



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ENVIRONMENT SECTOR
FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER
EQUALITY**

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1. CONTEXT

The Department of Environmental Affairs established the National Women and Environment Forum in 2010. This was borne out of an understanding that women remain an integral part of government's environment programmes and their participation thereof is critical in ensuring inclusiveness in environmental planning and decision-making. Notwithstanding, women are often at the receiving end of abject poverty due to our historical past that entrenched patriarchal attitudes which excluded women from active participation in the broader economy and it is through this forum that women could emerge as primary beneficiaries of opportunities created in the environment sector.

Hence, National Women and Environment Forum is one of the flagship programmes which positioned the Department of Environmental Affairs a champion of advancing women's economic empowerment and participation, as well as ensuring that women owned enterprises are integrated into the mainstream economic activity in South Africa. It has become evident that sustainable development and economic growth are possible only through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women. However it is not merely about the number of women in environment sector organisations and decision making, but the role 'empowered' women have in shaping the outcome of the decisions themselves.

It is from this end that the National Women and Environment Forum became the catalyst and trigger for the Department of Environmental Affairs to lead the development of the Sector Framework for the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality ('the Sector Gender Framework')—similarly to the international view of gender mainstreaming for environment programmes, the Sector Gender Framework is thus envisaged to be "a change in the mindset to move away from only women related initiatives to those that are shared by everyone to respond to the gender impact of the work done" by the sector and in order to meet the outlined strategic framework for gender equality in the public service involved the key stakeholders and strategic partners in the sector.

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) commits itself to take into account principles of gender equality in its employment practices, policies and service delivery. The Department is further committed to take initiatives that aim at addressing the imbalances of the past and gender inequality regardless of race, religion, disability, etc. This Sector Gender Framework is thus aimed at achieving women's empowerment and gender equality in the workplace. The Framework will address the concept that consolidates and adds value primarily to the DEA women and environmental programmes but may also be extended to jointly include the efforts of other sector partners. It will also propose key deliverables, timelines, financial implications and responsibilities for implementation of the framework through the development of an implementation strategy. In order to support the Sector Gender Framework and the strategy, DEA identified the need to establish a task team that will ensure the achievement of

sector gender equality for the environmental sector in accordance with the Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996), Women's Charter for Effective Equality, 1994, the National Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2000 and the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service, 2006).

1.1 Vision

The development of a structured Framework for women empowerment that will guide, support, facilitate and promote gender equality, thereby creating a platform to exchange and deepen the knowledge base, of the sector

1.2 Objectives

- To mainstream gender into environmental policies and programmes to assess the effect of women on environmental policies and to integrate further gender equality and environmental consideration into their work;
- To strengthen women's, including young women, leadership and cooperation in the environment sector;
- To identify opportunities for integration of gender considerations that will ensure environmental sustainability in the respective programmes and initiatives;
- To ensure active engagement and advice on environmental sector policy development matters to ensure consideration of gender issues;
- To facilitate partnerships and/or sponsorships from high impact organisations on women programmes;
- To guide the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of the medium-term implementation strategy;
- To ensure compliance with the gender Equality Framework for the public service;

1.3 Guiding principles underpinning the Framework

To facilitate the development of the Framework and Strategy for the environment sector the following, amongst other key material, were consulted:

- Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996)
- Women's Charter for Effective Equality, 1994
- National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2000
- Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service, 2006
- International Frameworks including UN Women, UNEP, Conservation on Biological Diversity etc.

2. FOCUSED PROGRAM INITIATIVES

The programs of initiatives and activities in relation to the environment sector women empowerment and gender framework have not been well documented. Currently the Framework could categorise the initiatives into three interlinked levels i.e. regional, national and provincial activities all of which cross cut through the various programmes of the sector.

The detailed focused program in terms of a comprehensive list of initiatives and their frequency is yet to be consolidated by DEA through a thorough status quo analysis of what is available and/or possible in the sector as well as provide recommendations for the incorporation of such work in the Framework. The above mentioned detail of work will be contained in the implementation strategy to map action plans for the Framework for a 5-year period to coincide with the overall government planning cycle so as to ensure sufficient resourcing of the initiatives.

A desktop review indicates that at Regional level the African continent has gradually initiated programmes to address issues of women empowerment and gender equity within the environmental, South Africa's role and involvement in the various structures is still to be determined and strengthened. Nationally there is an operational Forum for Women and Environment but due lack of coordination and positioning of the impact of the work being conducted minimal effect is being felt. At provincial level work seems to be even less structured with each province focusing on branch related activities with little sectoral coordination to ensure linkages and alignment to enable all the spheres to make a meaningful impact.

In an effort to revive the status quo DEA has, in the 2013/14 financial year placed the sector gender work within the environmental sector coordination to consolidate work being performed by the sector, formalize and manage structures to further promote this work. This decision has resulted in the establishment of the Sector Gender Framework to ensure government as well as the sector's objections for women empowerment and gender equality. A matrix indicating drivers for these programmes, e.g. capacity development, organizational support/structures, governance etc., against each of the levels will be examined.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Women have contributed to the conservation, use and management of natural resources playing a distinct role from men in managing agricultural lands, plants, animals and forestry, collecting and managing water for domestic use and income generation in the collection and use of (bio-) fuels. Women also contribute time, energy, skills and

personal vision to family and community development—their experience makes them valuable sources of knowledge and expertise on environmental knowledge and appropriate actions affecting their livelihoods, particularly in the rural areas where interactions with natural resources is still predominant. To add value and sustain the various women and environment programmes, a combination of action plans and partnerships (internal and external to the sector), in-kind and monetary based must be explored and triangulated.

The implementation plan for the framework will be developed (and reviewed) every 5 years informed by an approved strategy, institutional arrangements such as the Task Team as well resources made available to support the initiatives.

As a key component of DEA's role to provide sector coordination, various strategic partners will be engaged for determined roles and responsibilities as will be examined in the focused program initiatives (as discussed above). These partners will be extend to current stakeholders participating in the various structures of coordination within the sector e.g. Technical Working Groups, Mintech and Minmec that involve sector departments, provinces, public entities and possibly extended to NGOs and cooperate organisations so as to mainstream gender in the environment and upscale the reach of the work of the sector impacting not only the public service but also the citizenry.

Coordination of the Framework as well as facilitating the implementation of the strategy will be the responsibility of the Intergovernmental Planning and Coordination component within the establishment of the Chief Directorate Environmental Sector Coordination at DEA National Office. Through the Sector Gender Framework Task Team and other structures monitoring of implementation will be done quarterly linked to reporting to Mintech as approving structure for the sector's technical outputs. Reviews and evaluations of initiatives and/or programme will be conducted atleast annually to track progress and influence positive outcomes by the medium-term (5 year cycle) planning programmes of government to ensure the environment sector is constantly aligned and positioned within priorities of government.

4. CONCLUSION

It is envisaged that the implementation of this Environment Sector Framework for women empowerment and gender equality through an approved strategy will be a platform for women to: share experience and best practices; exchange knowledge, skills and expertise; training and capacity building; explore networking and leadership opportunities for the sector to excel within the public service.

5. REFERENCES

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