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Gender Mainstreaming in Nordic Development Agencies

Seventeen years after the Beijing Conference

Malokele Nanivazo* and Lucy Scott*

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Abstract

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, was critical in making gender equality a development goal and adopted gender-mainstreaming as its primary mechanism to achieve this. Effective implementation of gender-mainstreaming involves changing both the internal organization and the external operations of development agencies to ensure that gender is integrated throughout the life cycle of all policies, programmes and practices. This paper assesses gender-mainstreaming in the development co-operation strategies and activities of three Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, and Sweden—in two aspects. The first aspect focuses on the central level of development agencies in terms of strategies, operations, and structures while the second component examines gender-mainstreaming at the embassy level, in terms of gender-mainstreaming in implementation and interventions for advancing gender equality.

*UNU-WIDER, Helsinki, email: malokele@wider.unu.edu; scottlds@btinternet.com

1   Introduction

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, was critical in making gender equality a development goal. During this conference, participants recognized that equality between women and men is a human right and a prerequisite for social justice, development, and peace. The conference concluded with the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which affirmed gender-mainstreaming as the primary mechanism for promoting gender equality.

Gender-mainstreaming is not a goal in itself; it is a means for achieving the goal of gender equality. The aim of gender-mainstreaming is to integrate a gender perspective across the life cycle of all policies, programmes, and practices in order to maximize the impact of development on men and women. Following the Beijing conference, most donors and development agencies have adopted gender-mainstreaming as an approach and recognized that to be effective development projects and programmes need to incorporate and be gender sensitive.

Following the Beijing conference, donors, development agencies and NGOs restructured their internal systems and procedures to integrate gender issues at all levels of their operations. Many hired gender specialists, set up gender units, and launched gender training. National governments established women's machineries charging them with the responsibility for gender-mainstreaming throughout government institutions and operations (Mehra and Gupta 2006). They also included gender into their development operations such as design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (ibid.). In practice, this was translated into mainstreaming gender issues into law reform processes in Botswana (including national policy regarding HIV/AIDS), gaining greater visibility for women's work through the census in Nepal, India, and Pakistan; and protecting widows and orphans from dispossession on the death of the male 'owner', by supporting primary-justice mediation processes in Malawi (Rao and Kelleher 2005).

However, seventeen years after the Beijing conference, the lingering question remains as to whether gender-mainstreaming has been a success. Evaluating the success, or otherwise, of gender-mainstreaming is not without its difficulties for ultimately gender-mainstreaming is a 'process rather than a goal' (Moser and Moser 2005: 15). Nevertheless, researchers have attempted to take on this task; results from this research are mixed. Several reviews of development agencies reveal a gap between commitment and implementation (Hannan 2003; Lombardo and Meier 2006) and that implementation is patchy or embryonic (Mikkelsen et al. 2002).

The overall objective of this paper is to assess gender-mainstreaming strategies of three Nordic development agencies, namely the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), the development department of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FMFA), and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). All three of these agencies are considered to be pioneers of gender equality. Sida, for instance, was the first international agency to formulate a budget proposal supporting women in developing countries in 1964 (Himmelstrand 1989), while Finland was the

first country in the world to extend universal suffrage, in 1906, as well as the right for both men and women to stand for elections.

This paper is based on semi-structured interviews with gender advisors within each of the agencies as well as analysis of existing policy, strategy and evaluation documents. It investigates gender-mainstreaming in two aspects. The first is an investigation into the efforts at mainstreaming by Finland's MFA, Danida and Sida, at the central level of the agency in terms of gender-mainstreaming strategies, operations, and structures. The second component examines gender-mainstreaming at the embassy level, in terms of gender-mainstreaming in implementation and operations for advancing gender equality. Essential to the effectiveness of gender-mainstreaming at achieving its goal of gender equality is the effective translation of mainstreaming principles into implementable actions, guidelines and processes at the levels of policies and programmes.

All the three organizations have recently adopted, or will shortly be adopting, a wide range of tools and training programmes in order to translate their commitments on paper to gender-mainstreaming into effective and consistent implementation. However, current limitations in human resources, an unwillingness to mainstream gender, and 'priority overload' as other development objectives come to the fore, remain obstacles to applying an effective mainstreaming approach throughout the programme cycle. Gender advisers in all three organizations note that mainstreaming is not consistently implemented, particularly in the country embassies; it rather depends on the skills and commitment of individuals. The rationale of a gender-mainstreaming approach is precisely to overcome this variability in the treatment of gender throughout an organization.

This exercise sheds light on what has worked and what needs to be changed in order to maximize the impact of projects. This is especially relevant since two of these development agencies have changed or are planning to change their gender-mainstreaming strategies.

This paper is organized in seven sections including the introduction. The first section takes a retrospective look on how gender equality gained prominence in the three Nordic countries development agenda. In the second section, we present gender-mainstreaming, discuss past gender-mainstreaming evaluations and how gender-mainstreaming relates to gender equality in the three organizations under investigation. The fourth section contains a detailed description on the methodology used in the paper. The fifth presents the results of the investigation. In the sixth section, we discuss past, present, and future gender-mainstreaming strategies. We conclude in the seventh section.

2   The history and origins of gender equality of these three Nordic donors

All three Nordic countries studied here—Denmark, Finland, and Sweden—are pioneers of gender equality. Each has committed both nationally and internationally to promoting women's status through ratification of the 1979 Convention on All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women.[1] For all of these agencies gender equality has been over the last decade, or remains today, a development priority or cross-cutting issue. The drivers of this gender focus are a mixture of internal (including women activists, national female leaders, and societal debates) and external processes (including UN meetings and conferences); with the balance of importance between the two varying from agency to agency.

2.1 Finland

Finland gained a high profile on gender equality in the 1950s through the ground-breaking work of Helvi Sipilä[2] who first entered the UN as vice-chairperson and chairperson of the UN Commission on the Status of Women from 1960 to 1972. She was the first women appointed Assistant Secretary-General in 1972. She actively promoted issues such as equal pay for equal work even when Finland itself had not yet ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), or eliminated the obstacles for men and women to be hired on equal basis in the public sector, or advocated for practical application of key gender equality principles. She also served as the Secretary-General for the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975. She is credited for proposing the UN Women's year held in 1975 while serving as chair of the Year's Commission on the Status of Women of women. She was instrumental in the founding of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), then known as the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Advancement of Women and paved the way for women activists such as Hilkka Pietilä and influential female leaders, such as the outgoing President of the Republic Tarja Halonen.[3] Finland has promoted gender equality as part of its multilateral agenda in the UN due to its connection with the Finnish support to human rights.

In spite of these auspicious beginnings, gender equality was slow to arrive in Finnish development co-operation agenda compared to many other Nordic donors. Gender was side-lined in the 1974 and 1978 policy papers. The international focus on gender led by the UN Women's year (1975) and the subsequent Women's Decade (1975-85) brought gender equality back in Finnish bilateral development co-operation. The personal enthusiasm and input of few key gender advocates (not surprisingly, mainly women) within Finnida, as FMFA's Department for Development Co-operation was called at that time, in pushing for gender equality cannot be understated in this process.[4]

Finally, the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 gave a new policy impetus for Finland to strengthen gender equity both nationally as well as internationally. Gender equality as a right was brought back to co-operation agenda, influenced by the endeavour of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, which resulted in government commitment to the right of women to make decisions concerning their own bodies and sexualities.

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[1] Denmark (1980), Finland (1980), and Sweden (1980).

[2] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/news/helvi.html

[3] http://www.hilkkapietila.net/en/index.html and http://www.presidenthalonen.fi/en/

[4] The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for Development Policy, changed its brand from Finnida to its current name in 1995.

