

# Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues

7 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews

mainstreaming  
cross-cutting issues  
advancing gender equality and  
environmental sustainability



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# PREFACE

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The “Lessons from Peer Reviews” pull together knowledge on good practices in development co-operation from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), drawing in particular on the findings of DAC’s peer reviews. These lessons can help DAC members and other relevant actors to understand and implement measures that are critical to managing and delivering development co-operation more effectively.

DAC peer reviews are based on the dual principles of accountability and mutual learning. The reviews are the only international process to regularly examine key bilateral development co-operation systems and offer constructive commentary for their reform. In doing so, peer reviews constitute a yardstick against which the DAC can measure the influence – or lack of it – of its good practice principles on members’ behaviour, both in the field and at headquarters.

The ultimate aims of DAC peer reviews are to:

1. Help improve the quality and quantity of development co-operation
2. Provide credible analyses based on common principles that can be used by both OECD countries and the wider international community
3. Enable DAC members to share experiences, identify good practices and improve co-ordination.

Gender equality and the environment are treated as cross-cutting issues in all DAC peer reviews in recognition of their importance in development co-operation. This booklet highlights some of the common themes and important lessons on mainstreaming gender equality and the environment based on DAC members’ practices as documented in peer reviews, a number of donor evaluations as well as wider work across the OECD. It includes examples of DAC members’ practices and experiences, and sketches out the challenges donors still face as they move towards better support for mainstreaming these themes.

The publication was written by Elisabeth Thioleron, with support from colleagues in the OECD’s Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD). Representatives of Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway and Poland provided oversight as members of the editorial board. The DCD is grateful to the delegates of these countries for volunteering their services in this regard.

The “Lessons from Peer Reviews”, covering a range of current issues and targeted at development policy professionals, has been developed under the direction and guidance of Karen Jorgensen, Head of the Review, Engagement and Evaluation Division of the DCD.



# INTRODUCTION

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*By Erik Solheim, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD*

Cross-cutting issues like the environment and gender equality are relevant to all aspects of development. Environment and development should be seen as one and the same thing. Long term development is not possible if rivers are polluted, the climate is changing, soil depleted and biodiversity destroyed as a result. On the other hand, people cannot be expected to care about the environment as long as their family live in poverty. Gender equality is a goal in itself, but no country can reach its potential if 50% of their labour force, talent and ingenuity are not used. If only female farmers had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets as men, agricultural production would increase and the number of hungry people would be reduced by over 100 million! Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues means that all development initiatives should have a positive effect on issues such as gender equality and the environment.

In the field of development, mainstreaming a cross-cutting issue is generally understood as a strategy to make that theme an integral dimension of the organisation's design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development policies and programmes. It also implies that relevant analyses and studies are conducted as the basis for integrating the cross-cutting issue into the design of policies and programmes.

The process of mainstreaming involves innovation, flexibility, learning and acceptance of new norms. It suggests deep changes in the established procedures and cultures of organisations so that the issue becomes integrated into its values, mission and management. Achieving this sort of change is not easy, and there is always the danger that by putting the issue into the mainstream it will disappear from sight: in becoming the responsibility of everyone it becomes the responsibility of no-one.

The concept of "mainstreaming" was first coined at the Third World Conference on Women in 1985 in Nairobi in reference to gender equality. It is now commonly used in reference to governance, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, climate change, HIV/AIDS, democracy and human rights, disability, and capacity development, in addition to gender equality. The way mainstreaming is interpreted and applied varies considerably between DAC members depending on the issue and the countries in which the concept is implemented. Many donors take a dual approach, which involves

conducting standalone activities in addition to crosscutting interventions. Some mainstream selected themes in a limited number of strategic sectors only; others have made cross-cutting issues an integral part of their overall approach to development, addressing these themes across all projects and programmes. Still others consider that the entire mainstreaming process should be under the full responsibility of the partner country or concerned locality, and they shape their co-operation to support partner countries' efforts in doing this accordingly. The concept of mainstreaming is also challenged by some developing countries, which regard it as a donor-driven conditionality that fails to address their national priorities.

The overarching lesson from DAC peer reviews and donor evaluations is that while many donors have committed to mainstreaming cross-cutting issues, most of them are still struggling to bridge the gap between policy and implementation by conducting the organisational changes needed to achieve this. A common approach has been to overly rely on the easy changes that do not threaten existing patterns and styles of working, at the expense of the others that are more difficult to implement. In order to effectively mainstream cross-cutting themes in development co-operation, concerted and sustained action is needed at different levels which cannot be considered in isolation from one another (see Figure 1).

The lessons are grouped under seven interconnected categories: leadership and commitment; policy and strategic framework; policy and political dialogue; guidelines and tools; incentives and accountability linked to results; financial and human resources; and learning. The approach taken is not comprehensive and is much inspired from work on gender equality mainstreaming, which is better documented than other cross-cutting issues. Many lessons are not new, and most reinforce messages that have already been documented elsewhere. The lessons are primarily aimed at DAC members, particularly newer members, and can be applicable to other agencies and organisations that also contribute significantly to inclusive and sustainable development. They may also help partners in discussions with donors about support to mainstreaming.



