

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

**Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad**

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Email: svyas-doorgapersad@uj.ac.za

### **ABSTRACT**

The United Nations Millennium Development Goal [MDG] (Goal 1; Poverty reduction) in South Africa had not achieved all of its set targets. There are still economic disparities complemented by a wide ranging pollution-to-unemployment ratio creating gender-differentiation in poverty outcomes. MDG Goal 3 (Gender equality and women empowerment) also existed in isolation and was not explicitly aligned with other goals. The post-MDG review led to the establishment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Goal 1: poverty elimination and Goal 6: gender equality). In order to eradicate poverty and advance economic empowerment of households, the Local Economic Development (LED) programme has since been implemented in South African municipalities. The aim of the article is to explore the missing element of gender in development policies and goals. The purpose therefore is to align gender to local economic development in municipalities. A qualitative research design was planned to gather relevant information. A review of LED documents explores the gender exclusion in the LED processes. Gender differences, inequality, unequal access to resources, and unequal employment opportunities may lead to economic collapse. The article offers recommendations for improvement.

**Key Words:** gender, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, local economic development, poverty, sustainable development

**JEL Classification:** Z00

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The need for gender mainstreaming in policies and policymaking processes is currently being identified at global level. The United Nations Development Plan (UNDP) Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 (2014a: 4) emphasises the need for a gender equality strategic plan in order “to contribute to the eradication of poverty and the significant reduction of gender inequalities by empowering women and promoting and protecting their rights”. The aim of this UN programme is to advance gender-

based participation (especially focusing on women) in economic development processes. This trend began as far back as the 1970s with the emergence of the Women in Development (WID) approach (refer Moser, 1993) which sets out to counteract male dominance on the economic front and increase the number of female employees/professionals in the labour market. Thereafter the Women and Development (WAD) approach emerged (refer Elson, 1999) which focused on eliminating the marginalisation of women and worked towards gender equality in economic development processes. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach (refer Razavi and Miller, 1995) also promotes gender mainstreaming, enhancing gender equality and women empowerment in development policies.

Underpinned by feminist theory, this article adopts a Gender and Development (GAD) approach because of its proposed policy implications. The article furthermore links the GAD with the Empowerment Approach to mainstream gender in institutional processes. This collaboration is described by Razavi and Miller (1995: 2) as a “strategy of relevance” which conforms to the demands of challenging established institutional dynamics and making gender equality a key part of the development dialogue. On this reference is also made to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme [Un-habitat], 2010: 6). It is posited that the empowerment approach has its own indicators for measurement and that these vary from the individual in society to the collective societies at micro and macro levels. The micro level symbolises an individual seeking the progression from subjugation to an evolutionary personality while the macro level symbolises the institutions/authorities/regulations taking relevant decisions regarding the progression of individuals (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014a: 101). In this article, following the explanation put forward by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2014a: 101), at the micro level the individuals are women who seek empowerment and recognition, while the macro level is represented by “municipalities (organisations), authorities (political office-bearers), and regulations (gender equality policies and programmes)”.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Gender is defined as “the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity”. Depending on the particular context, these characteristics may include “biological sex, sex-based social structures or gender identity” (Budlender, 2001: 20). Ginwala (1991: 63) adds that gender is “the socially imposed divisions between the sexes. She goes on to explain that gender refers to “the psychological and physical attributes which a given culture expects to

coincide with physical maleness or femaleness”. It can be construed that as a primary observation, the concept gender is linked to the physiognomy separating male and female, and is physically constructed. However, gender cannot simply be categorised according to sexes; a far broader understanding is required in terms of different physiological, emotional and psychological behaviour, attitudes, abilities, tasks and responsibilities that are associated with masculine and feminine selves. A UNDP document entitled ‘Gender Equality in Public Administration’ (2014b: 64) identifies gender mainstreaming as “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”. The ultimate goal in this regard is that women and men should benefit equally at all these levels and inequality should not be perpetuated. There should, in other words, be gender equality. Gender equality refers to women and men being equal to one another and sharing the same rights. Furthermore, they should have equal power and both genders should be treated in the same way. Neither should be unfairly treated (Chisholm & September, 2005: 77). The paradigmatic shift in public management approaches demands that the world devise new government processes, initiatives and new ways of dealing with problems. This new environment also calls for transformed organisational systems, approaches, methods and procedures in mainstreaming gender for sustainable socio-economic development.

