

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)**

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND  
ACTIVITIES OF MINISTRIES OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**GUIDE**

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United Nations  
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Note: This study is based on a background paper by Ms. Reem Falooh Al-Zabn, Expert Consultant at ESCWA Centre for Women. The views expressed in this study are the opinions of the writer, and are not necessarily the views of the United Nations.

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## Introduction

Within the ESCWA strategic framework for the biennium 2010-2011, and with a view to implementing the ESCWA Centre for Women programme of work for 2010-2011, which aims to promote the advancement of women, raise awareness of gender issues, and build capacities for gender mainstreaming in programmes and employment policy in member countries, workshops were held, within a training programme, on ways of carrying out gender-based analysis in institutions and on how to build on that analysis by drawing up institution-based action plans for gender mainstreaming. The training programme targeted the ministries of labour and social affairs in Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in Qatar, which joined the second phase of the training programme, and national machineries for women in those countries.

To achieve the programme's objectives and carry out institutional analysis with a view to drawing up plans for gender mainstreaming in the ministries of labour in the participating countries, theoretical and real-world concepts and terms related to gender-issues needed to be defined. Workshops must be held in ministries to raise awareness of those fundamental concepts before embarking on an analysis of gender issues. In its definition of gender mainstreaming, the United Nations states that the concept of gender is reflected in the social roles performed by men and women, which are assigned to them on the basis of their sex. Gender is taken into consideration when evaluating similarities and differences between men and women, not when a direct reference is made to biological differences, but when focusing on the behaviour expected of men and women and the cultures that give legitimacy to such behaviour. Such gender roles often gain greater prominence in specific areas and at specific times. Men and women's gender roles are intricately linked to their socio-economic context and to particular times; such roles thus vary in accordance with the context in which men and women find themselves. While the term "sex" is linked to the physical and biological characteristics of men and women, the term "gender" is used to highlight differences between men and women that are based on the specific social roles assigned to both sexes. Unlike their biological-dependent roles, the social roles of both sexes are dynamic and are constantly in flux; the relationship between men and women alters in parallel with their changing roles, responsibilities and with the opportunities available to them. Such roles which tend to become reinforced over time and are the result of the prevailing social context and political situation.<sup>1</sup>

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has recognized that to promote gender mainstreaming, a strategy that addresses the concerns and circumstances of both men and women is needed when drawing up, implementing and monitoring policy and programmes in the political, economic and social fields, so that women and men can benefit equally.<sup>2</sup>

To that end, all policies, programmes and activities carried out by institutions must be analysed from a gender-perspective, so as to evaluate the extent to which they help create the conditions for social equality and equal opportunity for men and women. Gender-based analysis of an institution is a key step in the process to ensure that it implements gender mainstreaming effectively; an analysis must be carried out of the policies, programmes and activities of that institution, how that institution is structured, and how its decisions are taken and implemented, so that its impact on men and women can be better understood. Gender plays a key role in development and social justice and in-depth gender-based analysis of an institution helps to identify specific gender-related gaps so that appropriate measures can be implemented to create a work environment that is more gender-sensitive.

Ministries of labour play a key role in the organization of the workforce at the national level in many Arab countries; they propose amendments to labour legislation to meet the needs of the labour market in the light of social and economic developments, and provide quantitative and qualitative data on employment in

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<sup>1</sup> ESCWA, 1998, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA region 1997-1998*.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1997.

the country. Inter alia, they also implement support programmes for workers, promote employment at the national level, oversee the employment of migrant workers, and are a key player in the relationship between employers, workers and the State.

The measures implemented by ministries of labour have a major impact on the extent to which women participate in the economy; they draw up legislation and regulations on economic activity, regulate labour and oversee technical education, vocational training and support programmes to enhance workers' skills and help them enter the labour market. As a consequence, when ministries of labour promote gender mainstreaming and implement programmes that are more gender-sensitive, this enhances women's access to the labour market.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>3</sup> underlined the importance of coordination between civil society institutions on the one hand, and public institutions, public administrations and national machineries for women on the other. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stipulates the functions of those machineries, which include data collection; proposing, monitoring and following up on the implementation of legislation to counter discrimination against women. Those machineries should also evaluate measures to empower women and ensure that they fully enjoy their rights and measures to achieve equality and justice, and should advise stakeholders on integrating gender issues into all major activities, policies and programmes. National machineries for women are therefore a major source of information and expertise on gender issues.

Within that framework, ESCWA Centre for Women has organized a number of training courses on gender mainstreaming for male and female staff from ministries of labour and social affairs and from national machineries for women. The Centre for Women has adopted a participatory methodology for capacity-building workshops and training courses. Those courses aim to provide participants with a theoretical and practical framework for knowledge sharing, and exchange good practices and successful experiences with regard to gender-based institutional analysis.

The gender mainstreaming programme in the ministries of labour and/or social affairs, in partnership with national machineries for women, aim to: (a) prepare a report on a shared conceptual framework, and on institutional gender-based analysis; (b) develop a practical guide on gender-based institutional analysis that draws upon the expertise of and lessons learned by public institutions and input from national machineries for women. The guidelines should also include practical suggestions for ESCWA member countries should they require technical assistance.

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<sup>3</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1.

## **I. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS: STEPS TAKEN**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

Integrating gender issues into policies is an ongoing process for which all stakeholders share responsibility. An analysis of gender equality is carried out to ascertain the impact of such policies on men and women, since differences between the needs of men and women necessitate mechanisms and actions to take such differences into account, with a view to reducing discrimination against women and achieving justice and equality. To facilitate the process of integrating gender issues into public administrations' policies and programmes, particular attention must be paid to institutions' policies and regulations, to the way those institutions are structured, as well as to the prevailing culture and the programmes and measures implemented in those institutions.

