

**GENDER &
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK**

UN WOMEN: A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER FOR WOMEN

A Gender & Development Network policy paper

This paper was produced by the following members of the Gender & Development Network's working group on the UN Women's Agency:



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UN WOMEN: A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER FOR WOMEN

“Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health – including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would also venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended”.

Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General¹

The birth of UN Women marks a historic moment. This is an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate progress towards the goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment and bring about far-reaching changes for the world’s women and girls. But success is only possible if we build a powerful and effective agency that has the autonomy, status, expertise, operational capacity and budget to deliver real and lasting impact.

Driving international action to empower women and girls is one of the most effective ways of accelerating poverty reduction and stepping up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Research shows, for example, that agricultural productivity in Africa would increase by up to 20 per cent if women’s access to resources such as land, seed and fertilisers were equal to men’s.² Increased women’s labour force participation

and earnings fuel faster economic growth and poverty reduction.³ It also improves children’s nutrition, health and school attendance, since women usually devote a higher proportion of their earnings to food, healthcare and schooling.⁴ Empowering women and girls to create their own prosperity and act as agents of change can therefore yield large social and economic returns. And we must not lose sight of the sheer injustice of the scale of the current global inequality between women and men – women’s rights are absolutely central.

Yet despite having UN gender equality architecture in place - with four separate UN entities previously dedicated to advancing gender equality and women’s rights⁵ - the UN and Member States have thus far failed to make a real difference for women and girls on the ground. The UN’s performance on women’s empowerment has been hampered

¹ Empowerment of women the most effective development tool, Secretary-General tells Commission on the Status of Women, UN Press Release SG/SM/9738, WOM/1489, 28 Feb 2005

² Africa Partnership Forum, 2007, Gender and Economic Empowerment in Africa, 8th Meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum, Berlin, Germany, 22-23 May 2007

³ World Bank (2006) Gender equality as smart economics: a World Bank Group Action Plan (Fiscal Years 2007–10), Washington DC: The World Bank, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/GAPNov2.pdf>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ The four entities are the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the Office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)

by a lack of coherence and coordination, weak accountability mechanisms, inadequate human and financial resources and expertise. It has also been undermined by a narrow programmatic mandate focused on 'catalytic and innovative' programming, rather than substantive operational and technical work. As a result, more than thirty years after the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), gender inequality remains one of the most entrenched and pervasive challenges facing humanity.

The landmark agreement to create UN Women was a response to these failures and represents a crucial chance to learn from the lessons of the past. Just as the establishment of the previous gender equality architecture at the UN was not a magic bullet for gender equality, the foundation of a women's agency is not enough. Now is no time for complacency; we need to seize this historic opportunity to push for an agency that - from the very outset - has the ability to deliver real results for women and girls.

This paper outlines concrete recommendations for shaping an agency able to achieve this in 4 areas: global autonomy and decision-making, operational capacity and accountability, civil society participation and funding.

1. GLOBAL AUTONOMY AND DECISION-MAKING

The case for change

In the past the UN's gender equality architecture has lacked the authority, status and resources required to drive international action on women's empowerment and hold other agencies accountable for advancing gender equality. Analysis by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has shown that the previous UN gender institutions lacked the authority and status needed to deliver change,⁶ whilst the UK Department for International Development (DFID) concluded that the gender equality architecture always fell short of a global authoritative role.⁷

Status matters

A primary concern has been the ambiguity in UNIFEM's status, which has often rendered the agency without the authority and access to deliver real impact. Throughout its history and despite a significant four-fold increase in core budget and staff, the grade of UNIFEM's top level management remained at D2 level – two grades lower than almost all other UN bodies and excluding UNIFEM from most influential decision-making arenas.