2.2 Sweden

In 1964, Sweden proposed its first budget for supporting women in developing countries to the parliament. This budget proposal was the result of Ambassador Inga Thorsson journey through Africa in 1963. After her journey, she declared that development has left women behind and it was necessary to promote projects and programmes targeting women. In 1972, Sida investigated the conditions of women in developing countries. The investigation revealed that women's lack of knowledge concerning their participation in the social and economic development was the main impediment to the advancement of their situation. The investigation did not support the argument for targeting women in isolation instead it advocated for the integration of women into the development process. Hence, Sida opted to include women in its aid agenda which was translated into adding a paragraph on women in all policy documents (Himmelstrand 1989).

Sida then championed the integration of women into the development process before gender-mainstreaming was advocated as an approach at the Beijing Conference. After the UN Women's decade, Sida adopted a more direct strategy by (i) setting up a Women in Development (WID) office at its headquarters; (ii) providing special WID funds, (iii) appointing a WID counselling group; (iv) adopting a Plan of Action and country-specific plans; (v) appointing special WID offices at Sida's fields offices, and (vi) setting up a regional WID office in Nairobi. Sida launched country-specific WID plans for each of its programmes which consisted of short papers indicating the Swedish commitment to WID oriented programmes and how the different programmes should be changed, supplemented, or replaced in order to make them more suitable to a WID approach and to ensure the implementation of gender-mainstreaming (Himmelstrand 1989).

2.3 Denmark

Contrary to FMFA and Sida, the process of integrating gender into Danish development work was slow despite the impact of the Danish feminist movement and Ester Boserup's work. Indeed, the feminist movement in Denmark has a long history that spans from 1870 to 1985 that promoted issues such as women's vote and equal rights for both men and women inside and outside of the household.[5] Ester Boserup, a Danish economist, initiated the debate on the role of women in development through her book titled *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. She is considered as being one of the pioneers of the Women in Development movement. The real push came with the Second World Conference, which was held in Copenhagen in 1980. This event brought the attention of women parliamentarians to require that the WID approach to be included in the Danish development work. Nevertheless, it took five more years for Danida to commission its first strategy supporting women in development. This document was a technical guideline on how to operationalize women in development in various sectors, aiming to bring visibility to women in line with Boserup's work. The Beijing Conference further brought gender, equity, and empowerment into Danida.

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[5] http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/680/article/3/

3   Gender-mainstreaming

3.1 A presentation

Prior to 1975, the First World Conference of Women and the International Women's Year, less than one per cent of standard textbooks on development referred specifically to women. Development was about men, by men and for men (see Kabeer 1994: xi cited in Miller and Albert 2005). Policy makers did not 'see' women as active agents of development. During the 1970s, debates on the role of WID resulted in a movement and approach, advocating the inclusion of women in development due to the crucial role that women play as producers, sellers, and marketers of food in developing countries (Boserup 1970). WID did not explicitly challenge the sources and nature of women's subordination but instead pushed for their equal integration in arenas such as education and employment leading it to be referred to as an agenda for development or the 'add women and stir' movement (Moser 1989).

The United Nations declared the decade from 1976 to 1985 the Women's Decade and the Third World Conference of Women held in Nairobi in 1985 marked its end. It was following this conference that gender-mainstreaming was first mentioned in international texts in relation to the debate within the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the role of women in development (Council of Europe 1998). After the Women's Decade, a second approach emerged, the Gender and Development (GAD) movement, which shifted the focus from integrating women in development to questioning the roles ascribed to men and women in society (Rathgeber 1989). It therefore built upon a key critique of the WID approach, notably that it isolated women from their context, implying that both the problem, and so therefore the solution, lies with women themselves (Miller and Albert 2005).

It was during the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995 that gender-mainstreaming was adopted as a major strategy for promoting gender equality (Mehra and Gupta 2006). It was adopted mainly to address the perceived failure of previous strategies, such as women-specific projects, to bring about significant changes in women's status (ibid.). The UN, through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), defines gender-mainstreaming as:

> the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned actions, including legislations, policies and programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economics and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (UN 1997 in Moser and Moser 2005; Olowu 2011)

Jahan (1995) identifies two types of mainstreaming activities: the integrationist, and agenda-setting approaches. The integrationist approach aims at integrating women-and-gender concern in all sectors of development but it does not challenge the overall development agenda. The agenda-setting approach transforms existing development

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agenda with a gender perspective. Its key strategy is the participation of women as decision makers in determining development priorities. It is a step forward in challenging the existing development paradigm. Certainly gender-mainstreaming should not just consist of integrating gender analysis into existing work, but also involves 'stand-alone' work to address issues of particular strategic importance to women which would otherwise not be undertaken (Porter and Sweetman 2005). A combined strategy of agenda-setting and integration can prove particularly influential (Reeves and Baden 2000 cited in de Waal 2006); indeed gender-mainstreaming 'cannot succeed' without involving both types of activity (Porter and Sweetman 2005).

Baden and Reeves identify two types of strategy for gender-mainstreaming: dual, and stakeholders strategies. The dual strategy combines both the integrationist and agenda-setting strategies. The European Council, UNDP, and the Commonwealth Secretariat endorsed this strategy. The stakeholder strategy distributes the state responsibility for promoting gender equality and equity by encouraging partnership or collaboration with other social partners or stakeholders. These stakeholders can be national women's machineries, other government ministries and departments, inter-governmental organizations and donors' agencies, NGOs, the media, academic institutions, professional bodies, and women and men in the broader society (de Waal 2006).

The movement to a gender-mainstreaming approach though, has not been without opposition. In the same manner that some feminists have criticized the shift from WID to GAD, they have argued that women's interests are becoming invisible because a focus on gender inherently precludes initiatives directly targeted at women (Razavi and Miller 1995: 41). As the call has been to 'bring back men' this has allowed development institutions to shift their analytical focus away from women and in some cases even to deny the specific disadvantages faced by women and the radical policy implications of overcoming this division (ibid.).

In addition to the intellectual critiques of gender-mainstreaming, there are also practical concerns relating to its implementation. Some feminists argue that gender-mainstreaming has been co-opted and efforts to institutionalize the concept turned a radical idea into a public management strategy (Prügl and Lustgarten 2006 cited in Ransom and Bain 2011). Baden and Goetz (1997) make a similar critique. They argue that gender-mainstreaming has depoliticized gender and diluted its radical contents in order to facilitate its implementation and its acceptance by the development agencies leading them to use the concept of gender without questioning the power relationship between genders within their organization as well as in partners' countries. Certainly, implementing a mainstreaming approach, whereby gender concerns are incorporated in all aspects of work, 'is demanding as it requires that staff and partners possess the necessary competence, capacity and commitment to make it effective' (Uggla 2007: 5).

3.2 Evaluating gender-mainstreaming to date

In 2006 Mehra and Gupta argued that 'gender-mainstreaming is at a critical cross-roads'. In the decade following Beijing, many organizations restructured their internal systems and procedures and attempted change attitudes and values towards gender, primarily through gender training (Mehra and Gupta 2006). Many donor agencies, NGOs, and development organizations hired gender specialists, appointed women to

leadership positions, set up gender units and launched gender training. They integrated a gender analysis in all aspects of their operations and development programmes. National governments established women's machineries charging them with the responsibility for gender-mainstreaming throughout government institutions and operations (ibid.). However, despite being endorsed by countries and institutions, it still had yet to be fully implemented anywhere ten years later (ibid.).

There are three 'arenas' where mainstreaming strategies are relevant to development; the development agency, the development programme, and the developing country itself (Schalkwyk et al. 1996). Ten years after the Beijing conference, there was an avalanche of research that attempted, through focusing on case studies of these arenas as well as particular sectors (health, social services, education, agriculture) to assess the success or lack of, of gender-mainstreaming.

