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### Including Women's Voices? Gender Mainstreaming in EU and SADC Development Strategies for Southern Africa

Petra Debusscher<sup>a</sup> & Merran Hulse<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Antwerp, Belgium

<sup>b</sup> Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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# *Including Women's Voices? Gender Mainstreaming in EU and SADC Development Strategies for Southern Africa\**

PETRA DEBUSSCHER

(University of Antwerp, Belgium)

MERRAN HULSE

(Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands)

*This article examines gender mainstreaming in European Union (EU) development policy towards southern Africa. The aim is to detect how gender (in)equality in southern Africa is framed by the EU, and the extent to which this overlaps with Southern African Development Community (SADC) and civil society framing of gender (in)equality. We also explore potential reasons for the overlap and mismatch of frames. Using the methodology of critical frame analysis, EU policy programming documents are analysed and compared to SADC's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, and civil society texts on gender equality. We conclude that the EU approach to gender mainstreaming in its development aid towards southern Africa is to a large extent instrumentalist, predominantly integrationist and only partially participatory. Gender mainstreaming is framed as a way of more effectively achieving existing policy goals, and civil society groups are poorly integrated in the drafting process. Although the EU approach has significant overlap with the frames used by SADC, the latter seem to hold a broader, more holistic conception of gender mainstreaming. A major gap exists between civil society organisations' views on gender (in)equality and those expressed by the EU. This gap might be harmful for the relevance of EU policies and may compromise their effectiveness.*

## **Introduction**

The European Union (the EU Commission plus the 27 member states) is the world's largest donor of development aid, collectively distributing 55 per cent of the world's official development assistance. The EU's oldest relationship in development co-operation is with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries, which, since the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, is organised on an inter-regional basis. The EU provides

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Dr Petra Debusscher is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Antwerp. Her area of expertise includes development co-operation, gender equality in European Union policies, transnational women's organisations and gender mainstreaming. She teaches undergraduate and master's courses on gender theory and equality policies in the EU.

Merran Hulse is a PhD researcher at Radboud University, Nijmegen. Her area of expertise includes interregional co-operation between the European Union and Africa, norm diffusion, regional integration and trade co-operation.

extensive funding to regional organisations such as SADC in order to encourage integration and development along European lines, a policy which has been labelled by some as ‘Europeanization beyond Europe’.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, the EU perceives itself as a model of legitimate governance to be emulated by other countries and regions, and, through its development co-operation, aims to transform political and economic structures in other regions through the diffusion of ideas.<sup>2</sup> But does it also aim to transform unequal gender relations in other countries and regions?

In its policy documents and public statements, the European Commission (EC) frequently stresses gender equality as a goal in its own right, one that has been part of the European integration project since its inception.<sup>3</sup> The Lisbon Treaty considers ‘equality between women and men’ among the EU’s core values and objectives (Article 2 Treaty on European Union [TEU]), which should be integrated into all operations and policies. Since the 1990s the EU has adopted a range of high-level policy documents confirming that gender is a cross-cutting issue that has to be mainstreamed in all areas of development and into all programmes and projects at regional and country level.<sup>4</sup> In the European Consensus on Development, the EU explicitly articulates gender equality as one of the five essential principles of development co-operation, and in its 2010 Gender and Development Plan of Action it stresses that it ‘has been increasingly active in promoting gender equality in its external action’.<sup>5</sup> Given the growing importance of gender equality in all kinds of EU policy domains, including external action, it is not surprising that some authors have singled the EU out among other international organisations for its support of gender equality.<sup>6</sup>

This article critically examines the meaning of gender (in)equality in southern Africa: in EU development strategies for southern African states; in SADC’s own development strategy; and in the policy documents of local women’s organisations. First we assess *how* gender (in)equality in southern Africa is framed by the EU, SADC and women’s groups, and to what extent there is overlap or mismatch between them. Secondly, we analyse *why* such overlap or mismatch exists. In order to answer these questions, the methodology of critical frame analysis is used to analyse EU, SADC and civil society policy documents. Before delving into the analysis we give an overview of gender mainstreaming in EU development policy and discuss the method and the dataset.

1 F. Schimmelfennig, ‘Europeanization Beyond Europe’, *Living Reviews in European Governance*, 43, 3 (2009), available at [www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2009-3](http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2009-3), retrieved 17 October 2013.

2 T. Börzel and T. Risse, ‘Diffusing (Inter-)Regionalism: The EU as a Model of Regional Integration’, *KFG Working Paper No. 7* (Berlin, 2009).

3 H. McCrae, ‘The EU as a Gender Equal Polity: Myths and Realities’ *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48, 1 (2010), pp. 155–74.

4 Including the 1995 Council of Ministers Resolution on Integrating Gender Issues in Development Co-operation; the 1998 Council of Ministers Regulation on Integrating Gender Issues in Development Co-operation; the 2000 European Commission Communication on the European Community’s Development Policy; the 2001 European Commission Communication on the Programme of Action for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Community Development Co-operation; the 2004 European Parliament and Council Regulation on Promoting Gender Equality in Development Co-operation; the 2006 Joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on EU Development Policy: ‘The European Consensus’; the 2007 European Commission Communication on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Co-operation and the 2010 European Commission Staff Working Document, ‘EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development 2010–2015’.

5 European Commission ‘EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development 2010–2015’, SEC (2010) 265 (Brussels, 8 March 2010), p. 3.

6 P. Debusscher and J. True, ‘Lobbying the EU for Gender-Equal Development’, in J. Orbie and L. Tortell (eds), *The EU and the Social Dimension of Globalization* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009).

