The National Policy Framework aims to provide generic guidelines, which the various sectors will use to issue more detailed policy documents that are sector specific. Sectors will be able to integrate the principles contained in the Gender Policy Framework into their prevailing policy and strategic documents. It further proposes an annual national reporting mechanism to ensure that there is regular follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of the National Policy Framework. This will take the form of an annual meeting to which various stakeholders will be invited to report on progress. The meeting will focus on assessing performance on the basis of indicators described in the National Policy Framework and on providing guidelines for the way forward.

In 2005, a Draft National Programme of Action on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality 2005 – 2015 was distributed by the OSW as a discussion document. This document states "......Government has indicated its contribution to a broader Programme of Action to be launched on 10 December 2005 which will also include the commitments of Section 9 Institutions, the Legislation as well as NGOs and civil society to the empowerment of women in South Africa......"

Some key elements in the Programme of Action include “actions to be taken by government to ensure women’s empowerment and gender equality” and highlight issues, amongst others, such as:

- Ensuring compliance with the South African National Policy Framework on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality;
- Ensuring compliance by Heads of Departments on the effective implementation of the provisions of the National Policy;
- Creating appropriate institutional mechanisms to advance gender equality and empower women;
- Implement the roll out of training programmes for all public sector managers including managers on gender mainstreaming in the Public Service;
- Ensure implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies across all sectors into all policies, programmes and projects;
- Take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision making positions;
- Put in place appropriate training programmes to assist men in the Public Service to be able to deal with gender equality imperatives and women’s empowerment initiatives in the workplace;
- Ensure government training includes gender management and gender mainstreaming for all Public Service managers to ensure the integration of women and women’s issues into all areas of governance; and
- Review the 30% quota with regard to women in decision making positions in the Public Service in line with the new 50% parity clause of SADC Heads of State.

Underlying all of this is the importance of a strong and well coordinated National Gender Machinery as an effective forum for ensuring women’s empowerment and gender equality.

3.5 National Gender Machinery

There are key processes and mechanisms that must be adopted to affirm a vibrant national gender programme advancing the country towards gender equality. The mechanisms for transforming gender relations in South Africa were therefore reviewed, and are collectively known within government and civil society as the “National Gender Machinery”. Together, these mechanisms aim to promote and protect gender equality, both by mainstreaming it and by dealing with it separately. The National Gender Machinery has structures at different levels in national government, the legislature and statutory bodies.
3.5.1 The National Machinery in Government

The National Office on the Status of Women is located in The Presidency. The National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality states “…The OSW has a vital role to play as the principal coordinating structure for the National Machinery on gender equality. It has been constructed as the nerve centre for developing and maintaining a vibrant gender programme. It develops frameworks and monitors their implementation. It is responsible for developing national gender plans as well as national strategies to implement them….”

According to the Gender Policy Framework “At the operational level, the main responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the National Gender Policy, will rest with individual government departments at national and provincial levels. All departments will be required to establish dedicated Gender Units or Focal Points to assist in the formulation and implementation of effective action plans to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality in the work of departments”.

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) is responsible for the formulation of Public Service policy. It is the custodian of the Public Service Act of 1994, which provides for the organisation and administration of the South African Public Service, the regulation of the conditions of employment, terms of office, discipline, retirement and discharge of members of the Public Service, and matters connected therewith”. The DPSA is also responsible for ensuring that Affirmative Action programmes in the Public Service are implemented, which indicates the critical role they have not only in promoting gender equality in government, but also in holding Departments accountable for implementing gender programmes in the workplace. The DPSA would also be the key driver to ensure that recommendations arising out of studies such as this are implemented in government departments as a way to promote and enhance gender equality.

3.5.2 The National Machinery in the Legislature

The Women’s Empowerment Unit (WEU) aims to identify and address the obstacles to women’s full participation in law-making processes. It is a project of the Speakers’ Forum and situated in the Gauteng provincial legislature. At present, most of the women’s caucuses in provincial legislatures are informal. Some provincial legislatures have standing committees or sub-committees for gender issues.