Evaluating the success, or otherwise, of gender-mainstreaming is not without its difficulties for ultimately gender-mainstreaming is a 'process rather than a goal' (Moser and Moser 2005: 15). A review of 14 international development institutions found that most organizations have adopted the terminology of gender-mainstreaming, with every institution adopting a dual strategy of mainstreaming and targeted actions for gender equality (Moser and Moser 2005: 14). However, this same review found that the challenge for agencies remains in the implementation of gender-mainstreaming. Progress at implementation has not been consistent and only involves few activities rather than a coherent and integrated process (ibid.).

Several other reviews of development agencies have also concluded that there is a gap between commitment and implementation (Hannan 2003; Lombardo and Meier 2006). Gender-mainstreaming commitments tend to evaporate and become invisible in planning and implementation (MacDonald 2003). Gender is not reflected in country documents (Mehra and Gupta 2006) and implementation is patchy or embryonic (Mikkelsen et al. 2002). A review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Africa, meanwhile, argues that while the majority of countries have either fulfilled or are in the process of fulfilling the basic requirement of having guidelines in place for mainstreaming gender most of their gender machineries are 'largely ineffective'. Gender focal points, for instance, tend to neglect their gender-mainstreaming responsibilities which they consider to be of secondary importance to their other functions (UNECA 2010).

Feminist critiques of gender-mainstreaming highlight that its rhetoric far outstrips action, that the guidelines on gender equality are in practice frequently advisory and that there are few penalties for not acting (Ransom and Bain 2011). The frequently noted problem is that all staff are responsible meaning that it becomes nobody's responsibility (Mehra and Gupta 2006). Mainstreaming necessitates an organizational reform which requires, 'both creating (or at least providing) the capabilities necessary for all staff members to make informed considerations, and ensuring that all personnel possess the necessary commitment to conform to the requirements of the policy' (Uggla 2007: 10). The simultaneous development of gender expertise while also ensuring that gender issues are considered by all divisions of an organization poses institutional challenges. Because of this Rao and Kelleher (2005) point to the importance of organizational change within development institutions in order to ensure that gender-mainstreaming can contribute to sustained improvements in the situation of women, rather than be yet

another addition to 'the bean-counting approach to development deliverables' (Rao and Kelleher 2005: 59).

Certainly, there has been an over-emphasis of the details of procedures while limited attention has been given to the clarity or direction of goals (Baden and Goetz 1997). Creating the incentives for staff to be committed to gender-mainstreaming is not just a matter of institutional change, but also requires explicitly linking with other development goals and policies in the organization, such as poverty reduction. This is particularly the case with the mainstreaming of gender increasingly competing with other policy issues to be mainstreamed including the environment, disability, HIV/AIDs and human rights which are placing increasing demands on staff.

Every five years after the Beijing Conference, the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) organizes follow-up meetings, Beijing +5 (B+5, in 2000), Beijing +10 (B+10, in 2005), and Beijing +15 (B+15, in 2010), to review and evaluate the implementation of the Beijing Declarations and Platform of Actions. B+5 called for the acceleration of gender-mainstreaming commitment with researchers pointing to the gap between commitment and implementation of gender-mainstreaming strategies. B+10 did not reach any milestones, merely re-affirming what was promoted at B+5 (Molyneux and Razavi 2005). It painted a rather sombre picture of women's progresses, highlighting that the momentum created at the Beijing Conference for women's advancement had been lost due to the gulf between commitments and action. During B+15, the CSW emphasized the sharing of experiences and good practices with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges for the implementation of the Platform for Action and reviewed its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals (UN 2010). Despite the challenges of mainstreaming to date then, gender-mainstreaming is not being abandoned. Indeed, the CSW explicitly 'reiterated the need for gender-mainstreaming into the formulation and implementation of development policies' (UN 2010: 19).

Seventeen years after the Beijing Conference, the lingering question remains as to whether gender-mainstreaming has yet to be successfully implemented. One study concludes that, 'gender-mainstreaming has, after ten years, had limited success. Integrationist approaches have not succeeded completely in their comparatively modest aim of addressing 'women's issues' within existing development agendas, while agenda-setting approaches have yet to be attempted' (Porter and Sweetman 2005: 9). In 2006 Mehra and Gupta also argued that it was too early to evaluate gender-mainstreaming from the perspective of a development agency because 'the most critical element […]—mainstreaming in operations—has not yet been seriously attempted'.

This highlights the tension between how to define success or failure of the process of gender-mainstreaming—is it to be viewed in terms of the outcomes of gender equality, as laid out in the twelve critical areas identified during the Beijing conference, or rather in terms of internal restructuration of systems and procedures? Clearly, if it is to be the former then it would be inappropriate to measure the impacts of gender-mainstreaming on gender equality if it has not yet been implemented at the level of operations.

However, there are calls for gender-mainstreaming to be evaluated in this manner; for assessments 'to pay much more attention to the impact of gender-mainstreaming on women themselves' (Porter and Sweetman 2005). De Waal (2006) argues that the

evaluation criteria for gender-mainstreaming should be in relation to its objective; the achievement of gender equality. De Waal (2006) develops a new framework for assessing development interventions from a gender-mainstreaming perspective. The framework consist of squaring gender-mainstreaming indicators (parity, equality, empowerment, and transformation) to project evaluation criteria such as relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Nevertheless, few agencies can show the integration of gender-mainstreaming into development projects and relate the outcomes of projects to gender equality.

3.3 Gender-mainstreaming in Danish, Finnish and Swedish development co-operation

Both Danida and Sida adopted the approach of gender-mainstreaming prior to its widespread adoption after the Beijing conference. Denmark has promoted gender-mainstreaming since the 1980s (Danida 2008) following the 1979 Third Conference on Women being held in Copenhagen and the first strategy for women commissioned in 1985. Sida integrated gender into its aid efforts as early as 1972 its investigation into the conditions facing women in developing countries concluded that improving the situation of women did not mean targeting them in isolation (Himmelstrand 1989).

All three donor countries have acquired an extensive experience in gender-mainstreaming over at least two decades and all three have recently reviewed their strategies. Sida commissioned reviews of its gender-mainstreaming in 2002 (Mikkelsen et al. 2002), 2007 (Uggla 2007), and 2010 (Byron et al. 2010) while Danida and FMFA both conducted their most recent reviews in 2008 (Danida 2008; Kääriä et al. 2008). Indeed, all three agencies reviewed the cross-cutting theme of gender alongside other cross-cutting issues including human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law (Finland's MFA); environment, human rights and democratization (Danida); and HIV/AIDS and the environment (Sida).

With regard to gender-mainstreaming the most recent reviews of all three agencies point to their commitment to gender as a cross-cutting theme; however, all echo the findings of a previous Sida review that 'there is a considerable gap between what Sida says and what Sida does' (Uggla 2007: 19). Particular weaknesses in their mainstreaming strategies include:

- A failure to incorporate gender early enough in the project cycle. While this is not a weakness in Sida's approach, indeed the review notes that 'Sida has been good at encouraging the integration of gender in the planning of programmes' (Byron et al. 2010: 5) this shortcoming is specifically mentioned in the evaluations of mainstreaming by the FMFA (Kääriä et al. 2008) and Danida (Danida 2008). The Danida review meanwhile explicitly highlights the importance of cross-cutting issues being an integral part of the analysis conducted during the preparation stage of policies and programmes

- The absence of monitoring and evaluation tools to assess gender-mainstreaming efforts. The evaluation of Danida's treatment of cross-cutting issues notes that the root cause of this is the failure to integrate gender and other cross-cutting issues at the design stage. However, the review of Sida also notes that gender is

absent in monitoring and evaluation which both conceals the outcomes achieved and so risks undermining the motivations to work with gender-mainstreaming (Byron et al. 2010).

