



Campaign for the Gender Equality  
Architecture Reform at the United Nations  
European Focal Point

## GEAR campaign FAQs

### **Why do women require a single and stronger United Nations Entity?**

Poverty, inequitable relationships between men and women, poor access to health care, inadequate education, violence and a variety of social, economic, political and cultural factors adversely affect the health and well-being of millions of women and girls worldwide. It is well-documented that these issues have not been addressed and gender equity within the UN has not been achieved.<sup>1</sup> This is simply not acceptable. Women's marginal, lower status and unrealized potential punishes half the world's population, but weakens us all.<sup>2</sup> By having one consolidated women's entity, UN resources will be better targeted towards action and policy which will end gender inequality.

### **Would a women's entity effectively create two UN's – one for men and one for women?**

No, a women's entity would finally create, for the first time, one UN that benefits men and women equally. It would turn words into actions, promoting women's equal access to education and training, health care, sexual and reproductive health services, economic opportunities, structures and resources, power and decision-making, communications, science and technology, land and inheritance, and management of natural resources, to spell out just a partial list. It would apply dedicated expertise, programme planning and resources to intractable problems that hold women hostage and keep societies from developing fully: the feminization of poverty, gender-based violence, oppressive and unremunerated work burdens and the disproportionate effects of HIV/AIDS and of armed conflict. At present, these issues consume the lives and destroy the potential of vast numbers of the world's women, but they command little attention from those who hold the power to bring about change. A single dedicated women's entity would act on the universal recognition that, at all levels, the mechanisms that should be in place to promote the advancement of women and prevent discrimination are inadequate, and in many cases they are missing altogether.

### **Rather than segregating women's issues, shouldn't gender mainstreaming be strengthened in every facet of the UN's work?**

Gender mainstreaming was never expected to achieve the goals of equality on its own. The transformation to a world of equal rights and opportunities for all was to be achieved with a two-pronged approach: gender was to be integrated into every mainstream policy, plan and programme, while targeted interventions were to reverse gender-based discrimination as old as recorded history. Targeted interventions are easily identified and measured – they range from laws prohibiting violence against women and programmes addressing maternal mortality to quotas guaranteeing women's participation in politics and decision-making – and there are costs attached. But gender mainstreaming proved less easy to define, and therefore more elusive. Evidence now demonstrates that the concept of gender mainstreaming isn't well understood, that it exists more often on paper than in practice, that it is rarely assigned budget or staff, that when everyone is responsible for gender mainstreaming, no one feels accountable – and that adopting a gender mainstreaming approach instead of, rather than in tandem with targeted interventions, is an excuse for inaction. On its own, gender mainstreaming has proven dangerously inadequate to fulfilling women's human rights – often fatally so.

### **Those calling for UN reform want a more efficient and effective world body, not a bigger one, and may object to adding yet another structure to the bureaucracy. Is it sensible to advocate for expanding rather than reducing the size of the UN?**

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<sup>1</sup> UNIFEM Assessment: A/60/62 – E2005/10; UNDP Evaluation of Gender mainstreaming, available at [http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/EO\\_GenderMainstreaming.pdf](http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/EO_GenderMainstreaming.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The initial four frequently asked questions are courtesy of the International Council of Nurses who are also active on the campaign for a UN women's agency. More information can be found at <http://www.icn.ch/waa.htm>

Member States that continue to allocate resources toward every reform except an up-to-date, effective gender architecture will eventually realize the folly of striving for any advancements while half the human population is held back. A review that compares global gender goals with the international structures in place to fulfil them would reveal to Member States that none of their commitments can be met – and therefore, all of their efficiency measures as well as future resources will be wasted – unless the UN is reformed in a way that can help make development, humanitarian assistance, peace and security work for both halves of the human population.

### **When will the General Assembly decide on the structure of the women's agency?**

The process of the General Assembly discussions will continue throughout 2009 with a final decision expected prior to the closure of 63<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly- scheduled for September 2009. We will keep you up to date with specific dates in the process.