*Erik Solheim*  
*Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD*

**Figure 1. Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues**





## Lesson 1: Provide consistent leadership and sustained commitment

**WHAT:** The leadership of an organisation embodies and communicates its culture. Leadership is associated with a mix of soft characteristics such as ‘vision and commitment’, ‘decision making and prioritisation’, ‘motivation’, ‘recognition’, ‘communication and giving voice’; as well as hard measurable indicators such as financial and human resource allocations, staff incentives, policy development and dialogue, accountability and performance systems, and results targets. Effective leadership requires power and authority. It is not only a critical factor within development agencies for mainstreaming a cross-cutting theme: it is also

indispensable within partner governments’ ministries and agencies.

**WHY:** Consistent leadership and commitment from senior management over the long term is critical for a policy or strategy to be mainstreamed at organisational, country and intervention level. This has proved to be the “key ingredient” for mainstreaming cross-cutting themes. In the context of competing policy priorities, the lack of effective leadership in supporting the implementation of mainstreaming policies can result in “policy evaporation”. When senior management within a development organisation consistently supports the implementation of a cross-cutting policy, that policy can be translated into concrete actions at headquarters and at field level and serve as a basis for the policy dialogue with partner countries.

**HOW:** DAC members’ experiences illustrate that mainstreaming requires champions or ‘drivers of change’ situated within senior and middle level management, with sufficient authority to support and influence the implementation of the cross-cutting theme throughout the organisation. Senior leadership is most effective when supported by specialists in senior roles. Delegating leadership to technical staff who don’t have the authority or resources to lead is not effective. Increasing the number of specialists or creating dedicated units does not result in effective leadership either, if the human resources and skills are not backed up with the power and authority to influence operations.

To ensure that the focus on the cross-cutting issue is sustainable over the long term, leaders have to go beyond advocacy and technical fixes and develop clear organisational linkages between policy, resources, incentives and accountability systems. With these in place as well as established priorities consistent with international commitments, senior managers can be held accountable for results.

## Box 1. DAC member experiences

In **DFID**, the top political priority placed on girls and women at the ministerial level has been instrumental in ensuring that heads of office and senior divisional and country staff take the commitment to deliver results on girls and women seriously. A senior gender champion sits on DFID's management board and holds other directors to account. In the **United States**, President Obama issued a directive on 30 January 2013 that strengthens the government's efforts to promote gender equality worldwide. The directive expands co-ordination on global efforts such as reducing gender-based violence and expanding equal access to education and economic opportunities. Former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton provided strong leadership in advancing gender equality, both within the United States and in international debates and organisations. Alliances between the State Department, USAID and champions at ambassadorial level proved pivotal in pushing priorities such as the prevention of gender-based violence at senior levels of the organisations. In **Germany**, the former Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development put women's empowerment high on her political agenda and joined forces with other women ministers to campaign for the fulfilment of MDG 3. **Australia's** current Minister of Foreign Affairs is championing women's economic empowerment and women's leadership, and its Ambassador for Women and Girls is promoting the full and active participation of women, women's leadership and empowerment, including economic empowerment.

## Lesson 2: Have a policy or strategic framework as well as mainstreaming objectives in the corporate plan

**WHAT:** Country commitments under international agreements, treaties and accords act as a stimulant for DAC members' agencies to develop policies and strategic frameworks which provide a vehicle for mainstreaming. With its focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, MDG3 played a catalytic role in mobilising political will and making this theme a legitimate development goal. Likewise, the Rio Convention and Kyoto Protocol provided a legitimate reference worldwide for pursuing environmental and climate change objectives. While many DAC members' agencies have elaborated a policy and/or a strategy related to gender equality, the environment

and climate change, few of them have made the cross-cutting theme a specific priority of their corporate plans.

**WHY:** Establishing a clear policy and strategic framework for the cross-cutting theme is an important step for any DAC member to mainstream that theme in its development co-operation. The policy and strategic framework provide guidance to staff and help partners to see how the donor agency intends to support its development objectives. Making mainstreaming a corporate objective supports a consistent vision which applies to all parts of an agency's operations. It provides clarity of purpose that is unambiguous to staff, and gives a clear signal that mainstreaming must be implemented throughout the organisation, including at field level.

