TOOLKIT

The Importance of Gender Mainstreaming in Syria

TOOLKIT

The Importance of Gender Mainstreaming in Syria

Introduction

UNDP and other UN organizations adopt clear strategies for gender mainstreaming which emphasize systematic integration of gender equality objectives into organizational policies, programmes at all levels, resource allocations and practices.

This kit is designed to assist the user in mainstreaming gender in policies and programs that are supported by UN and other development agencies in Syria.

The kit is designed to be of particular use to:
1) Staff members of UN and development organizations in Syria
2) Experts and consultants who are recruited by these organizations to conduct any study, evaluation or undertake any other mission.
3) Any other person involved in the development field and interested to address gender issues in her/his work.

This toolkit consists of four 4 booklets:

Booklet 1: covers the following
What is gender mainstreaming? How to mainstream gender? and A gender glossary

Booklet 2: covers the following:
The situation of Women in Syria

Booklet 3: covers the following:
National governmental and non-governmental women machineries in Syria.

Booklet 4: covers the following:
Checklist for mainstreaming gender in a) Governance, b) Poverty alleviation .c) Basic social services, d) Employment e) Energy and Environment and f) Crisis prevention and recovery

BOOKLET ONE

I - What is Gender Mainstreaming?

There has been a concern expressed during the third and the fourth World Conferences on Women that took place in Nairobi in 1985 and in Beijing in 1995, that different policies, programs and actions did not have much impact in bringing about gender equality. The need to set a strategy of gender mainstreaming that would involve all stakeholders and accelerate structural changes was identified. Since Beijing, most UN organizations and other, bilateral cooperation agencies and development organizations have adopted gender mainstreaming strategy as a priority in order to bring about gender equality in their policies and programs.

Gender since then is no longer highlighted as a separate area of concentration, but as a cross-cutting theme that needs to be integrated, or mainstreamed into all areas of UN organizations' work. An explicit mandate for gender mainstreaming was reaffirmed.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making the needs, concerns and experiences of men, women, an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that everyone can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming is therefore, a means towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in all spheres.

Gender mainstreaming came into widespread use with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. The ECOSOC defines gender mainstreaming as "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 spheres with the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality.

In order to mainstream gender in programmes and related activities a number of steps are essential. These include 1) obtaining statistics disaggregated by sex and qualitative information on the situation of women and men 2) conducting gender analysis to show differences with regard to the gendered division of labour, access to and control over resources, participation rates, decision making powers, legal basis for gender equality/inequality, political commitments with respect to gender equality and the culture, attitudes and stereotypes which affect all these issues. An analysis of gender issues must also recognize the other diversity issues which affect all members of society, such as age, ethnicity and socio-economic conditions. Neither women nor men constitute a homogeneous group. 3) Adopting a conceptual framework for mainstreaming gender in all phases of projects 4) Adopting gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation system to measure the extent to which gender equality objectives are met and changes in gender relations are achieved.

In brief, gender mainstreaming is the systematic attempt to identify key issues contributing to gender inequalities so that they can be properly addressed. It is increasingly recognized that programmes in any sector which disregard gender inequalities usually make those inequalities worse.

Gender mainstreaming does not preclude the need for specific actions for women, aimed at redressing serious inequalities between women and men. The Beijing platform for Action calls for a dual strategy – gender mainstreaming complemented with inputs designed to address specific gaps or problems faced in the promotion of gender equality.

It is also worth noting that the advocacy for and the realization of gender equality can only take place in gender sensitive organizations.

II - HOW TO MAINSTREAM GENDER?

A gender mainstreaming strategy should initiate and sustain change processes at two levels:

First:

The organization itself –through its policies, procedures, culture and people. Within the organization, gender mainstreaming can be conceptualized in different domains:

a) The technical domain is constituted of the capacities, tools and instruments for gender mainstreaming. (gender training, gender experts, guidelines and tools for integrating gender into the project cycle). The organizations should address gender awareness in recruitment, promotion, appraisal, and making available analytical tools. There should be also gender balance among staff including management staff and also gender balance in all committees. Progress in addressing gender gaps and gender discrimination should be also a criterion in staff appraisal. Discussion on problems of staff in combining their different roles should also take place in order to identify if there is a need for crèche services for instances.

b) The political domain is the site for mainstreaming of gender equality concerns into processes of planning and decision making within the organization. This is the domain within which hierarchies of power take shape, and which in turn determine access and control over resources and decision-making in the organization. Top management has an important role to play to ensure full use and implementation of the organanization gender strategy by all staff and departments. She/He can make available financial and human resources to ensure gender mainstreaming in programming. He/she can also take decisions that help staff members to combine their different roles in life.

c) The cultural domain is the arena in which the environment and daily practice of the organization are defined and shaped and determined. It is in this domain that the gap between policy and practice is created, negotiated and contested. This shows to what extent there is a personal conviction of the necessity to work towards achieving gender equality and that it is reflected in the personal life practices as much as it is reflected in the professional work.