- A lack of time, knowledge and resources by staff needed to mainstream gender concerns. All three reviews note the additional pressures placed on staff by cross-cutting issues and how the extent to which issues were mainstreamed was largely a function of the commitment of individual staff members. As the review of Finland's development aid notes; 'it depends almost entirely on the desk officers to what extent the cross-cutting themes are taken into account […] one may or may not have an interest in one theme or another and may or may not have the required knowledge and skills to pursue the matter' (Kääriä et al.: 52). The Sida review notes how few staff have the time or expertise to engage properly in gender mainstreaming (Byron et al. 2010) while the evaluation of Danida's mainstreaming efforts also notes that gender focal points do not necessarily have the required expertise or time to focus on mainstreaming (Danida 2008).

The above three shortcomings of gender-mainstreaming approaches by each of the agencies are manifestations of their institutional weaknesses to provide sufficient incentives and scope for mainstreaming activities. The 2007 Sida review highlights this noting that there are 'deficits and shortcomings related to Sida's internal organization [which acts] as obstacles to effective implementation' (Uggla 2007: 5). For all three agencies there are two major obstacles. The first is weaknesses regarding clarity of responsibilities, roles and accountability for mainstreaming cross-cutting themes. Essential in defining staff roles in mainstreaming is a need to 'demystify' the mainstreaming processes (Danida 2008: 39) and ensure that all staff have the same understanding about what mainstreaming involves and the expertise, guidance and knowledge of their specific role in ensuring that it is effectively implemented. The second significant obstacle is an absence of clear explanation of the linkages and synergies between mainstreaming activities and the overall goals of the organization in terms of poverty reduction and economic growth. This can result in staff prioritizing other areas of responsibility.

In conclusion the reviews of all three organizations note that gender-mainstreaming has not been systematically implemented, the root cause being obstacles relating to institutional organization. The evaluation of Danida's mainstreaming activities notes that 'implementation is not very systematic and consistent' (Danida 2008: 41), while that of Finland's MFA notes that they have 'not been implemented in a systematic and coherent way' (Kääriä et al. 2008: 70). This is echoed in the evaluation of Sida's mainstreaming activities concluding that 'Sida has not managed to effectively implement any of the policies' (Uggla 2007: 5).

None of the evaluations meanwhile address the outcomes of gender-mainstreaming on gender equality. Partly this is because it was beyond the scope of the review (in the case of the Finnish review; Kääriä et al. 2008), but also because of the complexities of monitoring and measuring the impacts and outcomes of gender-mainstreaming (review of Danida cross-cutting themes; Danida 2008), with gender frequently not be considered in monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Sida evaluation; Byron et al. 2010) and gender not being explicitly linked to wider development outcomes (review of Danida;

Danida 2008). However, with all reviews concluding that gender had not yet been systematically mainstreamed, arguably the time was not yet right for an evaluation of its impacts on gender equality. This paper investigates gender-mainstreaming efforts seventeen years after the Beijing conference in the light of the findings from these previous evaluations.

4 Methodology

This study is based on the findings from semi-structured interviews and analysis of policy documents and existing evaluations. Semi-structured interviews have two advantages for this investigation; giving the flexibility to question some topics in great length and also giving the interviewing a high degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and highlight areas of interest.

Prior to the interviews, we developed a questionnaire (available on request), or interview guide, comprised of open-ended questions. The questionnaire was developed based on the current literature on gender-mainstreaming and was adapted to fit the particular context of each development agency, being structured around the approaches which each agency has adopted for working towards gender equality. In the case of Danida, for instance, the questionnaire was structured around its two approaches for working towards gender equality; mainstreaming and special interventions.

We selected one gender adviser from each development agency for the interview and also gave interviewees the freedom to bring another staff who they believe can make a valuable contribution to the investigation. Therefore, we had two interviewees at the day of the interview.

After selecting interviewees, we sent them the questionnaire prior to the day of the interview in order for them to assess the questions, prepare for the interview, and to gather documentations for supporting their answers. We conducted two types of interviews. We had a face-to-face interview with gender advisors from FMFA and Danida and a telephone interview with Sida's gender advisers. All interviews were recorded.

Gender-mainstreaming involves changing both the internal organizational and external operations of development agencies (Mehra and Gupta 2006). Mehra and Gupta (ibid.) define internal organization as the structural changes needed within development agencies in order to embrace the goals and practices of gender-mainstreaming and to alter system and procedures to meet these goals. External operations meanwhile, entails steps needed to integrate gender into development operations such as design, implementation, and evaluation.

Our questionnaire encompasses internal organizational, external operational procedures, and project evaluation criteria. By doing so, it can investigate both at the process of gender-mainstreaming within development agencies as well as in relation to achievements in terms of gender equality. This distinguishes our evaluations from previous ones.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

- The first part, entitled 'making aid work for gender equality', investigates the main drivers behind the rise to prominence of gender equality in the development agency, the coherence of their respective approaches as well as their applicability in advancing gender equality, and the strengths and weaknesses of the rights-based approach to development used as promoted by the MDGs in the last decade.[6]

- The second section, entitled 'operationalizing gender-mainstreaming', first focuses on their internal structure, and second evaluates the effectiveness of their gender-mainstreaming strategies. Here, our evaluation covered all aspects of interventions starting from their conception and design to their monitoring and evaluation both the central level (gender advisers or focal points in the ministries) or the local level (gender staff at the embassies).

- The third part entitled 'looking forward with gender equality' focuses on the period post-2015 and the development of subsequent policies for promoting gender equality.

5   Results: gender-mainstreaming on paper and in practice

All three development agencies are committed to gender equality in their policies and strategies (see Table 1 in the appendix). In the case of Sida and the FMFA this translates into gender equality either being a priority area (Sida) and/or a crosscutting issue or thematic area (Sida and the FMFA). While Danida and Sida both have a current gender strategy, the FMFA gender strategy expired in 2007 and has yet to be replaced. Nevertheless, gender equality, as a cross-cutting area in the FMFA remains, while the integration of cross-cutting objectives into all development co-operation activities is a binding obligation.

Under the previous Danish Strategy for Development Cooperation '*Freedom from Poverty Freedom to Change',* operational from 2010 to June 2012, gender equality was a priority area for Danida. Meanwhile, under the gender sub-strategy of 2004, gender-mainstreaming is the pillar of policies to promote gender equality (Danida 2004). However, in Denmark's current Strategy for Development Cooperation, adopted in June 2012 and entitled '*The Right to a Better Life*', gender is no longer a priority area. This has given rise to a debate on how gender will effectively be included within the agency. This is particularly the case since Danida's sub-strategy on gender equality in Denmark's development co-operation also expires in 2012. According to a gender adviser, there are even questions as to whether gender-mainstreaming is an effective approach to be adopted in the subsequent strategy. In the 2012 Strategy for Development Cooperation gender equality is to be addressed under the strategic priority of human rights and democracy.

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6   This question was included in the questionnaire based on the fact the three development agencies adhere to the human-rights based approach to development, particularly for gender equality (Finland-MFA 2012, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2012, Government Offices of Sweden 2012).

In contrast, a dramatic change in how gender is addressed in Sida occurred in 2008 when the present government announced in the Budget Bill that gender equality would be one of three thematic priorities. According to the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the thematic priorities should be visible throughout the process; including in policies, country strategies, monitoring and evaluation, and strategies for multilateral organizations (SADEV 2010). Gender advisers within Sida argue that, 'we could see very clearly how the country representatives increased the focus of the country strategy on gender issues', arguing that the new focus has helped in removing previous barriers to effective mainstreaming.

