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## **Gender Mainstreaming in Sector Budget Support: The Case of the European Commission's Sector Support to Rwanda's Agriculture Sector**

By Nathalie Holvoet<sup>1</sup> and Liesbeth Inberg<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

Donors face difficulties when handling gender concerns in the context of ongoing changes in aid modalities. Against this background, the European Union (EU) Member States and the European Commission (EC) adopted the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015) and launched, in collaboration with the UN Women and the International Training Center of the International Labour Organisation, the 'Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality' programme. Within the framework of this programme, the EU delegation in Rwanda has elaborated a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the EC sector budget support to the Agriculture Sector in Rwanda. Given that, so far, experiences with gender mainstreaming in sector budget programmes in the agriculture sector are hardly documented, the review of the current degree of gender-sensitivity and the remedying gender mainstreaming strategy are also the focus of our contribution. Both the EC and Rwanda are interesting cases as the former is an influential actor in development cooperation, while Rwanda's own commitment to gender equality gives the EC (and other donors) an interesting entry point to further trigger gender mainstreaming through (sector) budget support.

*Keywords:* Gender mainstreaming; European Commission; Rwanda; sector budget support; agricultural sector

### **Introduction**

Gender and development policies tend to be largely shaped by general aid and development policies and changes therein (Molyneux & Razavi, 2005; Moser, 1993; Razavi & Miller, 1995). In the past decade changes in aid policies and modalities have been proposed, with the goal of improving aid and development effectiveness. More specifically, donors are expected to replace their traditional projects with more programme-oriented aid and (sector) budget support, which are characterised by an evolution from donor *control* over the content and processes of isolated projects or programmes towards *influence* of donors over broader sector and national policies and systems while the control/leadership is in hands of the partner countries. Partner countries are expected to take the lead in developing the content of policies and programmes and in building sound systems for the development and management of these

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policies and programmes. This also applies to policies and programmes that stimulate gender equality and empowerment.

Most of the partner countries have country-owned gender equality and empowerment policy objectives as well as an institutional apparatus and actors with a specific mandate towards those objectives. In national development policies and sector policies, however, these gender policies are often neglected and national gender expertise is hardly involved in national development policy-making, planning, implementation, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Donors have room to manoeuvre in redressing this apparent negligence (UNIFEM, 2006) by using entry points that are typically related to the provision of (sector) budget support, including ex-ante diagnosis of country policies and systems, capacity building, performance assessment frameworks, monitoring and review mechanisms and evidence-based policy dialogue. In practice, however, these entry points have not been fully utilised. A 2007 OECD/DAC study highlighted that, in this respect, donor agencies do not always know how to handle gender concerns in the context of the ongoing changes in aid modalities.

In order to redress this situation, the European Union (EU) Member States and the European Commission (EC) have adopted the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015). One of the specific objectives of this plan is the use of sex-disaggregated indicators and gender-sensitive performance indicators, where relevant, in EU funded general budget support and sector support programmes (European Commission, 2010: 6). In addition, the EC, together with UN Women, and the International Training Center of the International Labour Organisation (ITC/ILO), launched the 'Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality' programme in 2011, with the aim to "increase the volume and effective use of aid and domestic resources to implement national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment" ([www.gender-budgets.org](http://www.gender-budgets.org)) in 15 countries.

Within the framework of this programme, the EU delegation in Rwanda has elaborated a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the EC budget support to the Agriculture Sector in Rwanda (SBSP Agriculture) with the aim to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in the programme. The strategy is based upon a review of the current degree of gender mainstreaming of the SBSP and takes into account ongoing initiatives in the Rwandan agriculture sector itself (alignment) as well as initiatives taken by other development partners (harmonisation). This Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is the focus of this article. As, up until this point, experiences with gender mainstreaming in sector budget support programmes in the agriculture sector are barely documented, we aim to contribute to this underexploited area of research.