## Gender Mainstreaming and the EU

EU efforts to tackle gender inequality through development policy date back to the mid-1980s, when the EC established its 'Women in Development' (WID) policy following the UN Decade for Women (1975–85) and the Third World Conference on Women (1985). The WID policy found expression in EU development policy through the Lomé III (1984) and IV (1989) Conventions.<sup>7</sup> However, the WID paradigm came to be increasingly criticised as a conservative 'add women and stir' approach by feminist scholars, who pointed out that its narrow focus on women was ineffective as it ignored the underlying societal problems, namely unequal gender relations.<sup>8</sup>

Following the 1995 UN Beijing Conference, the international community replaced the WID paradigm with a Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm. GAD was considered innovative, as it focused on gender without dislodging women as the central subject, and recognised that improving women's status requires analysis of the *relations* between women and men. The strategy of gender mainstreaming is central to the GAD paradigm; 'the fundamental GAD buzzword'.<sup>9</sup> It would widen the scope from small-scale, add-on projects for women to the integration of a gender equality perspective in all policies.<sup>10</sup> It stressed 'the shared responsibility of women and men in removing imbalances in society', thus the participation and commitment of men was considered fundamental to changing the position of women.<sup>11</sup> It also included a consideration of the notion of power, or rather of unequal power relations between women and men, and therefore implied that GAD or gender mainstreaming requires a challenge to patriarchy in an institutional context.<sup>12</sup> As the ultimate aim of gender mainstreaming is to alter discriminatory gender norms, structures and practices in society, it is generally regarded as a transformative approach. However, some approaches to gender mainstreaming are more transformative than others.<sup>13</sup>

A truly transformative approach to gender mainstreaming 'aims at a fundamental transformation'.<sup>14</sup> It is a strategy that would imply 'the transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms, changing decision-making processes, prioritizing gender equality objectives and rethinking policy ends'.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, an 'integrationist approach' addresses 'gender issues within existing paradigms'.<sup>16</sup> It sells 'gender mainstreaming as a

7 A. Peto and I. Manners, 'The European Union and the Value of Gender Equality', in I. Manners and S. Lucarelli (eds), *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy* (London, Routledge 2006).

8 C. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training* (London, Routledge, 1993); R. Subrahmanian, 'Making Sense of Gender in Shifting Institutional Contexts: Some Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming', in A. Cornwall, E. Harrison and A. Whitehead (eds), *Feminisms in Development: Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges* (London, Zed Books, 2007), pp. 112–21.

9 R. Subrahmanian, 'Making Sense of Gender', p. 112.

10 G. Johnsson-Latham, 'Power, Privilege and Gender as Reflected in Poverty Analysis and Development Goals', in S. Chant (ed.), *The International Handbook Of Gender And Poverty* (Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2010).

11 Council of Europe, *Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, Final Report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming* (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1998), p. 18.

12 D. Højlund Madsen, *Getting the Institutions Right for Gender Mainstreaming* (Roskilde University, 2010).

13 In the debate about the usage and meaning of gender mainstreaming, Jahan has identified two approaches: an 'agenda-setting' and an 'integrationist' approach. Prerequisite to a transformative development agenda is an agenda-setting approach towards gender mainstreaming, where women or organisations affected by development interventions have a voice in 'shap[ing] the objectives, priorities and strategies of development'. See R. Jahan, 'The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development', in A. Leonard and M. Chen (eds), *Seeds 2: Supporting Women's Work Around the World* (New York, The Feminist Press, 1995).

14 M. Verloo, 'Another Velvet Revolution? Gender Mainstreaming and the Politics of Implementation', *IWM Working Paper*, 5/2001 (Vienna, 2001), p. 3.

15 *Ibid.*

16 F. Beveridge and S. Nott, 'Mainstreaming: A Case for Optimism and Cynicism', *Feminist Legal Studies*, 10, 3 (2002), p. 300.

way of more effectively achieving existing policy goals' and as such does not seek to fundamentally transform unequal gender relations.<sup>17</sup>

Within its own borders, the EU has adopted an integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming. Implementation has been technical and noncommittal, with the focus on existing policy actors and processes instead of rethinking these processes or integrating excluded groups into policymaking.<sup>18</sup> As a result of this integrationist, technical interpretation, gender mainstreaming is presented as apolitical or without conflict, even though it ultimately entails a shift of power from one group (men) to another (women). Gender mainstreaming in the EU is realised mainly through 'soft law' (such as non-binding communications, guidelines for the member states and the exchange of best practices), which implies that results are not enforceable and depend largely on the goodwill of the member states and the actors involved.

There has also been criticism of the underlying ideology that colours EU gender policies. Several authors have criticised EU gender mainstreaming policies for focusing too strongly on the realisation of the internal market and economic growth, instead of social justice and democracy.<sup>19</sup> Gender equality policies are often framed instrumentally in terms of achieving existing policy goals, and therefore fit within an integrationist approach towards gender mainstreaming.

## Gender in EU–ACP Development Policy

The EU first incorporated gender concerns into its ACP development policy in 1984, with the signing of the third Lomé Convention. Under the title 'Cultural and Social Cooperation', Lomé III modestly but explicitly incorporated women into EU development aid by stating that 'co-operation shall support the ACP States' efforts aimed at enhancing the work of women, improving their living conditions, expanding their role, and promoting their status in the production and development process'.<sup>20</sup> This was very much in keeping with the WID paradigm, as was the fourth Lomé Convention (1989–2000) which contained a complete subsection on 'Women and Development', which could be seen as a first step towards a gender mainstreaming approach, and stated that projects and programmes shall take into account 'cultural, social, gender and environmental aspects'.<sup>21</sup>

It was not until 2000, when the Lomé Convention was replaced by the Cotonou Agreement, that the EU explicitly adopted a GAD/gender mainstreaming approach in its ACP development policy. In many respects, the Cotonou Agreement made a significant break with the past. Gender equality and the strategy of gender mainstreaming became priorities. Article

17 S. Walby, 'Gender Mainstreaming: Productive Tensions in Theory and Practice', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State, and Society*, 12, 3 (2005), p. 323.