Each of these domains is intricately linked to the other. In turn, each domain and the system as a whole are influenced by multiple factors in the external environment which include the national development agendas, the global discourses, civil society, women's movements, donor priorities and geo-political processes and issues. The implications and impacts of each of these should ideally be factored into strategies for gender mainstreaming.

Changes in the technical domain are generally easier to bring about and encounter comparatively less resistance than changes in other domains. There is now a large volume of data on global gender issues, tools, frameworks…etc.Organizational change and transformation therefore lie at the core of any gender mainstreaming strategy.

Second:

Gender should be mainstreamed in the development of interventions supported by the organization.

The mainstreaming of gender in programs requires the following:

- The Integration of gender considerations throughout the project cycle
- Reinforcing the capacity of the organization for sectoral policy dialogues with government and civil society to bring gender issues and women increasingly to the forefront
- Strengthening the use of gender sensitive output indicators
- Conducting gender analysis in every situation analysis of programmes through the collection and use of gender disaggregated data to show gender gaps and their causes
- Revising evaluation guidelines in order to address gender considerations, and include gender expertise in evaluation teams.

III - WHY MAINSTREAMING GENDER?

There are clear benefits that accrue when gender mainstreaming is adopted as a strategy. These include the following:

- Gender mainstreaming makes the social problem of gender inequality visible.
- Gender mainstreaming makes full use of human resources, by recognizing women and men with similar capacities and opportunities.
- Gender based discrimination weakens governance because accountability is then exercised by half the population only when women are excluded.
- Promoting gender equality is a promotion of fundamental human rights and the principles and values of human rights and democracy.
- Gender mainstreaming guarantees inclusion and weakens exclusion and therefore can guarantee social security.
- Gender mainstreaming can result in better understanding of family conditions.

- The lack of gender mainstreaming increases inequalities...
- Gender mainstreaming makes it possible to gain a better understanding and addressing the needs and interests of different groups of women, as well as those of different groups of men.

IV -GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

The commitment to gender mainstreaming is reinforced and facilitated by international frameworks such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, by Beijing Conference on Women and by the Mid Decade Goals.

The Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):

CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. It is the most comprehensive and detailed international agreement on women's human rights. It establishes rights for women in areas not previously subject to international standards most notably in personal and family life. It is based on three main principles: the principle of equality, the principle of non-discrimination and the principle of state obligation. All three are essential for gender mainstreaming.

Data from the periodic reporting on CEDAW can be used as a source of information on gender issues at country level. Discussion of the progress made in realizing national commitments made through ratification of CEDAW can be used in the dialogue with national partners. Concluding remarks of the CEDAW international committee on Syria reports can be addressed in new or existing UN and other development agencies projects.

UNDP can support the country in meeting its obligation, by providing assistance to the reporting process, by supporting programs of information and legal literacy which enhance women's knowledge of their rights in CEDAW.

The Beijing declaration and platform for action:
The fourth international conference on women which took place in Beijing in September 1995 was notable for placing great importance on gender mainstreaming in development cooperation. The Platform of Action upholds the CEDAW and builds upon previous strategic frameworks and policy commitments at international level.

There are twelve concerns that Beijing Platform of Action addresses and requires governments to periodically report on. These include alleviation of poverty, female education, combating violence against women….etc. All countries are requested to produce National Programs of Action (NPA) which set out their strategies and programs for implementing the commitments made at Beijing. These NPAs can be an important source of data, and a basis of policy dialogue with government and NGOs.

Countries also established special bodies to coordinate gender and women's issues in response to the demands of the global conferences. These machineries are responsible for coordinating follow up on both CEDAW and Beijing. MDG reporting

on gender mainstreaming can make use of documents produced as part of reporting obligations on these two instruments.

The Beijing NPA assigns responsibilities for governments to achieve gender equality in 12 domains. The follow up on Beijing conference provide an opportunity to strengthen and focus the gender equality efforts to achieve the MDGs.

The Millennium Development Goals:

The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs were the outcome of the Millennium Summit of September 2000, when world leaders met at the UN in NY. The eight MDGs constitute an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives worldwide. Goal 3 is about promoting gender equality and empowering women. This goal is not specific to any particular sector or issue, since gender equality and women's rights underpin all the other goals. The reverse is also true, as the achievement of goal 3 depends on progress being made on each of the other goals.

While accurate reporting against goal 3 is critical, tracking gender gaps and inequalities against each of the other targets and indicators is as important, i.e. gender equality needs to be mainstreamed through all the other goals. The reports produced by the country on CEDAW and Beijing follow up can be used in mainstreaming gender in the seven domains of the MDGs.

Efforts to achieve the MDGs should bring together a wide range of government sectors, development partners and civil society organizations. This provides an opportunity to improve coordination on gender equality concerns and raise them to new and higher policy levels. When gender equality considerations are successfully incorporated into efforts to achieve the Goals, the MDG process will help serve to mainstream gender in a broader range of national programmes and policies in an effective way.