All three agencies either have adopted, or are moving towards, a rights-based approach which justifies a focus on gender equality as a human right rather than through economic efficiency arguments. Within Sida there is currently a debate as to what extent the current government is moving away from its poverty focus towards rights-based approaches. Meanwhile, the current development co-operation strategy of Danida moves the organization away from the focus of the previous strategy (operational from 2010 until 2012) on the private sector, towards human rights. In particular there has been a political decision to focus on human rights which are viewed as both a means and an end.

Within a rights-based framework all three agencies have a strong emphasis on sexual and reproductive health. Sida, in particular, feels that it has a strong comparative advantage here compared to other donor agencies. The FMFA has traditionally targeted gender actions in health and education, particularly the realization of reproductive health and sexual rights for women. The starting point for much of its work on gender equality is the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)—considered to be the international bill of women's rights.

Both Danida and the FMFA are grappling with the implementation of a human rights based approach—what does it mean in terms of strategy on the ground? How can gender equality and human rights be combined? Certainly, gender equality is much broader than women's rights and a focus solely on human rights ignores a range of other dimensions of gender equality and fails to address women's empowerment and economic freedom. Gender-mainstreaming takes place within this context of shifting priorities and paradigms.

5.1 The components of a gender-mainstreaming approach

Each of these Nordic agencies commits to using the gender-mainstreaming approach to achieve gender equality, though with differences in definitions. Sida, for instance, follows the components of mainstreaming approach as used in the OECD-DAC (1999) guidelines with a mainstreaming strategy comprising integration and targeted initiatives. Danida and the FMFA in contrast, use the term 'mainstreaming' solely to refer to the integration of gender concerns throughout policy and programme cycles, though they both also implement targeted interventions. The FMFA and Sida also have a third instrument for achieving their gender strategy which is political dialogue. Certainly, the OECD is increasingly stressing the importance of dialogue with partners around gender equality and will soon publish guidelines on political and policy dialogue on gender

equality and empowerment. Policy dialogue is an approach which Danida is grappling with for its next gender strategy which is currently being developed.

All three agencies see the different components of mainstreaming as being complementary to each other. For Sida, gender-mainstreaming has the most success when two, or even all three components (integration, targeted interventions, and dialogue) are simultaneously adopted. Indeed, dialogue tends to be the most effective when combined with financial incentives. Meanwhile, in Danida the aim is for mainstreaming activities and special interventions complement each other. However, as the mainstreaming review (2008) points out, this is rarely happening with there being a tendency to focus resources on special interventions at the expense of pursuing gender equality objectives through mainstreaming.

In principle, mainstreaming should be more effective than special interventions at promoting gender equality, with its ability to reach more people than targeted programmes. However, a gender adviser in the FMFA notes that, 'projects that have a targeted approach have been able to bring about more visible improvements'. While mainstreaming should be as, if not more, effective at promoting gender equality it is not yet applied as it should be. Certainly, an evaluation of its crosscutting objectives in 2008 showed little integration of its three objectives into projects and programmes (Kääriä et al. 2008).[7] The targeted interventions for gender equality implemented by the FMFA tend to be relatively small and are seen as being necessary when mainstreaming (in terms of integration) is insufficient to overturn persistent forms of discrimination and discriminatory institutions.

The review of Danida's special interventions highlighted three areas where most of the gender interventions took place: legal rights; political participation; and economic empowerment. Between 1997 and 2007 there were around 400 of these interventions, with most being small projects with short time spans (Ornemark and Kristiansen 2008). Success is reported in terms of outputs, with most being based around service delivery, rather than in terms of outcomes. Similar findings were reported from an evaluation of Sida's work, noting that many interventions for gender equality focus on the achievement of practical needs, rather than addressing longer-term strategic interests (Byron et al. 2010).

Reviews of integrating cross-cutting issues to date also show mixed success. A point highlighted during interviews with gender advisers was the importance of the sector in which gender is being integrated. In Danida there have been successes in health, education and water (success here is largely due to women's participation in water committees), but less so in the agriculture sector. As advisers in Sida also explain, 'we have been good in 'soft' sectors, but now need to establish gender equality as an aim in harder sectors such as infrastructure and agriculture'. Certainly, a recent review of mainstreaming in the agriculture sector by Sida in five countries concludes that gender policy has not been translated effectively into development programming (Farnworth 2010).

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7   In 2008, the crosscutting objectives were women's rights and gender equality; human rights; good governance and the rule of law.

A gender adviser from the FMFA notes that gender has been successfully mainstreamed into the traditional sectors such as health and education. However, gender has been mainstreamed to a lesser degree in the agriculture sector and has not been integrated sufficiently into the water and sanitation, forestry, or infrastructure sectors. Farnworth argues that there is increasingly information about how to mainstream gender effectively in these sectors. Instead, the failure to integrate gender is due to attitudes and advisers in these areas not being willing to mainstream gender. Successful mainstreaming in these non-traditional sectors requires the commitment of management. It is not enough to have a few gender experts.

5.2 Budgets and financial resources for gender objectives and gender-mainstreaming

Gender equality is the principal objective in six per cent and a significant objective in 71 per cent of all Sida interventions initiated between January 2008 and March 2010. Meanwhile over the same period, in 23 per cent of interventions, gender equality was considered not to be relevant or applicable (Sida statistics database in SADEV 2010). For Danida, 18 per cent of total development aid in 2011, the equivalent of DKK 3 billion, was allocated to gender, both for mainstreaming and for special intervention. Danida's advisers note that it is likely that the same amount will be allocated in the next budget cycle. Meanwhile, the OECD gender marker shows that around 54 per cent of Finland's aid budget currently goes towards gender issues.

Taken at face-value then, gender equality is a well-funded objective. However, as Sida gender advisers note, this figure is likely to be slightly inflated and genuine questions can be raised about how these amounts are calculated. Budget allocations for gender also say nothing about the quality of interventions at shaping progress towards gender equality and it is not always clear the extent to which an activity has actually contributed to gender objectives. In addition, this amount varies widely across sectors.

Here there is a need to distinguish between budgets for special interventions for gender equality and budgets for integrating gender into existing programmes (the latter specifically referred to as mainstreaming in the FMFA and Danida). As previously mentioned, a review of crosscutting issues in Danida found that there is a tendency to focus resources on special interventions while there are no specific budget lines for integrating gender into wider projects and programmes. The FMFA advises that each project should be assigned a proportion of its budget for mainstreaming activities, but this is not always the reality. While on paper project documents state that gender is mainstreamed, in practice there is often little evidence of gender-mainstreaming in terms of the budget. Within the MFA there is also not a separate budget for staff to carry out gender-mainstreaming. An aim of Sida is to simplify mainstream in terms of budgets, results, and indicators and gender advisers identify gender budgeting as an area where increasing attention is needed.

5.3 Internal responsibility and human resources for gender-mainstreaming

In each of the three organizations, all staff members are responsible for mainstreaming. Under Finnish equality law, for instance, all civil servants are tasked with

mainstreaming gender into their work. In each agency there are staff assigned to give advice on how to mainstream gender issues, but ultimately their role is to help and guide and it is the responsibility of individual staff members to ensure that gender is mainstreamed.

Who gives this advice varies between organizations. The FMFA has a cross-cutting objectives team, which provides advice to staff members and develops practical tools for mainstreaming on each of its three cross-cutting objectives.[8] It does not have the resources to provide specialist gender staff within its country embassies. Some projects have these positions, but most advice is given by the headquarters. In contrast, Danida has a full-time gender adviser in the ministry as well as two full-time staff responsible for integrating gender into policies and multilateral assistance. In addition, the gender adviser co-ordinates a 'team gender' comprising a range of individuals with part-time gender responsibilities across various departments, all of these staff are currently involved in developing the new gender strategy. Meanwhile, there are also gender focal points in the country embassies whose role it is to ensure that gender concerns are included in country programmes, policies and strategies. However, they can only allocate 20 hours of their weekly work time to gender issues because they also have wider programmatic duties and responsibility for mainstreaming does not rest with them.