18 D. Perrons, 'Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality in the New (Market) Economy: An Analysis of Contradictions', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 12, 3 (2005), p. 390.

19 C. Hoskyns, 'Governing the European Union: Gender and Macroeconomics', in S. Rai and G. Waylan (eds), *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); M. Braithwaite, *How Regions in Germany, France and the United Kingdom are Putting into Practice the New Approach*, Final Report of the Survey of Current Practice and Findings of the Seminar at Gelsenkirchen, 21–22 January 1999; European Commission, DG Regional Policy and Cohesion; M. Braithwaite, 'Mainstreaming Gender in the European Structural Funds', paper prepared for the Mainstreaming Gender in European Public Policy Workshop (University of Wisconsin–Madison, 14–15 October 2000); J. True, 'Trading in Gender-Equality: Gendered Meanings in EU Trade Policy', in E. Lombardo, P. Meier and M. Verloo (eds), *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending, and Policymaking* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009).

20 African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States – European Economic Community, 'Third ACP–EEC Convention Signed at Lomé on 8 December 1984', Official Journal (OJ) L 086, Article 123.

21 *Ibid.*, Article 287.



1 on the objectives of the Cotonou Agreement states that 'systematic account shall be taken of the situation of women and gender issues in all areas – political, economic and social'.<sup>22</sup> This strong commitment to gender mainstreaming was explained in more detail in a specific section on gender issues, stressing the integration of a gender perspective 'at every level of development co-operation including macroeconomic policies, strategies and operations'.<sup>23</sup> It also calls for civil society participation and the promotion of women's organisations. The Cotonou Agreement is considered by some 'a groundbreaker in mainstreaming gender in development cooperation'.<sup>24</sup> But does the Cotonou Agreement's commitment to progressive gender mainstreaming policies actually manifest in more specific policy documents?

Arguably, the EU's aim of promoting gender equality through its development policy would be more effective if it were to adopt a transformative, inclusive approach to gender mainstreaming.<sup>25</sup> A transformative agenda not only 'implies the transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms', but also 'requires efforts to create constituencies that demand change'.<sup>26</sup> This condition is reflected in Naila Kabeer's idea of transformative agency, which entails the 'greater ability on the part of poor women to question, analyse and act on the structures of patriarchal constraint in their lives'.<sup>27</sup> Or, as Marty Chen points out in her analysis of the conditions for the successful reduction of poverty: 'the working poor, especially women' need to be empowered to hold policymakers accountable.<sup>28</sup> They need to have a 'representative – and stronger – voice, and to make rule-setting and policy-making institutions more inclusive, offering them a seat at the policy table'.<sup>29</sup> According to Article 4 of the Cotonou Agreement, civil society representatives, including women's organisations, should be involved in the policy programming process. Such a joint policy development process, rather than EU-directed policy planning, reflects the ideas contained in the Paris Declaration, and in theory the EC has committed itself to supporting partner country ownership and even respecting partner country *leadership*.<sup>30</sup> In practice, however, the EU's tendency to adopt the 'domestic analogy' in its external relations steers the EU towards a more conservative, integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming.<sup>31</sup>

22 African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States – European Community, 'Partnership Agreement Between the Members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the One Part and the European Community and its Member States of the Other Part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000', OJ L, 317.

23 *Ibid.*, Article 31.

24 K. Arts, 'Gender in ACP–EU Relations: The Cotonou Agreement', in M. Lister and M. Carbone (eds), *New Pathways in International Development: Gender and Civil Society in EU Policy* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006) p. 34.

25 A. Krizsan and E. Lombardo, 'The Quality of Gender Equality Policies: A Discursive Approach', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 20, 1 (2013), pp. 77–92; E. Lombardo and P. Meier, 'Framing Gender Equality in the European Union Political Discourse', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 15, 1 (2008), pp. 101–29.

26 On the first point, see Walby, 'Gender Mainstreaming: Productive Tensions', p. 323; on the second, see M. Mukhopadhyay, 'Mainstreaming Gender or "Streaming" Gender Away: Feminists Marooned in the Development Business', in Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead (eds), *Feminisms in Development*, p. 137.

27 N. Kabeer, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal', *Gender and Development*, 13, 1 (2005), p. 15.

28 M. Chen, 'Informality, Poverty and Gender: Evidence from the Global South', in S. Chant (ed.), *The International Handbook Of Gender And Poverty*, (Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2010), p. 470.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action (2005), available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>, retrieved 15 April 2012.

31 Schimmelfennig, 'Europeanization Beyond Europe'; P. Debusscher, 'Mainstreaming Gender in European Commission Development Policy: Conservative Europeaness?', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34, 1 (2011), pp. 39–49; P. Debusscher and A. Van der Vleuten, 'Mainstreaming Gender in European Union Development Cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa: Promising Numbers, Narrow Contents, Telling Silences', *International Development Planning Review*, 34, 3 (2012).

Given the EU's substantial funding of SADC, which we might consider 'carrots' offered to reward moves towards 'Europeanisation', and the potential effects of elite socialisation resulting from continued co-operation between the two regions, one might expect to find strong similarities between the integrationist gender mainstreaming model promoted by the EU and that used by SADC.<sup>32</sup> Indeed we do find significant overlap between the EU and SADC, but also significant difference, with SADC being closer to a transformative model of gender mainstreaming than the EU. Despite the EU's commitment to involving civil society and women's organisations in policy making that affects them, it is in fact SADC which is more responsive to the concerns of local women's organisations, as we illustrate in the following section.