The case of EC is interesting as it is an important actor in development cooperation, both in terms of financial resources and political influence, and can therefore make a difference when it comes to the gender sensitivity of aid. Moreover, gender equality is one of the EC's major goals. The 2006 European Consensus emphasises the importance of gender equality as one of the five common principles of EU development cooperation. Article 19 states more specifically:

"The promotion of gender equality and women's rights is not only crucial in itself but is a fundamental right and a question of social justice, as well as being instrumental in achieving all the MDGs and in implementing the Beijing Platform of Action and the CEDAW. Therefore the EU will include a strong gender component in all its policies and practices in its relations with developing countries" (Council of the European Union, 2006: 4).

The selection of the Rwandan case may be understood from the perspective of previous research on gender and aid effectiveness which has hinted at the importance of a recipient country's own commitment to gender-related objectives for the integration of a gender dimension in development interventions (see e.g. Elson & Mc Gee, 1995). Interestingly, it has also been highlighted that in the case of budget support, staff in donor agencies tend to misuse the principle of country ownership to escape their own responsibilities with respect to gender mainstreaming (see OECD/DAC, 2007; Van Reisen with Ussar, 2005). Such an excuse cannot be used by donor agencies in the case of Rwanda as it has been applauded for its relatively high commitment to gender issues which is obvious from, among others, the promulgation of legal documents, and the establishment of gender-sensitive policy and institutional frameworks. As far as the agriculture sector is concerned, gender sensitivity has been one of the principles taken into account during the elaboration of the second phase of the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture in Rwanda (PSTA II). More specifically, the Ministry of Agriculture has elaborated an Agriculture Gender Strategy to "institutionalise gender responsive programming (planning and budgeting), implementation, monitoring and reporting systems and improve gender equality in the agriculture sector" (Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, 2010: 32).

Data for this article has been collected through a combination of documentary review and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. government of Rwanda, EC staff members in Kigali, other development partners) conducted in June 2012. The key stakeholders included both actors with and without a specific gender mandate.

The structure of this article is as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of EC's policies and practices with respect to budget support, gender equality and gender mainstreaming as well as on its development cooperation with Rwanda. The subsequent section highlights the present degree of gender mainstreaming in the EC sector budget support programme in the Rwandan agricultural sector and discusses the main elements of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. Section four concludes.

## **Background**

As the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the sector budget support programme (SBSP) Agriculture in Rwanda has not been elaborated within a vacuum, this section provides some background information on relevant EC policies and practices and on EC's development cooperation with Rwanda.

### *Budget support*

The EC has provided budget support to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries from the 7<sup>th</sup> European Development Funds (EDF) (1990-1995) onwards. The percentage of budget support has increased steadily and is expected to be around 45% of programmable aid during the present EDF (10<sup>th</sup>, 2008-2013) (European Commission, 2008a). Initially the larger part of total EC budget support was provided through general budget support, but sector budget support has exceeded general budget support from 2006 onwards (European Commission, 2008a). Budget support does not only involve financial transfers to the national treasury account of the partner country; policy dialogue, performance assessment and capacity building are also important elements (European Commission, 2011b).

In reaction to criticism of the budget support mechanism, including the limited sensitivity of the EC to political issues (Faust et al., 2012), the EC published a new communication on the future approach to budget support in 2011 (European Commission, 2011b). While the primary goal of EC budget support used to be poverty reduction, the new communication adds the promotion of democracy and human rights to this goal (Faust et al., 2012). To reflect changes put forward in the communication, in the future general budget support will be referred to as ‘Good Governance and Development Contracts’ and sector budget support as ‘Sector Reform Contracts’. No targets for budget support are identified, as the Commission

“considers that the appropriate mix between the different aid modalities is best decided as part of a portfolio approach that comprises several aid modalities in response to a partner country’s specificities and agreed national objectives” (European Commission, 2011b: 3).

In the new policy four eligible criteria for budget support are selected, including stable macro-economic framework, national/sector policies and reforms, public financial management and transparency and oversight of the budget (see European Commission, 2011b for a full description of the four criteria).

