

The impact of gender focal points on the integration of gender issues and concerns within Sectoral Ministries in Kenya

Abstract:

Gender Focal Points (GFPs) were established within all sectoral ministries in Kenya as the institutional mechanism tasked with the key mandate of integrating gender perspectives into all policy formulation, sector-based development planning and programming (GoK, 2000, 2008). This study was conducted with a view of evaluating the impact of the GFPs on the integration of gender issues and concerns within sectoral ministries in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the gaps and challenges hindering the GFPs from effectively integrating gender issues and concerns, recommend relevant interventions to address these gaps and challenges and thereafter evaluate the GFPs in order to determine their impact on the integration of gender issues and concerns within the sectoral ministries. The study sites were 11 sectoral ministries identified through cluster sampling procedure. To collect the data, the study conducted an extensive literature review and content analysis on the status of the GFPs from available and relevant secondary literature such as annual reports, sectoral policies, monitoring and evaluation reports, and gender survey reports from the sectoral ministries among others. Thereafter, a questionnaire survey was administered on 17 GFPs randomly selected from the 11 sectoral ministries. From the study findings, the Researcher observed that the major challenges hindering the GFPs from effective integration of gender issues and concerns included inadequate resources-human and capital (18%), inadequate prioritization of gender issues (14%), inadequate structural linkages (14%), and limited technical capacity (14%). The study also identified disproportionate gender staffing and weak/inadequate gender policy frameworks as the major gender gaps within the sectoral ministries. A majority of the respondents acknowledged the increase in awareness of gender issues and concerns among the sector staff as a major achievement realized by the GFPs. This achievement was attributed to the successful implementation of capacity building programmes on gender by the GFPs. Lobbying for gender mainstreaming was identified as one of the strategies with the highest potential of increasing the impact of the integration of gender issues and concerns within the sectoral ministries. Some of the gender mainstreaming tools utilized by the GFPs included gender policies (25%), communication products such as reports and brochures (17%), monitoring and evaluation frameworks (17%), gender strategy papers (8%), and annual workplans (8%). For monitoring and evaluation of gender issues and concerns, the major indicators used by the GFPs to analyze the level of integration of gender issues and concerns included the number of trainings conducted on gender mainstreaming (36%), the percentile analysis of employed staff by sex (36%) and utilization of gender analytical tools (9%). To enhance the integration of gender issues and concerns within the sectoral ministries, the GFPs recommended for more gender sensitization (59%), increased funding for gender programmes (47%), and the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation structures (35%). In conclusion, the study findings indicated that 64% of the GFPs believed that gender issues and concerns were successfully being mainstreamed into the development agenda of the sectoral ministries, but perceived the process of integration as slow.