## Analysing Gender Mainstreaming in Development Strategies for Southern Africa

We analysed 18 Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs), eight southern African civil society texts and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) using the methodology of critical frame analysis.<sup>33</sup> CSPs and NIPs are bilateral agreements between the EU and the government of the partner country, and are the main instruments for programming EU development aid. Given their importance in planning and implementing EU aid, the programming documents are regarded as the main 'building blocks' to effectively gender mainstream policies in development practice.<sup>34</sup> In theory, the drafting process of these agreements is initiated in the respective countries. The national authorising office (the unit dealing with the programming of EU aid, mostly located in the ministry of finance or economic affairs and planning), along with the EU delegation, draws up a first draft of the CSP, including an indication of the main priorities for EU action in the country. This draft is then presented to the EC (notably the country desk officer in Brussels), which produces a second draft, which is in turn circulated to the national authorising office for another round of consultations. Once redrafted, the CSP is sent back to the Commission for final adoption.<sup>35</sup> According to the Cotonou Agreement, civil society representatives should be involved in this programming process.

In addition to analysing EU programming documents, we also analysed the views of SADC and relevant civil society organisations working on gender equality issues.<sup>36</sup> The aim in analysing these documents is to detect possible 'silences' in the CSPs and NIPs (what is not

32 SADC's International Co-operating Partners consistently provide 55–65 per cent of SADC's operating budget. The EU is the largest donor (47 per cent of donor funding in 2007/08), even excluding individual EU states (SADC Council Records, 2007).

33 We examined nine times two generations' CSPs and NIPs (2002–2007 and 2008–2013). The Southern African countries' CSPs and NIPs included: Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia.

34 G. Painter and K. Ulmer, *Everywhere and Nowhere: Assessing Gender Mainstreaming in European Community Development Cooperation* (London and Brussels, One World Action and Aprove, 2002), p. 4.

35 Cotonou Working Group, 'EU–ACP relations: Will the EU Deliver on its Promises? Information on the Programming of EC Aid for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries (Briefing by the Cotonou Working Group Aid)' (March 2006), available at [http://www.eurostep.org/wcm/dmdocuments/Briefing\\_programming.pdf](http://www.eurostep.org/wcm/dmdocuments/Briefing_programming.pdf), retrieved 17 October 2013.

36 All selected civil society organisations or networks are directed by a board of women and men from (southern) Africa. Some of the organisations are (partly) funded by western NGOs or governments, and some have western members among their board (always a minority). We have chosen texts of organisations that are active in or have members in several southern African countries, to guarantee a wider generalisation. The choice of the analysed texts was subject to availability on the internet and being in English. The selected civil society organisations include the African Feminist Forum, Gender and Media Southern Africa, Gender Links, Just Associates (hereafter JASS) Southern Africa, and the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition.

said) and to determine whether gender mainstreaming is implemented as a transformative approach that gives 'attention to the substantive objectives of the women's movement'.<sup>37</sup> For SADC we analysed the RISDP, which is its 15-year regional integration development framework, setting the priorities, policies and strategies for achieving the long-term goals of SADC. It is intended to guide member states, SADC institutions, regional stakeholders and international co-operating partners in the process of deepening integration. The RISDP drafting process followed a participatory approach during which extensive consultations took place in all SADC member states, including government agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society, academic and research institutions, and international co-operating partners such as the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).<sup>38</sup>

Critical frame analysis identifies three aspects relevant to answering the research question: 1) the problems and solutions relating to gender (in)equality that are put forward (frame); 2) how these problems and solutions are gendered (genderedness); 3) which actors are included and excluded in defining the problems and solutions (voice). First, we contrasted the framing of gender (in)equality in the CSPs and NIPs with that of the SADC RISDP and civil society texts in order to detect 'silences' in EU programming. Second, we compared the roles attributed to men and women in achieving gender equality across the different documents. Finally, we determined whether civil society was consulted in the CSP drafting process, whether civil society is mentioned elsewhere in the text, and whether they are given a role in EU development programmes. The roles given to civil society by EU development programmes are compared to that given them by the SADC RISDP.

## A Critical Frame Analysis: Comparison of EU, SADC and Civil Society

In this section we examine the nature and range of the differences and similarities between EU, SADC and civil society framing of gender (in)equality in southern Africa using the method of critical frame analysis.<sup>39</sup> In the concluding part, we summarise the findings and reflect on *why* the frames of these actors overlap or mismatch.

### *Framing Gender: Problems and Solutions*

In-depth content analysis of EU programming documents reveals that gender inequality in southern African country diagnoses is mainly framed as a problem of high levels of maternal mortality and lack of access to education. Other important frames are the link between gender inequality and poverty, and HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence. The most frequently mentioned solutions put forward in the NIPs are focused on gender-equal access to education (five NIPs), supporting civil society organisations which promote women's rights (five NIPs), reducing HIV/AIDS (four NIPs), promoting maternal and reproductive health (four NIPs) and employment (two NIPs). Two important frames can be detected in these solutions: a Millennium Development Goals (MDG) frame and an economic growth frame.

37 R. Jahan, *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development* (London, Zed Books, 1995), p. 127.

38 SADC, 'Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan' (2001), available at [http://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/Regional\\_Indicative\\_Strategic\\_Development\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/Regional_Indicative_Strategic_Development_Plan.pdf) retrieved 17 October 2013.

39 Critical Frame Analysis is a methodology that builds on social movement theory, and was further developed by the MAGEEQ project to identify how gender equality policies are framed. See M. Verloo, 'Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe: A Critical Frame Analysis', *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 117, B (2005) pp. 11–34.