While recognising the importance of governance issues, Faust et al (2012) point at several implications of using budget support for the promotion of democracy and human rights. First, as the new communication implies stronger political selectivity, the number of countries receiving (general) budget support are likely to decrease, which will lead to a loss of access to high level political fora at international as well as recipient country level. This will weaken the EC’s comparative advantage (over EU member states) and position. Second, by violating the Tinbergen rule, which emphasises the importance of using a specific policy instrument for each policy target, it is highly unlikely that the two different policy targets aimed at in the new budget support operations (i.e. poverty reduction and promotion of democracy and human rights) will be achieved (Faust et al., 2012).

#### *Gender equality and gender mainstreaming*

The EC played a significant role in the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (Debusscher, 2011) and actively supported the gender mainstreaming objective (Stratigaki, 2005; Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2009). As a follow-up to the Beijing conference the EC, like many countries in the world, has endorsed gender mainstreaming policies to promote goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment. In practice, however, the EC’s implementation of gender mainstreaming has not been very consistent and effective (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2009). Effective gender mainstreaming requires a two-track approach combining an integrationist approach on the one hand and a transformative or agenda setting approach that involves interventions specifically targeted towards men and women on the other hand (see also Mukhopadhyay, 2009: 95-96). While the Council of Europe has emphasised that the agenda setting approach is a prerequisite for an effective implementation of gender mainstreaming, in reality, gender specific actions have been reduced under the realm of gender mainstreaming (Stratigaki, 2005). In their assessments of the 2007 and 2008 work programs of the EC Directorates-General (DG), Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2010) highlight that 17 out of 39 DGs do not list any gender-specific activities, 15 list only one or two activities while 7 list 3 or more activities. The DG Development and Europeaid perform relatively well with eight activities.

With regard to development cooperation, the EC adopted a communication on the integration of gender issues in development cooperation shortly after the 1995 Beijing Conference (Stratigaki, 2005). With this communication the EC replaced its Women in Development (WID) approach with a Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Within the WID approach, income poverty is considered the underlying cause of inequalities between men and women. In line with this, it is assumed that poverty reduction, through the inclusion of women in the existing development processes will also automatically reduce inequalities between men and women. In contrast to the WID approach, the GAD approach considers human behaviour to be influenced by free agency on the one hand and by norms and structures on the other hand, including gender norms, amongst others (see Moser, 1993; Razavi & Miller, 1995). A GAD approach starts from the idea that any intervention at global, macro, meso and micro level is influenced by existing gender relations. Conversely, all interventions could potentially influence gender equality and empowerment. Given this mutually influencing relationship between ‘gender’ and ‘development’, there is a need to integrate a gender dimension throughout the different stages (diagnosis, planning, implementation, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation) of all types of interventions at any level, i.e. gender mainstreaming. In addition to a top-down approach there is also a need for more bottom-up interventions that aim at modifying the underlying gendered structures of constraint, something which is particularly important in areas that are strongly regulated by gender norms. Debusscher (2011) demonstrates that in reality the shift from WID to GAD was only effectuated to a certain extent. On the basis of her assessment of two generations of Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs)<sup>3</sup> (period 2002-2013) she concludes that the shift was predominantly visible in the format and budget, but less in the language, roles, frames and the underlying processes of participation. The language used in CSPs and NIPs is, for instance, clearly a WID language with a focus on women as the problem and solution to inequality, while gender stereotypes are also very rarely challenged.

The EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (EU Gender Action Plan) for the period 2010-2015 could potentially redress this situation. The overall objective of this action plan is to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially MDG 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) and MDG 5 (improve maternal health), as well as to attain the goals set out by CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action, and the Cairo Programme of Action (European Commission, 2010). The EU Gender Action Plan sets out a three-pronged approach consisting of political and policy dialogue, gender mainstreaming, and specific actions, and concentrates on a limited number of objectives which are selected in line with EU’s comparative advantage. In order to monitor its implementation, the EU Gender Action plan specifies 43 indicators whose progress should be reported upon in yearly progress reports to be submitted by all EU member states and the EC (European Commission, 2010). One of the 47 indicators is specifically related to the gender-sensitivity of CSPs and NIPs, i.e. “next generation CSPs and NIPs have a gender country profile and gender is mainstreamed. At least 50% identify gender equality -related specific actions” (European Commission, 2010: 13).