BOOKLET TWO

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN SYRIA

I - INTRODUCTION

In order to be able to mainstream gender into programs of an organization, one has to be acquainted with the situation of Syrian women at present. Syrian women constitute around 49% of the total population. There is a dearth of reliable statistics on women in some of the domains. Sometimes statistics differ according to the source. However, one can say that the situation of Syrian women has improved lately with regard to some domains. These include education, health and family planning. Syrian women still suffer from a strict division of labour where they carry most of the burden of unpaid labour especially in agriculture. Culture and traditions still play an important role in depriving women from enjoying their legal and sometimes religious rights such as in the case of inheritance.

II – LEGAL STATUS

The Syrian Constitution grants equal rights to men and women as well as equal responsibilities in all spheres of life, political, social, cultural and economic. Most of the laws treat women equally such as the labour law.

In 2003, the Syrian government ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with reservations applied to articles 2, 9(2), 16(1)(2), and 29(1). These articles were found by the government to be incompatible with the Sharia'a. The reservations concern a woman's right to pass her nationality to her children, freedom of movement and of residence and domicile, equal rights and responsibilities during the marriage and its dissolution, and the legal effect of the betrothal and the marriage of a child. Syria has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

There are still a number of gender discriminatory laws in Syria. These include the nationality law. Syrian women married to non-Syrians are still unable to give their nationality to their children. The penal code also discriminates against women in some of its articles such as the adultery and honour crimes. Women who commit adultery do not enjoy like men a decrease in the punishment which can be only six months for the adulterous husband. In case of killing or harming a relative, i.e. honour killing the man enjoys also a decrease in punishment.

The personal status law contains some positive articles such as article 17 which requires the husband to seek permission from the judge to take a second wife and must prove he has both legitimate justification and the financial means to provide for a second wife. However, a man's marriage to a second wife is not a legitimate reason for a woman to divorce him in the Syrian Sharia'a courts.

The personal status law contains also some discriminatory articles against women. These include the right of the husband to divorce his wife, and father guardianship of

Children. Women of all ages are required to have male guardians to contract their marriages, while adult men are free to contract their own marriages. If an adult woman marries without her guardian's consent; the guardian may invalidate her marriage.

The personal status law includes certain provisions that can protect women in marriage and in divorce. However, women are not always aware of these rights that they can exercise. Also because of strict traditions they do not feel comfortable practicing these rights. These include the ability of women to stipulate any provisions in the marriage contract and the right of women to initiate divorce through "Khole" which Syria has enacted to grant women the right to initiate divorce according to "Sharia"

There are no laws that criminalize domestic violence or sexual harassment at the work place.

Legal reform in Syria includes raising age of custody of children to 13 years for boys and 15 years for girls. Now, women can also pass their pension to their husbands. Other legal amendments included the increase of maternity leave to 120 days for the first child, 90 days for the second child and 75 days for the third child.

There is a need to redress gender discriminatory laws such as the nationality law, some articles of the personal status law, and articles of the penal code concerning adultery and honour crimes. New laws criminalizing domestic violence and sexual harassment at the work place should be legislated. There is also a need to provide women with access to justice through raising their awareness about their legal rights and providing poor women with free of charge legal aid.

III – ECONOMIC STATUS

Statistics on the economic participation of women differ to a great extent from one source to the other. This may be due to the fact that the larger number of women works in the informal sector (both in unpaid family work and also in agricultural unpaid family work).

The relatively high rate of female enrolment in the education system has not had a great impact on employment. The gender bias in the private sector is even more marked for graduates with only technical or intermediate education.

Women comprised 27% of the labour force in 2000, primarily concentrated in agriculture, medicine, and teaching. Very few women own their own businesses. Government provides national childcare for a small fee in schools and workplaces.

From existing statistics, one can conclude that the economic participation rate of Syrian women is low. Furthermore some figures show that it decreased from 12.3% in 2000 to 9.2% in 2004.

Percentage of working women in agriculture has also decreased from 58.8% in 2000 to 25.5% in 2004. The official unemployment rate is much higher among women than among men. It increased among men from 4% to 8.2% in the period 1981-2001 as for women it increased from 4.3% to 24.1%. Women's ownership of agricultural land is small estimated to be less than 5%. This in spite of the fact that the Syrian civil and commercial codes of 1949 ensure women's equality in owning property, managing businesses, and initiating legal cases.   It seems that the majority of Syrian women is not aware of their inheritance rights or voluntarily gives them up due to the strong patriarchal society.

Labour regulations protect women working in the public and private sectors from arbitrary dismissal during pregnancy, maternity leave, and sickness related to pregnancy and delivery. Both private and public sector employers grant 120 days of maternity leave for the first child, 90 for the second, and 75 for the third. Women are permitted one hour during the workday for breastfeeding the child. Childcare is available in many of   the public sector offices.

A number of governmental and semi-governmental agencies provide small loans to women. In 2004, women who benefited from family loans provided by the Agency of Combating Unemployment reached 55% of total beneficiaries. There is a need to increase the number of loans without collateral to be provided to rural women. Women borrowers should also be provided with marketing outlets to exhibit their products. The private sector should be motivated to employ qualified women and there is a need to train women on skills required by this sector to increase women's employability.

The government has not yet enacted any laws or policies to protect working women from harassment in the workplace.

