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A society free from gender oppression and inequality

TURNING GENDER MAINSTREAMING INTO A NUMBERS GAME?

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a real risk of gender mainstreaming in the South African public service becoming a numbers game, rather than a process of substantive gender transformation. The Commission for Gender Equality's (CGE) 2014 annual assessment on progress towards gender mainstreaming in the public service has revealed that considerable progress is being made in terms of gender mainstreaming, especially in terms of increasing numbers of women in the senior management service (SMS) levels of the public service.

In other words, it would appear that more women are entering senior levels of the public service as middle and senior managers, thus increasing the quantitative/numerical representation of women in the management echelons of the South African public service. However, the report also reveals that the progress made in terms of increased numerical representation of women in the higher levels of management is not matched by progress in terms of qualitative/substantive gender mainstreaming.

This Policy Brief is based on the findings of an assessment¹ carried out in 2014 on two national departments: the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC); as well as nine provincial departments responsible for matters relating to Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation. This assessment examined the progress, challenges and prospects for gender mainstreaming in the public service within these departments.

¹ CGE (2014), Beyond the Numbers: Mainstreaming Gender in the Public Service: Assessing selected national and provincial departments, (Research Report)

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

South Africa ratified the Beijing Platform for Action which is one of the international instruments set up to guide governments on gender transformation practices. It was at this conference that governments and other role players were encouraged to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes.

The CGE is one of the role players whose mandate is to promote gender equality. It is a constitutional body established in terms of the Commission for Gender Equality Act No. 39 of 1996 to support South Africa's democracy.

In particular, section 187 (2) grants the CGE "the power, as regulated by national legislation, necessary to perform its functions, including the power to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues concerning gender equality".

In line with this mandate the CGE undertook this assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming and transformation in the selected departments.

The goal of gender mainstreaming is to bring about institutional, legislative, policy and practical changes, including equal participation in decision-making processes relating to these changes to ensure the empowerment of both women and men in South Africa.

“Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s, as well as men’s, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally; this will avoid inequality from being perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”²

Gender mainstreaming therefore involves the analysis of all government policies and practices to examine the different impacts they have on men and women, and providing training and capacity building to enhance gender-management skills and raise the general level of gender awareness within institutions of government and society in general.³

3. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This assessment was carried out through the use of the Commission’s Gender Barometer online evaluation instrument. It sought to collect both qualitative and quantitative information to determine the extent to which selected national and provincial government departments were advancing towards the goal of gender transformation and equality through internal and external gender-mainstreaming policies, programmes,

strategies and projects. This requires departments to observe and comply with key national, regional and global policy and legislation frameworks aimed at promoting and achieving gender equality in South Africa.

The online instrument was therefore used to gather information on gender representation and the participation of women at senior management level; mainstreaming gender in organisational culture and systems, gender-responsive budgeting, capacity building, as well as monitoring and evaluation systems.

The research team also held meetings with, and interviewed relevant officials working within units responsible for gender-mainstreaming inside the selected two national and nine provincial government departments.

For analysis purposes, the research team developed a five-level Gender Representation Rating Scale to be used to rate the performance of the participating departments with regard to progress made in the numerical representation of women at senior management levels (i.e. in the Senior Management Service (SMS)) of each department. The scorecard was therefore used to rate the performance of the participating departments on only one of six thematic areas of assessment (i.e. Gender Representation and Participation at Internal Senior Decision-making Level). The rating scale was adapted from the Global Gender Balance Score Card developed by Avivah Wittenberg-Cox.⁴

² United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, 18 July 1997, General Assembly Official Records; Fifty-Second Session, Supplement No. 3, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4652c9fc2.htm>

³ The Public Service Commission (2006): Gender mainstreaming initiative in the public service report

⁴ See Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, One Key to Gender Balance: 20-first Century Leadership (<http://www.20-first.com/flipbook/index.html>).

Table 1: Gender Representation Rating Scale

• Level 5	Balanced Gender Representation	Males and females constitute between 45% and 50% of the Senior Management Service/Team
• Level 4	Critical Mass Gender Representation	Minority gender represents between 30% and 45% of the Senior Management Service/Team
• Level 3	Progressive Gender Representation	The minority gender makes up between 15% and 30% of Senior Management Service/Team
• Level 2	Symbolic/Token Gender Representation	The minority gender constitutes up to 15% of the Senior Management Service/Team
• Level 1	Failed Gender Representation	Institution's Senior Management Service ⁵ /Team consists exclusively of one Gender to the exclusion of others.

This means that, based on the number of women represented in the SMS division, compared to their male counterparts, a department's performance would be rated between Level 1 (for poor performance) and Level 5 (for best performance).