Sida undertook a reorganization two years ago, which resulted in a change of its staffing structure for gender-mainstreaming. Previously there was a gender unit, a specific entity charged with looking after gender issues. In 2008 this gender equality unit was expanded to five people with an increase in resources for gender staffing, which according to gender advisers made a huge difference in how gender was included in Sida's work plan. However, following the recent reorganization, gender capacity within Sida is now spread throughout the organization, though the number of advisers for gender remains roughly the same. Two of these are assigned to the policy department (along with policy experts in other areas such as health and education) while others are programme advisers in the implementing departments, for instance the post-conflict department. These gender experts meet at least once a week.

In addition, as with Danida, Sida has gender focal points, largely in the country embassies, who are both programme officers and also spend a portion of their time fulfilling a co-ordinating role and providing support on gender-mainstreaming. However, in reality they don't have much time to work on gender. Some programmes also have full-time advisers on gender. While there was previously a gender equality unit the current structure is a gender 'hub', comprising 83 people in total throughout Sida and the embassies and which is co-ordinated by gender advisers in the policy division.

A key challenge for both Sida and Danida is keeping 'team gender', or the 'gender hub', spread throughout the organization up-to-date. Sida aims to do this through a web-based gender network which was established in 2010 to provide a platform both for training and informing and also for sharing experiences from the field. However, to date the experience has not been entirely successful due to challenges in organizing a large network operating across time zones and with poor broadband connections in many

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8 Currently, they are gender, inequality, and climate sustainability.

embassies. In addition, policy specialists for gender equality go to embassies to build capacity and hold regional workshops.

Meanwhile Danida has a gender e-learning programme and also a gender toolbox both of which aim to ensure that staff are sufficiently skilled to be able to take their own responsibility for gender-mainstreaming. Gender e-learning is mandatory for everyone including senior management while there are also possibilities for extra training on specific topics. In the FMFA the crosscutting objectives team is responsible for training which is carried out several times a year either as part of more general training, or since 2012, as part of specific or in-depth training on development co-operation. Training for the three cross-cutting objectives is currently integrated, but specific training on gender modules will be offered once new webpages are launched in September 2012. As with Danida, gender advisers are also available to provide gender training on a needs basis to the embassies.

However, despite the aim to institutionalize gender-mainstreaming in all three agencies, the outcomes of this process ultimately depends on the commitment of individual staff members. In Sida, advisers in policy division note that a real challenge is the time and capacity of the gender focal points, with gender capacity varying from embassy to embassy; particularly given the context of a 20 per cent cutback in staff over the last few years. Meanwhile, a gender adviser from Danida notes that, 'gender-mainstreaming success has a lot to do with the person working on it and whether they are gender sensitive or not.' She also notes that 'you really need a good gender focal point with deep sector knowledge'.

5.4 Mainstreaming gender into intervention identification and design

All three organizations are highly decentralized and embassies are responsible for the identification, design, and implementation of interventions. In the case of Denmark, embassies initiate the project or programme based on studies conducted by consultants. Gender analysis is undertaken if there is no existing analysis available. The gender focal points are then required to draft a concept note, accompanied by a Gender Rolling Plan, which describes how gender will be addressed at different stages of the project cycle. These documents are then sent to headquarters where they are discussed, checked, and commented upon by a committee before the gender plan and design is further developed by consultants. Ultimately, the ambassador is responsible for all policies and programmes and for complying with the Gender Rolling Plan; a check-point to ensure that gender is being mainstreamed.

The FMFA also stresses the importance of gender analysis in the planning phase in order to ensure that gender is mainstreamed, with similar analysis advocated for each of the three crosscutting themes. However, according to a gender adviser in practice gender analysis does not always occur due to a lack of time, resources or capacity. In reality what happens at the project design phase is that gender advisers in Helsinki are asked for comments on whether gender is being adequately mainstreamed. Every project that is over 200,000 euros has to go through the quality assurance board (tasked with ensuring the inclusion of cross-cutting issues in the project proposals) and the comments of the gender adviser are included with the project proposal. Normally a consultancy would take these recommendations into consideration when implementing

the inception phase. A challenge facing the FMFA is that gender is often an after-thought and gender advisers are not always involved fully in the planning phase, so leading to challenges of mainstreaming later in the project cycle. Gender advisers are trying to address this in training.

In Sida the checking process for gender-mainstreaming in a particular country's programmes occurs within the embassy itself. Embassies have quality assessment committees for new or continued contributions and gender focal points should sit on these committees to ensure that gender is mainstreamed adequately. However, to what extent they have the time and capacity to do this varies from embassy to embassy. When it comes to the country strategy though, this is checked by gender advisers within the policy division. Sida has also developed a matrix in the Gender Equality Manual of how to analyse whether country strategies include issues of gender throughout the intervention cycle.

5.5 Ensuring gender objectives remain present during implementation

All the organizations, in principle, conduct and incorporate gender analysis into programme proposals and design and most interventions are also screened at an initial stage to check that gender concerns are included. However, this commitment evaporates during intervention implementation. 'I think you will find a gap between rhetoric and implementation' believes a gender adviser in Danida. A challenge here relates to human resources. Gender e-learning is available for project and country staff and help can be requested from the central experts during implementation. However, as with Sida, it is mainly gender focal points who are involved in the implementation and they are not full-time on gender issues, with the success of their advice depends on their sectoral knowledge. During reviews Danida assesses whether the Gender Rolling Plan is being followed, but arguably advice and additional support may be required during implementation.

Meanwhile the FMFA, not having gender specialists in its embassies, relies on its gender staff in headquarters to steer an intervention if it becomes clear that gender concerns are not being addressed. However, as a gender adviser notes, 'effective mainstreaming requires budget and expertise within a project and this has been lacking in many cases. On paper, programme document's state that gender is mainstreamed, but in practice there is little evidence of gender-mainstreaming in terms of budget, gender experts, gender sensitive indicators, and gender analysis'.

5.6 Monitoring and evaluating for gender equality

All three organizations advocate the importance of disaggregating indicators by gender as well as the use of gender sensitive indicators. In Danida, it is preferable that M&E data be disaggregated by gender, with the Gender Equality Rolling Plan stating that, in theory at least, one gender equality indicator must be defined. Danida also provides guidance on the selection of gender sensitive indicators. Meanwhile, by law all civil servants in the FMFA are required to analyse the gendered impact of project interventions. Despite this, not all interventions by the FMFA disaggregate their M&E data by gender. It is also recommended that all projects have gender experts

participating in indicator selection. Projects in the health, education, water and sanitation sectors do quite well in the selection of gender sensitive indicators. There is an ongoing effort to collect gender sensitive indicators by sector and to publish them on the website for guidance.

However, to date only very few evaluations of interventions by the Finnish-MFA have examined how project benefits are distributed between the sexes. Meanwhile, Sida widely uses consultants for evaluations where there is at least one person on the team with gender expertise. For Sida, demonstrating results in gender equality is one component of the quest to demonstrate results more broadly. The main initiative here is the development of a new contribution management system. This is a computerized system that includes mainstreaming questions in terms of planning and follow-up. The main challenge here is ensuring that gender indicators are initially selected in the proposal stage.

The country strategy reports also state achievements against the thematic priorities, but gender advisers note there may be a difference between reporting and commitment. Certainly though, initiatives including the contribution management system help to give an overview of gender achievements and shortcomings, something which is currently lacking in Danida where gender advisers in Copenhagen have no overview of achievements in the different areas of gender-mainstreaming. Rather, it is the gender focal points at the embassies who see all the assessments and progress reports. Gender advisers in Sida also note that sharing experiences is a constant challenge—particularly given the organizational structure with the embassies. There is a real effort to overcome this challenge through seminars and the gender network.