Women in Syria are disproportionately affected by poverty. While the rate of women headed households is low. Some figures show that it as 5.3% in 1997. Other figures show it as 8%. At any rate, they are more likely to suffer from poverty than households headed by men. It is reported that 40% of women headed households have incomes below 6,000 SP, compared to only 16% of households headed by men.

Women are underrepresented in Syria's media both in decision-making positions and as employees. While they contribute in a variety of capacities including as journalists, script writers, and talk show hosts, there are very few women in positions of leadership. Women enjoy somewhat greater freedom of expression in the press than on TV, although TV programming is increasingly presenting a positive image of women. Television dramas regularly draw attention to societal problems that women face, such as divorce and domestic violence.

IV - SOCIAL STATUS

Primary health care is free and accessible through public health clinics and approximately 70% of the population lives within a half hour distance from a clinic. 87% of women deliver children under the care of trained medical staff. Women in rural areas remain underserved however, but the proportion of rural women delivering children with medical supervision increased from 62.3 % in 1993 to 81.2% in 1999. In 2004, 49.5% of married women used contraception. Fertility rate decreased from 3.7 in 2000 to 3.58 in 2004. This could be partly due to the increasing age of marriage from 21.4 years in 1981 to 25.6 in 2001.

The Syrian government has made progressive strides in the area of education. Adult female literacy rose from 33% in 1980 to 60.4% in 1998, but still lagged well behind adult males (87%). Women comprise 57% of the nation's teachers, but they tend to be underrepresented in higher education. Females hold 39% of seats in the national university system.

National indicators show that both the educational attainment and the health condition of Syrian women have greatly improved. Government policies during the last decade have encouraged women's education and also the use of family planning services. Women's literacy has largely increased. However, illiteracy rate among women is still high in rural areas where it reaches 40% (2002) .

Some official statistics show that violence against women is on the decrease. A study conducted by the General Union of Syrian Women showed that 19.7% of the families experience violence. The types of violence reported were: insult 38.9%, battery 36.9%, sexual harassment 10.6%, kidnapping 1.8%, and theft 8.5%. The aggressors are in the majority of cases members of the family.

No reliable statistics on all forms of violence exist at a national level. Social custom discourages families from reporting crimes. And crimes are often masked as accidents. On the whole, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data as well as lack of services and legislation that address the different forms of violence practiced against women. The confinement of women to the private domain is a result of the strict traditional values and patriarchal system that discriminate against women. At the same time, there is legal illiteracy among many groups of women.

There is a need to raise awareness of women about their rights as stipulated in CEDAW and encourage them to monitor its implementation in their regions. Women should also be encouraged to put any provisions in the marriage contract that can protect their rights during marriage. Media should be used to reduce the social stigma of domestic violence and to provide families with information on how to help the victims.

V – WOMEN'S STATUS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Women were granted suffrage and the right to stand for office in 1949. The National

Strategy for Women set a target figure of 30% for female occupation of decision making posts by 2005. There are currently 30 women members of parliament out of a total 250. The most recent elections were held in 2003. These women were elected through the National Progressive Front, but no independent women won seats.

Legally, women have the right to vote and be elected on equal footing with men, but women run for office in far smaller numbers than men do, largely because Syrian society discourages women from entering the public sphere. Women first entered the People's Assembly in 1973 and now hold 12% of the seats, following the March 2003 election. The participation of Syrian women in political life is considered high if compared with other Arab countries.

Women judges represent 12% of total number of judges. A woman has also held the highest judicial post, as Syria's general prosecutor, since 1998 until recently. There has been also an increasing support to women under occupation in the Golan areas.

Women participation in the governorate councils is 8.7 percent, district council 4.5 percent and village councils 1.3% in the parliamentary election of March 2003. Women are also gaining access to the armed forces. There are currently 414 women in the security and police apparatus.

Women's participation in civic life is unequal to men's participation. While some women provide community leadership through charities and NGOs focused on women's issues, they are poorly represented in political parties, professional associations, and religious leadership; however, women are members and employees of various unions, including the Union of Agronomists, the Union of Engineers and the Union of Teachers. There are also few women's groups and NGOs involved in advocacy and in human rights activities for women.

Syrian women are underrepresented in the executive branch and tend to be assigned posts of secondary importance. Women hold ministerial posts in the ministry of culture and the ministry of labour and social affairs and have previously been appointed to lead the ministries of education and expatriates. Four women serve as Deputy Ministers, and women also fill the positions of director general (11), deputy director general (27), branch director (47) and deputy branch director (23).

There is a need to increase the number of women representatives in the governorate, district and village councils through the quota system and to allow women candidates who want to run the elections as independent to become members in the parliament. There is also a need to organize gender sensitization workshops to all members of the People's Assembly and to familiarize them with international conventions such as CEDAW. Women should also be assisted to take decision making positions in the media especially in the TV

VI – CULTURAL RIGHTS

Syrian society traditionally grants men the public sphere and women the private sphere. Women throughout the country experience various restrictions on their social freedoms due to religious and social conservatism that limits their participation in public life. Generally women in rural areas and lower socio economic classes experience greater restrictions on their access to the public sphere, education, health care services and family decisions.

