

*On track with gender*

# *On Track with Gender*

## Report Taking Stock phase

July 2009



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This report reflects the ‘work in progress’ of the *On Track with Gender* Trajectory, which is part of the Development Policy Review Network. The trajectory is the work of many people; from the steering committee who started this programme, to the contribution of several authors of the papers, and especially the practitioners, policymakers, academics and women’s rights activists that were present during the Expert Meeting and the Seminar on 28 and 29 May 2009. In this report we present the insights of the first phase of the *On Track with Gender* trajectory.

The *On Track with Gender* Trajectory is an initiative of the Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN/ Radboud University Nijmegen), Hivos, Oxfam Novib and the Gender Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is being financed and supported by the Development Policy Review Network as one of the three-year DPRN processes aiming at intersectoral cooperation and policy review.

Ireen Dubel (Hivos), Josine Stremmelaar (Hivos), Jeanette Kloosterman (Oxfam Novib), Ella de Voogd (Ministry for Development Cooperation), Tine Davids and Anouka van Eerdewijk (both CIDIN) are the members of the *On Track with Gender* Steering Committee. The coordination of the trajectory is based at CIDIN, with dr. Anouka van Eerdewijk.

## I Background

Almost fifteen years ago, governments committed themselves to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). This was to be realized through gender mainstreaming, which was then defined as a two-track strategy, encompassing on the one hand the integration of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue into all development policies and programs and budgetary decisions, and on the other hand the support to stand-alone women's empowerment and gender equality programs and policies. Over the years, most governments and actors in development cooperation have emphasized the track of gender mainstreaming at the expense of support for specific policy, programme and resources for women's empowerment. Meanwhile, gender mainstreaming has had little impact due to the way it had been implemented, as an a-political and technical approach, to fix particular organizational and institutional shortcomings. New aid modalities, such as the reductionist and technocratic Millennium Development Goals have further undermined the transformative nature of the two-track strategy. Gender policies, and in particular gender mainstreaming, have been vulnerable to ‘evaporation’ when they are to be translated into actual implementation. However, an overall comprehensive and systematic analysis - with multiple stakeholders - on the possible causes and solutions for this limited success is lacking.

This *On Track with Gender* Trajectory wants to take gender mainstreaming to a next level. It seeks to bring policymakers, practitioners, researchers, consultants and women's activists together in dialogue in order to create new synergies between these different actors that work on women's empowerment, gender and development issues. It also seeks to create space for the voices of Southern experts and organizations that have considerable experience/expertise in effective





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integrated strategic and practical women's empowerment and gender equality programmes. The objective of the Trajectory is to critically reflect on experiences with and insights into gender mainstreaming. Rather than contributing to the 'death of gender mainstreaming' by constantly repeating what does not work, we aim to build on the experiences and on the knowledge that is available, in order to rethink and transform the current understanding and practice of gender mainstreaming. While acknowledging what has been achieved, we seek to critically push the level of gender analysis as well as the formulation and implementation of gender (mainstreaming) policies. Dialogue and exchange between practitioners, policymakers, academics and activists is indispensable in this.

The *On Track with Gender* Trajectory covers three stages in three years (2008-2010). The first stage is devoted to 'Taking Stock': review of what has been done on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Ministry for Development Cooperation, Dutch NGOs and universities so far. It seeks to learn what policies and strategies are being pursued, and what can be learnt from evaluations that have been taken up so far. In addition to that, we aim to sketch the international context of gender mainstreaming by taking a close look at the recent review process of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: what does the Paris agenda imply for women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming, and more importantly how are gender issues addressed in the Declaration and the review process of the implementation of the Paris Declaration?

The outcomes of the reflection of the first year will set the stage for the second and third phase of the Trajectory. In those latter two years, specific policy fields will be subject to further scrutiny. The objective is to strengthen analysis, deepen insight, and strengthen policy formulation as well as strategies for implementation. A dialogue with Southern institutes and experts on women's empowerment, gender equality and gender mainstreaming will take a central place in the second year. The exact policy domains on which the Trajectory will focus will be decided at the end of the first phase on the basis of the 'Taking Stock' exercise. At the end of the third phase titled 'Back to the Future', we intend to come full circle, and relate the insights on the policy domains back to the 'taking stock' insights, in order to further strategize future collaboration.