The impact that this low status has had on the world's women can be evidenced using the example of UNAIDS. UNAIDS works in partnership with 10 co-sponsoring agencies, who collaborate with the agency to harmonise activities and provide expertise and input into UNAIDS' programme development, policies and strategies. These co-sponsors cover many areas of the development spectrum – from UNICEF to UNHCR. UNIFEM, however, was excluded from this process. With none of the other co-sponsors having responsibility for driving forward gender equality,⁸ subsequent independent analysis of UNAIDS' effectiveness from 2002-2008 found its global leadership on the gender dimensions of the AIDS pandemic to be 'weak', its mainstreaming of gender to be in need of strengthening and its engagement with organisations that work on gender to be 'limited'. The result has been catastrophic for women and girls, whose share of the AIDS burden continues to climb.⁹ Enhanced status for UN Women will ensure that expertise and knowledge on gender equality will be more effectively dispersed throughout the powerful decision-making arenas where it can make a real impact on women's lives.

⁶ 'Organisational Assessment: UNIFEM Past, Present and Future', UNIFEM Consultative Committee (UN Document Number A/60/62/E/2005/10, December 2004)

⁷ DFID (2008) 'Gender and UN Reform'

⁸ 'Funding, ODA, Governance and Structural Factors Relevant to the Establishment of a New UN Gender Equality Architecture', Oxfam NOVIB and the Varda Group, June 2009

⁹ 'Without Operational Capacity, the New UN Entity for Women Will Not Succeed', AIDS-free World.

A clearly defined role

Ambiguities in the role, mandate and autonomy of the previous gender equality institutions at the UN also limited their impact. For example, from its inception, it was stipulated that UNIFEM was not to be used as a substitute for the mandated gender responsibilities of other UN development cooperation agencies. However, ongoing confusions about the agency's role meant that many staff did not understand that UNIFEM had a 'supportive' rather than 'substitutive' role. This has resulted in UNDP staff requesting funding from UNIFEM to support gender equality work and frustrations when UNIFEM was unable to respond.¹⁰ A more clearly defined role for the new entity will curb confusion, as well as limit duplication in analysis.

The structural fragmentation of the previous gender equality architecture – particularly the exaggerated distinction between policy and operational functions – often presented an incoherent picture to governments.¹¹

Bringing these functions together, establishing an autonomous Executive Board and ensuring a clearly-defined role for UN Women will better enable the UN to speak with one voice to the world's governments on gender equality, enabling more coherence and stronger international accountability from governments for their progress on gender equality.

Given the above concerns, we welcome the announcement in General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/289¹² that UN Women will be headed by an Under-Secretary General (USG) and will have a new and autonomous Executive Board. We hope that this will go some way to delivering the autonomy needed to ensure UN Women is effective. We warmly welcome the appointment of Michelle Bachelet, a proven leader, as the USG for UN Women. It is important that the new entity is not hindered from the outset by a continuing lack of status and authority. We hope that steps will be taken to ensure that the USG and the Executive Board have the access, authority and the clearly defined remit needed to make a real difference for women and girls.

¹⁰ 'Organisational Assessment: UNIFEM Past, Present and Future', UNIFEM Consultative Committee (UN Document Number A/60/62/E/2005/10, December 2004)

¹¹ DFID (2008) 'Gender and UN Reform'

¹² UN Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/289 on System-wide coherence (adopted July 2nd, 2010), effectively establishing UN Women.

Recommendations

- The policy framework of the new entity must be grounded in all leading women's rights frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820.
- The new Under Secretary General must carve out a clearly-defined role for UN Women and firmly establish it as a strong driver for gender equality at the centre of the UN.
- From the outset, clear institutional links and roles must be established between the Executive Board of UN Women, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Security Council.
- The autonomy and authority of UN Women must be quickly established, while it must also develop mutually beneficial collaborations with other UN agencies.
- UN Women must have a seat at the table of the most powerful and influential decision-making arenas, specifically:
 - The commitment to ensuring that the Under-Secretary General (USG) sits on the Chief Executives Board (CEB) must be properly followed through.
 - UN Women must participate in the High Level Committee on Programme (HLCP) and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS).
 - UN Women should replace the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women on the Senior Management Group (SMG).
 - UN Women should be a full-time, non-rotational member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Advisory Group.
 - UN Women should take over the Chair of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANGWE).