First, of the dominant solutions, three out of five are framed within the UN MDGs.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, 'promoting the achievements of the MDGs in Africa' is an important EU objective, and supporting gender equality is 'considered as [a] prerequisite ... for attaining these goals'.<sup>41</sup> Second, solutions for gender inequality are often framed economically as a means to create economic growth or reduce poverty. For example, the Mauritian NIP aims 'to ease the burden of unemployment', 'increase the skills base available to employers' and 'reduce labour and skills mismatches' through providing jobs for previously unemployed women.<sup>42</sup> Gender equality as an aim in and of itself is not discussed. In the Namibian NIP, gender parity in literacy is among the measurement indicators for the 'human resources development' programme. Again, gender equality is not an aim in its own right, but it is used instrumentally 'to meet the labour market demands and support overall national development goals'.<sup>43</sup> Even less obvious policy areas are sometimes framed economically. For example in the Botswana NIP, 'the further fall in HIV/AIDS prevalence ... especially [among young] women' is a crucial aspect of the 'human resource development' focal sector with the main aim to reduce poverty 'through economic growth'.<sup>44</sup> The South African NIP states that improved public and social services benefiting both males and females is critical to 'unlock the scarce and necessary skills crucial for both economic growth and sustainable development'.<sup>45</sup> An important aspect of this focal sector on service delivery is collaboration with non-state actors to provide 'capacity building and job creation, especially for women'.<sup>46</sup> Overall, analysis of the CSPs and NIPs indicates that the EU indeed has a strong focus on 'reduc[ing] poverty and inequality mainly through economic growth'.<sup>47</sup>

Comparison of these EU policy texts with the SADC RISDP shows both overlap and mismatch. There is overlap in the sense that the economic growth frame and the instrumental MDG frame focusing on poverty eradication are found in several instances in the SADC RISDP. For example, the section on gender and development states that 'greater equality between women and men contributes to economic growth, the reduction of poverty and overall human development'.<sup>48</sup> It is argued that economic growth will ensure poverty alleviation and that the promotion of gender equality is an important strategy to pursue this goal. In this sense the view of the EU is compatible with the view of SADC. On the other hand, the SADC RISDP includes as objectives the eradication of violence against women, and equality between men and women in political and decision-making positions, and clearly outlines responsibilities, measures, strategies, time frames and indicators. Furthermore, the RISDP explicitly articulates 'substantive equality between women and men' as the goal of mainstreaming gender into all national and regional policies, and urges SADC member states to set up gender laws, policies, mechanisms, institutions and co-ordination structures. To enable gender mainstreaming, SADC has given its secretariat as well as its member states

40 More specifically: Goal 2 to achieve universal primary education, Goal 3 to promote gender equality and empower women (with the concrete target to eliminate gender disparities in all levels of education by 2015), Goal 5 to improve maternal health (with the targets to reduce maternal mortality and achieve universal access to reproductive health) and Goal 6 to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

41 European Commission Multiannual Indicative Programme 2007–2013 for South Africa (2007), p. 18.

42 European Commission Republic of Mauritius Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the period 2008–2013 (2008a), pp. 25–6. Also of note in the Mauritian NIP is the initiative of temporary migration programmes mainly focused on low-skilled women to go abroad as carers. Unfortunately it is unclear how the programme will create qualitative job opportunities or long-term career skills for the participants.

43 European Commission Republic of Namibia Indicative Programme for the Period 2008–2013 (2008b), p. 6.

44 European Commission Republic of Botswana Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the period 2008–2013 (2008c) p. 38.

45 European Commission, 'Multiannual Indicative Programme' (2007), p. 21.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

48 SADC, 'Regional Indicative Strategic Plan', p. 44.

the responsibility to collect gender-disaggregated data. Although the SADC RISDP contains strong language and clear measures on gender mainstreaming, gender was not fully mainstreamed in some of the intervention areas identified, including trade and economic liberalisation, environment and sustainable development, and HIV/AIDS. Despite these shortcomings, SADC's RISDP still succeeds in integrating a gender equality perspective into more policy domains than the EU.

Comparison of EU and SADC policy texts with those of southern African civil society shows that civil society actors are concerned with problems and solutions that appear neither in the CSPs and NIPs nor in the SADC RISDP (see Table 1). First of all, women's organisations criticise the MDG frame for its narrow scope and minimal agenda. In their view, the MDGs ignore systemic political and power issues concerning gender inequality, and do not use a human rights framework, which depicts people as rights holders who can mobilise to demand realisation of their rights, rather than as passive recipients of policies.<sup>49</sup> They stress that 'achieving gender equality has more to do with socially accepted cultural beliefs and ideologies that uphold male privilege than with educational or economic goals'.<sup>50</sup>

Other important silences in the gender inequality diagnosis include

- the effects of 'internationally-imposed neoliberal economic policies' on (poor) women,<sup>51</sup>
- the use of culture as a smokescreen to curb women's rights,<sup>52</sup>
- the domination of 'old boy's networks',<sup>53</sup>
- the link between HIV/AIDS and poverty,<sup>54</sup>
- sexual harassment,<sup>55</sup>
- the role of masculine identities in gender-based violence,<sup>56</sup>
- the impact of old and 'new colonization of the region',<sup>57</sup>
- sexist images of women that dominate television, newspapers and magazines.<sup>58</sup>

In general, civil society actors offer more structural and systemic gender analyses. For example, the gender effects of globalisation are a major concern in five of the examined civil society texts. Equally, the system of patriarchy is discussed extensively in five civil society texts, yet it is barely mentioned in the CSPs and NIPs: the terms 'patriarchy' and/or 'patriarchal' appear 37 times in about 300 pages of examined civil society documents; only four times in about 1,500 pages of CSPs and NIPs; and not once in the 163 pages of the SADC RISDP. The analyses of civil society are more systemic-critical and aim at 'structural transformation' by approaching patriarchy as a system changeable over time and space, and

49 C. Barton, 'Where To for Women's Movements and the MDGs?' *Gender and Development*, 13, 1 (2005) p. 25–35.

50 Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (hereafter SOAWR), 'The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Right's on Women's Rights in Africa: From Ratification to the Realization of African Women's Human Rights', special issue of *Pambazuka News*, No. 222 (Oxford, Fahamu, 2005), p. 28.