An analysis of all such gender-related issues constitutes a key step in the gender mainstreaming process. Data collection in that regard also helps stakeholders understand the true nature of an institution from a gender perspective, and to formulate proposals on how to strengthen the gender mainstreaming process within that institution. The gender mainstreaming process seeks to ensure the following: that men and women enjoy equal access to resources, employment, authority and decision-making positions; that institutions better serve their target groups; that resources are distributed fairly; that both men and women increase their productivity; and that the institution in question achieves its goals, and enhances its efficiency.

There is no doubt that the process of gender mainstreaming in policies, programmes and activities is an ongoing process involving the full range of an organization's material and human resources. Steps must be taken to address the policies and regulations governing the activities of that institution; in that regard efforts may be needed to change the attitudes and views of individual employees on selection mechanisms and programme implementation.

In the light of the above, the ESCWA Centre for Women had held a number of capacity-building training courses for male and female staff in the ministries of labour and social affairs, as well as in national machineries for women, on gender mainstreaming in policies, plans, programmes and activities. The Centre for Women has adopted a participatory methodology for capacity-building workshops and training courses. Those courses aim to provide participants with a theoretical and practical framework for knowledge sharing, and to learn from successful actions taken within the framework of gender-based institutional analysis. The programme was implemented in three phases:

#### *1. Phase one*

The first phase aimed to draw up a conceptual framework for the exchange of expertise and good practices vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of public administrations, and to agree on the steps to be taken in gender mainstreaming. Intensive discussions and knowledge sharing took place among stakeholders on the approaches adopted and the steps taken by public administrations and ministries to achieve gender mainstreaming, as well as on the difficulties encountered in that process. Moreover, group training sessions were held to provide male and female participants with the necessary skills so that they could collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data, and to draw up reports in that regard. In preparation for the second phase of the training programme, teams of staff from the ministries of labour and from national machineries for women, undertook an analysis of those institutions' policies and programmes, as well as of the services they provided, in order to assess whether differences were apparent in their impact on men and women and to monitor gaps that impeded gender mainstreaming. Coordination mechanisms were devised to strengthen the partnership between ESCWA Centre for Women on the one hand, and between ministries of labour and national machineries for women on the other, to carry out systematic institutional analysis. Joint working groups, comprising trained and qualified staff from relevant ministries and from national machineries for women, were established, provided with a conceptual framework, and tasked with working at the national level. ESCWA Centre for Women provided the necessary support and advice to each working group upon request.

## 2. Phase two

The second phase aimed to enable all countries participating in the training programme, under the supervision of ESCWA Centre for Women, to put into practice what had been discussed in theory in phase one, and carry out institutional gender-based analysis of the ministry of labour and/or social affairs.

It was agreed that a monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be established: final reports on the institutional analysis process would be submitted to ESCWA Centre for Women so that the results of that analysis could be reviewed and the outcomes discussed during the third phase. In that way, all stakeholders could learn from the experience. It was expected that all countries that attended the first phase of the training programme would participate in its third phase, together with other countries invited to take part, so that they could also benefit from the experience. In that regard, participants reviewed institutional analysis reports that had been submitted by Kuwait, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic.

## 3. Phase three

The third phase aimed to facilitate knowledge sharing, particularly with regard to the successful actions and best practice that had been highlighted in the analytical studies carried out in the ministries of labour and social affairs in the three countries that had participated in the first phase of the programme. Such an exchange of expertise aimed to draw out lessons learned and develop an action plan and guide on gender mainstreaming. At the end of the third phase, it was stressed that monitoring and evaluation should continue in order to ensure that comprehensive gender mainstreaming took place within public institutions, and that it was important to adopt the steps prescribed in the outcomes of the institutional analysis and to carry out such training programmes in all member countries.

The gender mainstreaming programme in the ministries of labour and/or social affairs, in partnership with national machineries for women, aims to: (a) prepare a report on the joint conceptual framework and on institutional gender-based analysis; (b) develop a practical guide on gender-based institutional analysis that draws on the experience and expertise of public institutions, and on the outcomes of discussions with national machineries for women, and which sets forth practical suggestions for ESCWA member countries should they require technical assistance.

However, for this process to be successful, decision makers must demonstrate that they are committed to adopting systematic gender mainstreaming before countries embark on practical steps in that regard, as guided by ESCWA. Such a commitment prescribes: (a) demonstrating appropriate political will and decision-making authority, so as to ensure that the gender mainstreaming process has sufficient legal and political support; (b) clarifying and defining the phases and steps to be implemented; (c) identifying difficulties and challenges that impede the gender mainstreaming process, as well as ways to address them; (d) establishing a working group of trained and qualified men and women with different levels of authority from within and outside the institution in question.

### B. IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTIONAL GENDER MAINSTREAMING

#### 1. *Data collection with a view to carrying out gender-based analysis of policies, programmes and activities*

Data collection, which constitutes the foundation of any analysis of policies, programmes and activities, is achieved by following the following steps:

(a) Developing an action plan for institutional analysis that sets forth the phases of work, the distribution of roles and tasks, determines the qualitative and quantitative data required, including in relation to policies, programmes and activities, codes of conduct and publications, and determines optimal data collection methods;

(b) Presenting and carrying out gender-based analysis of data, based on scientific and objective observations and facts, rather than on personal inclinations and subjective views, with a view to assessing differences between the sexes;

(c) Collecting and reviewing documents issued by ministries of labour on strategy, work plans, ministerial organization, as well as on laws and regulations governing all levels of work, and collecting and reviewing ministerial publications and websites, with a view to carrying out qualitative and in-depth analysis thereof;

(d) Consulting secondary sources that give a clearer picture of the institution, from a gender perspective, and analysing the conduct of that institution;

(e) Collecting quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data are based on numbers and statistics, while qualitative data are based on questionnaires and the responses given in interviews by stakeholders and decision makers.