### **What is gender equality architecture?**

Gender equality architecture is the way the UN describes the bodies within the UN system which focus on women and gender equality. Currently the UN has 4 separate agencies dedicated to women, each of which is under-funded, under-staffed and without the decision making power necessary to make to eradication of gender inequality possible. These agencies sit alongside UN legislation which calls for gender equality, but they do not have the power, resources or mandate to make signatures on paper into lasting commitments and change.

### **What does GEAR stand for?**

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign calls on women's organization to advocate for a new women's entity that is ambitiously funded led by an Under Secretary-General that combines policy making and country level operations to effectively deliver on women's rights on the ground. The campaign also promotes meaningful involvement of civil society, especially women's organizations, at all levels - global, regional, national and local.

### **What is the GEAR campaign's mission?**

Its number one mission is to ensure that all women's voices are heard throughout the United Nations Reform process so that women's issues and concerns are given the importance that they deserve on the global agenda. The campaign is calling for a stronger women's entity that can deliver results on the ground:

- An Under-Secretary-General should head this entity for women, to ensure the necessary status required for representation and decision-making at the highest levels both in policy-development and program operations at the global and country levels. The new Under-Secretary-General post would provide higher level leadership than at present to more effectively drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.
- Extensive field presence and a strong policy and programmatic mandate are essential for a strengthened UN entity for women to effectively improve the lives of women on the ground.
- Substantial and predictable resources to ensure that the new entity for women has the capacity to meet expectations and deliver results at all levels. It must be funded initially at a minimum level of \$1 billion USD with increases over time.
- Accountability within the new entity for women, at both national and international levels, including through meaningful involvement of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations for women.
- The new entity should also promote gender mainstreaming by the integration of gender equality and women's human rights throughout the UN and especially in the One UN Pilot countries and in all UN reform processes.

### **How did the GEAR campaign start?**

In February 2006, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan convened a High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence to explore how the UN system could be strengthened in terms of coherence and

coordination in the areas of development, humanitarian affairs and the environment. Led by the Linkage Caucus convened by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting in March 2006, women from around the world pressured the UN to add gender equality in the reform process to the Panel's agenda.

A background paper on what women needed from the UN in this reform (endorsed by some 300 organizations) was developed, we met regularly with the UN and organized to make certain women's rights advocates were present in all of the Panel's regional and thematic sessions to raise these issues. As a consequence of women's organizing, the UN High-level Panel made recommendations that, if adopted by governments, could make the UN system much better equipped to address women's rights, concerns and needs. One of the most far reaching recommendations of the Panel was to reform the women's machinery at the UN indicating that the Panel recognized the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the development agenda. As a result of continued collaboration, hundreds of women from around the world gathered at CSW-52 formally launched the GEAR Campaign on February 26, 2008.

In Europe the campaign is carried forward by a European Working Group bringing together different European organisations and networks participating and it coordinated by European Women's Lobby (EWL).

### **Which organisations are behind the GEAR campaign?**

Hundreds of civil society organisations with a commitment to gender equality, such as many women's organisations support the campaign worldwide, that means women and men from Latin America, North America, the Caribbean and Pacific, Africa, Asia and Europe. Although governments are globally divided on the strategy to strengthen the commitments to women's rights at the UN, women and men worldwide have united and come to consensus about the need for the GEAR recommendations.

For more information on the campaign at its global level, visit **WEDO's** website at: <http://www.wedo.org/campaigns.aspx?mode=beijingbeyonddemail> or **CWGL's** website at: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/policy/unadvocacy/gea.html>

### **How is the GEAR campaign structured?**

The GEAR Campaign Working Group determines the overall strategic directions and policy decisions of the campaign, and maps the advocacy strategy. The Campaign Working Group members are Global focal points, Regional focal Points, and the New York UN Lobbying Group.