3.1 Constraints of the Study

A number of constraints were encountered during this study. A detailed discussion of these constraints is provided in the original research report.⁶

Nonetheless the most significant and broad constraint that the study faced was limited information and in some case the poor quality of the information provided by government officials. In addition, many departmental officials took far too long to respond to request for information.

4. GUIDING FRAMEWORKS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender Mainstreaming is informed by the following legislative, policy and other frameworks:

- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): among others it promotes equity in the workplace.

- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): advocates for equal representation in decision-making.
- Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (EEA): prohibits discrimination against designated groups.
- National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (often called the National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF): informs gender mainstreaming and related processes in general.
- The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA): requires all state parties to make available the necessary financial and budgetary resources for gender mainstreaming.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section provides some of the key findings of the assessment of the two national departments, focusing on the following: gender representation and participation in decision-making, main-

⁵ In the Public Service, Senior Management Service is made up of managers in the position of director and upwards.

⁶ See CGE (2014), op.cit, pp.11-12.

streaming gender in organisational culture and systems, as well as measures to create an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming.

5.1 NATIONAL DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS (COGTA)

5.1.1 Gender Representation and Participation at Internal Decision-making Level

This department was led by a male minister and deputy minister, as well as male Heads of Department (HODs) at the time of the study. The gender composition of the department's SMS showed achievement of gender parity given that 60 (53.6%) of the total 112 members were females while the remaining 52 (46.4%) were males. In terms of the Gender Representation Rating Scale, the department was rated at Level 5.

5.1.2 Mainstreaming Gender in Organisational Culture and Systems

The department said it had internal structures and systems to create an internal culture conducive to gender mainstreaming such as the internal planning structure which regularly holds strategic planning sessions, although this in itself is not sufficient evidence of a culture conducive to gender mainstreaming. It had a Gender Forum that consults with the Human Resources Committee on a quarterly basis. In particular, the Human Resources Committee was identified as responsible for providing capacity to the National Capacity Building Forum (NCBF) on gender mainstreaming issues.

Participation of the EE Forum in gender-based violence issues and greater emphasis on procurement bids from prospective service providers that include women and/or those led by women by the Bid Specification and Bid Evaluation Committees appear as evidence of commitment towards gender mainstreaming.

5.1.3 Measures to Create an Enabling Environment for Gender Mainstreaming

The department indicated that it had put in place a Sexual Harassment Policy aimed at protecting all employees against sexual harassment, especially women as a vulnerable group. This was identified as a key measure to create an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming. In addition, a Men's Forum was in place to encourage men to make pledges to respect the dignity of others and to take a stand against gender-based violence.

5.2. NATIONAL DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE (DAC)

5.2.1 Representation and Participation at Internal Decision-making Level

The DAC was led by a male minister, with a female deputy minister. At administrative level, the department is led by a male director general. The department has also made progress in terms of the numerical representation of women at the Senior Management Service (SMS). It achieved Level 5 in the CGE's Gender Representation Rating Scale because women accounted for 51% (or 26 members) out of the 51 SMS members, based on information provided by the department.

5.2.2 Mainstreaming Gender in the Organisational Culture and Systems

The Department did not have a GFP or a Gender Unit. Gender mainstreaming was the responsibility of the Transformation Directorate, although the authority and powers of the Directorate were not clear. In addition, the department insisted that Bid Evaluation and Bid Adjudication Committees were part of systems advancing gender mainstreaming through greater prioritisation of women in procurement tender processes. Evidence and impact of this was not provided though.

5.2.3 Measures to Create an Enabling Environment for Gender Mainstreaming

The department indicated that it had an employment equity plan and employment equity policy necessary to attain the 50% target for gender parity. In addition, a Work Skills Plan and Human Resources Development and Sexual Harassment policies were put in place by the department as necessary

measures to create an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming. Although the HIV/Aids policy was also mentioned, it was not clear how this policy sought to address gender-specific challenges posed by the HIV/Aids pandemic.

5.3 PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS

This section of the report focuses on the findings related to provincial departments responsible for sports, arts, culture and recreation. For the North West Province, the department responsible for Arts and Culture is also responsible for traditional affairs while excluding sports.

5.3.1 Gender Representation and Participation at Internal Decision-making Level

The gender profile provincial departments were found to be marked by an over-representation of females in the Member of the Executive Council (MECs), in terms of gender representation given that many were highly ranked in Gauteng.