The Parliamentary Women’s Group (PWG) is a multi-party women’s caucus established in 1994 and aims to make parliament more gender sensitive.

The Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women is a Parliamentary Committee established in August 1996 and largely responsible for gender mainstreaming. Their role is to formulate policy and review draft legislation.

3.5.3 The National Machinery’s Independent Statutory Bodies

The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) is an independent public body established in accordance with the Commission on Gender Equality Act No 39 of 1996, which spells out its mandate and functions. The CGE’s mandate includes having the power to hold accountable state organs, statutory and public bodies, as well as the private sector, for promoting and protecting gender equality. Its constituency is all South Africans, but it is targeting those who live on the periphery, and has identified, in particular, women in rural areas, on farms, in domestic employ and in informal settlements. The CGE strives to transform society through exposing
and addressing gender discriminatory practices of any kind and through instilling respect for women's rights. Its functions include providing information and education on promoting and protecting gender equality in South African society.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is an important mechanism for promoting and protecting human rights, which include women’s rights. The SAHRC is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the rights in the Bill of Rights, with special emphasis on the implementation of socio-economic rights.

The Public Protector receives complaints from the public against government agencies and officials and investigates cases of unfair conduct. Women can take advantage of this office when they have been treated unfairly.

The Public Service Commission supports greater gender equality in the Public Service as it is responsible for promoting an equitable and unbiased Public Service, a broadly representative public administration and employment practices that are based on ability, objectivity, fairness and which also redresses the imbalances of the past.

The Financial and Fiscal Commission advises government on the allocation of government money. It is particularly concerned with how money is distributed between the different parts of government and its allocation formula favours the more rural provinces. This bias has a positive impact on women as the majority of rural people are women.

3.6 Concluding comments

While the purpose of this chapter was not critique the role and performance of the National Gender Machinery, it serves to identify the various components that collectively make up the institutional framework to support gender empowerment and gender equality in the Public Service of South Africa.
Chapter Four

QUANTITATIVE OVERVIEW OF WOMEN IN SENIOR POSITIONS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE
4.1 Introduction

The Employment Equity Act 1998 outlines the measures necessary to make affirmative action a success, and for achieving gender equality. As already mentioned in this report, the target set by Cabinet was that 30% of senior managers appointed should be women (that is, from salary level 13 to 16) by April 2005. This chapter provides a quantitative analysis and reflects the number of women that are in senior positions in the Public Service. As at June 2006 women occupied 30.3% of managerial positions.

The data was sourced from the Vulindlela database. It is important to point out that information presented in this report may vary to some extent to the actual numbers of women currently in senior positions. This was evident in collating information received from selected departments. Various reasons for this include:

- Staff promoted into more senior positions.
- Staff who resigned or dismissed from their jobs.
- Information may be presented by departments differently to how it is captured by Vulindlela.
- The time period between the start of the research and when the report was finally produced might present additional variances.

4.2 Provincial overview of Women in Senior Positions (levels 13-16) in the Public Service

A profile of provincial departments according to the percentage of women in senior positions was undertaken as displayed in Figure 1. The average percentage of women in senior positions in provincial departments is 29.8% which is only 0.2% below the target that was set. Some of the reasons for the varying degrees of women in senior positions relate to the extent to which the environment supporting women is enabling or constraining, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

In terms of the provincial analysis, North West (33.4%) and Limpopo (32.5%) have the most women in senior positions followed by Gauteng and Mpumalanga reflecting 30.6% respectively. The Western Cape has the lowest percentage of female managers (23%).

It must be noted that the percentage of women in senior level positions is not proportionate to the overall number of women in a department. This means that while there are many women employed in departments,
they mainly occupy lower positions.

