

ROUNDTABLE
GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL
Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS)
July 17-18, 2007

Introduction

The District Level Gender Mainstreaming Roundtable held on July 17-18, 2007 was sponsored by ILGS and organized in collaboration with the District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP).

The overall goal of the roundtable was to engender discussion among the various stakeholders regarding the way forward for district level gender mainstreaming with the aim of influencing regional and national level policy and programming. Given that the Project was in its final month, one of the primary points of discussion encouraged was the sustainability of the gender mainstreaming gains achieved, including the establishment of Gender Desk Offices and Gender Networks in the three northern regions.

The programme included:

- ⊕ The presentation of DISCAP's best practices in gender mainstreaming at the districts level in the context of decentralization;
- ⊕ The presentation of the results and recommendations of the evaluation study (commissioned by the three northern Regional Directors, Women's Department) of DISCAP's district gender work; and
- ⊕ The examination and critique of the district gender mainstreaming tool kit pulled together by DISCAP based on its work in the north over the last seven years.

Participants were drawn from the following:

- ⊕ Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (Headquarters and the Women's Department (DoW) – national and regional),
- ⊕ Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment
- ⊕ Department of Community Development
- ⊕ Donors (e.g. Royal Dutch Embassy, CIDA)
- ⊕ Academic Institutions (e.g. University of Ghana)
- ⊕ NGOs (e.g. SNV, VSO)

Key Themes: Mainstreaming Gender at the District Level

1. Sustaining the gains made in the three northern regions

After hearing the presentations on DISCAP's integrated and multi-prong gender mainstreaming approach coupled with the results of the independent evaluation study of DISCAP's district level gender work, there were calls to find ways of sustaining the structures established, the capacity built and the gender desk offices

whilst MOWAC pursued in collaboration with MLGRDE and Local Government Services the direction to be taken in light of the pending integration of decentralized staff into the District Assemblies. The following suggestions were offered by participants:

- ⊕ DoWs in the northern regions should collaborate with the Regional Coordinating Councils, District Chief Executives, and District Assemblies to pool resources together to sustain gender mainstreaming efforts.
- ⊕ This group in collaboration with the Gender Network and core members of the DPCU should develop a strategy that can be used to lobby for full implementation of the District Assembly Common Fund component on gender.
- ⊕ MOWAC should engage in a dialogue with MLGRDE with the aim of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding to fund the gender mainstreaming efforts and the positions of the Gender Desk Officers (GDOs) while waiting for the integration of the listed MDAs.
- ⊕ MLGRDE (based on the 1999 Ministry directive for the establishment of gender focal person in all districts) should direct the districts to include GDOs as core members of the DPCU. This would assist in greater gender mainstreaming impact as this would position the GDOS to be actively and meaningful involved in planning and budgeting processes including the Mid-Term Development Plan.
- ⊕ There is the need for collaboration among DoW, Community Development and MLGRDE to so that the challenges of sustainability can be effectively addressed.
- ⊕ There is a need to for further capacity building of many of the GDOs so that they can confidently and effectively make meaningful inputs regarding gender mainstreaming, particularly in advocating for gender inclusiveness and securing DA funding to support gender mainstreaming efforts.

2. Replication in other regions

Substantial interest was shown by the seven other Regional Women's Departments in the possibility or replicating the gender mainstreaming approach supported by DISCAP in the three northern regions. It was recognized that there was much to take into consideration given the lessons learned, best practices established and challenges encountered in the north. Key issues that were raised included:

- Sources of funding to support such efforts;
- The need to institutionalize the GDO position (local arrangements made sense for the pilot effort but now it needed to move beyond this.); and
- The relationship of GDOs to Regional Directors and the DAs.

3. The role of MOWAC in regards to the integration into DAs of decentralized MDAs personnel and thus gender focal persons

A major break-through was experienced when the Director of MOWAC's Women's Department welcomed the integration of gender focal persons into the District Assemblies thereby recognizing that district level gender focal positions do not necessarily need to be line positions within MOWAC. A further break-through

occurred when the Director committed to working with Local Government Services to provide direction from MOWAC regarding integration of such positions.

District Level Gender Mainstreaming Tool Kit¹

The tool kit prepared by DISCAP's gender team lead by the Gender Advisor was well received by participants. The kit was distributed at the end of the first day of the Roundtable providing participants with the opportunity to peruse the material prior its presentation on Day Two.

Following an overview of the kit, participants (in three small groups) had the opportunity to review it in detail including preparing a critique and suggestions for changes and enhancements. The suggestions offered and recommendations made were largely one of detail with only one or two major substantive suggestions advanced. The following is an overview of the input received:

- **Wordage:** Many of the suggestions had to do with accurate wordage (e.g. The Domestic Violence Act instead of The Domestic Violence Bill)
- **Expansion of material:** There were calls for expanded material (e.g. examples of gender specific budgets & gender integrated budgets or more definitions to be included in the gender concepts material).
- **New material or other tools:** There requests, in some cases, for additional components to be developed (e.g. A facilitator's manual to accompany the advanced gender analysis and advocacy course).
- **Ghanaian adaptation and/or development of materials:** One group suggested the inclusion of cultural specific tools.
- **The present context:** It pointed out that there is a need to include a general introduction to provide the context of decentralization (e.g. particularly the integration of decentralized departments' staff into the District).
- **Style and format of the Tool Kit:** A number of suggestions were provided regarding the style and format of the Kit (e.g. include pictures and illustrations and ensure that the documents are bound separately to make them user friendly).
- **Harmonization of existing tool kits²:** It was recommended that this tool kit be harmonized with existing tool kits such as that of Oxfam.

Participants were thanked for their input and assured that most of the suggestions/recommendations would be incorporated. Many of the participants commented on their eagerness to receive the finished product so they could use aspects of it in their work.

¹ Many of the suggestions and recommendations have been incorporated. The polished Tool Kit will be presented in late August to the Minister of MOWAC.

² This tool kit is focused at the district level whereas the other existing tool kits are more general in their treatment of gender mainstreaming. In addition, such a task is well beyond the means and time available of the DISCAP Project.

Summary

The following are the three key points that emanated from the Roundtable:

1. DISCAP was commended for its effort and achievements in gender mainstreaming in the north. Although not perfect, this pilot effort provided lessons learned and best practices that can be incorporated into other efforts to mainstream gender in all aspects of district level work and organizational development. Thus, the model can essentially be replicated.
2. There is an immediate need for MOWAC and MLGRDE to give attention to and find ways to sustain and enhance the structures created and the capacity built in the thirty four districts of the three northern regions.
3. There is an obvious need for cooperation and collaboration by the MLGRDE and the MOWAC in order to ensure that the integration of gender focal persons into district assemblies (in the context of present decentralization developments) is consistent with a gender and development approach (GAD). For this happen, the two ministries need to inform Local Government Services of the direction that is required and the level and location of the position of the gender focal person (at a minimum, assistant director and as a member of the DPCU).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the organizers of the Roundtable, the Institute for Local Government Studies, forward a summary of the Roundtable proceedings to the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment and the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs including the Regional Women's Departments. Such a summary would highlight the need for immediate action by the two ministries on the issues delineated above.