### **3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This article explores concepts such as gender, poverty and local economic development. These concepts and their inter-relatedness are discussed in this section.

#### **3.1 Gender and Poverty**

In a complex socio-economic environment, poverty is considered as “multidimensional in its symptoms, multivariate in its causes [and] dynamic in its trajectory” (Mowafi & Khawaja, 2004: 1). This conceptualisation of poverty is helpful from the perspective of understanding and combating women’s poverty. As Stephen Jenkins suggests (cited in Sharma, 2012: 3) a feminist concept of poverty can be described in terms of an individual’s right to a “minimal degree of potential economic independence”. The feminist definition, therefore, emphasises an individual’s ability to be self-supporting, based on the assumption that “people who are financially dependent upon others must be considered vulnerable to poverty”

(studylib.net, undated). Painter (2004, in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014c: 329) agrees, but argues that if we apply this assumption to the status and position of women, “no consideration is given to why and how poverty affects women and men differently and how they experience poverty differently”. Poverty is therefore linked to gender-based needs, demands and experiences. This view is further supported by Razavi (1998: 1) who claims that gender analysis of poverty is less concerned about whether women suffer more poverty than men, than learning how gender differentiates the social processes that lead to poverty, and the available escape routes from destitution. This situation affects the economy of households (both men and women), hence Sen (1990: 124) cautions that to concentrate on family poverty irrespective of gender may prove “misleading in terms of both causation and consequences”. Bennett and Daly (2014: 19) call this situation a “gendered poverty”.

This situation also supports the fact that of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Goal 1: Poverty eradication, has failed to achieve its targets. The challenges still exist with disturbing trends in terms of the differentiation of poverty outcomes according to generation and gender; in particular, youth and women remain disproportionately vulnerable to all forms of poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2013). These failures have, however, been identified and acknowledged. Strategies have been formulated to tackle the issue of gender inequalities in poverty reduction programmes. A document entitled ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’; (United Nations, 2015) in its Declaration, section 3, resolves between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It has been agreed that the outcomes of this resolution will be evaluated and the impact will be researched in future years.

### **3.2 Gender and Local Economic Development**

Local Economic Development (LED) can be seen as a platform to capacitate women and men, hence promoting the socio-economic evolvement of households. However, gender inequalities hamper the equal and significant participation of women in LED processes. A document entitled ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Local Economic Development Strategies: A Guide’ (International Labour Organization, 2010) identifies several barriers restricting women’s participation in local development processes. These include a significant lack of women’s representation in decision-making bodies; fewer available opportunities for the education of girls

and women resulting in, among other restrictions, less access to information; and limited access to skills development in certain occupations and positions. Furthermore, job opportunities at the local level are scarce. These inequalities cause either “brain drain, or distress migration and vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour; and irregular migrant status”. These barriers have also been identified in research conducted by Beall in South Asia, East Africa and Southern Africa, providing detailed comparative information on gender and local government reforms. Beall’s research, published in 2005 in an article entitled ‘Decentralising Government and Decentering Gender: Lessons from Local Government Reform in South Africa’, maintains that “the intersection of the formal organisations of local government with socially embedded institutions, such as patterns of male dominance in collective action and customary practices by traditional authorities”, have a distinctly negative impact on women’s economic prospects and access to the advantages of democracy (Beall, 2005: 35). However much research is still required to measure the impact and success of this programme and report back on its outcomes in the South African context.

### **3.3 Poverty and Local Economic Development**

LED has the premise of fostering and promoting economic development, and creating economic opportunities to prepare the ground for more employment opportunities in partnership with all relevant stakeholders in the local context. There is growing consensus on a paradigm shift towards formulating development agendas that combine economic growth strategies with strategies that are pro-poor, but with more inclination and bias towards poverty alleviation. LED is also identified as a distinct strategy towards poverty alleviation. Such is implied in the RSA White Paper (1998) which emphasises the LED objectives of promoting growth and addressing poverty and inequality at the local government level with municipal authorities being facilitators rather than drivers of LED policy (RSA, 1998). The National Development Plan (National Planning Commission 2011) in addition states that it is possible to eliminate poverty and to sharply reduce inequality by 2030 that may demand further evaluations in the coming years.