2. OPERATIONAL CAPACITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The case for change

Despite some progressive international agreements to advance women's rights over the last three decades, weak accountability mechanisms and poor implementation of key commitments, particularly at regional and country level, have repeatedly undermined the impact these agreements have had on women's and girls' lives. The UN's previous gender equality architecture suffered from a lack of capacity, both in terms of staffing and funding, leaving it with limited operational capacity and a reliance on the catalytic model of programming.

Real operational capacity is needed

Catalytic programming on gender equality has focused on gender mainstreaming within other UN agencies, coupled with a number of experimental pilots or demonstration projects that have supported a very small number of women for a short period of time. This approach has failed to deliver progress for the vast majority of women and girls. UNIFEM's limited in-country presence and shortage of country offices has often meant it has lacked the authority, senior staff and budget to push for and support gender mainstreaming, and influence the better-resourced UN agencies that deliver programmes within countries.

Successes have largely been dependent on the commitment and capacity of individuals within these other UN agencies to address gender inequality in their programming.

Increased country-level operational capacity and resources (both senior staffing and funding) for UN Women will increase UN Women's ability to hold other agencies to account for mainstreaming gender. This will push other UN agencies to better develop their programming and reporting mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment. With flexible resources (i.e. resources that can be used for multiple purposes), UN Women will also be able to fill the gaps in programming that exist on gender equality – for example, in areas that other UN agencies do not have a specific mandate to cover, such as supporting women's civil and political participation. Presence and capacity at regional level will facilitate learning and sharing of innovation and best practice.

UN Women must be able to hold other UN agencies to account

UNIFEM has not always been able to engage with UN Country Teams (UNCTs) as fully as other UN agencies that have well staffed country offices and regular access to the Resident Coordinator.¹³

¹³ Resident Coordinators (RC) lead UN Country Teams in over 130 countries, and represent the Secretary-General on development issues at the country level. The aim of the RC system is to increase efficiency and effectiveness at the country level through inter-agency coordination. The UNCT members are the Countries Directors, or equivalent country representatives of each agency or programme present in the country. The UNCT is responsible for preparing a UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) to guide development activities in the country. UNDG: <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=5>

Comparison with UNICEF

UNICEF provides a useful comparison and model for UN Women, as it also champions the interests of a specific population

- UNICEF has operational and programming capacity at the regional and country level
- UNICEF is present in 190 countries; UNIFEM is present in only 85
- UNICEF has 127 country programme offices with senior core staff, whilst UNIFEM currently has only 12 country programme offices. Where country programmes exist, UNIFEM country allocation is often less than \$1million – in many cases this is just enough to maintain the office and pay core staff but do little else

Sources: UNIFEM website, UNICEF website, DFID paper 2009

Formal gender coordination mechanisms at the country level, such as the Gender Theme Groups within the UNCTs, have therefore had to rely heavily on individual commitment. Because of a lack of leadership and incentives, a number of these groups have ceased to function.¹⁴ Of the 134 UN Country Teams surveyed in 2006, only 41 had Gender Theme Groups.¹⁵ Moreover, because of the limited country presence of the previous gender equality architecture, there has been insufficient gender analysis within countries, and a lack of attention paid to country-driven demands around women's rights. The limited cross-cutting technical capacity of UN staff on gender (e.g. knowledge of gender across the whole development spectrum), and the lack of budget for commissioning and carrying

out gender equality work at the country level, has meant there has been only limited engagement with civil society, particularly with women's organisations.

Filling the gaps in the UN's programmes for women is crucial

As a result of the above, a plethora of issues have been prioritised at the country level, without consideration of the specific needs of women and girls, and without the leadership to push for programming that addresses these needs. The lack of specific programming for women's empowerment has also meant that important areas – such as violence against women and girls, women's economic rights and women's civil and political participation – have been sidelined. UN Women should undertake a comprehensive analysis of the existing gaps in the UN system's programmes for women, and seek to fill these.