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<sup>3</sup> An CSP is a multi-annual programming document of the EC which describes EC’s cooperation with a partner country, a NIP is often an integral part of the CSP and identifies and defines measures and actions for attaining the CSP objectives (European Commission, 2004a).

### *Development cooperation with Rwanda*

Since the 8<sup>th</sup> EDF NIP (2000-2003) and after a period of post-conflict relief, the EC has shifted its development cooperation with Rwanda from a focus on post-conflict relief and reconstruction to long-term development and poverty reduction (Republic of Rwanda and European Community, 2007). The present framework for cooperation between the EC and Rwanda is described in the CSP/NIP for the period 2008-2013. The cooperation programme is aligned to Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and has poverty reduction as its overall objective. The EC provides general budget support and sector support through two focal areas: rural development and infrastructure for regional interconnectivity (Republic of Rwanda and European Community, 2007). The overall objective of support to rural development is

“poverty reduction through improved food security and increased agricultural productivity and developing an environment conducive for rural economic development, in the context of sustainable development and decentralisation” (Republic of Rwanda and European Community, 2007: 32).

In line with the announcement in the CSP/NIP that support to rural development would shift from project support to sector budget support, the “Sector Budget Support for Decentralised Agriculture” programme was formulated in 2009 (amount of 20 million Euros). The expected results of this programme are improved agricultural outcomes, increased public financial management capacities in districts to ensure proper use of funds and value for money, and a more stable and predictable intergovernmental grant transfer framework (European Commission, 2009).

### **Gender mainstreaming in the SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda**

In what follows we take stock of the degree to which gender equality is mainstreamed in the SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda while highlighting the main elements of the new Gender Mainstreaming Strategy which has been prepared with the aim to redress the current gaps in gender-sensitivity. We do this exercise against the background of the EC's own guidelines and instruments with respect to the integration of gender issues in (sector and general) budget support. In doing so, we use the 2007 guidelines on budget support (European Commission, 2007b) as these guidelines were in use at the moment of the elaboration of the SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda<sup>4</sup>. Table 1 provides an overview of the instruments and documents that are used in different phases of the SBSP and which we have analysed with respect to their gender-sensitivity.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2012, the EC has updated its budget support guidelines (European Commission, 2012).

**Table 1.** Overview of SBSB instruments and documents (subdivided over different phases)

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Instrument/Documents</b>
Programming	- Country Strategy Paper (CSP) - National Indicative programme (NIP)
Identification	- Identification fiche
Formulation	- Action fiche - Assessment of sector programme
Financing	- Financing agreement
Implementation and monitoring	- External Assistance Management Report (EAMR) 2011 - Public Finance Management (PFM) Annual Monitoring Report 2011 - Implementation and monitoring report and Background Conclusion Sheet (BCS) in results-oriented monitoring system (ROM)
Evaluation	- (joint) evaluation

Taking into account the importance of CSPs and NIPs in the planning and implementation of EC's aid, the integration of a gender dimension in these documents is quite fundamental for mainstreaming gender effectively in sector budget support programmes (Debusscher, 2011). The EC itself clearly acknowledges the importance of gender mainstreaming in these documents, as the 2007 guidelines for the elaboration of CSPs and NIPS include a specific 'programming fiche for gender equality' to guide the EC staff in their efforts to integrate a gender dimension in CSPs and NIPs. Whereas this attention for gender issues somewhat decreases when moving to guidelines which are specified at a more operational level (e.g. specific guidelines for project and programme evaluation), in various instances reference is made to the existing toolkit on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting (see European Commission, 2004b). The EU gender toolkit provides clear-cut suggestions on how to use gender (budget) instruments in the context of new aid modalities and more specifically sector and general budget support. Moreover, the Background Conclusion Sheet, which is a key document in the monitoring and evaluation of EC projects and programmes, also involves the classification of projects and programmes alongside the OECD/DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. The Gender Equality Policy Marker was introduced in 1997 with the aim to facilitate monitoring and co-ordination of DAC Member's activities in support of gender equality (OECD/DAC, 2008)<sup>5</sup>. The use of this policy marker necessitates a prior gender screening of the objectives of projects and programmes.