**HOW:** The policy and strategic framework should have high-level ownership within the organisation as well as clear objectives. They should spell out what mainstreaming entails and why it is important for the organisation to do it. Good practice suggests that a policy and strategic framework can yield more benefits when mainstreaming is also an objective of the corporate plan, guiding planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

## LESSON 2

How the policy and strategy apply to delivery on the ground will vary from country to country. In each country, a tailored approach is recommended. Specifically,

- DAC members prioritise cross-cutting issues either by integrating them into the main pillars of their overarching policy, or by recognising the issue as both a stand-alone objective of their development policy and a priority to be mainstreamed across all, or a selected number of sectors and interventions. It helps when the member country's national legal framework for the cross-cutting theme covers the importance of addressing those issues in developing countries as well.
- Donors' country assistance strategies can be an important vehicle for getting mainstreaming objectives into national policy agendas as they are usually prepared in close consultation with national governments and other stakeholders, including NGOs. Aligning assistance for mainstreaming the cross-cutting theme to partner countries' development plans, programmes and/or objectives respects ownership and increases the probability that the cross-cutting priority will be taken into account in national planning strategies, for example poverty reduction strategy papers. This can set the stage for integrating mainstreaming concerns at sector and local levels.
- For DAC members who have one or more implementing agencies or several ministries involved in development co-operation, a single approach, framework or mainstreaming strategy is best to ensure consistency.
- Joint donor assistance strategies in a particular setting reflect the common concerns of participating donors and provide the opportunity to raise attention to cross-cutting issues which may have a low profile on the development agenda of partner countries. In many cases, these strategies provide for the establishment of sector-specific working groups which can examine cross-cutting issues in the context of specific sectors.



## Box 2. DAC member experiences

**USAID's** Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy applies to all bureaus and missions and covers policy and programmatic operations in Washington and the field. The policy includes detailed descriptions of organisational roles and responsibilities to institutionalise the policy in missions, regional bureaus, pillar bureaus, the Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the Office of Acquisition and Assistance, the Office of Human Resources, the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, and the Office of the Administrator. **DFID's** Strategic Vision for Girls and Women was developed by a Gender Vision Working Group led by the Permanent Secretary, three Director-Generals and other senior staff. The strategic vision is meant to be understood by all DFID staff and members of the public. It enables DFID's vision to be distilled down to key priorities and ambitions and sets out a snapshot of top level "we will" commitments, which are meant to be easily digestible and measurable. Concurrently, DFID has placed gender at the centre of its corporate agenda and processes.

**Japan's** Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as **JICA** integrate environmental considerations into their development co-operation activities. JICA's environmental policy states that the agency will continue to (a) promote international co-operation and projects that contribute to environmental protection in developing countries; and (b) mitigate any adverse environmental impacts of development programmes and projects in accordance with its guidelines for environmental and social considerations. Equally, environmental concerns are integrated into the Ministry's overarching ODA policy, targeting both local and global environmental issues, and integrating the consideration of environmental and social impacts into all activities. Austria's environment-related development co-operation is guided by the "Strategic Guideline on Environment and Development in Austrian Development Policy" (2009). Austrian Development Co-operation implements this guideline in partnership with environmental and development policy actors in **Austria** and with national government bodies in partner countries, multilateral and international agencies, and civil-society organisations. All implementation efforts are primarily based on the goal of mainstreaming environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management in development co-operation at different levels.



## Lesson 3: Engage in the policy and political dialogue

**WHAT:** Policy dialogue between development agencies and partner countries is an interactive process of communication and exchange of viewpoints, a means by which donors advance major policy concerns and assess the room for manoeuvre in addressing them. All dialogue that aims to influence development outcomes towards achieving the mainstreaming of a cross-cutting issue can be considered policy dialogue. Given the nature of some cross-cutting issues, dialogue on these issues can also be inherently political.

**WHY:** Building on the momentum of the Paris, Accra and Busan agreements, development actors are moving towards genuine partnerships based on a more inclusive and reciprocal dialogue on development policy. For many DAC members, high level policy dialogue is a vehicle for raising the profile of cross-cutting themes with senior officials, and for seeking out new ways of working together to achieve lasting results. The dialogue helps to create a shared understanding of country-specific issues, perspectives and approaches to the effective integration of cross-cutting themes into national planning. Bringing such a perspective into policy and political dialogue at the country level is also essential to ensuring that significant funding opportunities will emerge. By engaging in dialogue with multilateral institutions on their mainstreaming objectives and results, DAC members' agencies can also play a critical role in influencing these partners to place a high priority on the cross-cutting theme, and to hold them to account.

**HOW:** There is no single recipe for a successful dialogue on mainstreaming cross-cutting themes: informal and ad hoc exchanges can be as effective as more formal and structured dialogue. The key is to acknowledge the underlying power and leadership dynamics and politics in which the national stakeholders operate. A comprehensive and inclusive approach to the dialogue will integrate a complete picture of the policy context, including how individuals and networks of people are working for or resist policy change. As well as identifying actual and potential sources of resistance, familiarity with the national context can facilitate the identification of allies. It is thus important to identify and engage key national-level actors that support the cross-cutting theme as a matter of personal commitment or organisational responsibility, and to gain their insights into potential challenges and opportunities. Targeting and convincing "power holders" in government with no particular knowledge of the cross-cutting theme, can also contribute to raising awareness of the importance of that theme for sustainable development and generate support for including it in national policies and planning.