51 JASS Southern Africa, 'Imagining and Building African Women's Movements' (Johannesburg 19–22 November 2007), p. 5; JASS Southern Africa, 'Building African Women's Movements: Thinkshop JASS Southern Africa' (Johannesburg, 27–8 September 2010).

52 Gender Links, 'Gender Links Vision 2020' (Gender Links, 2010).

53 JASS Southern Africa, 'Building African Women's Movements' (2010).

54 SOAWR, 'The Protocol to the African Charter' (2005).

55 Gender Links and Gender and Media Southern Africa (hereafter GEMSA), 'Sixteen Days of Activism 2009 Report' (2009).

56 *Ibid.*

57 JASS Southern Africa, 'Building African Women's Movements' (2010), p. 9; African Feminist Forum (hereafter AFF), 'Reclaiming our Spaces. Executive Summary of the 1st African Feminist Forum', 15–19 November, Accra (2006).

58 GEMSA Annual Report 2004–2005 (2006).

Table 1. Comparison of EU, SADC and civil society framing of gender (in)equality

	EU	SADC	southern African civil society
<b>1) Frames:</b> <i>MDGs, economic growth</i>	<b>Frames:</b> <i>economic growth, MDGs, (substantive equality)</i>	<b>Frames:</b> <i>gender equality as complex intervention, (substantive equality)</i>	
<b>Problem</b> Maternal mortality Lack of education Poverty HIV/AIDS Gender-based violence	<b>problem</b> Poverty Lack of access to productive resources, health and education Women's legal position Gender-based Violence	<b>problem</b> Multiple: broader than usual suspects (e.g. social oppression, political marginalisation, system of patriarchy, oppressive donor agencies support)	<b>solution</b> Multiple: broader than usual suspects (female political representation, social change, access to decent jobs, changing donor agencies support)
<b>2) Genderedness:</b> Women are main problem and solution holders Men rarely mentioned in problems and absent in solutions (Women as a vulnerable group)	<b>Genderedness:</b> Women are main problem and solution holders Men rarely mentioned in problems and are absent in solutions Women as a vulnerable group	<b>Genderedness:</b> Role of men indispensable/threat (mixed) Criticise binary thinking. Vulnerability as changeable/criticise language of 'vulnerable groups'	
<b>3) Voice:</b> EU and partner government Civil society to some extent integrated in implementation but less in policymaking	<b>Voice:</b> Civil society integrated in implementation and policymaking (monitoring)	<b>Voice:</b> Civil society Demand to be included, stress political role.	

Source: own compilation

stressing its interrelation with systems 'of class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperialism'.<sup>59</sup>

Important 'silences' are noted not only in the analysis of problems, but also in the outlining of solutions. In contrast to the solutions in the CSPs and NIPs, civil society texts pay significantly more attention to 'question[ing] the underlying structural inequalities between women and men' and finding creative ways out of gender inequalities.<sup>60</sup> Solutions include

- a '50/50 campaign' to push for more female political representation,<sup>61</sup>
- access to decent jobs (and not just the creation of jobs where women can 'dust ... the seats'),<sup>62</sup>
- involving local levels in the campaign for women's rights 'to have a critical mass of support',<sup>63</sup>
- popularising the feminist charter, which includes translations in as many languages as possible and diffusion through different media,<sup>64</sup>
- 'transforming the Southern African mindset of both women and men'.<sup>65</sup>

Analysing southern African civil society voices on the topic of gender equality thus reveals that the EU's gender mainstreaming approach is missing important aspects in outlining problems and designing solutions for gender equality.

### *Genderedness*

In all the CSPs and NIPs for southern Africa, women are seen as those primarily affected by the problem of gender inequality. Men, on the other hand, rarely appear in the country analysis and are almost never problematised. When men *are* mentioned, it is mostly in numerical terms (for example, the percentage of boys/girls in schools), or in a general phrase referring to equality between men and women. Furthermore, women are not only seen as the people affected by the problem, they are also, in the NIPs, made responsible for the solutions, since men are completely absent from that part of the planning phase and are never explicitly addressed as a target group to solve gender inequalities. The absence of men in the solutions for gender equality implies that women are solely responsible for 'catching up' with the implied male norm. This conceptualisation of women as the sole problem and solution holders is not unique to EU–southern African development policy, but is just as common in internal EU policies on gender equality.<sup>66</sup> This trend was also clearly visible in the SADC RISDP. In this respect the EU and SADC seem to have a similar approach focusing mainly on women instead of on gender relations.

We also find it remarkable that references to the unequal division of unpaid care work between men and women (household tasks and care for family members) are scarce in the analysis of problems, and absent in the solutions. Only three CSPs (Tanzania 2002, Lesotho and Botswana 2008) mention 'women's workload' as a factor hampering gender equality.<sup>67</sup>

59 AFF, 'Reclaiming our Spaces' (2006) p. 6.

60 Gender Links, 'Gender Links Vision 2020', p. 3.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

62 JASS Southern Africa, 'Building African Women's Movements', p. 7.

63 SOAWR, 'The Protocol to the African Charter', p. 9.

64 AFF, 'Reclaiming our Spaces'.

65 GEMSA, 'Annual Report 2004–2005', p. 3.

66 E. Lombardo and P. Meier, 'Framing Gender Equality in the European Union Political Discourse', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 15, 1 (2008), pp. 101–29.

67 European Commission United Republic of Tanzania Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the Period 2001–2007 (2002), p. 13.