Too often UN agencies and their staff are not pushed to promote, assess or report on their progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. A strong UN Women would have the capacity to introduce processes to enhance both upward and downward transparency and accountability on gender equality. Better data and reporting, particularly at country level, will increase transparency of gender-related activities. Developing stronger links with women's organisations at all levels, and increasing support to women's organisations to engage in 'social accountability mechanisms' (i.e. analysing and disseminating information, mobilising public support, negotiating for change) will further enhance accountability. This should result in better governance, improved service delivery and enhanced effectiveness.¹⁶

¹⁴ xxxviii Evaluation Office, UNDP (2006). Gender Equality: Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP

¹⁵ www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/millennium-development/docs/AccountabilityforGenderEquality.doc

¹⁶ <http://www.istr.org/conferences/toronto/workingpapers/malena.carmen.pdf>

Success to build upon: UNIFEM in Afghanistan

- UNIFEM in Afghanistan has been operational since 2002
- It is one of the largest UNIFEM offices at country level, with 71 employees
- Having a relatively strong presence (both staff and resources) in Afghanistan has allowed UNIFEM to support civil society and activists and to have committed staff with strong technical skills and an understanding of the context for women and girls in Afghanistan
- The first country programme (2002-2006) was evaluated in 2007 with overall positive results in achievement of outcomes. Furthermore, it was found that in this instance, UNIFEM had a comparative advantage (relative to other UN agencies) in taking the lead on gender in Afghanistan

Source: Norad, 2009

Improving reporting and accountability across the UN system, and strengthening engagement with civil society are not optional extras – they are vital if UN Women is to succeed. Limited country presence and catalytic programming has to date failed women and girls around the world. Strong operational capacity at the country and regional levels is desperately needed to bridge the gaps between the rhetoric of commitment to women's rights and the reality of implementation at regional, country and community levels.

Recommendations

- **UN Women must have strong operational capacity within countries and communities – ideally through establishing a country presence:**
 - The most pragmatic way to operationalise UN Women quickly, effectively and with most impact is to establish country offices by building on existing UN structures in line with Delivering as One, and prioritising work in countries where there are already UN Country Teams and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).
 - UN Women should then roll out to other countries on a greatest needs basis – this should include conflict affected countries/areas. Further scale up should be based on robust analysis carried out by UN Women and the development of a technical needs framework that also takes into account the areas of violence against women and girls, and women’s civil and political participation.
 - Country offices should have senior level representation and staff with strong gender expertise and credentials, as well as financial resources that match agencies such as UNICEF.
 - **Flexible resources should be made available to UN Women at the country level to enable:**
 - Capacity building for relevant stakeholders, including UN agencies, national government (particularly national women’s machinery) and CSOs.
 - Development of strong partnerships with, and funding for, women’s organisations at all levels (including regional and country levels).
 - A strong gender analysis of the country situation to be undertaken, particularly to feed into the development of the UNDAF.
 - Provision of strategic technical assistance on gender across all development sectors and issues.
 - The design and implementation of community driven programming where analysis shows up gaps in programming on gender equality, or where other agencies are failing to mainstream gender. Programming should focus on niche areas not currently covered by the remit of other UN agencies, such as violence against women and women’s civil and political participation. Programming should be delivered in partnership with women’s organisations.
 - Proactive work with national governments and national women’s machineries to ensure delivery on international commitments – this should include working with governments to implement commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action, UNSCR 1325 and 1880, and working with governments to implement recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee.
- **UN Women should have strategic regional headquarters:**
 - Where there is no strong UN country presence, UN Women should work from a regional office with staff based at the regional level and working at the country level where appropriate.
 - These regional teams should include independent monitoring systems (see below) and act as ‘learning hubs’ – collating evidence, facilitating innovation, learning and best practice from their region, and sharing this at a new learning session at the Commission on the Status of Women every year.