This is evident in the example of both the Western Cape and Limpopo. In the Western Cape there are more women employed in the province (64%) as compared to Gauteng (61%). However, the Western Cape has the least amount of women in senior positions (23%). Gauteng on the other hand has a higher number of women employed in senior positions (30.6%) despite having comparatively less women at all levels in the province.

4.3 Provincial Departmental Review of Women in Senior Positions (levels 13-16) in the Public Service

Figure 2: Percentage of women in salary levels 13 – 16 in Eastern Cape Departments

Figure 2 above provides a presentation of how the different departments in the Eastern Cape fare in terms of employing women in senior positions. The provincial percentage of women in senior positions in the Eastern Cape is 27.7%. Seven of the 12 departments fall below this average. The Office of the Premier, Economic Affairs and Tourism and Sports and Culture are well above the average.

Figure 3: Percentage of women in salary levels 13 – 16 in Free State Departments
In the Free State the average percentage of women in senior positions is 27.8%. The Department of Social Development has an exceptionally high percentage of women in senior positions (58.8%) and sets a clear example for the other departments to strive for. Of concern is Safety and Liaison where only 14% of senior managers are women.

Figure 4: Percentage of women in salary levels 13 – 16 in Gauteng Departments

In Gauteng the average percentage of women in senior positions is 30.6%. Only four (4) departments fall below the national average of 30.3%. While the Department of Social Development has traditionally employed more women, the Departments of Finance and Sports and Culture which are traditionally known to employ more men also have a high percentage of women employed in senior positions.

Figure 5: Percentage of women in salary levels 13 – 16 in KwaZulu-Natal Departments

In KwaZulu-Natal the average percentage of women in senior positions is 30.4%. Figure 5 above shows that three departments, that is Community Safety and Liaison, Social Welfare and Population Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism have an average of 40% and more female managers. At the same time, there are six (6) departments that fall below the provincial average.
Limpopo has the second highest average percentage (32.5%) of women in senior positions. Only five (5) departments fall below the national average of 30.3%. Of all provinces Limpopo has the most departments (8) with 30% and more women in senior positions (see Figure 6 above).

Mpumalanga has attained the target set by Cabinet with the provincial average being 30.6%. There are four (4) departments with an average of 40% and more female managers as indicated in Figure 7 above.
In the Northern Cape the average percentage of women in senior positions (24.6%) falls below the national average of 30.3%. It is the second worse performing province. In this province, as shown in Figure 9, there is a big difference in the range of percentages of women employed in senior positions (from 50% in the Department of Social Services to 0% in the Departments of Finance and Sports, Arts and Culture).
The Western Cape has the lowest average (23%) female managers. Departments such as Education (9.7%) and Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (9%) are specifically lagging way behind.

Across all the provinces there is a 10.4% difference between the province with the highest number of women in senior positions (North West at 33.4%) and the province with the lowest number of women in senior positions (Western Cape at 23%). It is observable from previous studies conducted by the PSC that the Western Cape has been the slowest of all provinces in achieving representivity targets. For example, the Audit on Affirmative Action\textsuperscript{20} found that in the Western Cape “Whites, despite comprising 20.1% of provincial employees dominate the management levels, with their representivity rising sharply from 5.5% at the lowest salary level to 53% at the highest salary level. This is in the context of a province where coloureds constitute 62.4% of the public servants, while Whites constitute 20.1%”.

A trend found across provincial departments is that the majority of women in senior positions are in the departments of Health and Social Development as compared to other departments. While this seems to be the norm due to the fact that women were traditionally more attracted to such occupations, or had easier access thereto, the trend seems to be changing. For example:

- In the Northern Cape Departments of Health and Education, women only occupy 18% and 25% respectively of senior positions.
- In the Western Cape Departments of Health and Education, women occupy 21% and 9.7% respectively of senior positions.