<sup>5</sup> Three different values are used in the marking system: Principal policy objectives (G-2) are those which can be identified as being fundamental in the design and impact of the activity and which are an explicit objective of the activity. Significant policy objectives (G-1) are those which, although important, are not one of the principal reasons for undertaking the activity. Not targeted to the policy objective (G-0) means that the activity has been screened against, but was found not be targeted to, the policy objective (OECD/DAC, 2008: 2).



The remainder of this section focuses on the actual degree of application of these guidelines in the SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda and on the main elements of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. The discussion is structured alongside the seven specific objectives of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy.

*Integration of a gender dimension in the identification, programming and formulation phase*

In line with the gender-sensitivity of the 2007 budget support guidelines discussed above, gender issues in the Rwandan SBSP Agriculture are ‘best’ captured in the documents which relate to the programming phase and more specifically the CSP. However, even at this stage, the integration of gender issues is at best fragmentary. More specifically, while the importance of gender issues is mentioned in the more ‘diagnostic’ sections of the CSP which analyse the key strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the Rwandan agricultural sector, the gender dimension gradually evaporates when moving to the sections which outline the strategy and the focus of cooperation.

Positively, the NIP refers to the government’s commitment to ensure the participation of women in rural employment creation activities and the Action Fiche (i.e. a key document used in the formulation phase) discusses the expected contribution of the sector budget support to gender equality. However, these references to gender issues are not translated further down the route when implementation issues are discussed, nor are they taken on board and further elaborated upon in the formulation phase. In addition, the assessment of the seven key areas<sup>6</sup> of Rwanda’s agriculture policy and systems, which are assessed by EC staff during the programming, identification and formulation phase to support the decision on the provision of EC support to a sector programme (see European Commission, 2007), has thus far been largely gender blind.

This limited attention to gender issues is somewhat surprising in the Rwandan context where the Government in general, and the Ministry of Agriculture in particular, as well as various other sector stakeholders, have instigated an array of initiatives to promote gender mainstreaming (and specifically gender budgeting) in the agricultural sector. These initiatives, which are country-owned and hint at a considerable level of commitment for gender equality, are a perfectly legitimate and an easy entry point for the EC (and other donors) to further trigger the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and systems in the agricultural sector, a strategy which neatly matches the EU Gender Action Plan.

In order to correct for this, the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy stipulates that a country gender profile will be integrated in the next EU-Rwandan CSP and NIP. According to the programming fiche on gender equality (European Commission, 2008b), a complete country gender profile includes data and analysis on the gender division of labour; access to and control over material and non-material resources; the legal basis for gender equality/ inequality; political commitments with respect to gender equality; and the cultural and traditional attitudes and stereotypes which affect the gender relations between women and men. For the elaboration of this country gender profile useful gender diagnoses are already available, e.g. Rwanda’s National Institute of Statistics recently drafted a country gender profile which includes specific information on agricultural activities and assets (see Republic of Rwanda, 2012).

In addition, the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy stipulates that for the next SBSP at least four of the seven key areas of the sector assessment have to include a gender dimension. The

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<sup>6</sup> These seven areas include: sector policy; sector budgeting and its medium-term perspectives; sector and donor coordination; the institutional setting and capacity issues; the performance monitoring systems; the macroeconomic framework; and public finance management.

integration of a gender dimension in this assessment exercise is key in order to diagnose the existing degree of gender-sensitivity of the sector policies and systems. In particular the inclusion of a gender dimension in the more systemic areas (e.g. sector systems, monitoring and performance systems) is of importance, as this will probably also affect the outputs of the system (e.g. policies, programmes, service delivery) and might create more long-term effects. As the Agriculture Gender Strategy elaborated by Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture includes an analysis of the gender-sensitivity of the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture in Rwanda (PSTA II), much of the information needed for a gender-sensitive assessment of the sector policies and systems is already available.