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## II Taking Stock and Call for Papers

For the Taking Stock phase of the *On Track with Gender* trajectory, five papers have been written in response to the Call for Papers published late 2008. In response to the Call for Papers, nine proposals have been submitted. Five authors were invited to write the papers. Summaries of the papers are available on [www.ontrackwithgender.nl](http://www.ontrackwithgender.nl).

The papers have been prepared in a participatory process that allowed for the exchange of experiences and insights among gender experts in Dutch organizations and agencies. In January 2009 the author(s) convened a meeting with experts on the possible content, guiding questions and materials to be analyzed in the papers. Three months later (in the second half of March 2009), the author(s) met again with this group of experts to discuss the first draft of the paper. The aims of these two meetings were to:



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- (1) stimulate exchange and dialogue between different stakeholders in gender mainstreaming and
- (2) create a mechanism for input and feedback on the writing process.

During the writing process, authors and their advisors in the reading committees exchanged materials and versions of the papers through intranet facilities of the DPRN *On Track with Gender* Trajectory.

The following authors were selected to write the papers:

1. Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action through a gender lens: an international perspective and the case of the Dutch Development Cooperation.  
Authors: Nathalie Holvoet and Liesbeth Inberg
2. Energies and (dis)connections: The practice of gender mainstreaming in Dutch development cooperation.  
Author: Anouka van Eerdewijk
3. No instant success... Assessing gender mainstreaming evaluations.  
Author: Conny Roggeband
4. "You shouldn't be too radical": Mapping gender and development studies in Dutch academia.  
Author: Linda Mans
5. Gender mainstreaming: driving on square wheels. Theoretical review and reflections.  
Authors: Tine Davids, Francien van Driel, Franny Parren

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### III Expert meeting and seminar: outline

At the end of the Taking Stock phase two closing events were organized for reflection with a broader audience: an Expert Meeting and an open Seminar. The central theme of discussion in both meetings was: in what way does gender mainstreaming work or not, and why? In this section we present the outline of the two events, as well as an indication of the participants' background. Key findings are presented in the next section.

#### EXPERT MEETING (28 May 2009)

##### *Design and speakers*

The Taking Stock Expert Meeting seeks to reflect on the mainstreaming of gender in development cooperation and universities with the aim to draw lessons on existing practices, and identifying key lessons for the future. The variety of expertise and knowledge from policymakers, practitioners and academics that was brought together, provided a rich ground for the discussion and strengthened



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linkages between these different groups. Because all participants are used to different kind of languages, the morning session invested in developing a shared language.

In order to stimulate a reflection process in which the participants could actively engage, the Expert Meeting was designed in an interactive way. The five papers prepared in advance were treated as input-papers. Two keynote speakers were invited to a) highlight the key insights of the papers, and b) to critically reflect on them from their own expertise and experience.

The keynote speakers were: **Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay** (Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam) and **Marianne Marchand** (Universidad de las Américas, Mexico). After each lecture space was allowed for questions and comments to both the speakers and the authors of the papers.

The second part of the Expert Meeting was devoted to reflection in smaller working groups, which was followed by a plenary closing session. The working groups consisted of participants from different backgrounds. Each working group reported to the plenary group their key points regarding what works and what does not about gender mainstreaming, and why this might be the case. **Ellen Sprenger** facilitated this process.

Opening and welcome was provided by **Paul Bekkers** (Direction Health, Gender and Civil Society / Ministry of Foreign Affairs), DPRN coordinator **Mirjam Ros**, and **Anouka van Eerdewijk** (coordinator OTWG trajectory). The full programme is available in Annex A.

## Participants

In order to ensure the presence of high-qualified experts and a variety of participants, participation was only possible on invitation. In total, 49 people from diverse background participated in the Expert Meeting. All participants that signed up also showed up. This indicates the need of many people to reflect on GM in a collective space.