Questionnaires can be used to collect quantitative data, both directly and indirectly. Specialists help the working group design and test such questionnaires prior to their approval. Qualitative data shed light on the type of behaviour in the society under subject to analysis. It provides a comprehensive overview, and facilitates understanding of such behaviour, and gender-based analysis thereof.

Qualitative data can also be collected through (a) structured interviews based on questionnaires and used to collect information on individual’s personal history and their views on and experience of sensitive issues; (b) focused discussion groups from which data on cultural norms and on views of other cultural groups and subgroups can be obtained from a wide range of participants; (c) monitoring how procedures are implemented and services delivered; (d) analysis of legislation, policy papers, institutional publications and studies, etc. (See table below).

EXAMPLES OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION  
WITH A VIEW TO ACHIEVING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Country		
Kuwait	Palestine	Syrian Arab Republic
<p>The working group charged with carrying out an analytical study for the Kuwaiti Ministry of Labour, designed a questionnaire with a view to collecting quantitative preliminary data (disaggregated by sex, age and social status and education level, job type, length of service at the Ministry). The questionnaire also set forth the goals of the study and contained 19 questions on working conditions, job satisfaction, the work environment, sexual discrimination and gender bias, work incentives, how job seekers were affected by discrimination, and who the most efficient and productive staff members were.</p>	<p>The working group at the Ministry of Labour collected qualitative data using the following methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reviewing and analysing documentation.</li> <li>2. Holding workshops and focused discussion groups for male and female staff and staff from partner organizations.</li> <li>3. Conducting in-depth one-on-one interviews with male and female staff members.</li> </ol>	<p>The working group at the Ministry of Labour collected quantitative data and formulated statistics-based conclusions and recommendations. Comprehensive surveys were carried out of all staff at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and its branch offices. The working group also formulated a questionnaire to collate the following data:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff distribution, disaggregated by sex, age, social status, level of education, vocational skills, administrative functions, technical skills, authority to make decisions, and the duration and type of work.</li> <li>2. The number of women, working in administrative, supervisory and executive positions.</li> <li>3. The number of male and female delegates taking part in scientific missions and attending conferences and courses within the country and abroad.</li> </ol>

The collection of qualitative and quantitative data on an institution constitutes the first stage of gender-based analysis of that institution. The objectives of that analysis must be determined, and a set of carefully-

worded questions elaborated to enable the team to collect such data and make it available. Such data can help to: (a) assess the status quo of the institution in question, including the fields in which it operates, its policies and the procedures it follows; (b) identify the roles of men and women in that institution, and compare their strengths and weaknesses and the challenges they face in their work; (c) to identify qualitative gaps and challenges that impede gender mainstreaming; (d) develop a strategy and clear plan of action to address such gaps and promote gender mainstreaming in all public administration policies and programmes. Data must therefore be collected on the following key areas:

(a) *Terms of reference governing the work of the institution*

The terms of reference are a set of rules, regulations and policies governing the work and organization of that institution. Those terms of reference are made available to the public although some terms of reference may not always be applicable. Data on the institution are required in order to ascertain the following: whether or not there is a clear policy on gender mainstreaming within that institution; whether a clear distinction exists between women and men in rules and regulations; whether different criteria for men and women are used when applying rules and regulations; and whether the provisions of instruments provide for positive discrimination so as to address the practical and strategic needs of both men and women.

(b) *Institutional structure*

An institution's structure depends on its human resources, how it is managed, both horizontally and vertically, how it makes decisions and exerts influence, and how its personnel are hired, promoted and dismissed. In the analysis, a questionnaire is usually distributed to male and female staff within that institution or a sample group thereof, or that institution's statistics and documents are reviewed in order to obtain quantitative information on men and women within that institution. This includes personal data, disaggregated by sex, on the ages of staff members, their education, their social status and the number of children they have, as well as professional data, disaggregated by sex, on the number of years that staff have been employed, their professional grades, the nature of their duties, whether they hold supervisory or non-supervisory positions, their job titles and their promotions, assignments or secondments within a specified period. In addition, sex-disaggregated data can be used to ascertain how many staff travelled to take part in training and educational courses, conferences, and seminars, and to ascertain how staff were rewarded or punished, including financially, the reasons for those rewards or punishments, and, if this happened more than once, the reasons for that reoccurrence. Sex-disaggregated data can, moreover, be used to monitor male and female staff members' vacations, sick leave, religious pilgrimages, unpaid leave, as well as women's maternity leave. It can also be used to ascertain if men and women work different hours, whether they can arrive late or leave early for personal reasons, whether they work from home and whether they work overtime. Sex and age disaggregated data can also be used to monitor staff performance evaluations, as well as hiring staff, termination of employment and retirement.

(c) *Institutional culture*

The culture of an institution stems from its values, principles, ways of thinking and unwritten customs and procedures. It reflects prevailing behaviour within that institution and determines how staff members interact with each other. It also determines an institution's priorities and how it is managed. The culture of an institution does not only depend on the policies and decisions that an institution has put down in writing, nor merely on figures and statistics, but draws upon the methods and approaches adopted by that institution and which impact its working environment. In that connection, data are collected by conducting interviews and convening focus groups to identify the nature of the prevailing culture within the institution, and how that culture impacts the institution's activities and relations between staff members. This data include information on customary procedures followed at work, as well as differences between men and women's roles and how they are treated, in the light of their rights and duties.

