

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The major bone of contention is the increasingly noticeable gaps between boys/men and girls/women backdating to time immemorial. Girls/women are grossly marginalised due to cultural beliefs on gender roles that perceive women as only bearers and nurturers in the private or household sector. These traditional norms influence division of labour in the public or job sector where women are often discriminated against and restricted to jobs associated with their child bearing role and not managerial and hence decision making positions.

Thus for instance, the International Labour Organisation Global Report (2015) reports that only 5% of the world's CEOs of the world largest corporations are women. Zimbabwe's share of women managers is 26%, that of Rwanda is 34% and USA is 42.7%. Men derive their privileged positions from several sources, firstly their spiritual role as the head of the woman (Ephesians 5:23) and also traditional role as breadwinners which makes society perceive them as suitable for decision making positions outside the home.

Further to this, women's minimum exposure to privileges such as education, paid work outside the homes and male muscular strength which makes women immediate victims of Gender Based Violence all interplay to give men more privileges than women. As a result, most of the decision making is made exclusively by men, including decisions that affect the woman's reproductive health such as the size of the family.

These issues provoked Global women network to pursue women's rights in 1945 and led to the signing of United Nations Charter on Women's Rights. This was the first step to solve issues of women deprived of basic rights such as access to education, health, development and governance.

To this end, a series of global platforms focusing on gender issues were put in place, chief among them, The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination from Women (CEDAW) in 1981, Safe motherhood initiative to address women's health issues held in Kenya in 1987, Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 with the intention to empower women, Millennium Development Goals 2000 with goal number 3 "promoting Gender Equality & Empowering Women" and lately Sustainable Development Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" in 2015.

To sum up, gender mainstreaming is a response to inequalities or differences between men and women that have developed over many years and have become embedded in our perceptions and ways in which we interpret and do things as societies. These differences are as a result of socio-cultural and spiritual interpretations of men and women's identity and roles that marginalise women.

For policy considerations, countries, development organisations, charity organisations, civic society, Community Based Organisations and the community should make a call to observe all the gender mainstreaming protocols in order to support women and girls as they are lagging behind