#### *Integration of a gender dimension in the financing phase*

The financing agreement between the EC and the Republic of Rwanda (agreement Nr RW/FED/2009/021-572) includes a set of indicators related to the general conditions for the release of all tranches as well as indicators related to the release of the variable tranche. So far these indicators, which relate to sector policy, (district) public finance management, macro-economic stability and agriculture, do not make any reference to gender issues. The inclusion of gender sensitive indicators is, however, essential in the gender mainstreaming process, as this influences the degree to which gender issues are taken on board during implementation, monitoring and evaluation, while it also influences the likelihood that gender issues are discussed during joint sector reviews and policy dialogues among the EU and the Rwandan government.

The importance of the use of gender-sensitive indicators to incentivise effective gender mainstreaming has recently been discussed in Hafner–Burton and Pollack (2009). In line with increasing acknowledgement within the international donor community and the EC in particular (Busscher, 2011), the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Rwanda's SBSP lists the inclusion of a gender dimension in the variable/performance tranche of the financing agreement among its future actions. The Rwandan case is also particularly apt for such an integration of gender indicators and targets, as its own key agricultural policy documents and matrixes (such as the Agriculture Gender Strategy and the PSTA II<sup>7</sup>) include gender-specific performance indicators. Such an alignment of targets in aid-related performance assessment frameworks with a country's own targets has been shown to be of critical importance for the incentivising effect of such performance-based aid contracts (Tavakoli and Smith, 2013).

#### *Integration of a gender dimension in the implementation and monitoring phase*

The policy dialogue is an important entry point to address gender issues during implementation. This is pointed out in the EU Gender Action Plan, in which policy dialogue is one of the three approaches:

“policy dialogues provide crucial entry-points to put gender equality and women's rights issues on the agenda and to support partner countries in their efforts to reduce gender inequality both through mainstreaming and specific actions”  
(European Commission, 2010: 8).

Integrating gender issues in the policy dialogue is influenced to a large extent by the above-mentioned inclusion of gender indicators in the financing agreement and conditional upon the existence of an evidence base to draw upon. Such an evidence base relies upon existing

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<sup>7</sup> The PSTA II includes 11 (out of 252) gender-sensitive indicators.

secondary information as well as primary data collected in the context of sector assessments and (joint) monitoring, and evaluative exercises such as joint sector reviews (see below).

In the available monitoring reports of the SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda, gender issues are limitedly included. While the 2011 External Assistance Management Report (EAMR) does not include gender issues at all, the 2011 Public Finance Management Annual Monitoring Report refers to progress in the implementation of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) (only education and health mentioned as example) as one of the expected reforms which has been substantially achieved. The reference to GRB is particularly valuable to give increased leverage to the ongoing GRB initiative. However, it would have increased consistency (and provided a basis for e.g. EC's gender-sensitive policy dialogue and capacity building) when the GRB initiative in the agricultural sector would also have been included more prominently in the CSP and NIP. Positively, both the GRB initiative in the agricultural sector and the Agriculture Gender Strategy are referred to in the 2010 Results-Oriented (ROM) Monitoring Report.

In the context of sector budget support, sector coordination mechanisms, such as sector working groups, play an essential role in monitoring the implementation of policies, exchanging information, mapping and using existing data collection initiatives, mapping capacity building initiatives, and engaging in joint diagnosis and analytical exercises and policy dialogues. In Rwanda, a specific EU gender coordination mechanism exists, which might benefit from the recent Swedish initiative for revitalisation of the group which has been rather inactive over the past couple of years. Within the agriculture sector a gender sub-group has been active and the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy also refers to this forum in order to stimulate and monitor the implementation of Rwanda's own Agriculture Gender Strategy.