For example, an analytical study carried out by the Ministry of Labour in Palestine highlighted gender-based aspects of the prevailing culture in that ministry. The study revealed that men and women rarely mixed at social events; for example, although men might contribute to the purchase of a gift for a female employee on a specific occasion, they would not take part in group visits to that employee. Furthermore, although there were no set meal times or spaces set aside for meals, some staff members noted that men and women usually gathered in separate groups to eat. The study also revealed that friendships were usually established between members of the same sex. Stereotypical roles for men and women were strictly adhered to in one group exercise, in which it became clear that the women present were suffering from a sense of inferiority, while most of the men affirmed the inferiority and weakness of women, and the importance of maintaining control over them. The fact that some women voiced their support for those ideas revealed that no awareness-raising activities had been held in that regard.

(d) *Programmes and activities*

These comprise the programmes and services provided by the institution to male and female staff members. These must be planned and the following identified: the target group; the practical and strategic needs covered by the institution; and the different benefits that can accrue to men and women. Qualitative data in that regard can be obtained from documents issued by the institution on those programmes and activities. However, interviews should also be held with those responsible for the implementation of those programmes and activities, and with those men and women who stand to benefit from them, since the implementation of programmes and activities may not go as planned, and men and women may not benefit equally.

The study elaborated by the Ministry of Labour of Kuwait revealed that there is a prevailing belief among men that men and women stand an equal chance of being chosen to attend local conferences. While some women supported that belief, the majority of women believed that there was discrimination in favour of men in that regard. In Palestine, Ministry of Labour documentation on certain programmes provides data that are disaggregated by sex. For example, the General Administration for Vocational Training has compiled a database on the number of men and women who enrol in, and complete training courses. This can be used to create a database for gender-based analysis.

(e) *Procedures*

The procedures adopted by an institution are those mechanisms and steps by which it implements programmes, makes use of resources, takes decisions, approves budgets, elaborates programmes, identifies potential gaps, or delivers services to beneficiaries. Data on how an institution accesses resources, takes decisions, approves budgets, and develops programmes allow stakeholders to identify the procedures followed in that institution. The data collated from documents, interviews and group meetings help the team to better assess the status quo, and better identify gaps that should be taken into consideration when drawing up proposals for development and change.

## 2. *Gender-based analysis*

Gender-based institutional analysis must be based on analytical data on gender issues and must also take into consideration the priorities and concerns of men and women. To that end, qualitative and quantitative data should be gathered using a range of methods that make use of specific analysis mechanisms and methodologies. Moreover, when conducting quantitative analysis, it is not necessary to adopt advanced statistical analysis methodologies; data may simply be reviewed from a descriptive standpoint, although it must be disaggregated by sex. Use can be made of tables showing one or two variables and how they correlate with sex. It may sometimes be necessary to highlight the relationship between variables by making use of a correlation coefficient.

For example, in the analysis of decision-making mechanisms in the study of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Labour, 57.8 per cent of respondents said that they believed that men's opinions carried more weight than the opinions of women when decisions were made; 29.8 per cent said that men and women's opinions were taken into consideration on an equal basis, while only 12.4 per cent believed that women's opinions carried more weight than the views of men. Meanwhile, 63.2 per cent of men and 55.6 per cent of women believed that men's opinions carried more weight than women's opinions in decision making, while 31.6 per cent of women and 25.4 per cent of men believed that men and women's views were taken into consideration equally. Only 11.4 per cent of men and 12.8 per cent of women believed women's opinions carried more weight than men's opinions.

This descriptive statistical analysis highlights the fact that further information is needed on certain issues and that questions on those issues need to be asked in interviews and discussion groups.

Qualitative analysis must be carried out on data contained in the study outcome documents using a range of approaches, including data collection, taking note of the views expressed by male and female participants in working groups or in interviews or focused discussion groups. Data analysis is most easily achieved by making use of matrices that highlight staff members' views of the prevailing attitudes and values within the institution in question, how male and female staff members interact with each other, and how men and women compare with each other within that institution. A report can then be drawn up on the main factors, information and the results of the analysis so that appropriate decisions can be taken.

For example, documentary analysis by the Ministry of Labour in Palestine has shown that the decision-making process is the preserve of senior managers, in accordance with the rules and regulations in force within that Ministry. Working groups, especially those groups and workshops that bring together male and female support staff, have highlighted the fact that those staff are usually not involved in the decision-making process, and that only managers at the executive director level are involved in that process. Although this is to be expected since decision-making authority is vested in high ranking staff, few women are involved in decision making and are often excluded from the process. Officials at the Ministry state that this is due to a lack of qualified women. A study should therefore be carried out of women's competencies prior to the outcome of the study being circulated.

### *3. Formulating action plans*

Gender-based institutional analysis is a major step towards formulating action plans to help institution carry out their duties, achieve their objectives, and make the best use of their human resources. An action plan sets forth actions to be taken to narrow gender gaps in major fields, and to achieve justice, equality and equal opportunity in the implementation of an institution's programmes and projects. The most important areas of concern are policy legislation, programme and activity formulation, the work environment, human resources management; raising awareness of gender issues; and the creation of databases of information disaggregated by sex.