Women freedom to make independent decisions about their reproductive health has improved greatly as a result of the government's family planning campaign that began in the early 1980s. Women can receive information and services, including contraceptives from clinics operated by the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Syrian General Women's Union, the Syrian Family Planning Association and the private operators. A culture of son preference in rural areas still prevails.

The impact of the culture is evident in two manifestations; the very low rate of women's property of agricultural land which explains that women may be allowed to have access but not control of their own assets. The other fact is the high percentage of women working for unpaid family work especially in rural areas. These show that women do not have much decision or control on the fruits of their work or their own assets.

The tenth 5-year national development plan which is being developed at present includes a component on the empowerment of women which calls for more gender disaggregated data in all domains, for gender training and gender sanitization, and for empowering women through legal reform.

The family plays an important role in society. The Syrian code states that if a woman over 17 years of age wishes to marry, the judge must ask her guardian for his opinion. If the guardian does not object within a specified period or makes a spurious objection, then the judge may proceed with the marriage as long as the husband is eligible. Another provision states that if an adult woman marries without her guardian's consent, the guardian may demand that the marriage be annulled if the husband is not eligible, unless the woman has conceived.

Under the Syrian Code, a wife's right to maintenance ceases when she works outside the home without her husband's permission. A woman who leaves her marital home without legitimate reason is defined as having violated marital law, and the price she pays for doing so is loss of the right to maintenance for the duration of her absence. While it is known that violence against women occurs, no reliable statistics on domestic violence or sexual assault are available. The vast majority of cases are not reported.

The above shows that traditions play an important role to confine Syrian women to a traditional role in the family and discourage them from playing an important role in public life where they can actively share in decision making.

BOOKLET 3

I - NATIONAL WOMEN MACHINERIES

Syria has a number of organizations that address women's issues. Some of these organizations are governmental or semi-governmental and others are non-governmental. The number of the latter category is increasing and are starting to address important issues such as participation of Syrian women in decision making positions and also the issue of gender based violence.

II – THE GENERAL UNION OF SYRIAN WOMEN

The Syrian Women's Union was established in 1967 to represent all Syrian women. It aims at mobilizing women within a single organization and enhancing their level of education, political awareness and level of skills to prepare women for a more effective and fuller role in social and economic development. Although not formally part of the government, the Union is supported by the state and has implemented a number of social development projects in the areas of childcare and education. On the institutional level, the role of he General Women's Union has expanded. It has 14 branches in different governorates, 114 associations and 1850 centres. Some 280,000 or 60% of total Syrian housewives are affiliated to the Union. The Union has pledged to end the isolation and marginalization of women and involve women as an effective force in society. The Union seeks also to implement the National Syrian Women's strategy until the year 2005 drawn up by the National Syrian Committee based on the guidelines set forth by the Beijing Conference and its Plan of Action. The Union acts also as an information centre, umbrella research institute, and training centre. The Union goals are:

Eradicating illiteracy among women, raising women's awareness concerning health, legal, social economic and political issues, empowering women economically to generate new sources of income, identifying obstacles that prevent women's development, proposing essential amendments to laws related to women, providing family planning and health services through 20 health centres and assisting working women by providing childcare thorough 266 nurseries and kindergartens.

The Union collaborates with many ministries in undertaking its activities in literacy and rural development. These ministries include Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Directorate of agriculture and Ministry of Health. The Union also provides vocational training and production centres and provides mass production of uniforms to the army, and to other national agencies such as schools.

Women's Units were also established in the Ministries of Agriculture, Labour and Social Affairs, and the State Planning Commission and the Central Bureau of Statistics. There are also Business Women Committees now in all governorates to provide the necessary services to business women to assist their enterprises to become successful.

III – THE SYRIAN COMMISSION FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS

The Commission was established in 2003 by a presidential decree as a corporate body affiliated directly to the Prime Minister with the aim of promoting the status of the Syrian family and enhancing its role in the human development process.

It aims at promoting the status of the Syrian family through enhancing its interaction with the concerned national governmental institutions and NGOs. It also proposes amendments to family-related regulations.
It aims at speeding up the process of promoting the status of the Syrian family and better empowers it to contribute to the human development efforts.

The Association has a president, a board of directors of 8 members and administration staff. The President is nominated by a decree and presides the board of directors and is directly accountable before the Prime Minister. The board of directors is nominated by the Prime Minister upon the proposal of the President.

The board is entrusted with suggesting development policies, national strategies, developing field communication plans, suggesting nominees to attend conferences, preparing reports to be presented and approved by the prime minister, preparing studies and research, and establish taskforces and committees.
The board meets monthly. The Family Association played a major role in lobbying for ratifying the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It prepared the first international report to CEDAW committee and also being follow up report.

IV – MODERNIZING AND ACTIATING WOMEN'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPEMET (MAWRED): www.mawred-syria.org

"Mawred" NGO was established to enhance Syrian women's participation in economic life through the provision of counseling and guidance to economic projects of women including the promotion, exportation and training.

