Source: Newton (2004)

Figure 1: Translation of gender sensitive policy through agricultural extension



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