## LESSON 3

DAC members often combine informal opportunities strategically with formal strategies for dialogue. The policy and political dialogue can be conducted on behalf of a single development agency or on behalf of a number of agencies for more impact and to generate common approaches and frameworks to mainstreaming. A number of agencies have moved away from meeting exclusively with government officials to fostering broad-based public debates on the causes, consequences and solutions to problems linked to cross-cutting themes. Engaging with civil society in a formal or informal manner is another strategic way of generating debate on a cross-cutting theme.

The importance of the cross-cutting issue can be more readily established if there is a clear linkage to international policy commitments that the partner country has already made on that issue. Citing the case of a nearby or comparable country's successes and/or failures can also spark interest and add a sense of urgency to the dialogue. Moreover, robust evidence can effectively be gathered to illustrate that the cross-cutting issue is critical to a country's development, deserving serious and open discussion. In this context, data is effective in supporting the argument for change.

Ensuring that national policies and programmes will address the cross-cutting theme requires the identification of relevant entry points and opportunities for the policy dialogue. Key entry points may include:

- Aid planning processes, e.g. country or joint assistance strategies; programme-based approaches, general or sector budget support; public sector reform;
- sector reviews;
- periods ahead of and following elections;
- the launch of key statistics and reports;
- discussions ahead of and at key international and regional fora;
- consultations on politically 'hot' policy issues where there is a clear link to security, macro-economic policy or employment.

Finally, DAC members engage with multilateral institutions on policy related to mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment as well as the environment and climate change. They can address mainstreaming in multilateral executive board meetings and co-ordination events, by sitting on steering and other committees and task forces, providing inputs into annual meetings and replenishment negotiations, and raising specific issues in meetings with senior staff of these organisations.

Although the extent of DAC members' influence in making multilateral institutions implement and report on mainstreaming objectives varies considerably between members and is not consistently documented at this stage, good practice indicates that they can play a role by:

- consistently emphasising the cross-cutting theme in the policy dialogue with multilateral institutions through Boards and other governance structures;
- extending the dialogue to the country level so that pressure is felt by country directors as well;
- ensuring that new Executive Directors have a clear understanding of what is expected of multilateral organisations on mainstreaming specific themes;
- engaging with finance ministries in partner countries to increase their attention to the cross-cutting theme so that the demand on the multilateral organisations also comes from partner governments.

### Box 3. DAC member experiences

In June 2010, **European Union Member States** adopted the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2010-2015, binding for both the Commission and the EU Member States. The action plan defines an innovative three-pronged approach which sets the political dialogue with partner countries as a key dimension, in addition to mainstreaming and focused programmes. The EU is committed to addressing gender equality in at least 50% of its political dialogue with partner countries as an opportunity to include the gender dimension in the broader poverty analysis, and supporting the development of national authorities' capacity for gender analysis and planning. Through this dialogue, the EU and its partner countries and organisations can also consider the impact and results of actions undertaken to implement UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889, particularly through the adoption of national action plans and policies.

In its gender equality reviews of Norwegian embassies, **Norway** has identified six factors that can contribute to successful policy dialogue: management commitment and will to lead; donor co-ordination to create a stronger voice; consistent messaging; competent embassy staff bringing issues to the table at field level; and support for the participation of national stakeholders in important policy arenas. Norway has run a three-year project with pilot embassies on gender equality and women's empowerment. This project has included concrete advice to the station manager on how to achieve results on gender equality and women's empowerment through policy and political dialogue.

## Lesson 4: Have clear implementation guidelines with follow-up tools and practices

**WHAT:** A key requirement for translating policy aspirations into practice is to have clear implementation guidelines, with follow-up tools and practices. The tools used are most commonly associated with: (i) diagnostic, screening or analysis before the design of interventions (e.g. gender analysis, environmental screening, public environmental expenditure reviews, surveys, guidelines and cost-benefit analyses); (ii) planning and organisation (e.g., environmental impact assessments; strategic environmental assessments, climate risk assessments, gender action plans, databases, toolkits), (iii) monitoring and evaluation (e.g. gender and environmental audits, dedicated markers); (iv) raising the profile and practice of the cross-cutting theme

(e.g. awareness-raising, training courses, manuals and leaflets); and (v) consultation and participation (e.g. steering and multi-stakeholders groups, forums, conferences, seminars and hearings). Tools and procedures for integrating cross-cutting issues into general budget support, programme-based lending and/or sector-wide approaches, are still limited.

**WHY:** A number of peer reviews have observed the gap between the vision for making mainstreaming a priority or goal in policy and the reality of how DAC members work in practice. Any approach to mainstreaming will only be successful if it is translated into practice to produce the expected results. Implementation guidelines are necessary for outlining key concepts and objectives and providing directions on how to monitor and understand outcomes. Tools can be the starting point to agree with partners on how external support can contribute to a country's development objectives linked to a project or programme.