## **4. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES**

The global overview of LED reveals that the idea of an LED agenda arose in the post-war era in cities that were “undergoing major transformations from industrial to post-industrial” development (Wekwete, 2014: 11); see also (Blakely, 1989);

(Nel & Rogerson 2005). These transformations created widespread poverty and gave rise to inequalities in government processes. Stating the situation of LED in different European countries, a document entitled 'Gender Mainstreaming and Female Participation within Local Development Processes: Best Practices Catalogue for the International Project Women in Development' (European Union, 2007) emphasised that the female world is a resource for Local Development not only because it contributes to economic growth of the territory and its social reproduction, but also because it promotes and confirms alternative approaches to development.

In the African and especially in the Southern African context, LED aims to "address the challenges of rapid urbanisation and urban development" calling for a significant "structural shift from pre-industrial economies to industrialised ones" and must of necessity be "informed by broader theories and methodologies that support the transformation agenda of addressing poverty, inequality and productivity" (Wekwete, 2014: 13).

To investigate the 'gender aspect' in the LED processes in South Africa, in 2015 a study was conducted of the City of Johannesburg. A desktop study revealed that the Gender Policy Framework in City of Johannesburg is that "local government as a client can play a role in promoting businesses that are owned by women and which employ women. Although there is some bias towards women in procurement procedures there are no specific targets set" (City of Johannesburg, 2013). This is cause for concern if the City of Johannesburg's local development processes limit the women involvement of women to procurement processes only. In addition, it is worrisome that at the national level, the gender aspect of the Department of Public Works Strategic Plan 2012-2016 (2015) only incorporates "people with disabilities" (see also Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015: 104). This situation is substantiated by a research initiative that explores gender mainstreaming in public procurement processes in South Africa and indicates that "the application of gender equality objectives through public procurement remains underdeveloped and under-researched" (Callerstig, 2014: 53).

The researcher/author of this article offered a certificate course in Johannesburg during March 2017, to share her understanding of 'municipal policymaking'. The two-day sessions were attended by a total of 72 young learners in the age-group 18 to 26 years, of whom 21 were males and 51 females. The registration of a large number of female learners supports the empowerment approach and shows that there is a need to promote an understanding of local government processes. The

researcher conducted structured interviews with the learners and gleaned responses on aspects such as their awareness; level of participation; and support for gender-based representation in the LED processes. The responses are discussed below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Youth Perceptions of LED Processes in City of Johannesburg: Recorded Responses**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<i><b>Awareness</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21% of the learners are aware of the LED processes in the municipality</li> <li>• 79% of the learners are not aware of the LED processes in the municipality</li> </ul>
<i><b>Participation</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the 21% of learners who are aware of the LED processes, only 7% participate in the LED processes in the municipality</li> </ul>
<i><b>Gender-based representation</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46% of the learners support the gender-based representation in the LED processes in the municipality</li> <li>• 54% of the learners do not support the gender-based representation in the LED processes in the municipality</li> <li>• Of the 46% of learners who support gender-based representation in LED processes in the municipality, 11% are males and 35% are females</li> <li>• Of the 54% of learners who do not support the gender-based representation in the LED processes in the municipality 18% are males and 36% are females</li> </ul>

Source: Author.

The responses in Table 1 indicate a challenging situation in that a lack of awareness hampers participation in the LED processes. In addition, a marked lack of support of gender-based representation proves the existence of a stereotype mentality in the society from which the learners were drawn. LED is incorporated in the strategic document of this municipal development plan. As outlined in Education and Training Unit (ETU) (Undated: 1) “Municipalities decide on LED strategies and the process of arriving at a LED strategy must be part of the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process. The LED strategies should be based on the overall vision outlined in the IDP and should take into account the result of the analysis done to identify problems and prioritise development projects”. The responses recorded and described above correspond closely to the findings of research undertaken on gender mainstreaming in policy and political contexts at South African local government level where it was shown that “there is a lack of understanding regarding the IDP, which effects the level of participation”. Furthermore, responses showed that “women (community members) are still restricted to obligate their household responsibilities instead of [making] a socio-political contribution in

policymaking processes” (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015: 128). This lack of awareness and participation in the IDP and LED processes has the potential to hamper the economic empowerment of women, due to negative consequences such as economic restrictions, opportunities and growth.

