INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

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Abstract

Information Management System (IMS) is an essential tool in supporting the provision of information needed for planning and decision making in any organization. Proper IMS facilitates the smooth flow of information both vertical and horizontal. This paper presents the findings of a survey on information needs of the Gender Development Programme Committee (GDPC) of the University of Dar es Salaam that was carried out with a view to developing appropriate Information Management System. A total of 180 respondents were involved in this study, comprising of students, faculty members, administrative staff and the Senior University Management. Interview, questionnaire, in-depth interview and focus group discussions were the main data collection methods. The study revealed that GDPC generates a lot of information on its activities such as gender based research opportunities, undergraduate female scholarships and gender sensitization workshops. Information on these activities is highly needed by the stakeholders but there is no organized vertical and horizontal system of information flow. The study recommends the establishment of GDPC's information dissemination mechanism, including developing databases on GDPC activities, creation of a website, establishing a documentation unit and transforming GDPC to a full fledged Gender Centre.

Introduction

The University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) has committed itself to gender equality and equity principles. This stand is well stipulated in the UDSM's Institutional Transformation Programme (ITP), and the Corporate Strategic Plan (CSP). The University has also embarked on the strategy of gender mainstreaming in order to achieve its objectives of gender equality and equity.

Gender equality and equity, though often used interchangeably, are two distinct concepts. Equality is based on the idea that no individual should be less equal in opportunity, access to resources and benefits or in human rights. It is based on the notion that all people are created equal, therefore should have equal share of the world's resources and benefits. In this case, therefore, women and men have an equal right to access and control over resources and benefits, including participation in politics and decision-making.

Equity on the other hand is basically about fairness. Equity programmes favor treating women and men differently in order to achieve the equal status of women and men. Such programmes are based on the premise that if women and men were treated the same way (equally), there would be a risk of reaching unfair outcomes due to original disparities as a result of unequal social relations between men and women.

The University of Dar es Salaam operates within the national policy frameworks including that of Women Development and Gender (2000), Education and Training policy both of which give guidance on how to address the existing gender imbalances. The Women Development and Gender Policy in particular highlight the multi-dimensional nature of gender issues and hence the need to address gender concerns in all aspects of human life.

One of the outcomes of the struggle to achieve gender equity and equality at the University of Dar es Salaam was the creation of a National Women's Organization (UWT) branch at the University in the early 1970s which created a forum for female staff members to engage in political and gender related engagements. Within the same period in the late 1970s, 'informal' or self-initiated efforts to address women's issues were also made by individuals and departments within the University. For example, by early 1980s, women groups were established at the UDSM by female academicians. These include:

- Women in Education Development (WED);
- Tanzania Women in Science and Technology Education (TAWOSTE);
- Medical Women Association of Tanzania (MEWATA);
- Society of Women Against AIDS in Africa (SWAAT) Tanzania Chapter;
- Women in Management (WIM);
- Institute of Development Studies Women's Group (IDSWG) and
- Women Research and Documentation Project (WRDP).

Over the years, more efforts were designed to promote gender equitable environment at the University of Dar es Salaam. The 1990s saw the introduction of courses on gender issues at the Institute of Development Studies. There was also the formation of the Gender Dimension Task Force (GDTF) in the 1995; and the Gender Dimension

Programme Committee (1997) that was mandated to examine gender concerns and gender dynamics at the university (University of Dar es Salaam, GDTF, 1996). All these efforts were aimed at providing gender equity and equality at the university.

Gender issues in East Africa and Tanzania

Some universities in East Africa are committed to implementing gender equity through their main functions of teaching, research and consultancy services. For example, in Kenya some public universities have already established gender units or centers or gender-related programs, or are in the process of establishing them and most of them are offering courses in Gender Studies. A similar situation applies at the University of Makerere in Uganda, where the Department of Women and Gender Studies was established way back in 1991 to address gender issues out of realization that gender is a necessary and an integral part of the development process. It is within these academic structures that gender-related information is generated and disseminated to stakeholders.