**HOW:** Although DAC members have some good examples of approaches, tools and practices for mainstreaming gender equality, the environment and climate change, not all development agencies have introduced them or use them systematically. The tools and approaches are not mutually exclusive; they can be complementary and used for multiple purposes (e.g. statistics disaggregated by sex are useful as educational and consultation tools as well as for analytical uses). The challenge is to use them consistently in the project or programme cycle and across sectors to be efficient. Using existing national, sector or local analytical/planning processes and procedures as far as possible – rather than running externally-based ones, is considered good practice. Donors also describe increased co-operation and harmonisation between agencies as advantageous for working on cross-cutting themes.

## LESSON 4

Some DAC members report that experimenting with an approach or specific tool related to mainstreaming, testing it, and adapting it to local circumstances, provides valuable outcomes and lessons. Choosing the appropriate mainstreaming approach and tools for a particular context may require asking the following questions:

- Is the tool relevant to the cross-cutting-development issues and local/sector conditions?
- Is it practically oriented and adaptable to the local context?
- Is it easy to use – what technical capacity, skills or qualifications does it demand?
- Is time available realistic for use of the tool?
- How much will it cost, is it economically efficient, and are sufficient funds available?
- Will it involve a desk exercise or will field work be required?
- How robust is the approach – does it deliver quality and reliable information, and can relevant stakeholders readily be engaged?
- What is the demand for data, and is this likely to be available or easy to access?



## Box 4. DAC member experiences

**DFID's** Multilateral Aid Review identified gender equality as a 'reform priority' for eleven multilateral organisations which DFID supports. The UK Secretary of State for International Development has committed to making women and girls a key issue in the 2015 Multilateral Aid Review. **Australia** holds multilateral agencies accountable using the Australian Multilateral Assessment (AMA), which includes as one of 24 assessment criteria 'a focus on cross-cutting issues, particularly gender, the environment and people with disabilities. In 2012, Australia also introduced multilateral performance scorecards to provide an on-going system to track the performance of multilateral partners on an annual basis. **Canada's** Gender Equality Institutional Assessment of Multilateral Organisations examines the ability of multilateral partners to plan for, achieve, monitor and report on gender equality results. Multilateral institutions are assessed against six criteria, with the heaviest weighting given to the gender equality results they deliver. The institution is given an overall rating for each of the six criteria based on a desk review and a mission to validate the findings and engage in policy dialogue with the partner institution. Following the validation of the initial findings, an overall institutional rating is determined. The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development has observed that gender equality issues, specialists and units gain greater visibility and profile within partner institutions through the assessment process. This is reflected in feedback from partners which has been generally positive. Partners report that the tool has helped them to gain the support of their respective executive boards for gender equality. They appreciate that participation is optional and is not a heavy-handed process. They also appreciate that the outcomes of the assessment are not tied to funding decisions; rather the exercise is aimed at helping the organisation to improve. Working with other donors to share concerns or recommendations from the assessments, particularly in advance of board meetings where multiple donors can coordinate messaging to a single institution, has helped to focus donor efforts.



## Lesson 5: Link incentives and accountability to results

**WHAT:** Many DAC members have gone to great lengths to strengthen institution-wide accountability mechanisms. However, few donors have put in place the standard systems and processes to assess, reward or sanction staff and managers' mainstreaming engagement and outputs. Incentives include both tangible benefits for staff, such as pay awards and promotion opportunities; and less tangible ones, such as professional recognition and increased budgets for activities seen to promote a specific policy. Monitoring

and evaluating are important dimensions of accountability since they assess progress against mainstreaming targets and objectives, and provide feedback and the foundation for learning. Results monitoring in cross-cutting issues has to follow good intentions of mainstreaming policies, and remains a major area for improvement.

**WHY:** Systems of incentives and accountability play an important part in communicating the tone and direction of an organisation to the staff. Their absence has been raised as a key factor limiting the achievement of results in mainstreaming, and passively supports the failure to use tools and procedures necessary to achieve results. Agency staff do not see the value of commitment to a cause that is not promoted within their organisations when there are no rewards or sanctions associated with that cause. Recognising outstanding work, at individual or collective level, also raises the profile and status of the cross-cutting issue.

**HOW:** DAC members' agencies which ensure that everybody has mainstreaming performance targets or indicators in their job plans, terms of reference and job descriptions, send a clear signal about what is expected of staff. When the competencies required of senior managers include good knowledge of a policy and practice of specific cross-cutting issues, those below them in the system understand that they too will be expected to perform with regard to that theme. Experience also indicates that strong incentives are needed to encourage all staff to attend training courses and be aware of the organisation's policy and practice on mainstreaming. When promotion and posting opportunities are made contingent on completing the training at the right level, the importance attached to the cross-cutting theme is clear to staff. Finally, in addition to personal incentives for individuals, the value of recognition or reward systems for high-performing teams, departments or projects, is an indication of top management's commitment.

As concerns monitoring, evaluating and measuring results, DAC members report that strong accountability frameworks for cross-cutting issues are identified as those which systematically

integrate mainstreaming into the organisation's monitoring system and evaluative work, and incorporate the issue into the body of evidence of evaluations. Some DAC members report that best results can be yielded where advisors have made specific mainstreaming inputs into monitoring and evaluation systems. Including the cross-cutting issue into intervention design and monitoring also enables it to be taken into account in evaluation.

