

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EMPOWERING INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR ETHIOPIAN YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS

A CONCEPT AND METHODOLOGY PAPER

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This think piece serves as a backgrounder to found a civil society organisation that advances empowerment training and education among school age girls and young women within the framework of gender-sensitive life skills training, education and communication.

Introduction

Empowerment is about gaining *power* and *liberty*, it is the *faculty* or *capacity* to *act*, the *strength* and *potency* to accomplish a common community and citizenship duty. It is the vital energy to make choice and decisions -- to overcome deeply embedded practices and to cultivate higher, more effective ones. Empowerment, the feeling of security, and guidance, brings about true wisdom which in turn becomes the spark or catalyst to release and direct power. The paper analyses gender-sensitive empowerment in light the significance of its constitutive effects on the plenitude of particular representations, attaining coherence and integrity; even as it comes into play in varied contexts of activity. While it may be tied to the initiatives and leadership of assignable organisations or groups in its emergence and development, it nonetheless gains currency as a relatively autonomous system that other, competing, concepts and organisations can also participate in and operate.

As a set of distinctly general categories and mechanisms of gender thought, discourse and practice, mainstreaming gender- *empowerment* takes the diversity of particular ideas and activities into itself and makes them a vital part of its conceptual and institutional economy. It mediates and channels specific actors and their activities by means of an objectification and generalisation that works on and through them. It attempts to present the dearth of current ideological rectitude by asking

1. Do gender *sensitive life skills training, education and communication* enter the arena of human development as an external ideology, constructing and deploying its concepts in sterile abstraction from the immediacies of indigenous traditions, beliefs and values?
2. In the case of Ethiopia in particular, do ideas addressing gender-*sensitive life skills training*, and gender equality come into play in total opposition to, or in co-operation with historic national values and sentiments?
3. In the struggle over the establishment of gender-sensitive rules of engagement, do leaders at all levels equate the articulation of their ideas and agendas with the production of broad-based concepts, norms and goals which should govern their leadership of sustainable livelihoods and does this signify a new kind of activity - an activity mediated and guided by objective and critical democratic standards, rules and principles?

In this light, *gender sensitive life skills training, education and communication* can be understood as a dynamic two-way operation. Generic forms on particular contents and particular contents on generic forms in which the deployment of the conceptual and institutional machinery of gender relations is at the same time the representation of specific needs, interests, motivations, claims, rights and obligations by individuals and groups. Going beyond structuring or rearranging gender actors and institutional activities in their spontaneous, often turbid reality, *gender-sensitive life skills training, education and communication* should result in the transformation of civic action into transparent agency and practice within the framework of a functioning political system. From the above analysis, the guiding objectives and principles of the gender-sensitive empowerment is to promote a national multi-sectoral and multi disciplinary mobilization for empowering school age girls and young women, to promote behaviour change. Specifically, the CSO will

1. promote a national understanding and acceptance of the principle that all persons must accept responsibility for guiding school age girls and young women and that all persons must accept responsibility for providing care and support school age girls and young women
2. ensure that communities are sensitized on area-specific preventable risk factors and empowered

to assess and analyze issues and act through genuine community involvement;

3. assist in removing human resource, financial, cultural and informational barriers to educating school age girls and young women; ensuring that the nation's laws and policies complement and assist school age girls and young women – to develop and implement a multi-sectoral, multi disciplinary institutional framework and legal machinery for school age girls and young women and to implement the activities using a decentralized and participatory approach, which incorporates all tiers of government as well as the private profit and non-profit sectors;
4. To empower school age girls and young women to form networks and contribute to planning and programming at national, state, wereda government and community levels; to ensure surveillance system is effective in providing accurate, periodic and timely information to individuals responsible for the development of program policy, to key decision makers and program managers and to influential opinion leaders at national, state, and local levels;
5. To stimulate research, documentation and research networks and recognize that a forceful response to gender issues centred on the development of a cohesive and cross-cutting strategy for the prevention of women's disempowerment.