Mawred is a non profit organization established under the patronage of the first lady in Syria to enhance and activate the Syrian women involvement in the socio-economic development process through providing all necessary support to existent as well as prospective women projects. Mawred aims at helping women to initiate and mange their own new enterprises, by training them and providing them with modern technology. Mawred is run by 11-member board elected by the general assembly for a renewable two year term. Their first project launched by Mawred was the business incubators enterprise which aimed at establishing an independent business incubator that provides consultancy and guidance to the newly established enterprise to help them turn into profitable enterprises capable of operating independently and contributing efficiently to the development of the national economy. This incubation project is the first step towards having a network of business incubators across the country with the aim of motivating the undiscovered potentials of businesswomen and translates them into viable, profitable and competitive economic activities which in turn will enhance businesswomen's integration in the business community.

The network will be connected with similar networks worldwide to make use of the advanced experiences in this regard.

V – FUND FOR INTERGRATED RURAL DEVELOPEMNT OF SYRIA (FIRDOS):www.firdos.org.sy

Firdos was established in 2001 as an NGO under the patronage of Mrs. Asmaa Al-Assad, the wife of the President to support sustained development in rural areas. In 2001 the Syrian Fund of Rural Development "Fardos" was established as a non-governmental organization to enhance women's economic and social development in rural areas. It secures micro credit necessary to fund small development projects and it also holds training sessions on computer. It is involved as well in rural development through the execution of infrastructure and public utilities projects such as improving sanitary sewage mains, asphalting roads, building nurseries for children, sports and health centres. It is also involved in introducing new technologies into education.

FIRDOS adopts the self-reliance principle under an interactive-based strategy of "helping others to help themselves". The strategy adopted is to improve individual performance so that they formulate the strategy as target group themselves. FIRDOS focuses on three groups of activities: 1) identifying and meeting basic needs of women,2) securing micro credit to fund small development projects and 3) holding training sessions on computer and providing scholarships. FIRDOS has implemented activities in 6 governorates in Syria (Aleppo, Edlb, Hama, Homs, Lattakia and Qunietra). It was able to develop an assessment of obstacles that face sustained socio-economic and cultural growth in the rural areas. It was also involved in establishing infrastructure and public utilities projects such as improving sanitary sewage mains, roads, building kindergartens, sports centers, irrigation networks…etc, health centers and introducing new technologic into education, agriculture and environment. By end of 2003, it was able to implement 56 different projects amounting to over thirty million Syrian pounds. They include 23 health projects, 15 educational projects, 10 asphalting roads and 7 environment related projects.

As for income generating projects in rural areas, FIRDOS supported 1012 projects at a total number of beneficiaries 3322. The total loans advanced amounted to 157 million Syrian pounds with 100% repayment rate. As for the training and educational program, it focused on three activities providing university scholarships, IT courses and mobile libraries. FIRDOS has awarded scholarships to 26 students and has held 178 IT courses for 2036 students. It made available two mobile libraries that provided its services to 57700 people. FIRDOS focused on improving the socio economic conditions in rural areas by adopting a comprehensive development approach to improve socio-economic, cultural and environmental life in rural areas through enhancing partnerships with national and international organizations operating in Syria, local community and municipalities and formulate joint work plans.

VI – THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN (El Gameia El Wataniya LiTatweer Dor El Mar'a)

Is a recently established NGO. The NGO has conducted an important field study which is considered as a public poll opinion survey entitled "Perspective of Syrian Society with regard to the role of women's associations" The results showed that 72% of the sample regard the services provided by these organizations as insufficient and limited and one third of the sample mentioned that women's organizations in Syria have not reached their target groups. Part of the reasons mentioned are that these organizations suffer from bureaucracy and exclude women form the decision making processes. As for the priorities mentioned , combating violence against women was at the top.

Other NGOs include the Social Initiative Society which was established in 2002 to raise awareness about women's issues and to conduct legal and social studies on women.

Also, the **Committee for supporting women's issues** was established in 2003 to monitor the situation of Syrian women and conduct research and field research in order to redress gender discriminatory laws. They have worked for lifting reservations made by the Syrian Government on CEDAW (www.syrwomen.org).

BOOKLET 4

CHECKLISTS

I - GOVERNANCE

- Is the government in the country conducting any gender assessment or analysis?
- Is there any project addressing women's political participation in terms of formal or informal measures; e.g. quota system? Are the social and legal issues addressed?
- Are there projects or activities to strengthen national equality mechanisms or other gender institutions?
- Are there projects or activities that address the issue of violence against women in its multiple expressions (domestic, sexual, etc.?)
- If the State is being decentralized, do the above initiatives favour women's involvement in the process?
- What are the obstacles that prevent women from gaining decision making positions in government or the civil service?
- What are the obstacles that prevent women from gaining decision making positions in the judicial system and the police office?
- Do courts or other tribunals promote and protect the rights of women?
- How many cases of gender discrimination are brought before the courts or other government bodies in the last four years? How were they decided?
- What input do women make to changes in the political system?
- Has the country joined CEDAW?
- Are there women NGOs registered easily?