Academics:	22	M/F ratio:	5/44
Activists:	5		
Consultants:	6		
Ministries:	5		
NGOs:	11		

## SEMINAR (29 May 2009)

### Design and speakers

The objective of the seminar, which took place on the afternoon of May 29th at the Institute for Social Studies (ISS), was to share insights from the Expert Meeting with a broader audience and engage with them in further debate.

After a brief introduction by **Anouka van Eerdewijk**, two keynote speakers **Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay** and **Amy Lind** (Department of Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati) took the floor to present and share the key insights from the papers and the Expert Meeting. After each lecture there was ample space for questions and discussion. The full programme is available in Annex B.





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## Participants

In contrast to the Expert Meeting registration the seminar was open to everyone interested. At the seminar 57 participants were present. The background of people was slightly different.

Academics:	12	M/F ratio:	2/55
Activists:	5		
Ministries:	1		
NGOs:	30		
Students:	9		

## IV Key findings Taking Stock phase

### *Strategic framing into the mainstream*

Originally, gender mainstreaming (GM) carried the promise of a transformative strategy, by which policy formulation and implementation would be reorganized and improved with the ultimate goal of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Over the past decade, GM has run the risk of turning into an integration strategy. GM was rapidly and readily accepted by many Dutch and international development institutions after the Beijing conference (1995). Yet, the GM strategies and policies were often not very context and organization specific, which resulted in the evaporation of GM in its actual implementation.

In order to enter and become accepted into mainstream policy processes, a fit needs to be realized between the dominant policy frames of mainstream processes and the interests of promoting gender equality. In practice, GM has often taken shape in technocratic interventions and tools rather than transformative strategies. In order to mainstream and find support in development organizations, GM was often framed in the instrumentalist arguments: how to sell gender. In this process of framing, gender is often narrowed down to numbers, and in many cases also to women. Policies often focus on ways in which women can become 'efficient market actors' (e.g. through micro-credit programmes) or gender equality projects are narrowed down to three indicators of Millennium Development Goal 3: 'to promote gender equality and empower women'.

GM has been implemented in an environment of subdued neo-liberalism, which values individualistic, market-centred approach, focussing on efficiency. In this context, political issues like inequality are vulnerable to evaporation. The qualitative aspects of the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women were not captured in GM policies and strategies, and as a consequence often remained invisible. This has contributed to disappointments among gender experts, as well as resistance among non-gender staff who felt that the counting did not seem the relevant entry point to the promotion of gender equality.

### *Drawbacks after early success*

The Netherlands have been a pioneer in incorporating a gender perspective in development cooperation. Even prior to Beijing, organizations created gender units, appointed gender experts, provided gender awareness training to staff, developed innovative tools to monitor the performance





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of project and programmes on gender, and set targets for spending on women, gender and development issues.

The early mobilizing efforts and strategic framings however faced a drawback from the mid 1990s onwards, with the demobilization of networks such as the *Vrouwenberaad*, and the decay of the gender infrastructure within organizations, where gender programmes and units were mainstreamed, or 'away-streamed'. Internationally, budgets for women and gender programmes and organizations started to decrease. All this meant that the actors and structures which had allowed for the early pioneering role of the Netherlands, saw their position weakened. This contributed to the further technocratization of GM, as the voice and pressure from women's organizations and from gender experts was undermined. In recent years, a revival is being witnessed, with new opportunities with the Minister for Development Cooperation having identified equal chances and opportunities for women and girls as one of his four priority areas, and with new efforts to revitalize training, working groups and tools.

### *Micro-politics of GM*

In order to assess why GM works or not, the micropolitics of organizations have to be taken into account. We should not only focus on the content and outcome of a policy but also look at the micro-politics of policymaking and the processes in which policies are shaped, re-negotiated and given meaning by actors within organisations. GM strategies within Dutch development organizations frequently rely on gender assessment tools, and input and outreach targets. Such targets and assessments are important for stimulating action and keeping gender on the agenda. They are however also vulnerable to being treated as merely administrative aspects in the relationships NGO staff have with counterpart organizations.