On the other hand, in some provinces higher numbers of women are employed in senior positions in what were traditionally viewed as more male-dominated departments. Examples include:

- Gauteng Department of Finance with 36% women occupying senior positions and the Departments of Agriculture (47%) and Community Safety (46.6%).
- KwaZulu-Natal Economic Affairs and Tourism (35%) and Sports and Recreation (33%).
- Limpopo Departments of Sports, Arts and Culture (40%).
- Mpumalanga Department of Finance (41%).

While progress has been made to mainstream women in the Public Service, there is a need to ensure that women executives continue to be appointed to reflect equality between themselves and their male counterparts.

4.4 Breakdown of Women in Senior Positions (levels 13 – 16) in the Public Service by Race Group

Apart from ensuring gender representivity, there is also an obligation on departments to affirm black women, specifically. An analysis presented by Figure 11 below in this regard was therefore made. It is clear that the majority of women in senior positions are black and therefore in line with the Affirmative Action objectives of the Public Service.

Figure 11: Breakdown of Women in Senior Positions (salary levels 13-16) in the Public Service by Race Group

4.5 National Departmental Review of Women in Senior Positions (levels 13-16) in the Public Service

The average percentage of women in senior positions in national departments is 31.2%, which exceeds the target of 30% by 1.2%. Figure 12 indicates that a similar trend in national departments is observed to that of provincial departments, where the highest percentage of women in senior positions is in departments such as Health and Social Development.

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21. Racial classification in the Vulindlela database is broken down into African, Indian, Coloured and White. Black as a racial classification for the purposes of this study refers to African, Indian and Coloured.
4.6 Women with Disabilities in Senior Positions (levels 13-16) in the Public Service

Previous studies by the PSC have found that the employment of disabled persons in the Public Service is not being addressed appropriately by departments. The figure for males is 0.10% whereas for females it is 0.06%, reflecting a difference of 0.04% between males and females.

Based on Figure 13 it is evident that more disabled men are employed than women at senior management levels in the Public Service. Seven provinces, that is, Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape have no disabled women occupying senior positions. The Free State (0.49%) and Western Cape (0.41%) are the only two provinces that have employed disabled women in senior positions.

4.7 Summary

Whilst it is important to note that the Public Service wide average for female representativity at senior management level stands at 30.3% with the national average at 31.2% and provincial average at almost 30% (29.8%), it is also equally important to acknowledge that some provinces and national departments performed better than the others who had not nearly achieved the target that was set at 30%. Although the target of 30% that was set to be achieved by 2005 at senior management level has been achieved in the Public Service,
it was evident that the majority of women are employed at support staff levels, e.g. secretaries and administration clerks.

The White Paper on Affirmative Action set a benchmark of 30% to be achieved by 1999 for departments to use as an indicator for the success of gender mainstreaming and, hence gender equality. The problem is that when departments reach the 30% target they could assume that they don’t need to do more. Target setting could therefore, create a barrier to the continued advancement of women, especially as gender mainstreaming in the South African Public Service is still seen as meeting numerical targets.

The following were highlighted during the research by participants as challenges in altering the gender profile to include more women into senior positions:

- The Public Service has inherited from the government prior to 1994 a staff profile that had men holding the majority of senior management positions. This has been altered with more women being employed in middle management positions and at junior staff levels however, women continue to be under-represented at senior management levels.
- Restructuring of various departments has taken place since 1994. Departments went through amalgamation processes, with some being over-represented by men in senior positions. Thus the staff profile had to be accommodated when departments merged, which resulted into an over-representation of men in senior positions.
- In some departments there are men who are mostly in the 55 year and older age group who will not leave their positions until they retire (at the age of 65 years). This has frustrated the mobility of women into senior positions and therefore is an obstacle to improving gender representivity in the Public Service.
- The quest to achieve gender equality in the Public Service is often hampered, because of factors such as the following:
  - The remuneration of senior posts in the private sector is not able to be matched by the Public Service.
  - The Public Service was often seen as a training ground for women in senior positions, who after gaining critical skills and experience in the Public Service were recruited by the private sector.
  - The culture in the work environment is not yet conducive and enabling for women to be supported and empowered.
Chapter Five