To that end, measures taken within the framework of an action plan should be specific and effective, and should set realistic goals in accordance with a determined time frame. The plan should aim to amend legislation and policy, mainstream procedures and establish specific mechanisms to promote positive discrimination for women on a temporary basis. Steps should also be taken to provide training to male and female staff members. Furthermore, adequate human and financial resources should be allocated for the plan's implementation within a specific time frame, and indicators and ways by which progress can be monitored and evaluated should be established, inter alia by making use of periodic and statistical reports, and carrying out field visits and case studies.

### *4. Follow-up and evaluation mechanisms*

All institutions must design appropriate mechanisms by which they can implement gender mainstreaming; they may establish special units on gender, or teams or networks to integrate gender issues

into their policies and programmes. Focal points on gender may also be appointed in different departments with a view to following up on the implementation of the gender mainstreaming plan across that institution.

The Palestinian Ministry of Labour, for example, has established a gender unit. That department is an effective tool in efforts to achieve gender mainstreaming in Ministry plans and programmes and it undertakes ongoing monitoring and follow-up in that regard. However, according to the group carrying out institutional analysis, the department requires support and mechanisms to facilitate its work with all administrative stakeholders and other departments at the Ministry. The process of gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all stakeholders and other administrations cannot be excluded from that process. The team also noted that all members of the gender unit were women, and that this gave the impression that gender and equality between men and women were still considered to be issues of interest to women only.

## **II. GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE WORK OF MINISTRIES OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS IN KUWAIT, PALESTINE AND THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

After completion of the theoretical part of their training, male and female participants were tasked with analysing the work of ministries of labour in their countries, and, based on that analysis, to draw up appropriate actions and interventions and a work plan on gender mainstreaming in those ministries' policies and programmes. Pursuant to that mandate, Kuwait, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic prepared a report that was submitted to ESCWA Centre for Women, and reviewed at a workshop, attended by those countries, on 29 and 30 March 2011.<sup>4</sup> The following is a summary of the three studies on gender-based institutional analysis.

### A. THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR, THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

The population unit in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Ministry of Health, carried out a study on gender in the Ministry, and in Ministry offices in the governorates of Syria. The study provided stakeholders with a wide range of detailed information on the status of women in the Ministry, especially with regard to reproductive health and family planning, employment and health insurance services, and gender-based discrimination against Ministry employees.

#### *1. Institutional analysis objectives*

(a) Gain insight into contributions made by men and women to the work of the Ministry and the extent to which those contributions differ;

(b) Identify gaps that hinder women's efforts to make an effective contribution to the work of the Ministry;

(c) Increase the qualitative and quantitative contribution made by women to the work of the Ministry, with a view to fully integrating population issues into its activities;

(d) Fully follow through on study proposals and outcomes in order to push the gender mainstreaming process forward;

(e) Gain insight into the status quo vis-à-vis gender issues at offices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in the various governorates.

The study focused on all staff members at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and its branch offices, and adopted a descriptive and analytical approach. The study considered both quantitative and qualitative data in order to reach conclusions and make recommendations. It also drew upon the results of a comprehensive social survey; to that end, a questionnaire was designed to obtain preliminary information from male and female respondents, including information on their professional grades, the extent to which they contributed to Ministry activities, and other data relating to various themes of the study. The questionnaire contained two types of questions: questions on the status quo and questions on trends. The research team also drew up tables to highlight the results obtained.

A team of staff drawn from the Ministry and its branch offices was responsible for collecting information. Prior to beginning their work, team members were trained in how the questionnaires needed to be completed. Data processing was carried out in collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics, and a

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<sup>4</sup> Expert Group Meeting on "Mainstreaming Gender in the Plans and Programmes of the Ministries of Labour in Selected ESCWA Member Countries", 29 and 30 March 2011.

number of experts were appointed to oversee that process and formulate statistical tables required for statistical analysis.

## *2. Results of the study*

- (a) Discrimination against women occurs in the Ministry and its branch offices;
- (b) Many employees of the Ministry are poorly educated; a total of 163 people have obtained a primary school education or less, equivalent to 22.7 per cent of those taking part in the survey. More women than men had completed graduate studies;
- (c) The vast majority of Ministry employees have an inadequate understanding of the concept of gender;
- (d) Inadequate health insurance and benefits limit the productivity of employees;
- (e) The views of the individuals taking part in the study on a number of reproductive health issues were in line with those individuals' behaviour;
- (f) There was a clear tendency among individuals taking part in the study to apply measures related to reproductive health and to practice family planning.

## *3. Recommendations*

- (a) Intensive courses on reproductive health, gender issues and family planning should be held for staff at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and at Ministry branch offices;
- (b) Practical programmes should be designed to combat gender-based discrimination at the Ministry;
- (c) Steps should be taken to address discrepancies between the services provided to men and women by the Ministry, in view of the fact that women constitute a key element in the production process.

### **B. THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, PALESTINE**

An analytical study to achieve gender mainstreaming was drawn up by the Minister of Labour, in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Four Ministerial departments took part in the analysis: the department of works and services, the department of vocational training, the department of inspections and employment protection, and the department of administrative and financial affairs. Inter alia, the study focused on legislation, policy, services and institutional culture and organization.

#### *1. Institutional analysis objectives*

- (a) Carry out an analysis of the organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour, the procedures and practices followed within that Ministry, and its policies, programmes and regulations, so as to identify the Ministry's prevailing institutional culture from a gender perspective;
- (b) Ascertain whether the internal practices of the Ministry and its regulations and policies provide for gender equality;
- (c) Identify gaps and challenges, as well as the Ministry's most important strengths and weaknesses, with regard to gender mainstreaming in its plans and policies;

(d) Draw up specific recommendations to address those gaps and challenges, and translate them into a clear action plan to be implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs;

(e) Work with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to formulate indicators and criteria to assess and follow up on progress achieved in gender mainstreaming within the Ministry of Labour;

(f) Document successful policies and regulations that promote and strengthen the gender mainstreaming process.