In terms of sharing experiences outside the organization, all three donors are involved in networks, including the European Union and gender-OECD meetings of DAC to share information about what works in gender-mainstreaming and promoting gender equality.

6   Discussion: gender-mainstreaming—past, present … and future?

Previous reviews of gender-mainstreaming by development agencies have noted that, since gender-mainstreaming has yet to be implemented, it is too early to investigate whether it is effective at achieving, or contributing towards, gender equality objectives (Mehra and Gupta 2006). In particular reviews pointed to shortcomings in staff time, knowledge and financial resources. Limited human resources, including unwillingness to mainstream gender still remain obstacles to institutionalizing and effectively applying a mainstreaming approach throughout the programme cycle. Gender advisers in all three organizations note that mainstreaming is not consistently implemented and is rather dependent on the skills and commitment of individuals. As a gender adviser from the FMFA states 'if gender-mainstreaming were applied properly, it would be effective', but despite rhetoric to the contrary it is still not being fully implemented. Meanwhile, a Danida gender adviser notes that because of the shortcomings of the gender-mainstreaming approach to date there are serious discussions while drawing-up the next gender strategy about whether it is an approach that is worth continuing.

Despite these obstacles to effective mainstreaming all three organizations have recently adopted, or will shortly be adopting, a wide range of tools and training programmes in order to translate their commitments on paper to gender-mainstreaming into effective and consistent implementation. For instance, each has mechanisms in place to ensure that gender is integrated into the concept notes and design of interventions. Gender analysis is frequently either undertaken, or the results of existing analysis are incorporated into programme design. Real efforts are also being made to train staff on gender issues, making training courses available online to ensure that a wide range of staff have access to these and providing regular training on specific gender themes. In Danida, senior management must attend gender e-training.

However, as gender advisers note, staff time remains a real obstacle to effective implementation of gender-mainstreaming. Because of this the degree to which mainstreaming occurs depends very much on the commitment of individual staff members; gender-mainstreaming has still not been effectively institutionalized and so is not consistently implemented. Key shortcomings in each of the three organizations relate to monitoring and evaluating and sharing experiences within the organization. Despite recommendations that interventions disaggregate results according to gender and include gender sensitive indicators these recommendations are frequently neglected. Meanwhile, previous reviews have highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluating and how not stressing the achievements of gender-mainstreaming risks undermining any motivations to work on it (Byron et al. 2010).

Sida is addressing this shortcoming through a new performance management system for results, which includes gender indicators. This is part of a drive to relate mainstreaming to demonstrating results within the organization and within donors more generally. Demonstrating results in terms of gender equality though, is challenging and varies with the context. Sida is particularly grappling with the long- and short-term questions. On the one hand, they are expected by the government to produce quick, measurable results. On the other hand, the message is that they should also be focusing on longer and larger contributions. The new results strategy for Sida is for seven years, two years longer than previously and so should enable a greater focus on strategic, rather than practical needs. Previous reviews note that Sida activities have been overly focused on the latter to date (Byron et al. 2010). As a gender adviser in the Finnish-MFA notes the focus on results in donor agencies does not encourage interventions which will take longer to yield expected outcomes including those which establish an enabling environment for gender equality.

Focusing on the 'nuts and bolts' of gender-mainstreaming in isolation from the wider processes occurring within development agencies and development co-operation though, is arguably missing the point. In a recent review of gender-mainstreaming within donor agencies, the African Development Bank Group asks if it is, 'a road to results or a road to nowhere?' (Risby and Keller 2012). During the assessment of gender-mainstreaming for this paper, a second talking point with gender advisers was on how the space for the future implementation of gender-mainstreaming and the achievement of gender objectives are changing.

Of particular concern to gender advisers in Sida and Danida are staff cut-backs which are increasing pressures on staff time. In the last ten years, Danida has seen an incredible reduction of staff at the ministries while Sida have lost 20 per cent of their

staff in cutbacks over the last few years. One result of these cutbacks is that remaining staff have to become generalists in order to facilitate their transfers from one area to another, rather than developing into specialists. The effective implementation of gender-mainstreaming is already suffering from limited staff time and expertise and this shortcoming is likely to worsen in the future as donor agencies are subject to tighter fiscal constraints. Is effective gender-mainstreaming ever likely to be a reality in this context?

Other current and future trends which have implications for the gender-mainstreaming approach include the following.

6.1 The aid effectiveness agenda

Managing for results is one of the principles of the Paris Declaration with the other four being alignment, harmonization, ownership and mutual accountability. The results agenda, as noted above, can have positive results for gender-mainstreaming. However, many of the other principles pose challenges for the mainstreaming approach as it is currently adopted by the Nordic donor agencies.

Gender equality is not necessarily considered a development priority either by partner countries or other donor agencies (such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA), which poses a direct challenge to promoting gender equality through harmonization and alignment. As a gender adviser in Danida notes, it is difficult to get gender into play through general and sector budget support, which have been the main donor responses to the ownership and alignment agenda. Using these aid modalities donors have limited knowledge of how gender is being addressed and it is difficult to examine the gender impact. Meanwhile, in its new development strategy of 2012 Danida is continuing the trend towards general budget support accompanied by policy dialogue.

Ultimately an aim of the Nordic donors is to influence the effectiveness of partner countries at promoting gender equality. Policy dialogue is an approach already adopted by the FMFA and Sida. This aims both to share information with governments about how to achieve gender equality (including building the capacity of statistics agencies to produce disaggregated indicators, for instance) and also to try and change their attitudes towards issues of gender equality, including ensuring that appropriate levels of resources are allocated for this objective. The importance of policy dialogue to accompany budget support is stressed by the OECD. Within Danida though, there are concerns about how women can be included in policy dialogue and also if policy dialogue will promote gender equality at the same rate as specific projects and programmes can. Lessons from the experience of Sida at using policy dialogue suggest that the effectiveness of dialogue is strengthened when it is combined with financial resources; partners are more likely to listen when there are also monetary incentives. Meanwhile, the FMFA notes that in instances where gender equality is not seen as important for poverty reduction then it is important to 'make the business case' for gender equality rather than using the language of rights. This however, is directly at odds with the Finnish development strategy.

6.2 Changing aid modalities and the nature of partnerships

In addition to policy dialogue an important focus for these donor agencies is supporting civil society, women's organizations, and NGOs, in order to pressure partner countries to address issues of gender equality. The focus for Sida to date has been in the social sphere. Meanwhile the FMFA works through and gives support to women's political networks.

Indeed, there is an increasing tendency for aid to be channelled through other organizations, including national governments, climate funds, multilateral institutions and NGOs. Sida, for instance, now distributes half its aid through multilateral institutions. Meanwhile, Danida is increasingly giving money to global funds, including climate funds, health funds, and the Global Partnership for Education. Danida is finding it increasingly challenging to ensure that gender is included as a cross-cutting theme within these funds raising the risks that gender evaporates during the implementation of policies and programmes. Adding more indicators for the evaluation of interventions is often not feasible due to the number, and nature, of indicators involved and the costs of increasing reporting requirements.

When interventions are implemented by partners, such as NGOs, Danida does not use its Gender Rolling Plan. Rather, there are framework agreements with international and Danish NGOs which do not include details on gender-mainstreaming requirements. Frequently, NGOs are recipients of basket funds from a range of donors and so it is not possible for Dandia to specify details of their gender-mainstreaming activities. Instead, the emphasis is on building NGO capacity through their partnership with Danida.

