



---

# Case Study of Challenges Gender Focal Person Facing: The case of College of Humanities, Addis Ababa University of Ethiopia

---

Wubishet A. Chiche\*

*\*Ethiopian Institute of agricultural Research, Ethiopia.*

Corresponding Email: \*Chichewub21@gmail.com, \*wubishet.chiche@eiar.gov.et

**Received:** 25 November 2021    **Accepted:** 18 February 2022    **Published:** 24 March 2022

**Abstract:** *Higher education's responses and decisive roles to bring consistent and persistent change to socio-political and economic influences that affect gender equality at the nation-state and university levels has unparalleled importance that can bring tangible behavioral and institutionalized change toward gender equality. The gender focal point/person is the key staff member within an organization dealing with gender mainstreaming strategy and build capacities for incorporating gender into work and advocating for increased attention to and integration of gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. This article identified lack resource and facilities, lack of attention/recognition, and language barrier as challenges that hinder gender focal person to accomplish her responsibilities. Preparing and drafting policy is a good and guiding step for institutionalizing and tackling identified problems, however the main decisive factor that enhances success is determined and committed leaders who are ready to implement and support it.*

**Keywords:** *Case Study, Challenges, Gender Focal Person, Gender Mainstreaming.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Addis Ababa University (AAU) acknowledges the necessity of gender mainstreaming by drafting gender policy. That is to address the gender issues in conformity with AAU's vision for gender equality and women's empowerment. Likewise, it clearly indicates the importance and establishment of gender focal Person. Addis Ababa University's Gender Policy (AAUGP) (2015), in its organizational structure and institutional culture, states "AAU shall have college/institute level gender focal person who can follow-up the proper implementation of AAUGP within their respective colleges/institutes". Also in its strategies indicates gender focal person's dual accountability to the college/institute Dean/Director and the Central



Gender Office and gender focal person membership to college/institute level academic commission (AC).

**A. Related Policies and Strategies:**

Reference [1] indicates, importance and challenges to ensure equality at Addis Ababa University and strategies for addressing the challenges. This gender policy has been developed in conformity with various national policies, AAU's senate legislation and strategic plan. AAUGP has been designed based on human rights, a prerequisite for sustainable development and a standard for institutional advancement. The policy intended to promote gender justice by mainstreaming gender in all aspects of the university's activities for gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally, [2] in its revised senate legislation (April, 2013) Article 165 (1 & 2), indicates the importance of having office of gender and gender and educational equity (OGEE) and its duties and responsibilities.

**B. Gender Theory:**

Some literatures stress the requirement of radical feminism to bring radical changes to gendered institutions. According to [3], the complex process of turning policy into practice and intentions into outcomes requires both effective institutional insiders and strategic external critics. Radical feminism, which was raised within second wave feminism in the 1960's is a feminist theory that calls for radical reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts and seek to abolish patriarchy [4].

For successful institutional gender mainstreaming, gender analysis should be carried out at any time we are looking for ways in which to better understand and improve programs/projects. And also put emphasis on using suitable theories in identifying gender issues and indicating appropriate recommendation determines the success of addressing women's representation and equality in the institutions after carried out a good gender analysis [3].

**C. Institutional Gender Perspective:**

Addressing gender issues in government and non-government institution is not only policy drafting issues, but it is about implementation and leader's and stakeholder's commitment. According to [3], policies are statement of intent; they are not reflections of reality. States and governmental delivery systems do not make change happen. They can, however, build an enabling environment for justice and equity. But even then, they have to be prodded, negotiated with, and held accountable. That is the job of civil society organizations. If that job is not done, even the most progressive of intentions will falter on the bedrock of patriarchy, and business as usual.

Furthermore, [3] indicated reforming existing institutional structures and developing alternatives to those that now exist needs focus. This means making public and private service delivery systems work for women and finding new institutional solutions for systems that cannot be fixed and for new issues that defy traditional solutions. This requires institutional change that drives equitable resource allocation, catalyzes new means of monitoring and measuring the performance of service providers, produces attitudinal and behavioral change in service providers, and results in concrete benefits for women.



#### **D. Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budgeting:**

According to [5], national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy coordinating unit inside government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas. Poor institutional accountability on gender equality and women's rights is the main challenge to bring tangible changes in regards to institutional gender equality. According to [6], even when institutions commit to gender equality in their policies and practices by developing a gender equality action plan they often fail to take responsibility for these.

The government's budgetary policy plays a major role in achieving the objectives of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. According to [7], Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a means of integrating a gender perspective into all steps of the budget process of planning, drafting, implementing and evaluating. So as to ensure that budget, policies take into consideration gender issues in society.

#### **E. Relating Theory with Practice:**

According to [8], the theoretical framework of radical feminism for the most part consists of three key interrelated concepts, or patriarchy, power, and oppression. In radical feminism, like in feminism in general, the patriarchal society occupies a central place where, and why, the fundamental power struggle between the sexes takes place.

Reference [9] indicated agencies with a mandate for the advancement of gender issues are established within and by governments for integrating gender concerns in development policy and planning. So the establishment of gender section in various organizations is mandatory for promoting gender equality and empowering women.