Regarding multilateral agencies, most DAC members rely on these agencies' monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems and routines for providing accountability on cross-cutting themes.

### Box 5. DAC member experiences

**Switzerland's** approach to mainstreaming gender across the programme is strategic and targeted, and continuous awareness-raising about gender equality and women's empowerment with partners appears to be bearing fruit in Burkina Faso. The approach includes basket funding for gender-related activities; training implementing partners on the gender tool kit to build capacity in relation to cross-cutting priorities; following-up on project proposals that do not meet checklist/screening criteria; and integrating gender indicators and issues in programme/project evaluations. All annual programme reports must identify progress against these indicators, gender mainstreaming is in the terms of reference of programme managers, and SDC's gender contact persons at headquarters provide briefings on gender equality before each assignment. Drawing on the lessons from initial mainstreaming efforts since 2007, **Ireland's** approach has evolved in recent years. Initially, a strong focus had been placed on specific interventions and the establishment of internal structures for the promotion and monitoring of mainstreaming. Ireland reoriented this approach towards increasing capacity and staff knowledge on mainstreaming and ensuring cross-sectoral linkages (i.e. across partner-government sectors) and comprehensive programming responses. This

was achieved through embedding mainstreaming into Ireland's approach to managing for development results, the revised guidelines for country strategy papers and Irish Aid's research strategy, and through internal training courses in political economy analysis.

**Luxembourg** takes systematic account of cross-cutting aspects in programme formulation, implementation and evaluation. Its operational agency, **LuxDev**, has amended its code of conduct to include respect for the environment and non-discrimination against women. Bilateral programmes dealing with biodiversity as well as with adaptation to and attenuation of the effects of climate change and desertification are still limited, but the more systematic resort to impact analysis and environmental impact evaluations is beginning to show concrete results. One example is the construction of a vocational training centre for renewable energies in Cape Verde, based on strict standards of energy efficiency. Contributing to international action on climate change is one of **DFID's** top policy priorities. The agency supports developing countries to adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by investing in low-carbon energy sources, improving fuel standards in cars and increasing energy efficiency wherever possible. To do so, all DFID business areas, country programmes and other major policy and spending areas completed Strategic Programme Reviews to identify climate change risks and opportunities. DFID is currently implementing a strategy to strengthen the agency's approach to climate change and resource scarcity, focusing on shaping future investment decisions, new business tools and increasing staff skills. In **Germany**, the business model of its operational agency GIZ supports engagement in new international alliances and partnerships. For example, GIZ assists its partners in identifying the wide range of causes of environmental risks, helps modernise environmental policy at all levels, advises on regional environmental co-operation and develops strategies to embed environmental protection in other areas of policy. In anchor countries, GIZ disseminates concepts for resource efficiency and recycling, assists developing countries in decentralising management of natural resources, to ensure greater efficiency and closer orientation to local needs.



## Lesson 6: Allocate sufficient financial and human resources for delivering on commitments

**WHAT:** Most evaluations and peer reviews report that not enough money and people are allocated to support the organisational changes needed to mainstream cross-cutting issues in development co-operation. DAC members fund cross-cutting themes through bilateral programmes, civil society organisations as well as multilateral contributions. Since the late 1990s, the OECD marker-based statistics report on environment and gender-related aid for DAC members individually and as a whole. The proportion of aid screened with the gender equality and the environment and Rio markers has increased in recent years, and today most DAC members apply this tool. Some multilateral institutions are

beginning to use gender and environment markers as well. In spite of this, there is no established good practice baseline for financial and human resources commitments to enable the effective mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues.

**WHY:** Adequate financial and human resources enable development organisations to mainstream cross-cutting issues throughout the organisation and achieve sustainable results. By contrast, insufficient resources are likely to impede the organisation's mainstreaming policy and objectives when these exist, and may only result in technical fixes with no sustainable outcomes.

**HOW:** A comprehensive approach to mainstreaming requires a strong presence of well trained, dedicated specialists with adequate capacity at both headquarters and the country level, and the appropriate budget and mandate to influence the design and implementation of interventions as well as to provide policy and technical support to partner countries. When the responsibility for mainstreaming cross-cutting issues lies with relatively junior or part-time staff, their influence on senior management is minimal and mainstreaming is not a priority.

For best results, some evaluations point to the following good practice:

- A combination of senior advisors at headquarters, working in collaboration with country-based specialists as well as focal points, is perceived as an effective staffing arrangement for advancing institutional efforts to address cross-cutting issues. The presence of full-time, senior specialists is also seen as critical for engaging senior executives at headquarters.