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the key findings of the study. The data collection process used five thematic areas as a basis to source information in addressing the objectives of the study. These thematic areas are: profile and representivity, legal and regulatory framework, human resource practices, gender mainstreaming structures, processes and organisational culture. The findings are an amalgamation of issues that cut across the areas identified and are compiled around the key objectives of the study. The findings incorporate aspects that have emerged from the literature review that was undertaken during this study.

5.2 Staff’s understanding of gender mainstreaming

The concept of gender mainstreaming was not understood by most of the staff members interviewed. This lack of understanding was not confined to only junior level staff but included many senior staff members. In almost all cases staff members equated gender mainstreaming with employment equity, and indicated that this was about the number of women employed at different levels.

It is clear that the issues surrounding gender must be clarified, and a “gender perspective” established in order to implement gender equality as far as possible in South Africa. Developing a gender perspective is, by itself, a complex and challenging task, yet an essential step toward Gender Mainstreaming.

5.3 Empowerment of women in terms of their role as part of the executive structures of Department’s and their involvement in decision making

Empowerment is about people (men and women) taking control over their lives. It refers to the process of “conscientisation” which builds critical analytical skills for an individual to gain self-confidence in order to take control of her or his life. Women’s empowerment therefore enables women specifically to set their own agendas, gain skills, build self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-reliance. It is also an essential process in the transformation of gender relations because it addresses the structural and underlying causes of subordination and discrimination. Women’s empowerment is but one means of achieving gender equality and should not be seen as an end in itself.

In terms of the gender representivity profile, it is evident that there are not many women in executive structures in departments, hence limiting their involvement in decision-making. Women in executive structures that participated in the research argue that the predominantly male culture has made it difficult for their voices to be effectively heard.

The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. “Women’s equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved” 22.

In order to properly assess whether the empowerment of women has occurred in the Public Service, it is important to ask the question: what are the key elements needed in the Public Service in order to empower women. The thematic areas used during this research provides an indication of the extent to which the empowerment of women has been successful.
5.3.1 Legal and regulatory framework

The legal and regulatory framework is an essential tool towards the empowerment of women so that they can advance to senior positions and be part of decision making. Without this framework there are no measures to guide or enforce gender equality.

All Government departments are guided by, and operate within, the legal framework provided by the range of Acts, agreements and policies. A wide range of policies were identified by departments as being relevant to, and assisting them with gender issues. Such policies included provisions surrounding leave, recruitment and selection, promotion, performance management, HIV/AIDS, financial assistance, training & development, bursaries, learnership and mentorship, and sexual harassment. In general most of the policies referred to women as a designated group as stipulated in Affirmative Action and Employment Equity legislation.

Some departments (eleven of the twenty four departments surveyed) had developed their own gender policies to address a variety of issues that would impact on the empowerment of women in their departments. These policies seek to address issues that impact directly or indirectly on the empowerment of women such as:

- Addressing the attitudes and behaviour of individual, group and institutional practices that are discriminatory and entrench the traditional stereotyping of males and females which impacts negatively on their growth and development.
- Ensuring that all decision-making and all practices in the Department are informed by gender considerations which impact proactively on future practices.
- Aligning policies, practices and procedures in all educational institutions, sub-directorates, directorates and programmes with the national legal framework of Government that is signatory to many international declarations.

The policies also addressed issues of capacity building and training of staff through awareness workshops, training and development initiatives as well as reviewing departmental policies and procurement processes to ensure they are gender sensitive.