In Tanzania, issues of gender equity and gender mainstreaming are not new and currently are featuring in almost all government policies and activities with the intention of achieving transformed national policy changes with a gender perspective. National policy frameworks such as Women Development and Gender (2000), and Education and Training Policy both give guidance on how to address the existing gender imbalances, and in particular highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of gender issues and the need to address gender concerns in all aspects of human life. Realizing that gender problems, imbalances and discrimination have existed since its inception, the University of Dar es Salaam seriously committed itself in achieving gender equality and equity through its functions of teaching, research and consultancy and general management and administration of the institution.

At national level, a full-fledged Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children was established. This ministry is mandated to:

- Coordinate government machineries and other institutions responsible for the advancement of women;
- Facilitate equal representation of women and gender issues in the top level decision making organs of the state;

- Strengthen capacity of women's focal points in ministries and in public institutions; and,
- Establish appropriate policy frameworks to enhance gender main-streaming at all levels in the country.

Several NGOs, for example, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) are involved in effecting government policy on gender equality and equity. It is also true that it is within these national frameworks on gender equity perspectives that the University of Dar es Salaam operates. Out of advocacy and research activities on gender-related issues, a lot of gender- information is equally generated.

This was emphasized in the Institutional Transformation Programme (ITP) Objective No.13 of the 2001/2-2005/6 Rolling Strategic Plan. With the creation of a University-wide Gender Dimension Programme Committee (GDPC) in 1997 as an important structure for supporting the UDSM in managing gender issues, it has been possible not only to initiate activities aimed at gender sensitization, equality and equity, but also at college level created policies and gender management structures that would promote gender equity.

The University of Dar es Salaam has also commissioned several gender-related sensitization programmes, counseling services and research, all of which have been producing critical gender-related information that need to be adequately accessed by the stakeholders at the University. However, it is noted in some studies that despite all these interventions on gender relations at the UDSM, their impact is yet to be thoroughly analyzed and publicized because of the absence of a formal Information Management System.

Challenges of gender information flow at the University of Dar es Salaam

Despite the UDSM's efforts in attaining gender equity and gender mainstreaming, one observable factor to the programme is the absence of a gender information management system at the University. In other words, there is no formally defined information dissemination mechanism. For example, despite the use of various channels of disseminating information such as discussions, seminars, workshops and conferences, it cannot be ascertained whether these channels have been effective to meet the needs of the diverse

stakeholders at the University and its constituent colleges. It is not certain that those attending these meetings and workshops report to their constituencies be it faculties, departments or sections.

This problem has been caused by the fact that GDPC does not have a well-defined organizational structure that is visible and properly linked to the overall University organizational structure. It is a unit/programme under the DVC- ARC. It is assumed that such an arrangement implies that the unit's activities, functions and hence information flow is basically cutting across the academic elements of the UDSM functions only.

Studies on gender issues in Tanzania and at the University of Dar-es-Salaam in particular have already been undertaken. Gender-related policies and information on their implementation have also been documented. Strategies to facilitate gender equity and its mainstreaming in university activities are also being published. For example, information is available on:

- The incorporation of gender issues in the Rolling Strategic plans of the University;
- Reviews of major UDSM policies from a gender perspective;
- The state of gender relations at the UDSM;
- Gender mainstreaming proposals;
- Gender-related situational analysis of UDSM employment;
- Retention and enrolment and
- Various reports on the performance of GDPC.

Currently, most of these documents are scattered in various University offices. All these gender-related information sources need to be processed and organized in a way that would guarantee access to this information by stakeholders. In addition, for the University of Dar es Salaam to be able to take stock of its activities on gender and related issues it needs a well-formulated and organized gender information management system. Furthermore, if these documents can be well managed, they can also become instruments for reflecting the accountability and evidence of achieving (or lack thereof) gender equity; and can become authoritative sources of information that can be used to support decision-making and the delivery of gender-related programs.

The fact that gender-related equality and equity activities are increasing at the University and in key government organs, implies that related data and information will also be increasing exponentially. To manage such information the need for a gender-related information management system at the UDSM is inevitable.

Another problem affecting the management of gender information is the absence of baseline data at GDPC that establishes the extent to which gender information is available at the University. It is true that several documents and research reports on gender are produced frequently but data is not available on the magnitude of such information. The absence of a defined Gender Information Management System at the UDSM means that many stakeholders are unaware of the gender initiatives at the UDSM.