Section I.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR ANALYSING GENDER-SENSITIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Current discussions and analyses of gender-related empowerment and their management are generally are marked by several limitations. These include: (1) a tendency to narrow *gender-sensitive life skills training* thinking and practice to the terms and categories of immediate, not very well considered, social action, a naive realism, as it were. (2) inattention to problems of gender articulation or production of endogenous gender relations systems and process within locally grounded socio-politics rather than simply as formal or abstract possibilities. (3) Ambiguity as to whether civil society exists in the strength its historical mandate signifies and is it an agent or object of change? (4) a nearly exclusive concern in certain institutional perspectives on *gender-sensitive life skills training* with generic attributes and characteristics of political societies and organisations and consequent neglect of analysis in terms of specific strategies and performances of civil society organisations.

I

INATTENTION TO PROBLEMS OF ARTICULATION OF GENDERISED-LIFE

When it is not dissolved into the immediate reality gender is likely to be represented as "pure" principle that needs only proper "application". Practitioners and analysts of gender mainstreaming tend to quickly pass over the particular nature of democracy in fragmentary presence in much of Africa, "adjusting" it against an ideal-general conception of what it might be. Consequently, critical problems concerning the philosophical and practical entrenchment of gender mainstreaming receive scant attention. The fundamental issues of how the concepts, standards and practices could be generated and sustained under historically hectic conditions, and the manner in which they are likely to gain systemic integrity and autonomy as well as broad social currency are inadequately addressed.

This relative inattention leads analysts and practitioners to make internal observations and assessments in terms of the performances of polities without raising the question of setting up or securing the polities as democratic systems in the first place. Citizen action, democracy and gender relations must actually exist, take definite shape and structure and become a working process, before particular criticisms, claims and demands can be based on it.

Insofar as existing perspectives neglect to pose the problem of articulation of empowerment as a relatively autonomous mode of analysis, they would consist of a set of activities in which mainly Western concepts and standards of gender are neatly "applied to", as distinct from produced or re-produced in, Ethiopian contexts and conditions.

II

WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY: AGENTS OR OBJECTS OF DEVELOPMENT!

The hypotheses to address here are (1) that gender-sensitive social transformation is most likely managed when initiatives emanate from civil society rather than other organisational sectors. Women's political interests in civil society must become formally organised if they are to achieve empowerment (2) The

effectiveness of organisations in civil society at promoting gender reforms depends on their autonomy, capacity, complexity, and coherence. The organisation, which displays the greatest strength on these dimensions, is likely to become the lead organisation in civil society in promoting democratic reform.

In the current drive for empowerment and gender justice, civil society and institutions within it are "foregrounded" as the arena, agents and instruments of the movement. Internal and external demands for and the need to reform the indigenous state into a system of transparent practices have placed a heavy emphasis on social institutions as autonomous actors within democratic projects. The most likely and most effective initiative will come from below, outside the state, in civil society. Society yields the spontaneous interests, demands and institutional mechanisms of governance and sustainable livelihood security.

From this perspective, the state has only a limited role to play. Its function will not be to manage society's empowerment, but to create the enabling conditions for endogenous mechanisms to work efficiently. Institutions and groups in civil society must be allowed to form and run themselves. When they begin to address longer socio-economic and political issues beyond their limited sectional concerns, or to co-operate with the state on certain matters, they should be able to do so in terms of their specific interests and competence, not as mere instruments or extensions of governments.

Alternatively, the "under-development of civil society" and the "incapacities" of institutions within it are seen as major barriers to endogenous action. Some assert that the activities of some social institutions may have the salutary effect of bringing into transparency the work of government, and of opening up state institutions and practices to public suiting. But the overall weakness of civil societies is often cited as a fundamental structural constraint to governance and sustainable livelihood security. Rather than offering agents and arenas of transitions to democracy, African civil societies are generally seen as objects and problems of reform.

On account of this view, the state assumes a large role in gender justice. It is assigned the task of nothing less than "cultivating genderised-civil society" itself through political education and mobilisation and other

means. Government is not pushed to the background as society activates itself and leads the struggle for reform. Rather, the former acts on the latter, promotes and manages the participation of individuals and groups in democratisation. We have here, then, two divergent representations of civil society accompanied by somewhat disturbing conceptions of the role of the state in the African passage to democracy.