However, although these departments have been successful in developing gender policies, the implementation of the policies was not as successful with a key challenge being the ability to effectively integrate such policies into overall departmental plans, programmes, and other processes. Reasons cited as limitations in the implementation of gender policies included that:

- Senior staff did not take the gender policies seriously;
- Senior staff did not know the ‘how’ of gender mainstreaming, in other words the guidelines and toolkits for how to implement gender mainstreaming;
- There was no one with authority to drive gender mainstreaming; and
- There were time constraints and other departmental priorities.

From a policy perspective, empowerment of woman can therefore still be improved.

5.3.2 Structures and processes

What is evident from the literature review is that gender mainstreaming will not occur naturally due to various mitigating factors. Processes and structures need to be in place for gender mainstreaming to occur effectively. The structures and processes internally in departments that drive gender mainstreaming, its role and reporting mechanisms are therefore addressed in this section. Later in the report the role of the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) in terms of gender mainstreaming will be addressed.
The structures that exist in most departments and have a role to play in gender mainstreaming are the gender focal person and Employment Equity Forum. In all cases the Employment Equity Forum had no role to play in monitoring or supporting gender mainstreaming apart from ensuring that employment equity targets with regard to women were met.

5.3.2.1 Gender Focal Persons (GFP)

The GFP is supposed to drive gender mainstreaming in departments. What is meant to ‘drive’ gender mainstreaming is, however, unclear to the majority of respondents at all levels. In many cases the GFP was a Special Projects Officer that included having multi-faceted roles with responsibility for children, youth, disability, HIV/AIDS, and in some cases even the Employee Assistance Programme. Only three departments had specifically assigned GFP’s to carry out the responsibility of gender mainstreaming. In most cases all the GFP was responsible for, was to organise activities around events such as National Women’s day and Sixteen Days of Activism. There was generally a lack of understanding from both GFPs and staff members about what gender mainstreaming is, with a superficial approach indicating that it was about celebrating women’s day and “showing appreciation to the ladies”.

The National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality clearly identifies the functions of the GFP’s. None of the GFPs were however, able to implement their functions in any significant way as identified in the Policy Framework.

GFP faced a number of challenges which included:

- There did not appear to be a great deal of senior management support for the role of the GFP in any of the departments surveyed, resulting in the compromising of the GFP’s position in departments and the seriousness with which their work and processes were taken more broadly. Although immediate managers generally tried to be supportive, there was not a clear understanding of or commitment to gender issues more broadly. The supervisors of the GFP were often inappropriate and did not hold a position in the departments that sent a clear message about gender and its importance in the departments.

- Gender was not mainstreamed in the departments, but seen as a stand alone issue to be dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

- It was felt by respondents that the level of the GFPs in the departments was too low with the majority being in positions of Assistant Director. In order for this position to carry more weight, influence and decision-making powers, it was suggested by some respondents that it should be at Director level. Alternatively, if the level remained that of Assistant Director, that the position should be given the authority that is needed to genuinely drive gender mainstreaming.

- The GFPs often worked alone or with minimal support and were therefore not able to do their jobs properly.

- Managers were not familiar with gender issues and thought that gender was about women only.

- Lack of dedicated budget for gender mainstreaming resulting in an inability to conduct proper programmes and activities. In cases where funding was allocated to gender related activities this was prioritised for events such as National Women’s Day.

- Many of the departments did not have a coherent strategy within which to focus on gender issues.

- Lack of co-operation from other members of the departments generally.
In addition, the GFP themselves did not have the capacity to drive gender mainstreaming in departments. The majority of them did not understand their role or how to carry out their responsibilities. Even if they were provided with the concepts and tools for gender mainstreaming, they could not do justice to their tasks unless they were dedicated to address gender mainstreaming.