Several documents on the gender issues at the UDSM have equally stressed for an effective University-Wide Gender Information Management System (IMS). For example, a *Proposal on strategies and activities of mainstreaming and balancing gender equality and equity at UDSM* (2002) recommends the establishment of the UDSM gender programme Information Management System to facilitate follow-ups, reporting and monitoring activities and resultant information. The document analyzing the UDSM's policies from a gender perspective (2003) records the limited use of gender disaggregated information and data in University's policy formulation and monitoring process due to the absence of a structure or system through which such data and information could be easily obtained and accessed.

Rationale for setting up IMS for the UDSM's Gender Programme

An Information Management System refers to a set of organized procedures that provide information to support planning and decision-making of a unit's activities. Thus, a gender information system is the one that captures, gathers, classifies, manipulates and disseminates information required for gender-related issues and decision-making. Organizations are increasingly aware of the potential of information in providing competitive advantage and sustaining their success as evidenced in a number of published case studies (Owens, et al., 1996; Grimshaw, 1995) and commentaries (Broadbent, 1992; 1977). The descriptions of information as an asset and a resource are no longer unusual.

The work in institutions of higher learning is very information-intensive, partly due to the higher institutions' complexity of the processes which sustain them. It is this complexity, which informs the need for an information management system for this programme. Top and middle managers, in this case, the UDSM's top management that is the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor- Academics, Deputy Vice Chancellor – Planning, Finance and Administration, College Principals, Deans and Directors as well as the senior university officials need to be able to exploit information generated by the gender programme. This is necessary in order for them to make informed decisions which will reflect the gender focus as stipulated in the UDSMs Institutional Transformation Programme (ITP). For this to happen, the disaggregated information along gender relations needs to be available and accessible.

UDSM's gender programme therefore, needs an information base that is relevant, appropriate and timely for decision-making. Such information is needed in order to address a number of possible interventions. This being the case, there is a potential for IMS, and deliberate efforts must be made to make accurate and useful information available.

The UDSM Gender Dimension Programme Committee (GDPC) has developed a strategic gender programme that consists of activities to be implemented. These current and planned activities of the GDPC and its sub-programmes generate and use information for planning and decision making. At the moment, information and data collected, analyzed, and used in the programme is not well managed or documented correctly for future reference to ensure timely access for its use. An information management system for the programme facilitates information flow within and among the different sub-programmes and also documents and ease dissemination of information generated from its activities.

The enhanced UDSM gender relevant data and information will inform on the effort to engender the University's crucial strategic policies. Gibb (2001) observes correctly that sex disaggregated data is an essential input into gender analysis. Furthermore, a gender analysis provides information that can be integrated into formal calls for programme proposals.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was therefore to assess ways in which information is managed at Gender Dimension Programme Committee with a view to establishing a well defined Information Management System of the Unit.

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Specifically, the study had the following objectives:

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- (i) To determine the type of information generated by GDPC that stakeholders need
- (ii) To establish the appropriate means in which GDPC can disseminate its information to the stakeholders
- (iii) Examine the GDPC structure and the way it impacts on information flow
- (iv) Recommend appropriate ways in which GDPC could disseminate its information.

Research Methods

Data collection

Data collection methods included interview, questionnaire and indepth interview and focus group discussions. The research was conducted at the Main Campus and its former constituent colleges of MUCHS and UCLAS. In July 2007 these two constituent colleges were transformed into full-fledged universities known as Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) and Ardhi University (ARU) respectively.

Sample

A total of 180 respondents were selected for the study. The sample comprised of the students, academic, administrative staff and Senior University Management. Out of the 180 respondents 52 (28.8%) were academic staff, 95 (52.8%) students, 30 (16.7%) administrative staff and 3 (1.7%) Senior University Management that is the Vice Chancellor and his two deputies. Out of the 52 academic staff, 38 (73.1%) were males and 14 (26.9%) were females. Of the 95 students 70 (73.7%) were males and 25 (26.3) females. The administrative staff had 19 (63.3%) males and 11 (36.7%) females. All the 3 (100%) Senior Management Team respondents were males. This shows the extent to which education in Tanzania is skewed towards the males. The reasons behind this are basically historical as males were given more educational opportunities than females.