Table 2: Comparative Performance Ratings for assessed departments:

NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS	DEPARTMENTS	RATING LEVEL
• National Government	Department of Arts and Culture	5
• National Government	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs	5
• Gauteng	Department of Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation	5
• Limpopo	Department of Sports, Arts and Culture	4
• Northern Cape	Department of Sports, Arts and Culture	3
• Mpumalanga	Department of Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation	4
• Western Cape	Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports	4
• Eastern Cape	Department of Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation	4
• Free State	Department of Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation	4
• North West	Department of Arts, Culture & Traditional Affairs	4
• KwaZulu-Natal	Department of Arts and Culture	N / A

There were eight female MEC's in eight provinces. The Northern Cape Province proved to be the exception to the rule, with the only male MEC. The HOD for the Northern Cape Department was also male, as were those for Free State, Western and Eastern Cape. So the remaining five provincial departments were headed by female HODs. Many provincial departments were found to have performed well, achieving Level 5 in their ratings. Of the remaining seven provincial departments, six achieved Level 4. The Northern Cape Department of Sports, Arts and Culture was the only exception, with a rating of Level 3.

5.3.2 Mainstreaming Gender in Organisational Culture and Systems

Putting effective internal policies, systems, processes and structures in place to facilitate gender mainstreaming is an important step that many of the departments appeared to have failed to do. It was clear that in all the nine government departments selected for this study, there was lack of clarity on this, with some confusion on the difference between gender mainstreaming and employment equity. Most of the departments were performing well in terms of their employment equity targets for women in senior management positions, while other internal processes, systems, policies and practices were lagging behind in terms of the requirements as set out in the National Gender Policy Framework.

Most departments had special programme units where a number of programmes were placed (i.e. the so-called basket programme approach). This meant that gender mainstreaming is never a strategic priority but just one among many programmes competing for limited resources. In addition, all provincial departments, except for Gauteng whose GFP is at Director level, had appointed their GFPs at Deputy

Director level or lower. It was also noted that GFPs were generally unskilled and lacked proper understanding of gender transformation. In general gender mainstreaming tends to be viewed as event-based, focusing on events such as women's month and others.

5.3.3 Measures to Create an Enabling Environment for Gender Mainstreaming

Most departments had policies in place, with a sexual harassment policy being the most common. However, the existence of these policies in many of these departments did not guarantee effective implantation and compliance. There was no convincing proof of implementation, nor was there evidence that the employees were familiar with these policies. Moreover, there was general lack of clarity of trained personnel or systems and procedures to handle, process and deal with sexual harassment cases in the workplace. Many of the departments reported that no cases of sexual harassment had been reported, which meant that such policies had never been tested on actual cases to determine their effectiveness. Moreover, the lack of reporting of sexual harassment cases could signal general lack of knowledge among staff regarding such policies.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study appear to reveal signs of progress, particularly with respect to the numerical gender representation and balance in the senior levels of the public service. Yet such progress is not matched by developments in other areas of substantive gender mainstreaming. This presents the following policy implications for policy makers:

- Gender mainstreaming continues to be regarded as a mere numerical exercise, exacerbated by the

effective implementation and monitoring of employment equity legislation, accompanied by threats of punitive sanctions for failure to meet equity targets.

- The reluctance to prioritise, set clear targets and allocate the necessary budgetary resources towards gender mainstreaming within departments continues to undermine the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming programmes in government.
- The responsibility for gender mainstreaming programmes in government continues to rest on the shoulders of low level officials without the necessary authority, resources and opportunities to influence crucial internal policy making processes in government departments. This undermines the viability of gender transformation.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from this study, it is clear that in terms of numerical gender balance and representation of women in the higher echelons of the selected departments, many departments were performing fairly well. However, it is important to note that the progress or improvements achieved in the numerical representation of women in the senior ranks of these departments might not be entirely due to the implementation of coherent gender-mainstreaming programmes and strategies to increase women's representation and participation. It is almost certainly due to other critical factors, key among which is the compulsion for government departments at all levels to comply with the employment equity legislation. Also, whilst many departments are complying by appointing Gender Focal Persons (GFP), most GFPs are appointed at lower levels of employment, resulting in lack of the necessary resources, clarity of roles and responsibilities and authority to influence internal decision-making processes relating to gender equality and transformation.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government departments should develop clear, practical and implementable gender-equity policies and implementation plans with clear and achievable targets as part of their annual strategic planning sessions.
- CGE should hold discussions with the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to develop a common approach that ensures that government departments and other public entities are compelled to put in place effective systems, including employment contracts and performance agreements for senior managers to incorporate KPAs relating to gender mainstreaming.
- The DPSA should develop an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the public service Heads of Department's 8 Principles on Gender Equality to ensure compliance. Clear sanctions for non-compliance should be defined as part of such a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.
- The NGPF should be reviewed, with particular emphasis on the position of a GFP in the public service to be re-conceptualised to ensure that the functions and responsibilities for gender mainstreaming are clearly defined and assigned to a senior manager within the SMS of every government department.
- Government departments should be required to incorporate gender mainstreaming into their annual programmes of action with clear, specific and dedicated budgetary allocations.
- Finally, government departments should develop annual internal gender-mainstreaming awareness-raising campaign programmes for staff members, accompanied by a skills development programme for officials responsible for gender mainstreaming.



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