An instrument of monitoring and evaluation that has, over the past decade, increasingly been used in the context of budget support is the joint (sector) review. During a joint sector review, which is also used in Rwanda's agricultural sector, different sector stakeholders (donors, governments, private sector, non-governmental organisations, etc.) jointly assess and discuss sector progress and the level of achievement of targets, and reach agreements on the future actions and programs (see e.g. World Bank, 2001; Overseas Development Institute & Mokore, 2010). The integration of gender indicators and targets in financing agreements obviously stimulates the inclusion of gender issues during these reviews. Reversely, the inclusion of gender issues during joint sector reviews puts gender issues on the agenda of joint sector working groups which follow up on the recommendations and conclusions of joint sector reviews.

#### *Integration of a gender dimension in the evaluation phase*

So far, gender issues are largely absent from the mid-term evaluations of the Rwandan SBSP Agriculture. As these evaluative findings feed into the policy dialogue and elaboration of the new agricultural sector programme, the inclusion of a gender dimension would have been particularly valuable. In fact, evaluations are usually an opportunity to include a gender dimension in two main ways. First, 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' can be included as dependent variables, i.e. to assess and analyse to what extent the sector programme has had an impact upon gender equality and women's empowerment. Second, it is also important to include a gender dimension in the analysis of the (lack of) effectiveness and impact of the sector programme on agricultural productivity and poverty reduction (= gender as independent/explanatory variable). Given the fact that the agricultural sector is heavily feminised, and particularly so in Rwanda, it is highly likely that a neglect of gendered constraints and needs in agricultural policies leads to underperformance in the agricultural sector.

### *Integration of a gender dimension in capacity building efforts*

The recent communication on the future approach to EU budget support to third countries (European Commission, 2011b) argues in favour of a portfolio approach, in which several aid modalities are used to address specificities and objectives of a partner country. Within such a portfolio approach projects could be included that specifically focus on capacity building of actors inside and outside government who are involved in the realisation of the objectives of the sector budget support.

In existing efforts to strengthen the capacity of national actors, both government and non-government, a gender component can easily be included. This is in line with the EU Gender Action Plan (European Commission, 2010: 14) which emphasises that capacity strengthening of (non-state) actors on gender issues will be specifically promoted. An essential first step in any capacity building effort is to (jointly) diagnose and map what already exists. Such a mapping could be done through the sector working/coordination groups or could at least be commissioned through this forum.

When it comes to strengthening national gender expertise, it is important to target both gender and non-gender staff and actors inside and outside government. For these different audiences, the tools and instruments of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) might be particularly useful (see Holvoet 2006). For staff inside government GRB tools are interesting because they help to integrate a gender dimension in policy diagnosis, implementation, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. For stakeholders outside government, GRB tools allow users to assess to what extent the government keeps its promises when it comes to gender equality. In Rwanda several GRB activities exist, initiated by the government (e.g. Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Gender Monitoring Office) and by multilaterals (UN Women & UNCDF). In the context of these initiatives, various capacity building activities take place, also within the agriculture sector where they are targeted at the Ministry of Agriculture as well as actors outside government (e.g. Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base (CCOAIB)). A 2012 initiative which promotes more sustainable capacity building in GRB and gender-responsive economic policy management in general is the organisation of courses by the Rwandan School of Finance and Banking.

### *Integration of a gender dimension in projects*

While projects are good entry points to address specific aspects of gender inequality - e.g. women's participation in politics, girls' access to education, and sexual and gender based violence (O'Connell, 2013) - gender mainstreaming within the EC came at the expense of actions that address specific women's interests (see Stratigaki, 2005), as mentioned above. The EC is not unique in this respect, as showcased by a 2006 study of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) which documented a general decline of available bilateral and multilateral donor funds targeted at women's organisations since the 1995 Beijing Conference and the shift in aid modalities initiated at the turn of the century (AWID, 2006).