Sida is moving towards making markets work for the poor (M4P) approaches and working with the private sector. This raises new challenges for effective dialogue and the integration of gender issues. The private sector is ultimately concerned with profit and so is more receptive to the language of efficiency, rather than the flag of rights. In many cases gender advisers in Sida find that they are speaking a different language, both with their colleagues involved in private sector initiatives and with individuals working in the private sector. They are facing resistance from both. What language can gender advisers use to express the importance of gender-mainstreaming and gender equality when engaging with the private sector? This is a question for further research.

6.3 Priority overload and priority switching

There are concerns by staff of both priority switching and priority overload, particularly for the Nordic development agencies, where the overall development strategy and its priorities are a political decision. For instance, currently in Sida the duration over which the thematic priorities apply is currently ambiguous, and so is the time period for which gender will remain one. Danida, meanwhile has arguably seen gender become marginalized in its 2012 strategy, '*The Right to a Better Life*', where it is subsumed in the human rights approach. This contrasts to its 2010 strategy when gender equality was a political priority.

Denmark, Finland and Sweden as nations are all committed to gender equality and this is reflected in their policies for international co-operation. Gender equality becoming

one of three thematic priorities for Sida during the 2008 Budget Bill, and gender-mainstreaming remaining a key approach to achieve this, has demonstrated the commitment of senior management to mainstreaming and has increased the incentives for staff to take mainstreaming seriously. This was a positive step taken by the new government which came to power in 2007. This government has also overseen a shift in development co-operation, moving power away from Sida and towards the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with the former now implementing the policies decided by the latter. In particular this has resulted in a shift in the underpinnings of gender policy. The previous gender policy (operating from 2005 to 2010) approached gender equality through strengthening the position of women and men—the philosophy behind Gender and Development (GAD) Meanwhile, the most recent policy, drawn-up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs focuses on women and women's rights—the Women in Development (WID) approach. In each of the four key areas; women's economic empowerment, political participation, sexual and reproductive health, women's security the focus is on women.

In the meantime, within Danida aid modalities are changing and along with this so are the sectors where Danida is actively involved. Education and health budget support are on the way out as Danida will channel money through the Global Partnership for education and health funds. There will be only few specific programmes on health and education, as well as water and sanitation as Danida will work with national governments on their national plans, rather than specific projects and programmes in these areas. However, these are precisely the sectors where Danida has been effective at mainstreaming gender. Meanwhile, the sector programmes which remain include 'hard' sectors for gender-mainstreaming such as agriculture and infrastructure. Danida will need to make significant changes to its incentive structures in order to get advisers in these areas committed to gender-mainstreaming; to date none of the Nordic agencies have had success here.

The importance of staff incentives is particularly important in an era of 'priority overload'. Since gender equality came to the fore of development policy during the 1980s other crosscutting issues including HIV/AIDS, climate change and most recently human rights have come to the fore and are jostling for prime position, either to be incorporated into development policy as crosscutting issues or priority areas. Each of these is then accompanied by training and tools stretching staff capacity even further.

One external driver of the development agenda has been the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expire in 2015 and whose replacement will influence how, and if, donor agencies maintain a focus on gender. Gender advisers in each of the three organizations expressed that they wanted the commitment to gender equality to continue under the post-2015 agenda, and that it represents an opportunity to broaden gender objectives beyond the current reasonably narrow gender focus of the MDGs. However, what will the post-2015 agenda entail for gender equality? Should gender be integrated into all the goals (and so take lessons from the gender-mainstreaming approach), or be a goal in itself? What is clear though, is that as for the current strategies of each of these agencies, post-2015 will be a political rather than a technical exercise. Here it is important for gender advisers to influence the process to ensure that something sensible emerges for the objective of gender equality.

7 Conclusions

Reviews of gender-mainstreaming highlight the importance of incentives, accountability and commitment in ensuring its effective implementation. However, gender is competing with other development priorities including HIV/AIDS and the environment and more recently climate change and the re-emergence of human rights. Integrating all of these concerns throughout the programme cycle is placing overwhelming pressures on the staff of development agencies, particularly in the context of fiscal tightening of aid budgets and reductions in staffing. Gender-mainstreaming has not effectively universalized the treatment of gender throughout the policy and programme cycle. Instead, it remains the role of committed individuals to promote gender and to ensure that gender concerns are effectively integrated into the development activities of donor agencies.

Due to the mounting challenges faced by development agencies in implementing gender-mainstreaming, Danida is reconsidering the use of gender-mainstreaming as an approach in its forthcoming gender strategy. However, the results agenda can provide an opportunity to maintain the focus on gender. Gender equality needs to be more explicitly linked to other development outcomes, including poverty reduction, in order to provide incentives for its integration. A focus on development outcomes and particularly the disaggregation of indicators by gender may be a more pragmatic approach to integrating gender and promoting gender equality.

Development agencies' funds are increasingly channelled through other organizations including multilateral organizations, NGOs, climate funds, and the private sector. In fact, development agencies are no longer the starting point, or the correct unit of analysis, for an analysis of the successful implementation, or otherwise, of gender-mainstreaming. Gender-mainstreaming has proven to be a challenge for development agencies. These challenges in implementation are likely to be even greater in other international organizations and funds due to a wide range of interested parties involved, each aiming to promote a different agenda and where compromises often have to be made. In these contexts it may not be simply to apply best practices from development agencies.

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Appendix Table 1

	Current development strategy and its underpinning	Priority areas for development co-operation	Cross-cutting objectives/issues	Current gender strategy and its objective	Priorities for gender equality	Strategies for gender equality	Tools for mainstreaming gender
Danida	2012 'The Right to a Better Life' Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation The human rights-based approach	• Human rights and democracy • Green growth • Stability and protection • Social progress		Gender Equality in Danish Cooperation Strategy 2004 Objective is to contribute to the promotion of equal; • rights for women and men • access to and control over resources for women and men • opportunities to achieve political and economic influence for women and men (New strategy currently being drawn-up)		Mainstreaming Special interventions	Gender Equality Rolling Plan Gender e-learning training programme Gender equality toolbox. Guidance on gender sensitive indicators (2006)
FMFA	2012 Development Policy Programme Human rights-based approach	• Democracy and human rights • Inclusive green economy • Sustainable nr management and environmental protection • Human development	• Gender equality • Reduction of inequality • Climate sustainability	No current strategy Previous strategy: Strategy and Action Plan for Promoting Gender Equality in Finland's Policy for Developing Countries 2003-2007 Objective: to achieve a fundamental increase in the impact of policy with regard to gender equality and women's rights by the year 2007	• Economic empowerment • Natural resources, climate change and gender • Women, peace and security • Sexual and reproductive health rights • Political leadership	Mainstreaming Targeted actions Political dialogue	Web-based gender training modules (September 2012) Web-based gender sensitive indicator guidance (forthcoming)

Sida	2008 Global Challenges - Our Responsibility. Communication on Sweden's policy for global development Takes a Rights perspective and the Perspective of poor people on development	• Respect for human rights • Democracy and good government • Gender equality • Sustainable use of natural resources and care of the environment • Economic growth • Social development and security • Conflict management and security • Global public goods	• Gender equality and women's role in development • Democracy and human rights • Climate and the environment (termed 'thematic priorities' in 2008 Budget Bill and are to be visible through the process)	On Equal Footing 2010-2015 The overall objective is 'gender equality, greater influence for women and greater respect for women's rights in developing countries'	• Women's political participation and influence • Women's economic empowerment and working conditions • Sexual and reproductive health and rights • Women's security including gender-based violence	Three instruments for mainstreaming; Targeted measures Integrated measures Dialogue	Gender Equality Manual Gender network (2010)

Source: Compiled from a range of sources, including information from interviews and Danida (2004), FMFA (2012), Government Offices of Sweden (2008 and 2012), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2012), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (2003 and 2012), SADEV (2010).