NGO staff within non-gender programmes are open and supportive to gender assessments and targets, but are at the same time critical of their quantitative character and the negative incentives they generate (stick rather than carrot). Moreover, individual staff members are expected to pursue GM objectives within programmes which often lack an explicit gender analysis. This creates a catch-22 situation in which staff have to meet targets, whereas the priorities of the programmes in which they operate are not gender-sensitive.

Most staff do not so much question the 'why' of GM, but have many questions with regard to the 'how' to do it. In response to such questions, there is space for translating GM more to specific policy areas and explore how gender equality related to areas such as microfinance, agriculture, reproductive health, value chains, hiv/aids, arts, democratization, humanitarian assistance, etcetera. Gender equality objectives need to be broken down to specific policy fields, and connectors could play an important role in a shared analysis and identification of gender issues and priorities within those fields. There is an opportunity here: practitioners nowadays emphasise a need for tools. They are asking how to deal with resistance and show a need for reflection on gender and connections to other identity markers as well.

### *The international context of changing aid architecture*

Gender efficiency and (other forms of) efficiency are different concepts. The neo-classical idea of efficiency is that poverty is the main cause of inequality. The presumption is that it can be solved by increasing income, or  $a+b=c$ . While the conceptualisation of gender efficiency is build on the idea





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that human behaviour should not only be analysed on the basis of agency but also in certain biased structures. The problem is that the reductionist vision of efficiency (neo-classical idea) is dominant within current development cooperation.

Although new efforts of mobilisation by lobby networks tried to bring issues of gender back in new aid modalities, in particular in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, gender is largely written out of those scripts. Especially at embassy level (in case of the Netherlands) within development countries gender disappears from the agenda or is 'generalized' within programmes. Moreover, as within the new aid modalities responsibilities are mostly located in the hands of the institutions of development countries, Dutch/ Western agents feel less pressure to 'perform well on gender' or to demand gender equality policies.

There is a need for more reflection on the contexts and strategies gender equality and gender mainstreaming have to be promoted. What are the challenges within our own development organisations? We have to be careful suggesting that gender should be mainstreamed into the Global South while we are not able to do it ourselves. This is also important to avoid processes of 'othering' in which the South is told to do GM whereas at the same time the North is not able to do so.

### *Theoretical developments and definitions of 'gender' and 'equality'*

In theoretical debates, GM has come about in a shift from 'women in development' (WID) to 'gender and development' (GAD). Clarity is needed on definitions of 'gender' and 'equality' while talking about GM. In the past decade, gender studies in academic circles has moved away from a focus on 'women and development', to the much broader field of 'gender and globalization'. In the same time, theoretical frameworks have become more complicated and complex.

In addition, clarity is needed on questions such as 'what is mainstreaming', 'mainstreaming into what' and 'for whom'. In theory as well as in practice there is a clearer vision on inequality than on the what gender equality exactly is and entails. Heteronormativity and intersectionality provide openings for nuanced thinking about social change and justice. GM is adaptable to specific situations and it is important to take into account different realities. Considering that and how conceptualizations and ways of framing GM trickle down in policy and practice, these conceptualizations needs to correspond with (and be reconnected to) local realities.

Within academic circles however, there seems to be a loss of activism due to being strategic silences on gender and inequality. Renewed alliances and cooperation between academia and practitioners might be necessary and fruitful. Academics could, for example, play a role in enlarging political recognition of gender and GM. However, the strengthening of such dialogues and synergies is challenged by the different histories and discourses within different sectors.

### *Revitalizing the political project: unpacking GM*

An important gain of the past decade is that the gender question has become more legitimate. The key conclusion of the Taking Stock exercise is the need to contextualize and unpack GM. This first of all requires more clarity in what sense and to what extent development organizations are the objects or the subjects of GM. As objects, the organizations are the ones that need to be transformed; as subjects, these organizations contribute to the promotion of both GM and gender equality in other institutions and society at large. This raises two questions: (1) what is needed to





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transform organizations, and (2) what can organizations do in order to contribute to social change and societal transformation?