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- **Senior and expert leadership and staffing is needed:**
 - Every UNCT, regional centre and UN peacekeeping mission must have a gender equality expert or team that is represented at ‘head of agency’ level, where decisions are made. These experts must have an independent budget.
 - UN Women country and regional offices must have sufficiently highly-graded staff to ensure they have the authority to be key players in UNCTs, with access to the Resident Coordinator’s office.
- **UN Women needs the clout to push system-wide accountability:**
 - UN Women should set-up an independent monitoring system based at the regional level. Staff should be independent from UN Women staff and carry out learning visits to UN Women offices and UNCTs. This independent monitoring system should review how well gender equality and women’s empowerment is being addressed by UN agencies and the UNCT at country level. This learning should feed into the regional learning hubs described above.
- **UN Women must have the authority to push other UN agencies to adopt or strengthen accountability mechanisms, building on successes from other UN agencies, such as World Food Programme (WFP), who are already monitoring implementation of gender equality in their programming. Agencies should:**
 - Report on gaps in delivering their commitments and progress made against established gender policy through Annual Performance Reports.
 - Assess their UN country offices’ gender mainstreaming performance by incorporating gender equality indicators in audit policies.
 - Ensure that organisational reporting includes data disaggregated by sex and age.
- **The UN lacks a system-wide approach to disaggregating revenues, allocations and expenditure for gender equality. The establishment of UN Women presents an unparalleled opportunity to champion gender-responsive budgeting from the very centre of the UN, and to set an international marker for disaggregating budgets. At the country level UN Women should ensure that all UN agencies have financial reporting systems that provide accurate accounting of allocations and expenditures for gender equality and women’s empowerment.**

3. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

The case for change

International institutions alone cannot solve all of the world's problems. Neither can the pursuit of equality and empowerment for women and girls be the sole responsibility of the world's governments. We welcome the recognition in General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/289 that civil society organisations, and in particular women's organisations, play a vital role in promoting women's rights, gender equality and the advancement of women. However, we question the Resolution's assumption that current UN consultative practices with civil society organisations (CSOs) are 'effective' and make a 'meaningful contribution' to the UN's global work on gender equality.

Inclusion of civil society is key

Evidence has systematically shown that the UN consistently fails to tear down the barriers to effective participation for grassroots stakeholders working on gender equality, hampering the efficiency of the entire gender-equality approach. Throughout the UN system engagement with CSOs is often reliant largely on the discretion of individuals and is therefore inconsistent and dependent upon ad hoc, informal initiatives. In 2008, the UN retreat *Delivering as One on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* in Hanoi found that the *Delivering as One UN Framework* lacked adequate, formal mechanisms for involving women's organisations and networks in planning, implementation and monitoring of gender equality goals.

In 2004, UNIFEM's Consultative Committee itself reported that it is women's networks and movements that take on the role of monitoring, providing technical assistance, ensuring ongoing advocacy for implementation and demanding accountability for gender equality goals. By contrast, a 2001 UNFPA study concluded that a majority of UN staff with responsibilities for gender equality were relatively junior and lacked technical expertise.¹⁷ To improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of UNIFEM's work, the 2004 UNIFEM report concluded by calling for more structured mechanisms to incorporate the work and perspectives of CSOs into the UN's gender equality strategic planning and processes.

Failure to adequately include CSOs and women's organisations in the work of UN has therefore been a failure to fully capitalise on the human resource and wealth of expert knowledge that has driven many of the global advancements for women and girls over the past 30 years. It is vital in the creation of UN Women that we learn the lessons of the past, and draw on the skills and expertise of the women's organisations that have worked tirelessly across the world for decades to tackle the barriers to women's empowerment. Developing mandated and formalised structures that ensure the full participation of civil society in UN Women will be an important step in ensuring that the agency is responsive and accountable to the world's women. We must end the pattern that has seen vital decisions being taken in the world's power centres without any participation from the women such decisions impact upon the most. Further, the sustainability of UN Women depends upon such a broad coalition of ownership.

¹⁷ Organisational Assessment: UNIFEM Past, Present and Future, Dec 2006, A/60/62 – E/2005/10

Given this evidence, the UN's recent commitment in Resolution A/RES/64/289 to encourage UN Women to 'continue the existing practice(s)' with regards to CSO participation seems to lack ambition. The establishment of UN Women gives the opportunity to push from the outset for mandated, formalised and truly-participatory

structures for civil society organisations - from the local and country levels, right up to full participation in the Executive Board. It is vital that UN Women is accountable, accessible and responsive to the needs, not just of the governments of the world, but of the women and girls of the world and the organisations that represent them.