### **Findings and Analysis**

In this section summary of data collected from gender focal person (GFP), managing director and student discussed. Additionally, four students and managing director are considered as key informants to triangulate data collected from GFP. So the identified factors are discussed as follows;

#### **A. Resource and Facilities:**

As indicated in AAUGP, AAU shall have college/institute level gender focal person who can follow-up the proper implementation of AAUGP within their respective colleges/institutes. One of the strategies indicated in the policy to implement the above mentioned point is to ensure that the university allocates the necessary resources and facilities to the college/institute level gender offices. Additionally, as indicated in the job description of the GFP in college of humanities, GFP should conduct various mini gender researches, and organize and facilitate trainings which supposed to be input for the college. Furthermore, AAUGP (2015) indicated the necessity of resources and facilities to conduct the responsibility GFP assigned with. However, the GFP claims she is prone to improper and insufficient allocation of resources and facilities. She indicated "During budget allocation if budget deficit is encountered, gender section would be the first to be dropped out from the list or susceptible to budget dispossession. Additionally, gender section is the one that get least priority in budgeting. When I request for submission of budget break down of my own, they



are not willful to accept. The management has repeatedly ignored to consider budget proposal of our respective sections”.

Furthermore, facilities like laptop computer, printers, office and other basic facilities are mandatory to facilitate and carry out different activities effectively and efficiently. Her office is not in the same building with other College of Humanity staff members to work in collaboration. She is working by sharing the office with the other college’s staff members. The only role she is playing is counseling students; because of it doesn’t require resource, and she work if any nongovernmental organizations came to help students in need.

The Managing Director of the College of Humanities was interviewed about the process of budget allocation and the advantage of gender section for the college. He indicated as their office allocates budget based on the number of staffs the sections have, however for gender office papers, pens, and office allocated, and her salary is enough to facilitate her work. He claims as he knows the benefit the college would gain if the section is active. However, he misinterpret about the necessity of proper budget allocation for gender focal person.

On the contrary, the responsibilities of GFP mentioned in AAUGP are not easy things that could be applied by the supplied facilities. However, the managing director claim that “As you know, in our country job description is prepared only for consumption of accountability response to upper, not to give deserving attention or the necessity of the job description is not supported by research. Additionally it is used for political consumption especially when it comes to Gender issue, just to say we have gender section.”

#### **B. Lack of Attention:**

Attention by the concerned bodies for the work of different sections in the organization has a big contribution for the smooth achievement of the goal. As indicated in AAUGP (2015), the college’s/institute’s gender focal person shall be member of the college/institute level academic commission (AC). Being member of the AC has its own benefit to express the problems GFP is facing and to get immediate responses and actions for problems faced. Because most of the higher officials are members of AC. So lack of attention by the concerned bodies hinders each activity because all structures are interlinked. The GFP indicated as she became the member of the AC by her own struggle and after many scarifications. So GFP’s membership to the AC has a good contribution to get opportunities to be heard, to address problems and to get deserved attention and recognition.

On the other hands, counseling students also the responsibility of GFP. However, the GFP eager to work her job efficiently, however her office situation not let her to counsel students conveniently. This is because of she is sharing office with other staff members.

#### **C. Language Barrier:**

The GFP deliver information using working language, however it is challenge for her and students who came from other than Amhara region to get services. The GFP indicated as she suffers to communicate with those students who are unable to speak and understand English. Additionally, when third person invited to translate they don’t feel comfort especially for counseling. So language barrier is also one of the challenges that hinder to deliver her responsibility to all students equally. One of the key informants who have ability of Amharic language indicated, “Because of our gender focal person is so genuine and friendly we feel at home when we go to her office and we are comfortable. Additionally, we are happy by the



services we got. So, for the above achievements, being fluent in working language for having a good conversation and capable of expressing ourselves had a big contribution.”

On contrary students who are unable to understand Amharic language indicated, “One of my friends has no family and no one to support her. When I told her to go to GFP office for assistance, she does not want to. She said since I couldn’t explain my feeling why I go there. Sometimes she went and fears to enter the office and back without any service”. Additionally, student I got on her way out from GFP office was not happy by the response she got and she said: “If I could speak Amharic, I would explain my idea accordingly and misunderstanding would not occur between us. So now I am getting back without satisfaction by the response I got, I know it is because of my explanation”. So language is a big challenge for GFP to deliver and students to get services.

### **Acknowledgment**

Above all, I would like to thank my almighty GOD. The author is grateful to Mr. Sisay Mamo for his continuous comment and edition work. I am also thankful to research participants for the success of this article.

## **2. REFERENCES**

1. Addis Ababa University Gender Policy, Addis Ababa, Nov, 2015.
2. Alyson B, Gender and Governance Over view Report, BRIDGE, UK, 2009.
3. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome, United Nations, 1995.
4. Economic and Social Council, New York, 2010.
5. F, Marylin, Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals, New York: Ballantine, 1985.
6. P, Slater, A Dream Deferred: America’s Discontent and the Search for a New Democratic Ideal, Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.
7. A, Rao, and Kelleher, D, “Is There Life After Gender Mainstreaming?” Gender and Development Journal, Vol. 32, No. 11, Oxford: Oxfam, 2005.
8. W, Ellen, Radical Feminism and Feminism Radicalism, Duke University Press, 1984.
9. WWW.aau.edu.et/gender office, Addis Ababa University website
10. UNESCO, The Missing Link? Rethinking the Internationally Agreed Development Goals beyond 2015, UNESCO Future Forum on Gender Equality, Athens, Greece 9-11 September 2010.