## **5. THE WAY FORWARD**

The article proposes that awareness regarding capacity building, LED processes and opportunities [from a gendered perspective] are imperative for empowerment. Such empowerment brings economic independence, participation and access to resources, all of which are required for achieving the development goals of municipalities. These suggestions are substantiated by research conducted in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality in 2006 by Breitenbach (2006) who identifies similar challenges when he writes that “LED is not a phenomena that is well understood by the municipalities; [there is a] lack of training by municipal LED practitioners and managers; [and] poor participation by the locals on LED issues” (Breitenbach, 2006: 17-18). The identification of LED-related challenges led to an initiative by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Local Enterprise Support Program (USAID LENS) entitled ‘Gender in Local Economic Development’ (2016) that has introduced gender mainstreaming training programmes to “complement and support a broader institutional strengthening and capacity building package for municipal Local Development Units (LDUs) [to be] carried out by a range of service providers”. In addition, a project entitled ‘Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality, South Africa’ (South African LED Network, 2009) was introduced for a period from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011. This initiative had a number of perceived outcomes such as developing “an improved enabling environment for women entrepreneurship development (WED) in South Africa”, increasing the “capacity of business development service (BDS) providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs; and improving women entrepreneurs’ income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness” (South African LED Network, 2009). The expected deliverable of such initiatives will be economic empowerment of households with improved skills and entrepreneurship capabilities.

In the year 2014, the 15th Francophone Summit was organised in Dakar, Senegal to discuss issues of gender equality and local economic development. The in-depth debates explored the claim that gender mainstreaming in LED processes can bring the gender equality required for improved participation, taking cognisance of the “specific needs and priorities of poor women and men, with a particular focus on the removal of barriers to women’s economic participation” (United Nations



Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), 2014). According to a document entitled ‘The Strategic Framework on Gender and Women’s Economic Empowerment 2006’ (RSA: Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 2007), gender issues are not yet well integrated into other economic development strategies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) strategies. This being so, to provide opportunities and improved access to resources, this strategic framework on gender and women’s economic empowerment was introduced in 2006 (DTI, 2007). Its objective was to achieve economic empowerment of women which was deemed vital to the achievement of gender equality and to introduce a quota system of 30 percent for women’s inclusion in terms of participation, representation and resource allocation”.

Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to eradicate poverty while Goal 6 deals with gender inequality – and both offer significant scope for empowerment strategies. However these goals can only be achieved [through identifying] which poor women and men are able to participate positively in the growth of their particular economies, contributing to growth and benefiting in terms of their own socio-economic development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2001); and (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014b). It is true to say that “every aspect of development needs to be inclusive of gender equality” (Kotze, 2009 in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2014b). The deliverables of development must be part of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of municipalities; currently many IDPs lack gender mainstreaming in their strategic processes. A paper presented by Carrim (2011: 2) entitled ‘Participatory Planning in Local Government in South Africa: Policy, Legislation and Practice’ emphasises that local participation is “crucial to effective IDPs, [but cautions that] getting effective participation is [often] difficult”.

The article further suggests that economic empowerment indicators can also be established to ensure that municipalities are implementing gender mainstreaming in LED processes. The municipalities must aspire to implement gender equality programmes; introduce preferential procurement initiatives to train women entrepreneurs; explore investment opportunities; establish public-private partnerships; develop local community-based projects; and have a proper business plan for economic empowerment of the households. These indicators will assist municipalities to achieve the development objectives set out in the documents such as the Rural Development Framework of 1997 and the Local Economic Development Programme of 2003, both of which emphasise that the LED calls for identifying and using local resources, ideas and skills to stimulate economic growth

and development. The aim should be to create employment opportunities, alleviate poverty, and redistribute resources and opportunities to benefit local residents (RSA, 1997; RSA, 2003). In addition, through these indicators, the performance of municipalities can also be measured and the impact of economic empowerment on the households can be assessed.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This article aimed to explore the missing element of gender in development policies and goals. The participation of women is important in advancing and sustaining local economies. However, gender gaps and differentiation are still clearly identifiable. Women often resort to stereotypical occupations or restrict themselves to performing routine household activities. Issues such as these must be the focus of serious commitment and ongoing discussion. Concerns that will receive attention in future research include: Are South African municipalities implementing gender equality policies? Are municipalities organising skills development workshops to understand gender mainstreaming in municipal policymaking processes? Are there any initiatives in place to redress gender imbalances in procurement processes? Are local entrepreneurship initiatives gender-sensitive in approach? Is there any suitable checklist to guide municipalities on how to incorporate gendered perspectives in IDP and LED processes? Are municipalities incorporating gender-responsive budgeting in IDP and LED processes? The study suggests that public management scholars should engage in serious research to explore gender issues in governance. Such an approach will bring relevance, and make an important contribution to the discipline in terms of transformed policies, progressive measures and significant social reform.

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