Recommendations

- UN Women should be the vanguard of a new, people-centred and women-centred UN. The entity should be accountable to all of the world's women - not only to the (usually male-dominated) governments of the world represented on the Executive Board, at ECOSOC and at the UN General Assembly.
- To achieve this end, the new Executive Board should, over time, provide for the full participation of civil society within its structures. At the very least, this should mean five representatives of civil society – one from each region – on the Executive Board, with full speaking and participation rights. A more ambitious aim would include full voting rights for civil society members.
- Innovative mechanisms – similar to CEDAW's optional protocol – should be considered to allow women and women's organisations to report their circumstances directly to UN Women when they feel failed by their government and/or other institutions that are supposed to be protecting their rights. This is especially important for women in countries without a UN Women Country Team and which are also not covered by the CEDAW Convention.
- Larger Civil Society Advisory Councils should be established at global, regional and country levels to advise UN Women.
- At the country level (where UN Country Teams exist) structural mechanisms should ensure Resident Coordinators deliver UNCT consultations that include the Civil Society Advisory Council, National Women's Machineries, women's NGOs and community-based groups in planning, implementation and monitoring processes.¹⁸
- To ensure that enhanced resourcing for UN Women does not have an impact on the funding available for grassroots women's organisations, consideration should be given to ring-fencing at least five per cent of UN Women's budget for CSOs, safeguarding and strengthening their role as key partners in the delivery and monitoring of development outcomes.

¹⁸ Adapted from the Key Findings of the 19-21st November 2008 UNIFEM Hanoi retreat, Delivering as One on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

4. FUNDING

The case for change

This paper has highlighted the importance of building a UN Women that is a vociferous champion for women and girls – an agency with international autonomy and real decision making capability, with strong operational capacity at the regional and country level, and with effective and meaningful civil society participation at every level of the system. None of this can happen without sufficient funds. If UN Women is to succeed in its mandate to deliver positive change for women and girls around the world, we cannot make the same mistakes of the past – UN Women must be ambitiously funded.

Supporting gender equality and women's empowerment are 'powerful multipliers of development efforts... and catalysts for the reduction of poverty and the achievement of all the MDGs'.¹⁹ Countless studies have shown that gender equality reduces poverty and that positive development outcomes cannot be achieved without the empowerment of women and girls. The MDGs that are most off-track are those most closely dependent on women being empowered and able to realise their rights.

The need for more than rhetoric

There has been impressive rhetoric around the importance of gender equality and women's rights, but UN gender equality architecture to date has been woefully under-funded. Funding for gender equality work within both mainstream agencies and women's specific mechanisms such as UNIFEM, has

been inadequate for the task. In 2008, the existing gender equality bodies had a total budget of \$221 million - with UNIFEM's budget accounting for the vast majority of this. Given that the entire UN system had a combined budget of \$27 billion in 2008, the total expenditure of the four gender equality bodies amounted to less than one per cent of total UN expenditure.²⁰

Resources are critical to delivery

Whilst UNIFEM's mandate was to be 'the women's fund at the United Nations ... (providing) financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality',²¹ in reality its work has been limited by funding constraints. A lack of funding has meant that its presence within countries has been limited and sporadic – often with small scale pilot projects that have not translated into visible differences to the lives of the huge majority of women around the world. As previously discussed, UNIFEM's mandate and funding constraints have meant its activities have been catalytic, restricted to playing a supporting role to other UN agencies. Limited funding has meant that, on the whole, UNIFEM has lacked seniority and resources to ensure other, much bigger, UN agencies mainstream gender equality. Furthermore, lack of funding has made it difficult for UNIFEM to engage with and support women's organisations on the ground, or to push for specific women's empowerment programming. A lack of sustainable core funding has meant it has struggled to develop longer term plans and strategies.