III

OVERPLAY OF GENERIC INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES

Institutional approaches to the study of gender governance call for analysis of the effectiveness of non-governmental institutions in contributing to the reforms in terms of the generic characteristics of the organisations. The characteristics include autonomy, capacity, complexity, cohesion and a combination of these. Presumably, the more organisations and institutions are endowed with these attributes, the greater their strength, and the more likely they are to promote sustainable livelihoods.

1. The prospects for good governance based on gender equality depends on the extent that the state apparatus contains organisations that are autonomous (from the executive branch), capacious, complex and cohesive.
2. The organisation, which displays the greatest strength on these dimensions, is likely to become the lead organisation in the state promoting gender relations.
3. Other organisations contribute to gender relations to the extent that their office-holders assert professional standards. The prospects for gender relations are heightened to the extent that the women's organisations exhibit independence by arbitrating neutrally in rule disputes between state (the executive branch) and their organised plaintiffs in society.

The stress on standard organisational dimensions and traits in explaining sustainable livelihood security, which borders on over-emphasis, is problematic. We can here identify three problems with it.

1. First, **it assumes or requires a level of development and strength of institutions societies** beyond that of the developing societies in question.
2. Second, it makes the rather **questionable connection between the strength of institutions and the likelihood of their promotion of gender**. Why should one equate, for example, the cohesion of an organisation with what that organisation actually does, or how it might behave gender-wise? One should be alive to the possibility that actual performances of autonomous and complex institutions may be indifferent, or even contrary to gender principles, notwithstanding the formal profession of such principles by the institutions in question.
3. Third, the stress on generic traits of government and non- government institutions in explaining empowerment and their management largely overlooks substantive gaps in organisations' knowledge of gender and livelihood security ideas and practices as a source of problems of empowerment generation along with structural incapacities of organisations.
4. Through particular strategies, performances and self-evaluations, governmental and non-governmental agencies can make significant contributions to achieving gender justice even when the generic endowments they bring to the task are limited. Capacity building for gender relations is important. But it is also important that institutions in civil society and the state make the most effective use of whatever actual capacity they have for promoting governance and sustainable livelihood security change.

Section II

CREATION OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONABLE PROGRAMME AREAS

STRATEGIES		ACTIONABLE PROGRAMME AREAS	
Removal of socio-cultural barriers			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise key influential groups to respond to women's disempowerment • Mobilise influential groups to respond to women's disempowerment - Sensitize and increase awareness • To create an enabling environment for women's empowerment
Removal of information barriers			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically update data base on good practices • Economic and social impact / behavioural studies • Establish information and resource centres on women's empowerment • Develop and implement guidelines and mechanisms for research on key aspects of women's disempowerment
Removal of systemic barriers			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop National programme management capacity to successfully implement the grassroots action plan. Identify funding flows + strategies to increase funding for grassroots action plan implementation. Develop financial management systems for implementation of grassroots action plan • Ensure the Legal status /capacity of local women's organisations • Build capacity of Civil society organizations for grassroots action plan implementation
Catalysing community based-responses			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Needs Assessment, training plan and implementation • Monitoring of training impact • Funding gap analysis and development of transparent financial management systems • Develop operational systems + reporting mechanisms • Composition and training of mobilisation teams • Compose and train local rural mobilisation teams • Development of and funding of Community Action Plan. • Information dissemination, counselling and linking victims with care & support sources.
STRATEGY V: HIGH RISK GROUP TARGETED INTERVENTIONS	Empowerment of women to negotiate safer sex	Youth High risk and non-high risk youth population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and coordinate the development of youth focused mass media campaign • Selection and training of popular sports men and women, singers and musicians and young actors and actresses to convey women's empowerment messages • Sensitisation of communities within tertiary institutions • Development, pre-test and production of women's empowerment modules for integration into the curriculum • Integration of women's empowerment modules into curriculum • Training per state for teaching staff that will teach basic facts about women's disempowerment/STIs in tertiary institutions. • Inclusion of women's disempowerment issues in publications of tertiary institutions, e.g. newsletters, journals papers, books • Conduct peer education training in all tertiary institutions • Conduct reproductive Health and Rights education for female students in tertiary institutions • • Develop and produce a women centred manual to train and empower vulnerable women for women's disempowerment prevention • Develop IEC materials targeting women in polygamous relationships • Conduct TOT workshops for market place women on peer counselling, gender issues and women's disempowerment and negotiation safer sex • Train CSOs to include gender & women's empowerment in their programmes • Conduct workshops on women's disempowerment prevention, • Establish • Conduct sensitisation meetings in six Police zones. • Empower women and girls to negotiate safer sex • Establish anti-AIDS Girls Clubs in secondary schools • Identify and support community-based established programmes on women's disempowerment targeting out-of-school youth in urban area