A new opportunity for projects that are specifically targeted at gender equality and empowerment objectives could be the use of portfolio approaches in which different aid modalities (including projects, general budget support, sector budget support, etc.) are combined. The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy already includes the use of a thematic call for proposals to support gender related projects that are linked to Rwanda's Gender Agricultural Strategy among

its actions. From this vantage point, projects could be selected that, for instance, aim at levelling the playing ground for men and women in the agricultural sector.

### *Institutionalisation of gender*

Important conditions for the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy are the commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, sufficient capacity and the existence of incentives to stimulate gender mainstreaming within the EU delegation and EU member state donor agencies themselves.

The EU Gender Action Plan clearly highlights the existing commitment at the highest EU level. As discussed above, it is expected that the indicators and yearly reporting with regards to progress in the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan clearly function as an incentive at the level of the EU delegation and donor agencies of EU member states. This is in line with evidence from Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2009) who demonstrated that EU's failure to implement gender mainstreaming consistently and effectively has, to a large extent, been caused by the absence of hard incentives such as the identification of targets, and staff that is accountable, requiring annual progress reports and naming and shaming of noncompliant directorate generals (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2009).

When it comes to increasing gender capacity and expertise of EC delegation staff in Rwanda, the focus is both on gender and non-gender staff. For gender staff, capacity building is particularly useful in the area of policy and system analysis, public finance management, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. For non-gender staff, specific gender training is useful, possibly including training that is tailor-made and on-the-job. For both types of audiences, gender budgeting tools are particularly helpful as these provide a useful bridging frame among gender and non-gender experts. The courses offered in GRB and gender-responsive economic policy management by the Rwandan School of Finance and Banking might be particularly valuable, both in terms of content as well as networking.

### **Conclusion**

Acknowledging the fact that donor agencies are not always familiar with the ways to deal with gender issues in new aid modalities, the EU Member States and the EC adopted the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development in 2010. In addition, in cooperation with UN Women and the ILO, the 'Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality' programme was launched in 2011. In the context of this programme the EU delegation in Rwanda took the initiative to elaborate and implement a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for EC's budget support to Rwanda's agriculture sector, with the aim to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in the programme. To the best of our knowledge, experiences related to gender mainstreaming in budget support in the agriculture sector have not been documented before, making our study on gender mainstreaming in the SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda particularly relevant. Moreover, both the EC and Rwanda are interesting cases: the EC is an influential actor in development cooperation, while Rwanda's own commitment to gender equality gives the EC (and other donors) an interesting entry point to trigger gender mainstreaming.

Our stocktaking of the integration of a gender dimension in the different phases of the current SBSP Agriculture in Rwanda demonstrates that gender issues are best integrated in the documents related to the programming phase. The limited integration of gender issues in

subsequent phases of identification, implementing and M&E is rather surprising within the context of a relatively gender-sensitive Rwandan government and Ministry of Agriculture which provides ample entry points (such as the Agriculture Gender Strategy and the inclusion of gender indicators in the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of the Agriculture in Rwanda) for donors to trigger the gender-sensitivity of their budget support operations. While these opportunities have thus far not been grasped, they remain critical elements to ensure a successful implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy of the EU delegation in Rwanda. Furthermore, at the level of the Rwandan EU delegation several key ingredients for success are in place. First of all, there is sufficient commitment, not only within the delegation, but at high levels within the EC as well. Second, the EU delegation in Rwanda is a well positioned and powerful donor with a prominent position in aid towards Rwanda's agriculture sector, and other (EU) donors in the agriculture sector have already informally highlighted their appreciation of the EC's gender mainstreaming strategy. Third, the EU Gender Action Plan, in combination with the yearly implementation reports that have to be submitted by the EC and the EU member states, can incentivise the effective implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy.

In addition to the more context-related factors that create a conducive environment, the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy also arrived at the right moment, more particularly, at the moment that the third Rwandan Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA III), the key policy document for the next period, was being drafted. Additionally, the Rwandan Agriculture Gender Strategy, which has required a long period of drafting and costing, was also recently launched and it is particularly important at this stage to promote its effective implementation. Failing to do this might create fatigue within those sections of the ministry (and sector) that have put efforts into this initiative.

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