The Global Focal point consists of four global organisations, who are responsible for the overall global facilitation of the Campaign.

The Regional Focal Points coordinate the regional work in Latin America (with the Caribbean), Asia, Africa and Europe. Regional focal points identify country positions, lobby governments in capitals, engage civil society in the campaign. In Europe the regional focal point is the European Women's Lobby that is coordinating the European Working Group pushing for the GEAR Europe campaign.

The New York UN Lobbying Group is composed of over 17 organizations and networks and take care of the lobbying and advocacy mainly at the United Nations in New York. They monitor ongoing discussions on GEAR at the UN, lobby UN missions and work with UN Secretariat and UN Agencies to achieve the campaign's objectives: the creation of a consolidated and stronger women's entity at the UN. They disseminate information to regional focal points and campaign members.

The Campaign Working Group is co-facilitated by WEDO and CWGL.

### **Which are the European organisations behind the European Focal Point of the GEAR Campaign?**

In Europe the following networks and organisations are pushing the GEAR campaign: ACTSA (Action for South Africa), European Women's Lobby (EWL), International Gender Policy Network (IGPN), OXFAM Novib, WIDE – Women in Development in Europe.

The organisations are informally linked through a European Working Group that's works together via email and phone (and occasionally through face-to-face meetings) and decide together on the direction of the lobby efforts and public campaign. The working group is not formally established.

### **How can I help determine what your next campaign is?**

We aim to keep supporters regularly updated on the campaign actions through our mailings so make sure you are signed up to them. You should also continue to look at the website for latest campaign developments.

### **Can my organisation join the GEAR campaign? Or can I as individual join?**

Any NGO with a commitment to global gender equality can and should participate in GEAR Campaign. Currently, many global human rights organization are backing the campaign, as well as many regional and international women's networks, but grassroots and smaller NGOs, trade unions, etc. should also support the campaign.

An organisation can undersign the global statement and get in touch with the regional focal points. In Europe, organisations and individuals can collaborate with the European GEAR Campaign Working Group.

Any interested individual and/or organisations can, of course, lobby their government and advocate for the reform towards other organisations and the general public. There are many campaign materials available such as key messages, letters to use to this purpose, GEAR talking points for governments, etc. You can find them on this site or from <http://gear.collectivex.com/>

### **How can I join the GEAR Europe and why should I?**

To become further involved in your campaign we would ask you to write to the relevant government minister in your country of residence and raise the issue with them. Beyond this we would ask you to raise as much public and political awareness as possible by lobbying the support of MPs and general public, local or national events and/or press work can be good for this. You can use the materials in this site to initiate own lobby activities, and we would love to hear from you if you do so.

Any interested organisations may join the European working group. The main criterion for participation is active involvement and commitment to the campaign. The working group brings a range of campaigning, policy and advocacy experience on the issue of gender equality and reform at the UN. To find out more, please contact: [campaign@un-gear.eu](mailto:campaign@un-gear.eu)

### **How do you intend to make the general public aware of what you are doing?**

We intend to inform general public through mailings and existing networks of contacts who are currently campaigning for better women's rights. We will also undertake media and public activities. Currently, the Campaign is asking GEAR supporters to sign the petition to *Build a United Nations that really works for all women!* <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/GEAR> .

### **What happens if a member of public wants to donate money to help fund a particular campaign?**

Is someone would like to donate money to the GEAR campaign in Europe they should contact the European Campaign Coordinator at European Women's Lobby. There is a separate budget for the GEAR Europe activities and with your support we can extend our activities and do more for lobbying.

### **I have a community fundraising group could someone come and give a talk?**

The amount of people working on the campaign is very limited and therefore, it might be difficult for a representative to give a talk about the campaign. We would advise you to contact the regional coordinator to see if this would be possible.

### **Where can I find your promotional materials?**

You can find all promotional materials from [www.un-gear.com](http://www.un-gear.com) or at <http://gear.collectivex.com>.