Section III

METHODOLOGY: EFFECTIVE GENDER EMPOWERMENT REQUIRES GOOD INFORMATION

Effective gender mainstreaming requires good information: Timely access to new research, writing and thinking about gender and gender mainstreaming; producing useable and useful resources for varied audiences and constituencies; managing organizational information effectively and capturing data and expertise in events and meetings - using innovative methods and systems. The growing recognition of, and renewed attention to, information and communications along with the development of new information and communication technologies are opening up new possibilities for collaboration and sustained networking. While still far from universal, computers and the Internet are allowing many more voices and perspectives to be heard and made visible. The following are other arenas in which information is required

1. Effective gender mainstreaming requires strategic networking: Regular and substantive exchange with colleagues, practitioners and like-minded organizations; Knowing who and where the knowledge sources are in a changing environment; reaching out to and engaging in dialogue with known and unknown constituencies; promoting a more inclusive process of participation by stakeholders and encouraging collaboration and raising the visibility of the organization's activities and outputs. Documents can be made easily available across distances of space and time. For example the Internet made possible the involvement and informed participation of many more thousands of women through the Beijing process than would have been possible with more conventional communications tools. The nature of the technologies, then, makes communications more horizontal and allows people separated by time and geography to take part in ongoing discussions and debates, to share experiences and strategies. There are distinct improvements to be had both in terms of content/outputs and in participation.
2. Effective Gender Mainstreaming Requires Continuous Learning: broadening the debate around gender and gender mainstreaming, promoting richer content of debate by facilitating a wide range of resources and much improved flow of information, experiences and perspectives on existing policies and programmes, systematically capturing, learning from and sharing (our own and others) good practices in gender mainstreaming. Gender Mainstreaming knowledge and experiences can be shared through informal networking, awareness raising groups, meetings, and trainings.
3. Committing to learning and knowledge-sharing: What are some current trends in knowledge-sharing and information for development? What might it take to systematically incorporate a communications strategy and technology planning into organizational life? How can information and communications tools and technologies contribute to improving everyday tasks? How could existing information systems be better utilized? Where can we turn for help in using Internet-based tools more effectively? These questions are a guide to the slides that follow and will be addressed as the presentation progresses. Activity: This is an opportunity for participants to add their views, and explore the strengths and weakness of their own situations. The participants could be divided into small groups by region, sector or area of interest and explore one or more of the questions in their small groups. Report-backs to the plenary could be flip-charted by the facilitator or recorder and analysed by the group for similarities, differences, questions and possible future recommendations.
4. Trends in Knowledge Networking and Information for Development: Information and communication technologies (information and communication technologies) are driving a renewed emphasis on information and communications. New information and communication technologies are providing tools for doing things in new ways from governance to education to administration. There is a growing debate about how the architecture of national and global information infrastructures