Of the 52 teaching staff, 40 (76.9%) were holders of PhD degrees and the remaining 12 (23.1%) were Masters Degree holders, indicative of a relative academic strength of the teaching staff at the University of Dar es Salaam. Eleven students (11.6%) were pursuing their Postgraduate degrees while the remaining 84 (88.4%) were undergraduates. Administrative staff had varied academic qualifications ranging from Certificates to Masters Degrees in various disciplines. This group was composed of Administrative Officers, technicians, secretaries, research assistants and other professionals.

Findings

Type of Information needed by the stakeholders

In this survey, the stakeholders were asked to state the type of information generated by GDPC that they would like to receive from time to time. The basis of this question is that GDPC generates a lot of information out of its activities, and the assumption was that not all information may be relevant to all its stakeholders all the time.

The response to this question is shown in Table 1

Table 1: Type of information needed by the stakeholders

Type of Information	Number of	Percentage	
Mark the state of	Responses	, vita i i i	
Research Activities	65	36.1	
Female Undergraduate Scholarship	58	32.2	
Programme			
Gender Sensitization Workshops	44	24.4	
Any Other	13	7.2	
Total	180	100.00	

Data on Table 1 shows that GDPC Research activities, Female Undergraduate Scholarship Programme and Gender Sensitization Workshops are areas which many stakeholders needed to be informed about. This means that the dissemination of GDPC should consider all types of information generated as being important and needed by the stakeholders.

Other needed information include information about GDPC, its objectives, functions, structure etc; statistics on gender performance in

various activities; how colleges are represented in various GDPC meetings; women employment opportunities and women projects.

Based on the information needs of the respondents, findings revealed that the University Community is interested on gender issues in general and GDPC in particular. At the same time, they have issues that could be solved when provided the relevant information. Aspects like women employment opportunities and women projects are areas where GDPC could furnish them with relevant information, in addition to the specific ones mentioned earlier.

GDPC Information dissemination strategies

Information dissemination strategies are an important aspect of Information Management System of any organization. Information dissemination basically refers to ways and means in which information is conveyed to the recipient from the source.

When respondents were asked to mention specific methods of information dissemination which they preferred most, the responses are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Methods of Information dissemination preferred by respondents

	N= 180		
Information Communication Method	Number of Respondents	Percentage	
Website	80	44.4	
E-Mail	36	20	
Use of Databases	17	9.4	
Printed reports	62	34.4	
Other means	10	5.5	

Note: Respondents mentioned more than one method

Data on Table 2 shows that Website is the most preferred way of information dissemination, followed by printed reports and electronic mails. Keeping information on databases that can be searched from time to time was also indicated as a means of information dissemination. Given that GDPC is an organ within the University of Dar es Salaam, the website should ideally be part of the UDSM

website and as one searches the UDSM Website access to GDPC site is automatic.

The choice of website for the accessing gender information indicates the level of awareness and use of website as a means of accessing information among members of the university community. It should be noted that the majority of the teaching staff have networked computers in their offices. The problem however, is with the students who have to share computers available in the Main Library and faculty computer labs. Generally, access to computers by students at the UDSM is still inadequate.

Those who selected printed reports show that this is also a viable means of information dissemination to complement the electronic one. Whereas some reports could be disseminated through ICT related media, others could still be sent in printed format. An offer of a scholarship for example, can be published in the print newspapers or through a letter. Some GDPC information can also be posted on notice boards. For those who have problems in accessing computers, the printed media remains the best option.

Some information can also be communicated to the respondents using databases. During the in-depth discussion, it was revealed that subject specific databases such as GDPC Publications, research projects, scholarship awards, and workshop opportunities can be disseminated through databases that are updated regularly.

GDPC needs to have such information readily available. A donor agency for example may ask questions like:-

- How many students received Female Undergraduate Scholarships last year?
- What degree programme was student with Reg. Number X pursued?
- Which degree programme had most scholarship recipients?

Such questions can be answered quickly and accurately if there is a database on GDPC scholarship programme that has been built with all that information.

Those who mentioned "other means" of information dissemination proposed the following methods, depending on the kind of information to be disseminated:

Special GDPC Notice Board, newspapers, posters, public talks, workshops and seminars, TV and radio programmes on GDPC activities.