5.3.2.2 Processes

Although there were planning and budgeting processes in place, in most departments gender was not mainstreamed into the planning processes. In three departments, however, gender mainstreaming planning had taken place (Gauteng Department of Social Development, Western Cape Education Department and Northern Cape Department of Social Services and Population Development). The Department of Social Development in Gauteng had a strategic work plan for gender which was developed three years ago. In the Northern Cape the Department of Social Services and Population Development had developed a comprehensive “Provincial Gender Action Plan”. In the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) the GFP developed strategic planning documents on gender mainstreaming as well as developing indicators of success in the gender mainstreaming process. The Department of Social Development in the Western Cape also provided a similar example where staff were trained in how to develop gender sensitive indicators. The WCED strategic planning documents on gender mainstreaming, amongst others, provided for the following:

- “Implement and prioritise the WCED Gender Policy and implementation strategy in all sites of the WCED.
- To establish mechanisms and a process for monitoring and evaluating progress in mainstreaming gender, and reports on this provided to senior management.
- To provide gender training (in analysis, planning, mainstreaming, budgeting, advocacy and lobbying in WCED) in order to enhance awareness around gender implications of, for example, budgets.

In all cases, the plans were broadly defined and the implementation of these plans, as with that of the gender policies, was difficult to integrate into normal planning processes and therefore, difficult to implement.

Having addressed the lack of and inadequacy of the ‘drivers’ of gender mainstreaming at all levels within departments, it is fair to say that the environment in general is not enabling for the empowerment of women. It remains a mainly male-dominated environment.

5.3.3 Human resource development

This section addresses training and development opportunities as it contributes to the empowerment of women. It is evident from the research that no specific actions were taken to fast-track women into leadership and senior management positions.

Although it appeared that there were adequate resources, support and encouragement for staff development and training, these opportunities were ‘gender neutral’ and did not promote women in any meaningful way. In some departments there was a focus to promote women in the external programmes activities. For example in the National Department of Science and Technology, there was an understanding that in order to advance women they are given preference in the issuing of bursaries. Another example refers to the National Treasury where specific targets were set to either award bursaries or recruit women into external programmes.

In the Western Cape Department of Social Development a training course had been developed particularly for women. The executive training programme was particularly aimed at building the capacity of women. However, on further examination it was ascertained that it had not lead to women being promoted even though women were hoping for acknowledgement through promotions. This raised the issue of mentoring
and coaching in departments. Apart from the DPSA and DoL where a Mentorship Guide Policy exists, no other department had a formal mentoring and coaching programme. However, mentoring seemed to occur on an informal basis although not on a large scale. Mentoring was seen as particularly useful in ensuring that training programmes attended by staff members were translated into practice at the workplace. More importantly, if women were provided with some form of mentorship this could assist in fast tracking to apply for promotions into executive structures.

Another complexity was that women often did not take up the opportunities for training where they would have to leave their homes for extended periods due to domestic responsibilities. Opinions were divided on this issue as some staff members suggested that women do not make themselves available for training, whilst other agreed that due to family responsibilities women were unfairly excluded from such opportunities.

5.4  Family friendly policies which take into account the social benefits of families, such as flexi-time for men and women and childcare arrangements which support equal family responsibility

In the Public Service women and men face different social constraints. A very real and practical constraint for women to achieve real satisfaction in their jobs is the responsibility they naturally bear for raising children and performing household tasks. An important feature of their professional and managerial work is the long hours often required to complete tasks to gain recognition and eventual promotion. Thus, women who want both a family and career have to straddle both these heavy responsibilities.

A more subtle constraint is that even women without family responsibilities are still seen as potential mothers, with less attention being given to their training and career opportunities than their male counterparts, thus reducing their chances of obtaining top jobs further up the hierarchy. This can be perceived as a “glass ceiling” that limits their advancement and is a possible reason that can be attributed to the slow progress in the attainment of targets set to achieve gender representivity in senior management echelons.

5.4.1  Human resource policies/programmes

Human resource practices have an impact on how women progress into senior positions in the workplace. In general, most of the policies refer to women as a designated group as stipulated in Affirmative Action and Employment Equity legislation. Policies such as maternity leave and family responsibility leave were seen as examples of policies/programmes that have a gender focus in them. This negates the fact that many of these are basic conditions of employment that apply to all employees, as stipulated in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. It was noted that the EAP was seen as having a women’s focus when in fact it is a programme meant to assist all employees, although most of the users were women.