- might, or might not, contribute to human and sustainable development goals. The knowledge sharing potential of new information and communication technologies are enabling and, in some cases, forcing international and local institutions to become more global in character. Gender advocates are bringing a critical voice to the debates on the role of information and communication technologies for development.
5. Knowledge has become a new buzzword in development and the debates around information, communications and knowledge are growing. This has been largely driven by the emergence of new information and communications technologies and their various successes and shortcomings. There is also growing concern over the growing gaps in access, both to the tools and in the content, as well as issues around privacy, gendered impacts, increasing concentration of control and ownership over information environments, among others.
 6. Basic Functions of Information and Communication In Organizations: Four Basic Functions Of Information & Communication In Organizations: (1) Promote and disseminate the organization's activities and outputs, reaching and catching the attention of target audiences, raising visibility, and looking for impact. (2) Help locate and bring external knowledge resources into the organization. (3) Strengthen the collaboration and networking efforts of the organization's staff with people in other organizations. (4) Improve internal communication and information exchange.
 7. Organizational and Individual Commitments and Actions - What organizational and individual commitments and actions are needed to put information, communications and knowledge-sharing systems in place? Reorient organizational perspectives and policies. Use and adapt existing knowledge systems or create new ones. Develop new skills and competencies. Commit to mindful use of information and communication technologies. Create an action plan for information, communications and knowledge-sharing.
 8. Reorienting organizational perspectives and policies - Reorient organizational perspectives and policies by making an organizational and individual commitment to: Share knowledge assets. Move from the traditional role of programme delivery agent into a more organic entity that consolidates and brokers knowledge assets. Develop knowledge-sharing strategies. Develop a knowledge-sharing strategy to identify organizational knowledge assets, key constituencies and their information needs, and the role of the Web and other information and communication technologies as vehicles for change. Facilitate organizational reflection and learning. Incorporate and build vision and strategy components that facilitate organizations as centres of reflection and learning – enabling networks to form and thrive and providing partners with information for better decision-making. Embrace collaboration. Embrace collaborative environments that enable development sector specialists and practitioners to share knowledge and interact at more equal levels/channels of influence.

Section V

LEARNING & INFORMATION

An Outline of the learning and communication methodology

The indigenous knowledge learning and communication methodology combines known adult education techniques with research on competencies for gender mainstreaming. It has demonstrated its effectiveness in building multiple capacities to act as a change agent – to take risks, seize openings, think dialectically, deploy skills of "purposeful opportunism" and influence decision-making processes effectively and productively. It builds leadership and team-related skills at many levels.

1. The methodology comprises four elements:

- a set of learning materials in the six areas that make up the competencies required for gender mainstreaming.
 - Specific facilitation skills and processes which are relevant for both individual workshop events and for broader cycles of organizational learning and
 - a set of management systems to support both these linked processes.
 - All of these are linked by an overall *approach* to adult learning.
2. The Learning Materials include the six knowledge, skill and attitude sets that have been identified as comprising (gender) mainstreaming capacity. These are:
- conceptual clarity on mainstreaming in general, and gender mainstreaming in particular;
 - socio-economic and policy analysis;
 - creating and seizing opportunities – organizational and project cycle entry points for gender mainstreaming;
 - process management and advocacy skills;
 - strategic planning and strategy development; and
 - information management and communication.
3. The basic model used in developing the methodology was that of a spiral, which symbolizes the emphasis on consultation as the foundation of iterative cycles of learning. This model also guides the *déroulement* of each learning and communication session, and the structure of many of the individual sessions within it, and the facilitation process itself. This spiral could also govern planned cycles of organizational learning.
4. The methodology is based on techniques of participation, systematic needs assessment linked to functional requirements, and a mix of methods and approaches to respond to the identified needs. It is a competency-based learning support strategy, which defines learning as a sustained change in behaviour and performance, in the capacity to do a job and fulfil a function. Moreover, the methodology is fully participatory. This means that workshops are not only structured in such a way that people get to talk to each other and questions are encouraged. The purpose of the programme is to help people learn how to operationalise policy through consultative processes, provide a fully enabling environment for them, and make the time to work through the difficulties that arise, in which the most intensive learning usually takes place.
5. At the heart of the methodology lies a commitment to identify and respond to the learning needs of each workshop participant, as mediated by their function(s) within the organization (i.e., their specific contributions to the attainment of policy objectives). This responsiveness requires a quite specific perspective on the facilitation function, and on the facilitation skills required. This perspective is the subject of this document.
6. Approach to Adult Learning: Each of the three elements of the methodology was developed through, and is implemented by a combination of factors which together have been designated the learning and communication *approach*. The approach is made up of: *Learning* according to objectives determined through mutual analysis of needs, self-assessed, organizationally defined and professionally compared. *Consultation* among staff and external resource people to share, organise and analyse their experiences relating to gender mainstreaming. Such consultation helps in identifying lessons learned, good practice/s and recommendations for action. Consultation provides the base of experience from which organisational change can be initiated and the capacity to act as a change agent built.
- *Briefing* on the latest in basic information, perspectives, data, position statements, policy decisions, practical guidelines, research information, and the development of tools, techniques and methodologies
 - *Linkages with the workplace*, so that decisions on desired outcomes, strategies and activities are transferred back to the workplace of the workshop participants. Such transfer mechanisms are built into the design of the learning and communication methodology, as are tracking and evaluation systems to ensure accountability.