Problems with GDPC organizational structure

This study also intended to determine whether GDPC organizational structure had some problems which have an impact on information dissemination. Responses to this question are on Table 3 below:

Table 3: Respondents' views on Problems with GDPC
Organizational Structure

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage	
Yes, there are problems	16	8.9	
No, there are no problems	12	6.7	
I am not aware	102	56.6	
No response	50	27.8	
Total	180	100	

Results on Table 3 show that the majority of the respondents (55.6%) were not aware whether there were any problems with the current organizational structure of GDPC that had some impact in information flow. The possible explanation being that respondents were not aware of the current structure and operations of GDPC. It is also likely that the 27.8% who did not complete this question were also not sure of the structure of GDPC and how it operates, therefore decided not to give any response.

Among observed problems related to GDPC organizational structure includes:

 GDPC is a University organ but has no organic link with statutory organs at departmental, faculty, college and university levels. Additionally, the structure of GDPC does not provide legal enforcement of its activities to other organs. For example, can the Coordinator of GDPC take action against the Dean or Head of Department for non-compliance to GDPC directives? Or can GDPC coordinator issue a directive?

- 2) The non-accountability of the top officials at College and Faculty/Institute levels was also seen as a weakness in the organizational structure. For example, when discussing GDPC matters at the University level or strategic plan meetings and other forums, the college principals, deans and directors attend to represent their colleges, faculties and institutes respectively, but there is no forum to hold them accountable for gender mainstreaming responsibilities in their domains. There is no clearly established mechanism that the decisions made can be enforced, and the vertical flow of information facilitated.
- 3) It was also mentioned that GDPC is based at the center. Very few activities are going on at the lower levels. This also affects the flow of information because of the concentration of power and activities at the center. The periphery is said to be given no or very little attention.

Those who raised this issue were of the opinion that GDPC is not well known. Some of the remarks given include: "GDPC is very little known in other campuses"; "It is not heard; I have never heard of it." etc.

Despite such comments, GDPC has made a lot of efforts to publicize itself and make its presence felt. For example, there are Campus Gender Committee members who are basically representatives at the campus level. These are the link-persons between the campus and university gender centre. The structure goes further down to the faculty and departmental levels.

GDPC has also organized a series of seminars and conferences aimed at creating gender awareness, sensitization and capacity building at the UDSM. Since 1998 to 2004 for example, a total number of 24 workshops and conferences were organized by GDPC and attended by over 720 participants (GDPC Report, 2004).

Various stakeholders have attended the workshops. Theses include all top university management, both academic and administrative staff; all deans and directors since 1998 to date; all heads of departments,

trainers, all student leaders since 2000 to date; all new students during orientation programme and many others have had an opportunity to attend these sessions. Such seminars help to market GDPC to its stakeholders, making it widely known, more participative and its presence acknowledged.

Only 12 respondents out of 180 categorically mentioned that GDPC had no problems associated with its organizational structure. They were happy with its current structure and the way it is functioning.

Gaps in the dissemination of GDPC information

The respondents were asked to mention what they considered as the current information gaps or problems affecting the way GDPC information is disseminated. Some of the problems mentioned were as follows:

- (i) Lack of baseline information on what GDPC possesses, which can be disseminated. This means that there is no baseline information on what is available at GDPC in terms of its activities, functions, structures, information resources, etc. that can be made available to the people.
- (ii) GDPC has not marketed itself fully. Most of the respondents particularly the students were not aware of GDPC and its activities. There is need for using various mechanisms to ensure that information on GDPC reaches as many stakeholders as possible.
- (iii) GDPC's vertical and horizontal flow of information is not well defined. For example, if there is information that the coordinator wants to send to the colleges, should it go through the Principal or directly to the Chairperson of College Gender Committee? The same for faculties and departments. To what extent do departments, faculties with similar GDPC information needs, and even colleges share information amongst themselves, hence creating horizontal linkages of information sharing?

