

8. Gender Impact Assessment: Framework for Gender Mainstreaming

What is it?

The Gender Impact Assessment provides help for policymakers in incorporating a gender perspective into policies that take account of the different needs, characteristics and behaviours of the users at whom they are aimed.

When and where is it used?

Equality Impact Assessments can be applied to legislation, policy plans and programmes, budgets, reports, and existing policies and services. Ideally, they should be done at an early stage in the decision-making process so that policies can be changed – or even abandoned – if necessary.

Why is it important?

Although there are some policies where it is clear that gender plays a central role, there are other policies where the relevance of gender is less obvious. These are as a result sometimes labelled gender-neutral, for example: health and safety and regional or town planning. In these examples, it may be tempting to see such policies, goals and outcomes affecting people as a homogeneous group. If policies are mistakenly perceived as gender-neutral, opportunities will be missed to include the views of different groups of women and men in policy formation and delivery and, in turn, to misjudge the different effects on each group, and the systems and organisations that support them.

How is it used?

It provides a methodology for policymakers to assess whether their policies will deliver equality of opportunity across the board, and helps to challenge policymakers to question the assumption that policies and services affect everyone in the same way. It puts forward key questions for policymakers to ask at each stage of process:

- Define issues and goals
 - Define what the policy trying to achieve
 - Understand different problems and concerns
 - Enable equal contribution
- Collect data
 - Gather gender, race and disability disaggregated statistics
 - Consult experts, women and men, black and minority ethnic and disability groups
 - Interpret from different perspectives
- Develop options
 - Determine impact/implications for different groups
 - Offer real choice and opportunities
 - Remove stereotyped perceptions
- Communicate
 - Integrate with equality commitments
 - Design different strategies
 - Use inclusive language

- Monitor
 - Use the community
 - Develop indicators
 - Examine differential impact
- Evaluate
 - Achieve equality of opportunity and equal outcomes
 - Learn lessons
 - Spread best practice

Example

Diversity in Public Appointments: The government is taking action to increase women's representation on the boards of public bodies with the aim that women should hold 45–50% of the national public appointments made by the majority of central government departments by the end of 2005. In 2002, 34% of these positions were held by women, with 1.8% held by women from an ethnic minority background. Research commissioned by the former Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions shows that many women underestimate their potential contribution and the relevance of their experience. Far fewer women than men apply for national posts. However, when they do, they appear to be just as successful at getting on public boards as men. Encouraging women to apply for appointments in the first place is the challenge. In an attempt to redress the balance, a series of regional seminars was organised during 2002, aimed at encouraging women from a diverse range of backgrounds to make the move from local to national-level appointment. In parallel with this, a research programme was commissioned by the Women and Equality Unit (WEU) to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminars and to investigate factors that encourage women to apply for and hold public appointments.

Source

Cabinet Office, Women and Equality Unit: http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/gender_impact_assessment.pdf