7. The dearth of tools and methods to record indigenous knowledge systems has made it imperative that we develop research and development tools. While a general awareness of community's research and indigenous knowledge systems is rapidly increasing, lack of the methodology has become an uphill struggle, creating a vacuum that may erode our proclaimed goals in social development. The tools to be used in this study are direct observation and participation. The following represent some of the methods to record indigenous knowledge systems are discussed in the following:
- a. Dynamic observations are effective in identifying and recording various indigenous technical practice of community's; beginning the moment of contact with a potential field setting and during the familiarisation process. The observations have been documented immediately and with the greatest detail because never again will you experience in the same setting will be available. The following procedures, largely borrowed from PARTICIPATORY Learning and ACTION, provide an idea of how the team conducted the dynamic observation to document indigenous technical practices and indigenous community's technical knowledge of community's.
 - b. **Observing indigenous community's technical knowledge**: Indigenous community's technical knowledge adopted by community's and farm labours in their respective farms can be observed;
 - c. **Documenting indigenous community's technical knowledge**: The observed Indigenous community's technical knowledge can be documented using a camera;
 - d. **Analysing indigenous community's technical knowledge**: The salient features of indigenous community's technical knowledge can be recorded in a pocket notebook by carefully observing, and listening to the conversations between labourers and community's and
 - e. **Titling indigenous community's technical knowledge**: Later on, an appropriate title for each of the indigenous community's technical knowledge recorded can be identified through informal discussion either with the participant community's or with the labourers who are encountered in the farm holdings;
 - f. By adopting the above procedure systematically and patiently, indigenous community's technical knowledge related to the following areas of food production and resource conservation can be documented: cropping systems, seeds and sowing, seed processing, soil health care management, planting techniques, crop nutrient management systems, weed management techniques, plant protection strategies, and post-harvesting procedures.
 - g. Unstructured Interaction: The purpose of unstructured interactions is to elucidate relevant information pertaining to indigenous community's technical knowledge that are documented during the participant observation stage: community's' beliefs, values, and customs related to the indigenous community's technical knowledge. This interaction would provide an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of local community's. The success of unstructured interaction lies in the careful involvement of key informants. Key informants are those local people who are willing to talk or be interviewed intensively regarding the matter of specific interest.
 - h. Synopsis on local institutions, local people's knowledge and practices.
 - i. efforts to mobilise the populace and initiate the citizens towards democratic culture has been a futile exercise until the present day; although the participation of grass-root institutions in administration of

resources and management of political change has been indispensable for a number of reasons.

- j. People's behaviour is conditioned by community norms and consensus, so building democracy at the heart of society requires more than just individual incentives and persuasion.
 - k. Institutions encourage people to take a longer-term view by creating common expectations and a basis for co-operation that goes beyond individual interests. To the extent institutions are regarded as legitimate, people comply without (or with fewer) inducements and sanctions.
 - l. Institutions, especially at local levels, are important for mobilising resources and regulating their use with a view to maintaining a long-term base for productive activity.
- m. Available resources can be put to their most efficient and sustainable use with location-specific knowledge, which is best generated and interpreted locally.
 - n. Monitoring changes in resources' status can be quicker and less costly where local people are involved;
 - o. making adaptive changes in resource use is speeded up where local decision-making has become institutionalised.
 - p. while local institutions are not always able to resolve resource management conflicts, if they are absent, all conflicts must be dealt with at higher levels, yielding slower and often less appropriate outcomes.