Conclusion

The following are the major conclusions based on research findings. GDPC generates information resources that are highly needed by the staff and students of the University of Dar es Salaam. This information is on activities performed by GDPC that includes: Female

Undergraduate Scholarship Programme; which is a Carnegie funded programme for financial support to female undergraduate students at UDSM; Gender sensitization and capacity building workshops. These are workshops organized by GDPC for stakeholders, sensitizing them on various gender issues; GDPC Research activities; and Financial Support for Pre-entry science students.

GDPC's information however does not reach the intended clients. There is no clearly defined information dissemination mechanism that has been established to ensure that such information can easily be accessed whenever needed by GDPC itself, the University management and other stakeholders.

Most of the University of Dar es Salaam members particularly the students are not aware of the existence of GDPC at the University. Its functions, activities, roles and responsibilities are not well known by the university community.

GDPC organizational structure is not clearly defined. This affects the flow of information since the generation and dissemination of information is expected to correspond to the vertical and horizontal organizational structure.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Establishment of GDPC Databases

It is recommended that GDPC should create databases in which basic information on major activities undertaken in the unit shall be stored. The databases should be centralized to facilitate control and management.

The databases should be on issues related to GDPC researches, scholarships, workshops and other matters of interest to the stakeholders.

GDPC Website

To facilitate and enhance information flow to the stakeholders, GDPC needs to develop its website. The site can be designed and accessed through the University of Dar es Salaam website.

Among other things, the website shall include: Objectives and activities of GDPC; Female Undergraduate Scholarship opportunities and how to apply; Research and Publications activities; GDPC staff list/college and faculty representatives and their contacts.

The website can also provide information on conferences, seminars and workshops organized by GDPC, including papers presented.

Additionally, the website can be linked to other Gender organizations such as: Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP); Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA) and Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA).

GDPC Documentation Unit

GDPC generates information. These include research reports and projects covering various gender related issues. They need to be organized and properly kept in a well established documentation centre. They may also be disseminated as complimentary or legal deposit copies in other libraries and information units for access to researchers and the academic community.

GDPC Brochures

GDPC should design a printed brochure as part of information dissemination strategy. The brochure shall provide basic information on various aspects of the Unit.

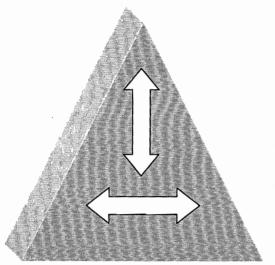
GDPC Newsletter

Information on GDPC activities can easily be disseminated through the use of a newsletter. A newsletter will help to inform, educate and impart gender awareness and social transformation among the readers. It will also be GDPC publicity and outreach tool.

GDPC Vertical and Horizontal Information Flow

GDPC as a unit within the University must have a well established system of information flow, both vertical and horizontal. The information flow model goes hand in hand with the organizational structure (Figure 1), which essentially determines the way information should flow.

Figure 1. GDPC information flow diagram



University Level (Coordinator)

College/Main Campus

Faculty /Institutes

Departments

Source: Designed by the researchers

(a) Vertical Information Flow

From the departments and faculty/institute levels, any information generated shall be collected, analyzed and compiled by GDPC representatives. They will then forward it to the college level that will process it at that level before forwarding it to the university-wide GDPC Coordinator. This is a bottom-up flow of information. As for the top- down information flow, the same route will be adopted. The CGC in liaison with the principals, deans and directors will ensure that the information received reaches all relevant members of their respective areas of operation. This can be realized if the recommendation for a full-fledged gender centre/ unit to monitor and evaluate the process of gender mainstreaming at UDSM is in place.

(b) Horizontal Information Flow

This is the flow of information from one college to the other or from one faculty/institute to the other. Certain faculties/institutes or colleges may have certain things in common. The Faculty of Science for example may have some common features with the Faculty of Engineering in certain areas. As such, they may wish to share information (horizontally).

Establishment of UDSM Gender Unit/Centre

Considering the range of activities undertaken by GDPC and the ones proposed for enhancement of information flow, there is a need for the establishment of a fully- fledged Gender Unit or Centre. The Centre will coordinate all gender-related functions and fit into the UDSM's management and reporting structures. As the Centre builds its self up and train its academic staff, it can assume a teaching role in all courses related to gender issues. The Gender Centre of the University of the Western Cape in South Africa for example, is a case in hand.

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