## LESSON 6

- specialists recruited at the country/regional level can be efficient in supporting the mainstreaming of interventions, delivering appropriate knowledge and conducting analysis and monitoring functions. The use of nationally recruited specialists results in greater contextual relevance to programming. Making better use of national and local expertise, research institutes and civil society organisations also facilitates engagement with local networks and communities of practice;
- human resource gaps can be filled with consultants if and when necessary. What matters most is individuals' competences and skills and the relevance of their terms of reference to the needs expressed by the organisation and the partner country;
- building the expertise of more generalist staff through tailored capacity building/training, consistent support over sustained periods and networking, yields some benefits;
- allow focal points sufficient time, knowledge and support from management to influence their colleagues;
- as concerns the environment, retain access to expertise on both environment and climate change;
- strong relationships and channels of communication within DAC members' agencies between advisors in cross-cutting issues and their colleagues in multilateral units that lead on negotiations with multilateral institutions, is a key ingredient for influencing multilateral organisations effectively. This underlines the need to build the capacity of these advisors to engage confidently in technical negotiations on multilateral funding.

Few agencies have an overall budget for mainstreaming. The financing of mainstreaming objectives is critical to ensuring adequate budgets for projects and programmes, consultants and capacity building tools and activities, including in partner countries. The establishment of common results frameworks, either at the national level or for particular programmes (including at sector level), can help to build consensus and ensure that policy and resource allocation decisions take sufficient account of cross-cutting issues.

DAC members' agencies fund mainstreaming activities through dedicated bilateral funding and/or discretionary programme budget, joint funding with other donors as well as earmarked funding



to multilateral institutions and contributions to multi-donor trust funds. Basket funding provides significant opportunities and resources to address cross-cutting issues. Some members have decentralised budgets, and the programming process conducted at field level informs resource allocations for cross-cutting issues. Others have a discretionary budget for cross-cutting themes which can be used for innovative programmes and for giving specific support to NGOs. Still others make it mandatory for country offices to allocate the financial resources required to support advisors on specific themes.

### Box 6. DAC member experiences

**Australia** has made the important link between accountability for implementation and the use of tools such as quality reporting tools, gender action plans and gender analysis on the one hand, and the improved effectiveness of the interventions on the other hand. Aid quality checks of all aid initiatives are conducted on an annual basis. Initiatives are scored according to quality criteria, one of which is gender equality. The checks include a management response where improvement could be made, ensuring an accountability loop for initiative management. **DFID's** accountability for gender equality is through the core reporting process, against nine indicators on girls and women in the results framework. All divisions and country offices are required to include results for girls and women in their plans and report against these; accountability sits at the most senior levels with the Management Board and Directors of divisions and regions; a senior (Director General-level) gender champion sits on the Management Board and holds other directors to account, and senior gender staff have been appointed in each division to support directors to deliver gender equality results. The inclusion of gender objectives in performance management frameworks for country Heads of Office and senior gender champions is encouraged as part of annual objective setting. In **Norway**, a senior advisor in Norad's Section for Rights and Gender Equality is dedicated to work closely with the gender focal points and technical experts in the energy section and Norway's embassies. This set-up, coupled with a framework agreement with an international network of gender and energy consultants and experts – Energia – has resulted in targeted actions and results in a number of pilot countries. For example, Norad and Energia have provided backstopping support to the

embassy-funded programme on gender and energy in Mozambique. Within this programme, significant capacity building has taken place, and ownership of the mainstreaming process is increasingly being transferred to senior management in the relevant national institutions and ministries. **USAID's** Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment states that it will measure performance in closing key gender gaps and empowering women and girls, learn from successes and failures and disseminate best practices on gender integration throughout the Agency. To this effect the State-USAID performance plan and report system was significantly revised and the entire foreign assistance indicator suite was reengineered. The new system includes seven output and outcome indicators on gender equality, female empowerment, and gender-based violence that should be used in the performance management plans for tracking progress toward implementation results and measuring impact across programmes.

**DFID** has devised a number of input indicators to track its commitments to support developing countries' climate adaptation and low-carbon growth. These are: (a) spend on adaptation programmes; (b) number of people supported by programmes to cope with the effects of climate change; (c) spend on clean energy programmes; and (d) number of people with improved access to clean energy as a result of projects.

## Lesson 7: Strengthen the culture of learning on mainstreaming

**WHAT:** Learning refers to capturing good practices that generate valuable lessons and provide innovative examples that are relevant for future forms of dissemination and transferability in other contexts. Few DAC members' agencies have formal reporting mechanisms on good practices in mainstreaming, including between specialists at field level and headquarters. Many are still negotiating the challenges of managing and reporting on results. They point to the difficulty of measuring outcomes rather than outputs and processes, aggregating data at the central level to respond coherently to mainstreaming objectives, and creating a learning culture

based on documented practice. When mainstreaming results are reported, this tends to be limited to the micro or project level and to areas where there is good understanding of how the cross-cutting theme improves results.

**WHY:** The recording and systematic documentation of results over time and across sectors is a very powerful tool for development practitioners to give purpose and power to mainstreaming. The lack of consistent monitoring in particular constrains the gathering and use of good practices for future planning purposes and the creation of an evidence base from which learning can be disseminated across the organisation and beyond.