Apart from the Family Responsibility leave there are no family friendly policies. In many instances staff were able to use this policy to attend to emergencies, health issues such as pre-menstrual tension and other domestic responsibilities and in this way it was seen as dealing with women’s practical needs, albeit very inadequately. The DPSA initiated a policy on breast feeding meant to create a more conducive physical environment for pregnant mothers and those that were breast feeding. This was probably one of the only policies that referred specifically to the interest and well-being of women, and could be promoted in the Public Service as long as there are facilities available. Similarly, the Gauteng Department of Social Development had an Employment Equity Plan that was very clear about providing support to women employees particularly, resulting in the policies and procedures being applied using this lens. In addition, the department had undertaken an ‘organisational climate’ survey which had resulted in a document entitled “Organisational Culture Interventions 2005 – 2006”, that also spoke implicitly of gender equality issues.
5.4.1.1 Flexi-time

Very few of the departments had a flexi-time approach which allowed women to come in early or late or not take lunch, or even work from home in some instances. However, these arrangements were negotiated with managers and supervisors and depended on the relationships between staff members and their bosses. In many instances there appeared to be more of a sense of discrimination between levels of employment rather than between men and women. For instance, in some departments there was a clear distinction between women who were at senior management level because they had access to laptops so they could work from home. The same did not apply to women at lower levels.

There is a significant increase in men assuming their parenting responsibilities that were traditionally seen to be a women’s role, as well as men as single parents. The response from management has been varied and on the one hand again dependent on the relationship between manager and staff. Many managers still maintain that parenting is a woman’s responsibility and would allude to this when asked for permission to fulfil these responsibilities.

5.4.1.2 Child care facilities

Whilst no departments reported that they had on-site child care or crèche facilities the Department of Health had in the past provided subsidised child care facilities at hospitals. Many staff members who are parents stated that it would be beneficial for them to have such a facility at their place of work especially during school holidays or when a child was sick. In instances such as these where parents found themselves with no alternative but to bring children to work, this created difficulties as the children stayed in their parents’ offices and this often distracted them from their work and also made them feel anxious that they were disturbing their colleagues. Some departments were keen to pursue the issue of child care facilities but were waiting for DPSA to provide guidelines of how to go about doing this.

Whilst most staff members who had babies took the allocated maternity leave, for some this was not adequate as they wanted to continue breastfeeding their children. Obviously being able to allow for child-care facilities as well as facilities for breastfeeding requires that some resources be put into establishing such facilities. This also impacts on women with small children (and in some cases breastfeeding their children), who are not able to leave their children at home and consequently who are not able to accept training opportunities away from home. The issue around flexi-time, child-care and breast feeding facilities raised an inherent concern amongst participants in the research that these policies would be abused and affect service delivery negatively.

5.4.1.3 Example of international practice

Given the context described above, as well as the stalling or slow progress of government to move forward in developing family friendly policies that would support and empower women towards greater gender equality, the following example of a policy adopted by the United Kingdom provides an example of how this could be approached. The policy called the Child Care Strategy is based on the premise of “ensuring that every child has the best start in life and to creating more choice for all parents: helping fathers and mothers better control the balance between work and time spent with children, whilst ensuring that the needs of business are met”.

Following publication of its Ten Year Strategy for Childcare, consultation commenced on a set of proposals aimed at providing more choice for families in how they balance work and caring responsibilities. The underpinning principles guiding the development of the proposals were to:

- Ensure that every child has the best possible start in life;
- Respond to the changing patterns of employment and ensure that parents, especially mothers, and others with caring responsibilities can work and progress their careers; and
- Enable all families to have genuine choices about how they balance work and family life.