When this topic is mentioned, it is depicted as a women's problem, in which men play no role. In most cases, women's disproportionately large burden and men's small burden of socially necessary but economically invisible care work is left out of the analysis. This neglect of the gendered time burden severely limits the scope for analysis and solutions, since the issue of unpaid work touches upon the core of the gender issues put forward in the southern African CSPs and NIPs. Poverty, domestic violence and women's access to (full-time) education and jobs all have direct or indirect links with the gendered division of (care) work. These links remain invisible in the analysed documents since the time burden is not discussed. Even if implicit, the absolute silence on this topic perpetuates men's and women's unequal roles in care work. The SADC RISDP is also silent on this topic, with the exception of one reference to men being generally 'responsible for the productive activities outside the home, while the domain of women [is] the reproductive and productive activities within the home'.<sup>68</sup> However this statement is located in the document's glossary, and further analysis in the body of the text is lacking. Again, the EU approach and SADC approach seem to overlap. Also of note when analysing the genderedness of roles in EU development policy documents is that women are repeatedly described as a 'vulnerable group' and/or mentioned in the same breath as children (CSP South Africa 2002, CSP Mauritius, Swaziland and Zambia 2008). This was even more the case in the SADC development plan, where women are systematically mentioned as a vulnerable group together with children, youth, the elderly and the disabled.

By contrast, civil society groups tend to take a more nuanced and complex view of the categories of 'men' and 'women' and their roles in gender equality. Just Associates (JASS) Southern Africa explicitly criticises 'binary thinking' in development policy and (inter) national politics. They explain that a view of the world in polarities – such as women versus men, black versus white, old versus young – does not reflect reality, and limits solutions for equality. Power works dynamically at different moments, and a more nuanced understanding is needed.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, in contrast to EU and SADC documents, care work analyses are present in all civil society documents examined. Civil society groups clearly state that stereotypes about caring as 'women's work' should be eradicated and that 'men should be involved in care work as they also benefit from [it]'.<sup>70</sup> Some groups also criticise "'home-based care' programs' which exploit and devalue women's care-giving role, and let 'governments and the international aid community off the hook for providing basic healthcare'.<sup>71</sup> They urge that care is a public issue and that the responsibility should be transferred from individual women to the government.

Lastly, civil society takes a more nuanced view of the role of men and of the concept of 'vulnerability'. Some civil society groups see the involvement and commitment of men as crucial in the struggle for gender equality.<sup>72</sup> Others advocate women-only spaces, as they fear that men and men's organisations will show 'no accountability to women or women's movements', and will take a large share of 'the shrinking pot of gender equality funding'.<sup>73</sup> Civil society sees vulnerability explicitly as a changeable situation, and women should not be lumped together with other groups in an essentialist and vague discourse of 'vulnerable groups'.<sup>74</sup> JASS Southern Africa warns that the 'gender equality language has been watered down, as the key focus has shifted from "women" to the more nebulous "gender" to ...

68 SADC, 'Regional Indicative Strategic Plan', p. 143.

69 JASS Southern Africa, 'Building African Women's Movements', p. 30.

70 Gender Links and GEMSA, 'Sixteen Days', p. 53.

71 JASS Southern Africa, 'Imagining and Building', p. 16, p. 5.

72 GEMSA, 'Annual Report 2004–2005'; Gender Links and GEMSA, 'Sixteen Days'.

73 JASS Southern Africa, 'Building African Women's Movements', p. 6.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 8.



“vulnerable groups”, thereby losing its core intention and the essential element of power and injustice at the heart of women’s inequality’.<sup>75</sup>

### *Voice: Actors Included and Excluded*

Only four CSPs explicitly mention that women’s organisations were included in the CSP drafting process (Botswana and Zambia 2002, Swaziland and Botswana 2008). Three CSPs refer to women’s organisations in other parts of the text (Seychelles, Swaziland and Tanzania 2002). However, the sources referred to when giving information on gender equality issues are predominantly UN, World Bank or government sources. National or regional women’s organisations are not given a legitimate voice in providing information on gender inequality. As regards participation of women’s organisations, the picture is mixed. The women’s movement is relatively well integrated in the CSPs and NIPs, as five NIPs have some aid earmarked for supporting civil society that promotes women’s rights. However, the drafting process does not seem fully gender mainstreamed. Voice is given to civil society representing female stakeholders, but only partially. Women’s organisations are written about, but they do not write (they are not mentioned as reliable sources in the CSPs and NIPs). Women’s organisations are called upon to implement policies, but they are poorly integrated in the drafting of these policies.

Some civil society groups feel that the minimal consultation with women’s movements and organisations is responsible for a depoliticised development agenda that has little to do with social justice and gender equality. They criticise donor approaches, priorities and timeframes as they push women’s movements ‘into project mode rather than movement-building mode’.<sup>76</sup> In the SADC development plan the situation seems to be more balanced. The document foresees both a service delivery and a watchdog role for civil society working on gender equality. It is mentioned that NGOs should play a role in ensuring the enforcement of gender laws, as well as deliver services, such as the organisation of educational programmes against violence against women and children. Furthermore there seems to be the possibility of actual policy input in the SADC policy-making process. Women’s groups are mentioned as members of the stakeholder forum that gives input and reviews the monitoring progress reports concerning the RISDP.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the EU’s claimed commitment to transforming unequal gender relations in southern Africa, our analysis shows that it does not adopt a truly transformative approach to gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is pursued instrumentally and within existing development paradigms, as solutions for gender inequality are mainly framed as promoting the MDGS and leading to poverty eradication and economic growth. The EU’s gender mainstreaming strategy towards southern African countries can be deemed ‘integrationist’, as gender equality ‘is sold as a way of more effectively achieving existing policy goals’.<sup>77</sup> Apart from the ‘usual suspects’ (health, education), gender issues have been included in few new domains. The framing of gender roles gives the impression that women are often victimised, men are left out, gender roles are not questioned and women are put forward as both problem and solution holders in the gender inequality equation. Furthermore, the EU’s approach is

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> JASS Southern Africa, ‘Building African Women’s Movements’, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> Walby, ‘Gender Mainstreaming: Productive Tensions’, p. 323.

only partially participatory. Although women's organisations are to some extent called upon to *implement* policies, they are poorly integrated in the *drafting* of these policies.