**HOW:** A consistent approach to reporting on results involves tracking progress, adapting management practices and documenting good practice. For system-wide learning to take place, a two-way flow of meaningful information needs to be established between the different parts of the system through interlocked feedback loops – e.g. from the policy-making units led by the government's priorities, through the implementing agency's policy guidelines, through to country operations, implementing partners, and beneficiaries. Assessing and presenting good practices in mainstreaming should seek to evaluate the progress and impact achieved by the practice itself, and document striking and sustainable practices which can be used to inspire decision-makers involved in formulating, implementing and evaluating mainstreaming policies.

Several DAC members note that reporting on mainstreaming is often constrained by poor or lacking monitoring and evaluation data, and the absence of country-level strategies and indicators. DAC members who report on good practice have, *inter alia*:

- Integrated mainstreaming indicators into the institution's core reporting processes and reported on results delivered as part of a mandatory annual reporting process;

## LESSON 7

- systematically incorporated the issue into the body of evidence of evaluations;
- mandated that all divisions and country offices report on results achieved with mainstreaming;
- improved the collection and dissemination of data related to the cross-cutting theme;
- integrated explicit cross-cutting issues results in programme documentation;
- a number of donors support partner countries' efforts to strengthen statistical capacity building.

### Box 7. DAC member experiences

**Canada** has 33 locally-engaged consultants working as gender equality advisors in consultation with gender equality focal points in 47 country missions. Local expertise ensures that the Department for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development's country programmes were informed by context-specific knowledge and facilitates engagement with local networks and communities of practices. The combination of local gender equality advisors and focal points, working with headquarters-based gender equality specialists, has strengthened the focus on gender equality in country programmes. For **Australia**, having senior gender equality specialists in regional divisions at headquarters has increased the influence of gender focal points in missions by providing access to regular, tailored support expertise with knowledge of the region. In Irish Aid, the main role of gender equality advisors and focal points is to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of country strategy papers, participate in sectoral and gender working groups, policy dialogue and manage specific gender equality projects. The mainstreaming dimension of advisors' work is focused on supporting and building the capacity of colleagues to strengthen approaches to gender mainstreaming.

The **Netherlands'** MDG 3 Fund provided over EUR 79 million between 2008 and 2011 for women's organisations, including grassroots organisations. The Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW) provides over EUR 83 million to support women's economic empowerment, political participation and security for the period running from 2012 to 2015. The success of this initiative has bolstered political support for gender equality in Dutch

society and Parliament. France has introduced an environmental and social risk assessment tool which the Agence française de développement now applies to all its programmes. The agency is engaged strategically with the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the Japanese Bank to encourage others to use the same tool. France committed EUR 420 million annually in 2010-2012 to finance interventions related to climate change. In the past five years it has committed over EUR 7.5 billion in activities linked to mitigation, and EUR 1.6 billion linked to adaptation.

**Norway** recently revised its Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2013-2015) to integrate an improved structure for results management and reporting. In the period 2010-2015, six embassies were designated as pilots for measuring and reporting results in policy and programmes on gender equality. This initiative has led to an increase of 13% in spending for gender equality (according to the gender equality marker), and has inspired the embassies to address gender issues in high level political dialogues and the energy sector. The status of 'pilot embassies' created expectations for strengthened efforts for women's rights and gender equality at country level, and received support from management to follow-up. Training was provided and resources made available to strengthen gender mainstreaming. This improved enabling environment seems to have created necessary conditions for increased levels of activity and improved mainstreaming processes.

**Australia** reports on enhanced resources, processes and accountability mechanisms at the managerial level, to ensure a more systematic mainstreaming of gender equality through gender stocktakes, gender action plans and results reporting. Measures have included: (a) raising the profile of gender equality as a key part of all aid programming so that senior and middle-level management are directly responsible for implementation and results; (b) a quality reporting tool to improve results reporting and focus on accountability; and (c) an increase in the number of gender specialists from one to six persons, including at the director level.

## Box 8. DAC member experiences

The **United Kingdom's** assistance to climate change adaptation in Bangladesh has been evaluated. Where activity is underway, it appears to be performing well and establishing effective models with good local engagement. Activities are being monitored but there is no regular assessment of the impact they have. There are aggressive targets for impact on people, which will require monitoring by personnel independent of the implementation partners. In terms of learning, the programme demonstrates considerable innovation. The balance between the three elements of knowledge transfer, development of new approaches and funding large-scale implementation is a good model. The ability to take such lessons to scale is beginning to be tested. **Norway** supports a number of REDD+ multilateral and bilateral initiatives which combine the objectives of fighting climate change, protecting biodiversity as well as ensuring sustainable development for countries, communities and forest users. Given the complex nature of REDD+, multi-sectorial action is necessary to achieve sustainable results. This prompted Norway to support both environmental groups as well as organisations specialised in gender equality in relation to REDD+.

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