II – POVERTY ALLEVIATION

- Does gender appear in research, negotiations with the government, indicators? training, promotional material, etc. relating to the MDGs?
- Is gender included from the beginning in the process of preparing the National Human Development Report? Is there a methodology, specialized personnel, specific chapters or sections and a budget to address gender analysis?
- Are there any projects addressing gender sensitive government budgeting at the national or local level?
- Are there specific projects and/or technical and credit assistance actions to generate micro enterprises and cooperatives management by women?
- Do poor women have access to free legal aid?
- Do women from low socio economic status use e-governance services?

III - SOCIAL SERVICES:

a) Education:

- Are all educational statistics gender disaggregated? (Years of schooling completed, by level and sex,, Access to specialized training programmes at the secondary level and above, by sex)
- Are illiterate women of different ages targeted through sufficient projects in which they participate in their planning?
- Are studies conducted on reasons of drop out rates of girls from school?
- Do girls have access to all training programs at secondary level and above?
- Are girls encouraged to join the different specializations at university?
- Are schools girl-friendly?
- Is sexual violence in school detected and addressed?
- Are female teachers allowed maternity leave, child care leave?
- Is there equal access to education in practice? If not, which factors cause differential access to education by women and men? If there is discrimination, how can this be changed and how can women and men take part in this process of change?
- What uses do women and men make of their education? Does the social context allow women to make full use of their education?
- Do women and men enroll in university subjects according to gender stereotypes?
- Can the government intervene to challenge such stereotyping?
- Are women and men stereotyped in school curricula? How can these curricula be changed to eliminate gender stereotyping and present in a positive light women, men and gender relations?
- Have legislative or other measures been taken to ensure equal access to education for women and men?

b) HEALTH:

- Are women and girls discriminated against in terms of access to health care: If so, what are the reasons for this and how can this discrimination be overcome?
- What % of health personnel are women, at the different levels of the health system?
- Do mortality and morbidity rates differ between men and women? If yes, what are the reasons? What are the major causes of infant and child morbidity in girls and boys?
- What cultural and other obstacles are there to women and girls receiving health care and family planning services?
- Is abortion legal, and if so, are services available in practice?
- Have any programs been introduced to combat AIDS and have any of these programs been developed with a focus on women?
- Is intra household distribution of food biased against women and girls? If so, what are the reasons for this?
- Does access to sanitation and clean water differ by sex? If so, what are the

implications of this on women's health?

- Do women spend more on food than men? If so, what are the implications of this?

IV - EMPLOYEMENT, ECONOMIC ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

- Are there areas where men or women predominantly work? Does sex-stereotyping in employment exist? If so, what are the consequences of this?
- What provisions exist to eliminate discrimination against women in employment? How are these provisions enforced?
- Are women moving to better or worse paid employment? What are the consequences of this for women?
- Are there professions which, by law or custom tend to be filled predominantly by or are closed to women?
- Is there a bias against women in terms of employment because of a lack of child care facilities?
- Do women receive equal pay as men for equal work or work of equal value?
- What legislation exists to ensure women's equality in terms of employment? How is this legislation enforced in practice?
- Is work done by women in the home counted in national statistics? Do national statistics reflect the role of women in the economic sector? What means are being taken to ensure that censuses and other surveys accurately reflect the economic role of women within and outside of the household?
- Is there a difference between women and men's agricultural labour wages?
- Do women have equal access to credit facilities?
- Are women adequately covered by social security and other schemes: Are such schemes sufficiently gender sensitive? Is sufficient attention being paid during national level budgetary planning to groups at risk such as poor single mothers and female headed households?

V - ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

- What input do women have to favour the creation and/or strengthening of inter-institutional gender teams on gender and the environment within environmental policy making bodies?
- Is there any initiative or project to help produce gendered environmental statistics?
- Are there initiatives in the office to promote the participation of women in building the water agenda for GEF funding?
- What criteria does the Small Grants Program use to select beneficiaries? Is there affirmative action? Is there a differentiated impact on male and female beneficiaries?
- Are technologies used accessible, beneficial, and acceptable to both male and female stakeholders?
- Are extension studies facilitated, particularly for women, to improve the

accessibility and use of new technology?

- Is gender analysis and gender equality indicators integrated into programs and projects to identify where specific vulnerabilities exist and where opportunities for mitigating and adapting to environmental change can be found?

VI – CRISIS PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

- Do initiatives for the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts consider gender differences?
- Do initiatives for reduction of small weapons and conflict mitigation programs take into account gender differences?
- Does the office program for early disaster warning include women in its
- processes of formulation and implementation, especially at the local level?
- Are women informed of action to be taken in case of natural disasters or man-made disasters?
- Do women have access to protect their families in case of natural or man made disasters?

GENDER GLOSSARY

Sex
Refers to the biological differences between women and men. They are generally permanent and universal.

Gender
Refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men, in a given culture or location. These roles are influenced by perceptions and expectations arising from cultural, political, environmental, economic, social and religious factors, as well as custom, law, class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias. Gender attitudes and behaviors are learned and can be changed.

Gender discrimination
Refers to giving differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender. In many societies, this involves systemic and structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources, and participation in decision making.

Gender Equality
Means that there is no discrimination on grounds of a person's sex in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in the access to services. Gender equality may be measured in terms of whether there is equality of opportunity, or equality of results.