To a certain extent, the EU approach has significant overlap with that of SADC: both regional organisations perceive gender policies instrumentally to achieve economic growth or MDGs, focus on women as problem and solution holders and hold stereotypical images of men and women. On the other hand, SADC also at times displays a broader, more holistic conception of gender mainstreaming. Gender is integrated in a more diverse set of policy domains compared to the EU, such as ICT and science and technology. SADC also attributes a broader role to civil society groups that represent female stakeholders. As SADC's gender policy seems to go further and be more inclusive than the EU's, we conclude that SADC is closer to a transformative approach to gender mainstreaming than the EU. We agree that in this case of EU–SADC relations, the EU does not in fact act 'as teacher and paymaster'.<sup>78</sup>

This leaves us with the question of why SADC is comparatively more receptive to the voices of women's organisations, especially in relation to the process of drafting policies. One explanation lies in the relative 'openness' of SADC as compared to the EU. SADC is faced with severe capacity constraints, in terms of both financial and human resources. For example the Gender Unit employs only two full-time staff members. In such a context, well-organised civil society groups can play a useful role in not only monitoring and implementing policies but also drafting them. SADC and civil society groups engage in a mutually beneficial relationship: SADC benefits from (low-cost) additional human resources, while civil society is given the opportunity to get their concerns represented at the regional level. On the other hand, as a huge and well-oiled bureaucracy, the EU has set procedures and ways of doing things, both at home and abroad, which in practice may not always translate well into taking account of local peculiarities and concerns. Complying with EU procedures often forces women's groups into 'project mode' instead of agenda-setting mode, with the end result being a less transformative approach to gender mainstreaming within EU programming. Of course, SADC's openness also explains why many of the EU frames are found in the SADC RISDP. The EU provides not only a great deal of funding and technical assistance to SADC as a whole, but also assistance to the Gender Unit, so perhaps it is not surprising that we find significant overlap between EU and SADC frames.

A second explanation for the differences between the EU and SADC in receptiveness to civil society, and more specifically to the particular *messages* of women's groups, relates to the fundamentals of both regional organisations. The EU's original aim was to develop a common market and facilitate economic growth. As a result, the EU tends to be more receptive to gender policies that can be integrated into the overall goal of economic growth. In such a context it is hardly surprising that 'gender equality policies have suffered from the limitations of the EU as a common market where women were only relevant as workers and gender issues were only taken into account in the economic part of the public domain'.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, SADC and its forerunner organisations were founded with entirely different aims, primarily to liberate the region from minority rule and extend full rights to all citizens.<sup>80</sup> As a result of the region's past, SADC has from the outset been concerned with questions of social justice, human rights and non-discrimination, which might explain why SADC is more receptive to framing gender equality as a goal in and of itself, rather than 'just' a means to

78 A. Van der Vleuten, 'Gender in Interregional Relations: EU as Teacher and Preacher?', paper presented at the Fourth Pan-European Conference on EU Politics (Riga, 25–27 September 2008), p. 1.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

80 Initially the Frontline States, later the Southern African Development Coordination Conference.

obtain economic growth and MDGs.<sup>81</sup> Domestic violence, for example, is considered an important part of SADC policy making, while the EU has not been able to act upon this issue through hard law, as it falls outside the scope of its treaties.

The tendency for the EU to adopt 'the domestic analogy' and translate its internal experiences into external policies predisposes EU development programming to perceive southern Africans as (potential) workers and facilitators of economic growth, rather than rights holders.<sup>82</sup> The more transformative issues that are put forward by southern African civil society organisations, such as radically questioning masculinities and femininities, do not fit within the EU's dominant development paradigm, which is focused on achieving the MDGs, nor does it significantly challenge gender relations or power. The neglect of southern African civil society organisations is not without implications for the quality of gender mainstreaming in the CSPs and NIPs. As we have shown, conceptions of gender (in)equality are limited and risk losing touch with the lives and experiences of the stakeholders. This undermines the transformative potential of the EU's gender mainstreaming approach. Not only is the lack of space for civil society voices detrimental to the empowerment and agency of the women who are actually affected by these policies, it is also harmful for the relevance of said policies.

What shows up as a 'problem' and 'solution' for policy-makers is limited by their specific institutional culture and predetermined goals, and may be significantly mismatched with problems and solutions 'on the ground', which risks consigning policies to irrelevance and ineffectiveness. If the EU truly wishes to transform unequal gender relations in southern Africa, it should take greater care to include the voices of southern African women.

PETRA DEBUSSCHER

*University of Antwerp, Political Science Department, Research Group Citizenship, Equality & Diversity, Lange Nieuwstraat 55, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium. E-mail: [petra.debusscher@uantwerpen.be](mailto:petra.debusscher@uantwerpen.be)*

MERRAN HULSE

*Radboud University, Institute for Management Research, Department of Political Science, Thomas van Aquinostraat 5, 6500HK, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. E-mail: [m.hulse@fm.ru.nl](mailto:m.hulse@fm.ru.nl)*

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81 A. Van der Vleuten and M. Hulse, 'Governance Transfer by the Southern African Development Community', *SFB-Governance Working Paper Series, Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 700*, No. 48, December 2013, available at [http://www.sfb-governance.de/publikationen/sfbgov\\_wp/wp48/wp48.pdf?1394458888](http://www.sfb-governance.de/publikationen/sfbgov_wp/wp48/wp48.pdf?1394458888).

82 Schimmelfennig, 'Europeanization beyond Europe'.