¹⁹ OECD-DAC. 2009 DAC Guiding Principles for Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' OECD, 9th March 2009

²⁰ GEAR Campaign, Funding, ODA < Governance and Structural Factors Relevant to the Establishment of a New UN Gender Equality Architecture, 2009

²¹ UNIFEM annual report p.2 2008-2009

In recent years, UNIFEM's income and expenses have almost doubled due to the creation of a fundraising campaign to encourage governments to commit \$100million in core grants by 2011,²² but this is not indicative of UNIFEM's budget. For 2008-2009, the total UNIFEM income was just over \$204 million in comparison to previous years' budgets: in 2007, UNIFEM's budget was \$129.8 million and only \$63.3 million in 2006.

Comparison with UNICEF

- Even if we consider UNIFEM's largest budget to date (around \$204 million in 2008-09), this is still only a fraction of the total budget of other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, whose total budget for 2008-2009 was well over \$3 billion
- In 2008, the UK awarded \$9.6 million in funding to UNIFEM. By contrast, its funding for UNICEF was \$213 million

Source: GEAR Campaign & UK Parliamentary Questions 14680/14681

Whilst initial base funding commitments of \$500 million annually is a welcome start – this amounts to more than double the current resources available for the current UN gender equality architecture – UN Women needs to be more ambitiously funded if it is to succeed.

An initial commitment of \$500 million annually to UN Women would only constitute about 1.6 per cent of total UN funding. A more ambitious commitment of \$1 billion annual funding to UN Women would still only constitute just over three per cent of all UN funding. In light of the fact that women make up over 50 per cent of the world's population but represent 70 per cent of the world's poor,²³ committing between only 1.6-3 per cent of the UN's budget seems an incredibly modest amount to invest in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Return on investment

Investing in women pays dividends for the entire community. Typically, women put an average of 90 per cent of their earnings back into the family, compared to the 30 to 40 per cent that men contribute.²⁴ Investing in women also pays dividends at the national level. For example, a one year increase in the schooling of all adult women in a country is associated with an increase in GDP per capita of around \$700.²⁵ It is extremely difficult to estimate the true cost of inequality - the sustained trauma caused by violence, or the long-term impact on a child whose mother has died of AIDS, are not straightforward to determine. However, we do know, for example, that violence against women and girls drains public resources, undermines human capital and lowers economic productivity. Even the most conservative estimates measure the national costs of this in the billions of dollars.²⁶

²² http://www.unifem-saro.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36:what-we-do&catid=3:campaigns&Itemid=36

²³ http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/

²⁴ Rt. Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP, Secretary of State for International Development, in his first overseas speech at Carnegie Endowment, Washington DC, 25 June 2010

²⁵ ActionAid paper, p.5

²⁶ ActionAid paper, p.5

Recommendations:

- The UK should continue to play a leadership role in pushing for ambitious funding for UN Women. Whilst an initial global commitment of \$500 million is a start, this is still too little to sufficiently scale up programming and resources for women and girls. The UK should lobby internationally to scale up the annual budget to at least \$1 billion to ensure UN Women has the resources to carry out its mandate effectively.
- In order to reflect the UK Government's high-priority commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide, the UK should commit significant financial support to UN Women – considerably increasing the contributions made to UNIFEM in the past. As outlined above, funding to UN Women should be at least comparable to the amount the UK has previously funded UNICEF.
- Furthermore, the UK should commit ambitious funding to UN Women in the first year in order to set an example and encourage other member states to follow suit.
- The UK should strive to maintain their place on the Executive Board as one of the top four donors. When the Executive Board is renewed, the UK should maintain their position in order to continue to exert strategic influence on the direction of UN Women.
- Whilst there is need for stringent indicators and measures of success, donor governments, including the UK, should take into account when making future funding decisions that supporting social transformation will take time. Annual assessments, indicators and measures of success should reflect this.





The Gender & Development Network (GADN) brings together expert NGOs, consultants, academics and individuals committed to working on gender, development and women's rights issues. Our vision is of a world where social justice and gender equality prevail and where all women and girls are able to realise their rights free from discrimination. Our goal is to ensure that international development policy and practice promotes gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Our role is to support our members by sharing information and expertise, to undertake and disseminate research, and to provide expert advice and comment on government policies and projects.

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