Structural gender inequality
Exists where a system of gender discrimination is practiced by public or social institutions. Structural gender inequality is more entrenched if it is maintained by administrative rules and laws, rather than by only custom and tradition.

Gender Equity
Means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and interests and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the sexes.

There has been a debate as to whether equality or equity should be the goals of empowerment and change. Because the meaning of equity has been seen to depend on the definition of fairness and justice. It is often said to be a lesser term than equality. In addition, in its legal sense the term equity may suggest a limited notion of the concept of justice, since equity refers to justice within the existing law, rather than justice by changing the law.

Gender Blind:
Gender blindness is the failure to recognize that gender is an essential determinant of social outcomes impacting on projects and policies. A gender blind approach assumes gender is not an influencing factor in projects, programmes or policies.

Gender mainstreaming:
Is the process of ensuring that women and men have equal access and control over resources, development benefits and decision-making at all stages of the development process and in all policies, programs and projects

Gender Indicators:
Analyses variables describing people's situation in society. Knowing social, labour, educational and economic reality from a gender perspective requires using these indicators, which make it possible to compare data for both sexes and identify differences that can lead to stereotypes.

Quota system:
Reserving a given number of participation space so that various groups can share social, political and economic activities. Positive action implies establishing percentages of female membership, so as to foster their presence in particular activities.

Gender Roles:
Gender roles are learned behaviour in a given society/community, or other special group, that condition which activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as male and female. Gender roles are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity, religion and by the geographical, economic and political environment. Changes in gender roles often occur in response to changing economic, natural or political circumstances, including development efforts.

Sex roles:
Refer to an occupation or biological function for which a necessary qualification is to belong to one particular sex category. For example, pregnancy is a female sex role because only members of the female sex may bear children.

Gender role stereotyping:
Is the constant portrayal, such as in the media or in books, of women and men occupying social roles according to the traditional gender division of labour in a particular society? Such gender role stereotyping works to support and reinforce the traditional gender division of labour by portraying it as "normal" and "natural".

Sex disaggregated data:
For a gender analysis, all data should be separated by sex in order to allow differential impacts on men and women to be measured.

Gender division of labour:
Is an overall societal pattern where women are allotted one set of gender roles, and men allotted another set? Unequal gender division of labour refers to a gender division of labour where there is an unequal gender division of reward. Discrimination against women in this sense means that women get most of the burden of labour, and most of the unpaid labour, but men collect most of the income and rewards resulting from the labour. In many countries the most obvious pattern in the gender division of labour is that women are mostly confined to unpaid domestic work and unpaid food production, whereas men dominate in cash crop production and wage employment.

Gender Awareness:
Gender awareness is an understanding that there are socially determined differences between women and men based on learned behaviour, which affect their ability to access and control resources. This awareness needs to be applied through gender analysis into projects, programmes and policies.

Gender sensitivity:
Are the ability to recognize gender issues and especially the ability to recognize women's different perceptions and interests arising from their different social location and different gender roles? Gender sensitivity is often used to mean the same as gender awareness, although gender awareness can also mean the extra ability to recognize gender issues which remain "hidden" from those with a more conventional point of view.

Gender issues:
Arise where an instance of gender inequality is recognized as undesirable, or unjust.

Gender analysis:
Means a close examination of a problem or situation in order to identify the gender issues. Gender analysis of a development programme involves identifying the gender issues within the problem which is being addressed and in the obstacles to progress, so that these issues can be addressed in all aspects of the programme - in project objectives, in the choice of intervention strategy and in the methods of programme implementation.

Practical needs & strategic needs:
Maxine Molyneux defines two types of "women's interest/needs": practical needs/interests and strategic interests/needs. Practical needs are those needs which do not challenge the unequal structure of gender relations, divisions of labour or traditional balances of power but relate to the spheres in which women have primary responsibilities. These differ from women's special needs but may sometimes arise from them.

Practical needs may differ according to the woman's or the group of women's social class, age and situation. They can vary from the need for income, to send children to school to have pumps for water…etc.

Unlike practical needs, strategic needs arise out of an understanding and analysis of women's subordinate situation in society (conscientisation). Strategic needs are actions and strategies which are required to bring about structural change and empowerment. These can include a need for political and legislation reform to grant constitutional equality to women; reproductive rights; state accession to CEDAW; a political voice; action on violence against women.

Patriarchy:

Is the male domination of ownership and control, at all levels in society, which maintains and operates the system of gender discrimination? This system of control is justified in terms of patriarchal ideology - a system of ideas based on a belief in male superiority, and sometimes the claim that the gender division of labour is based on biology or even based on scripture.

Empowerment:

Is an important element of development, being the process by which people take control and action in order to overcome obstacles. Empowerment means the collective action by the oppressed and deprived to overcome the obstacles of structural inequality which have previously put them in a disadvantaged position. The Women's Equality & Empowerment Framework regards empowerment as the goal, and at the same time, the essential process for women's advancement. It is the process by which women mobilize themselves to understand, identify and overcome gender discrimination, so as to achieve equality of welfare, and equal access to resources.

(Part of the Glossary is taken from UNICEF WEEF: Gender training Manual)