## *2. Information gathering*

Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methodologies were adopted and training was provided to an integrated working group so that it could carry out analysis and formulate recommendations on gender mainstreaming in Ministry of Labour policy and programmes.

The working group collected information in the following ways: (a) accessing all Ministry documents from the previous three years (2009 to 2011), particularly documentation for the four departments chosen for analysis. Those documents included strategic plans, laws and regulations, and other publications; (b) holding workshops that targeted a number of groups of male and female employees in the Ministry at different technical and administrative grades, as well as male and female staff from partner institutions; (c) conducting in-depth individual interviews with a number of male and female employees in the four departments that were subjected to analysis.

## *3. Challenges and difficulties*

A number of difficulties were encountered when carrying out the analytical study, including those related to: (a) non-participation of senior management in workshops held with a view to gathering data, despite their interest in the process of institutional analysis from a gender perspective; (b) a lack of awareness of gender issues, leading to a range of reactions by Ministry staff; some staff denied that discrimination against women occurred while others were resistant to change; (c) the fact that certain individuals within the departments in question seemed uninterested in the analysis and did not engage with the process, thus hindering access to the required information and documents; (d) the fact that certain administrators had only recently been appointed to their positions, hindering access to detailed information on the departments in question; (e) inadequate documentation and archiving systems within departments; this prevented new male and female staff from providing a comprehensive overview of their departments over the previous three years.

## *4. Results and recommendations*

Pursuant to the institutional analysis, a number of recommendations were made, inter alia, to address the following issues:

(a) Key gaps that, despite the positive approach, continue to impede gender mainstreaming and efforts to meet the needs of women in the Ministry of Labour;

(b) Labour laws that, failing to address the issue of gender equality, are used as basis for internal rules and regulations that place restrictions on women. Such laws should be amended;

(c) Although it is clear from ministerial documents on strategy that there is considerable interest in gender mainstreaming, such interest is neither reflected in detailed policy, programmes and plans, nor reflected in the preparation of the ministerial budget;

(d) Insufficient use has been made of partnerships between the Ministry and local, regional and international organizations working in the field of gender mainstreaming with a view to improving ministerial programmes. Likewise, full use has not been made of input provided by local organizations, including statistics and studies of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and other relevant civil society organizations;

(e) Gender balance is not a factor that is taken into account in a serious and conscious manner when recruiting and appointing Ministry staff. As a result, most high-grade positions are held by men, while women hold middle management and lower-grade positions; women are thus excluded from decision-making and policy formulation;

(f) The prevailing culture within institutions is usually an extension of a wider patriarchal culture of society. That culture prescribes stereotypical roles for men and for women; in order to change the way that women are perceived, both men and women must adopt new ways of thinking. In that connection, women continue to avoid working in the field and undertaking key activities through which they can learn specialized skills so that they can best address women's needs;

(g) There is, as yet, no gender-mainstreaming capacity-building plan for Ministry staff. Such a plan would enable administrations in the Ministry of Labour to identify the goals that must be reached in order to achieve gender mainstreaming. Similarly, no indicators have been developed so that progress can be measured;

(h) Despite awareness of gender mainstreaming, such awareness must be institutionalized and translated into clear plans and programmes of action.

### C. MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR, KUWAIT

Pursuant to an analytical study on gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in Kuwait, mechanisms were adopted to promote cooperation with the Kuwaiti Women's Affairs Committee. The objectives, outcomes and the recommendations of the study included the following:

#### 1. *Objectives of the institutional analysis*

(a) To identify the roles of men and women, their rights and responsibilities, and the relationship between men and women in the workplace, as well as women's capacity to take on roles traditionally assigned to men;

(b) To review opportunities for equality in positions of authority, and how to benefit from available options and resources;

(c) To verify that no discrimination takes place against women within the working environment, and that both men and women are afforded the same incentives at work;

(d) To evaluate men and women's working conditions and level of job satisfaction;

(e) To make recommendations on how to achieve gender mainstreaming.

In the analytical study at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, a quantitative method of data collection was used; a questionnaire was designed with a view to collecting data on the ground, and a small group of staff employed in the Labour Section were consulted to ascertain whether the answers given were indeed correct. The questionnaire included questions to obtain preliminary data on the respondents, including their sex, age, marital status, education, job title and length of service with the Ministry, as well as

questions related to the objectives of the study. The form contained 19 questions on working conditions, job satisfaction, the work environment, the extent of discrimination or bias in favour of men, whether men were more productive and efficient than the women, work incentives, and the extent of discrimination experienced by women when applying for jobs. Twenty-nine per cent of Ministry staff took part in the study.

## *2. Key outcomes*

(a) Most respondents (78 per cent) were between 25 and 44 years of age. There were few staff members involved in the study aged 55 or above; most of those respondents were men, since women tend to take early retirement;

(b) Most male and female staff members were employed in administrative positions and worked as administrative executives or coordinators, secretaries, writers and typists. Constituting 54.4 per cent of the total labour force, a majority of those staff members were female;

(c) Many respondents (54.1 per cent) said that discrimination against women took place, while many others (45.9 per cent) said that discrimination in favour of women occurred;

(d) A total of 51.2 per cent of respondents said that women were more productive than men, while 35.4 per cent said that men and women were equally productive;

(e) More than half of those staff members included in the study (51.7 per cent) said that men were more competent in leadership positions. That view was supported by 45.3 per cent of women. Furthermore, 57.8 per cent of respondents believed that, in decision-making, men's opinions were more likely to be taken into account than the opinions of women. That view was shared by 55.6 per cent of women;

(f) The majority of respondents said that men were more likely to apply to attend conferences and training courses abroad, while men and women applied in equal numbers to attend conferences and training courses held within the country. These views reflect the habits and traditions of society; it is difficult for women to travel unless they are accompanied by a guardian, and women often refuse to participate due to commitments vis-à-vis their families and children. Moreover, since men are more likely than women to hold leadership positions, they are more likely to be chosen to take part in such events.

