

## **Abstract**

Gender mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that the needs, interests, perspectives and knowledge of women and men are taken on board in the development of policy and its implementation. It is a process that recognises that men and women have different needs and interests that have to be deliberately identified through gender analysis and the development of strategic interventions. Because traditional policy and planning processes have not taken the gender variable into consideration, mainstreaming gender in policies, programmes and institutions has always been an uphill task. A look at our Eastern African region shows the various institutional frameworks that keep being established and dissolved almost with equal speed. Countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Djibouti and even countries outside the Eastern African region have moved from women's desk, to gender desks, women and gender ministries, departments in office of the president, gender and social development, gender and community development among others, in an effort to mainstream gender in development. Often they only succeed in mainstreaming women into oblivion. This has often been because of the lack of appropriate tools and the fact that gender mainstreaming challenges many traditional, social- economic policies and theories. The paper recognizes this problem and shares tools that could be useful in mainstreaming gender in policies and programmes. The paper defines some key concepts, briefly looks at the methodology used in developing the tools and finally presents the tools and demonstrates how they can be used. The tools were developed through various processes which included analysis of secondary data and presenting discussions in small technical committees. In addition, the tools have been subjected to application in various policies including food and nutrition policy and were found useful. Gender analysis allows you to „know“ before you formulate policies and programs and ensure that the data you have collected in relation to gender relations, roles, responsibilities, knowledge e.t.c of men and women are taken into consideration, that they are mainstreamed. It is a transformative and challenging process. “It is more important to know where you are going than to get there quickly. Do not mistake activity for achievement” (Mabel Newcomer: 2007).