Secondly, GM policies have to be adapted to the specific characteristics, objectives and work processes of an organization. Both the neo-liberal context in which international development cooperation takes shape and the micro-politics within organizations need to be considered and taken into account in the design and implementation of GM strategies.

The ambitious agenda of GM needs to be broken down to smaller steps, in order to ensure that organizations and staff can grasp it. Where are we now, what are the overall objectives of GM, what mid-term goals can be specified within and for particular organizations and settings, which investments and initiative can be taken, and how can we evaluate their success or shortcomings?

A vital point in this respect is to figure out what is needed in order to make change at institutional level happen. The pioneering experience of Dutch development cooperation in relation to GM has underlined the importance of mobilising networks and gender experts. It is time to see what specific steps need to be taken in this time and place to make the transformation of both institutions and societies happen.

It is necessary to build 'creative tensions' within and around organizations, in order to stimulate and pressure them to change and transform. For such creative tensions, 'triangles' are needed of (1) gender experts within and outside organizations, (2) women movement and feminist organizations, and (3) women in decision-making positions and procedures. In the context of international development, 'triangles' also have to bridge North-South divides. By building multiple 'triangles', not only dialogues, but also trialogues can create innovation and energy through feedback loops that come into life between different types of actors and different institutions and organizations.





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## ANNEX A: Programme Expert Meeting – TAKING STOCK

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May 28th 2009

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Multi Purpose Room

- 9.00 Registration and coffee& tea
- 9.30 Welcome by Paul Bekkers  
*Direction Health, Gender and Civil Society ( Ministry of Foreign Affairs)*
- 9.35 Welcome by Dr. Mirjam Ros  
*Development Policy Review Network*
- 9.40 Welcome by Dr. Anouka van Eerdewijk  
*Coordinator On Track with Gender trajectory*
- 10.00 Introduction to today's programme  
Ellen Sprenger (facilitator)
- 10.20 **Key note address Dr. Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay**  
*Royal Tropical Institute (Amsterdam)*
- 10.40 Questions and comments on key note lecture and papers  
With:
- Dr. Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay (*Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam*)
  - Dr. Conny Roggeband (*Culture, Organizations and Management, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*)
  - Dr. Nathalie Holvoet (*Instituut voor Ontwikkeling & Beleid, Antwerpen*)
  - Dr. Anouka van Eerdewijk (*Centre for International Development Issues, Nijmegen*)
- 11.15 Coffee break
- 11.30 **Key note address prof. Marianne Marchand**  
*Universidad de las Américas (Mexico)*
- 11.50 Questions and comments on key note lecture and papers  
With:
- Prof. Marianne Marchand (*Universidad de las Américas, Mexico*)
  - Drs. Tine Davids (*Centre for International Development Issues, Nijmegen*)
  - Drs. Linda Mans (*Manskracht*)
  - Dr. Nathalie Holvoet (*Instituut voor Ontwikkeling & Beleid, Antwerpen*)
- 12.30 LUNCH
- 13.30 **Workshop sessions**
- 15.15 Coffee break
- 15.30 **Plenary discussion**
- 16.30 Closing remarks
- 16.45 Drinks and reception



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## ANNEX B: Programme Seminar – TAKING STOCK

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May 29th 2009

ISS – Aula B

- 13.30      Registration  
            Coffee & tea
- 14.00      **Welcome and introduction to On Track with Gender**  
            Anouka van Eerdewijk  
            *(Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen)*
- 14.20      **Introduction to today's programme**  
            Ellen Sprenger
- 14.30      **Key note address**  
            **Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay**  
            *Royal Tropical Institute (Amsterdam)*
- 14.55      Questions and comments
- 15.35      Coffee/tea break
- 15.50      **Key note address**  
            **Amy Lind**  
            *Department of Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati*
- 16.15      Questions and comments
- 17.00      **Closing remarks**  
            Steering Committee On Track with Gender
- 17.15      Drinks and reception