## *3. Recommendations*

(a) Urge the State to provide Ministries and public bodies with modern premises;

(b) Focus on working women's education and training in order to improve their performance and prepare them for leadership and decision-making roles;

(c) Improve the working environment and create a positive atmosphere so as to improve performance and the quality of service provided to citizens;

(d) Encourage the employment of women in senior management positions, as it remains the case that many more men than women hold such positions;

(e) Encourage all authorities to set up kindergartens nearby in order to make it easier for women to carry out their duties;

(f) Develop the oversight role performed by management, particularly since there are often no criteria in place to measure performance, and a lack of incentives to encourage creativity and hard work. Furthermore, as employees receive the same pay and enjoy the same prospects for promotion, they have little motivation to improve their productivity;

(g) Take steps to cut administrative red tape, accelerate the implementation of development projects and steps to meet the administrative requirements of ministries and public bodies and institutions.

#### D. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDIES ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE THREE MINISTRIES

In this section of the guide, a comparison is made between the analytical studies carried out in Kuwait, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, even though those studies adopted different methodologies. The comparison looks at the analytical studies' objectives in the countries concerned, how study data were gathered, the extent to which cooperation took place between the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and national machineries for women, the difficulties and challenges faced by those involved in the analysis, and the studies' outcomes.

##### 1. *Study objectives*

The three studies all paid particular attention to the policies of and work regulations in place in the ministries concerned, and how those policies and regulations promoted equal opportunity for men and women. The studies also identified gender mainstreaming gaps and made recommendations on how those gaps should be addressed. However, in its analysis, the Ministry of Labour in Kuwait also sought to ascertain the extent to which women were able to undertake all duties that were performed by men while the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in the Syrian Arab Republic also considered reproductive health and family planning issues and how those were related to gender mainstreaming. However, setting such additional objectives, which went beyond issues related to gender mainstreaming within Ministries of Labour, altered the focus of the analysis and diluted efforts: similarly, those studies focused on the collection and analysis of data that, while of importance with regard to other issues, were not directly relevant to the original objectives of the study.

The formulation of clear objectives that are relevant to the study and can be measured or interpreted will thus help working groups determine what data are required, saving both time and effort.

##### 2. *Data collection*

Various methods of data collection were used in the three studies, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed, meaning that both quantitative and qualitative methods were used at the same time. The analytical study carried out by the Ministry of Labour in Kuwait focused on quantitative data and made use of a questionnaire in order to collect data. That data were tested in the field by making use of a sample group of male and female employees in the Labour Section before formal approval. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the working group adopted a qualitative approach in its analytical study and made use of a questionnaire to carry out the comprehensive survey. In Palestine, a qualitative method of data collection was used in the study; individual and group interviews were held and focussed discussion groups organized. However, a quantitative approach was used in the analysis of data and statistics contained in ministerial records.

Using both quantitative and qualitative methods enriched the analytical studies on gender mainstreaming and ensured that goals were achieved. Moreover, that approach helped provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the institutions in question, and thus facilitated the formulation of appropriate recommendations. To undertake quantitative analysis, numerical and statistical data on a specific phenomenon must be gathered in order to fully understand the status quo. Qualitative analysis aims to facilitate a clearer understanding of a situation or phenomena by focussing on the behaviour of those persons being studied.

### *3. Mechanisms to promote cooperation between national machineries for women and ministries of labour and social affairs*

The Ministry of Labour in Palestine carried out the analytical study primarily in cooperation with Ministry of Women's Affairs, in its capacity as an entity at the national level that seeks to promote the interests of women. A joint working group that drew its members from both Ministries was established to carry out all aspects of the analytical study. The same approach was adopted by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, which established a partnership with the Women's Affairs Committee. The Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour established a different type of partnership: the working group drew its members from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the United Nations Population Fund and the Ministry of Health. The nature of that partnership was reflected in the fields of study and in the study's main objective, namely an analysis of the status quo within the Ministry and drawing up plans for gender mainstreaming in its programmes and policies. The study focused on issues and priorities related to reproductive health and family planning, as well as employment and health insurance services. The working group underlined the fact that this was one of the important studies that it had carried out with a view to improving knowledge and changing attitudes and behaviour among women, men and young people vis-à-vis gender and reproductive health issues.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is responsible for drawing up legislation and regulations on the economy and the labour force. Meanwhile, a national machinery for women is responsible for monitoring and following up on all issues related to women in public, private and civil society institutions, and provides necessary advice on gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes. The two bodies work together to ensure the implementation of programmes to foster greater sensitivity towards gender issues, which have a direct and indirect impact on women's participation in the labour market.

### *4. Difficulties and challenges*

The analytical studies published by the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour did not address any difficulties or challenges faced by the working group. In contrast, the study by the Palestinian Ministry of Labour highlighted a number of difficulties and challenges encountered by stakeholders, notably a lack of awareness of gender issues, and the fact that most male and female staff members did not have a clear idea of what gender issues entailed. That lack of understanding sometimes led to misunderstandings and sparked mixed reactions among Ministry staff who sometimes resisted change or denied that discrimination against women occurred.

Preparatory workshops were held to raise awareness among all male and female staff members at all administrative grades of the concept of gender and the importance of gender mainstreaming in programmes and policies. Those workshops constituted a preliminary step that ensured that all stakeholders had sufficient background knowledge and could provide key data for institutional analysis.

### *5. Outcomes*

The outcomes of each country's analytical study depended on the methodologies used to carry out institutional analysis, including how data were collected, how that data were processed, and what the goals of each study were. The conclusions of the analytical study carried out by the Ministry of Labour in Palestine, for example, provided an interpretation of attitudes and behaviour within the Ministry, since that study had used a qualitative data approach in order to collect and analyse data, analyse legal texts, measures and practices within that institution, and assess the prevailing institutional culture. Those findings were in line with the goals of the study and the data provided. Clear goals included designing capacity-building programmes for all Ministry staff at all administrative grades, and addressing gender issues with a view to achieving gender mainstreaming. A further goal was to broaden participation in decision-making in the Ministry so as to ensure the participation of women in that process so that they can better articulate their concerns and needs. These and other findings of the analytical study can be used by the working group to

draw up a clear action plan on gender mainstreaming within the Ministry in order to achieve relevant objectives.

The outcomes of the analytical study carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in Kuwait were based on statistics and figures obtained as a result of quantitative data collection and analysis. Some recommendations were based on the study while others were more general. Those recommendations were not in line with the findings of the study and were not supported by data. It is likely that the working group found it difficult to translate the recommendations into action plans on gender mainstreaming within the Ministry with a view to achieving specific objectives.

The analytical study carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in the Syrian Arab Republic used quantitative methods to collect and analyse data and its findings were presented in statistical tables, or as percentages and figures. The study made three general recommendations; however, the fact that those recommendations are of a general nature means that they cannot easily be used as the basis of an integrated action plan on gender mainstreaming in the Ministry.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In preparing this guide on gender mainstreaming in public institutions, and on institutional analysis from a gender perspective, ESCWA adopted a participatory methodology in order to institutionalize the process and ensure its sustainability. To that end, the process was divided into three phases: the first dealt with capacity-building for staff working in the relevant institutions; the second dealt with implementing the process on the ground within those institutions; and the third phase aimed to encourage participating countries to share relevant experience and draw conclusions. Such an approach helped to mainstream institutional analysis in ministries of labour in a number of member countries.

ESCWA called upon ministries of labour and national machineries for women to establish genuine partnerships by taking part in training workshops on institutional analysis from a gender perspective. ESCWA stressed the importance of cooperation in that regard and the need to clarify the aims of policies and programmes relevant to the gender mainstreaming process. To that end, national working groups should be established in a number of participating countries to further gender mainstreaming within ministries of labour. The formation of such groups constitutes a key step in efforts to institutionalize the process and ensure its sustainability.

Participating countries demonstrated considerable commitment to this process, as did ESCWA which, in its capacity as sponsor and organizing authority, adopted clear and practical preparatory, implementation and follow-up mechanisms. ESCWA urged participating countries and ministries preparing institutional analyses to follow up on efforts exerted in that regard, implement action plans and apply the lessons learned from the outcomes of analytical studies: the most important of those lessons being that a variety of methodologies and sources should be used for data collection, and that stakeholders should adopt a variety of analytical approaches. Furthermore, action plans should be reviewed and amended in the light of relevant updated information obtained during that phase of the process.

Through the capacity-building programme, ESCWA seeks, inter alia, to formulate action plans on gender mainstreaming in the programmes and policies of ministries of labour and national machineries for women in participating countries. To that end, it is vital that all stakeholders follow-up on the implementation of action plans, and elaborate indicators to monitor performance. ESCWA Centre for Women and relevant authorities must continue their dialogue and consultations in that regard, and must continue to monitor the process with decision makers in the relevant ministries, with a view to adopting and implementing action plans. It is, moreover, vital to continue to monitor actions taken with a view to achieving gender parity in employment and combating discrimination against women. Those actions include the following: (a) administrative and judicial complaints and claims for compensation submitted by female staff members who have been the victims of discrimination, as well as calls by those staff members for the party that discriminated against them to be punished; (b) the response to such complaints, including efforts to ensure equitable treatment for victims of discrimination and to punish offenders; (c) combating harassment and abuse of authority, and examining whether current legislation affords protection against moral and sexual harassment; and whether penalties can be imposed on persons who abuse their positions of authority or influence; (d) monitoring women's participation in trade unions and identifying policies that could strengthen their involvement and encourage them to stand as candidates for decision-making positions within those unions.

Capacity-building for staff at different administrative grades, and measures to raise awareness of gender issues, are vital elements in efforts to achieve gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of ministries of labour. This is due to the fact that, by acquiring relevant knowledge and expertise, it is easier to counter those who deny that gender-based discrimination exists. Encouraging the exchange of relevant experience is one of the key objectives of the programme, which seeks to disseminate the experience of all ESCWA member countries in that regard. The programme can thus be repeated in countries that yet to implement the steps covered by this guide; in their capacity-building efforts targeting new stakeholders,

those countries can learn from and build upon the experience of countries that have already carried out institutional analysis and drawn up action plans on gender mainstreaming.

Moreover, once analytical studies in ministries of labour in participating countries are completed, those studies will be published on ESCWA and ministry of labour websites with a view to offering guidance to ministries of labour and institutions in other countries that wish to implement this programme.