

Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF,

UN-Women and WFP

A. Equity: narrowing the gaps to push for achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals

1. Following a brief welcome by H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen (Bangladesh), the President of the UNICEF Executive Board, who chaired the meeting, Mr. Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of UNICEF, introduced the concept paper. The Executive Director noted that overall progress has been made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals but that the Goals are tracked by national averages that do not measure inequities within societies. Mr. Lake presented the example of inequities faced by children in sub-Saharan Africa, where a child in the poorest quintile is 2 to 3 times more likely to be stunted, not receive vaccinations, and not be enrolled in school. Such vast disparities have stirred UNICEF to refocus on equity. The Executive Director also highlighted a modelling study carried out by a team of experts from within and outside UNICEF, which aimed to assess the cost-effectiveness of an equity-focused approach. The results of the study defied conventional wisdom: an equity approach, with efforts focused on the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach children and families, was the most cost effective and quickest way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Mr. Lake emphasized the challenge ahead, which is the need to move from modelling into action, to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are achieved quickly, cost-effectively, and equitably.

2. Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator of the UNDP, noted in her opening remarks that there is “a disconnect between economic growth and human development” in many societies that are making overall progress but leaving behind the poorest of the poor. “GDP growth does not ensure equity,” she said. “An explicit focus on inequality is now required.”

3. Following the introductory remarks, 18 delegations took the floor, raising several key issues:

(a) The potential for the private sector and civil society to forge a partnership with the government to play a role in the equity-focused approach;

(b) The extent to which national governments have adopted the equity-focused approach, particularly in countries with large disparities;

(c) How the equity approach is being addressed in the least developed countries and middle-income countries, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America;

(d) Whether the results from the study conducted by UNICEF on an equity-focused approach, which was modelled on the health sector, can be more widely applied to all areas covered by the Millennium Development Goals;

(e) What could be recommended to help national policies and programmes to address equity in the context of volatile situations.

4. Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, in his remarks stressed the importance of addressing gender inequities for the sake of the broader development agenda, as women and girls are especially vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. “Equity is essential to everything that we do” he said. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN-Women, stressed the problem of gender-based disparities in education. While the education gap between girls and boys has narrowed in most nations, she said, inequities persist among marginalized communities – even in regions that have made great strides, such as those in countries of Latin

America and Caribbean. She further added, “Women are essential in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”. Mr Amir Abdullah, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, positioned equity as a key to development progress. “Hunger and food security are clearly an equity issue,” he said. The world’s poorest people, he added, “are depleting their assets, depleting their wealth, just to be able to feed themselves.”

5. Responding to the issues raised by delegations, the following points were emphasized by the panelists:

(a) The large role that the private sector and civil society may play alongside the government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals through an equity approach;

(b) The promising reception given to the equity focus by national governments, with many of them encouraged by its cost-effectiveness;

(c) The necessity of an equity approach in all regions, tailored to specific country conditions;

(d) The centrality of an equity approach to all areas covered by the Millennium Development Goals; given the interrelated nature of the Goals, it is important to further analyse the effect of an equity approach across all sectors;

(e) The important role of social protection systems, especially in the face of volatility.

6. Overall, several common themes were expressed by both delegations and panellists. One was the importance of achieving gender equality globally. In this regard, UN-Women was enthusiastically welcomed as an entity that will play a vital role in accelerating this achievement. Another theme emphasized was the need for cooperation and collective action at the country

level. Delegations expressed hope that countries could share experiences and learn from each other regarding equity-focused programming.

B. Mainstreaming gender through the work of the agencies and envisaged collaboration with UN-Women

7. This session commenced with the President of the Executive Board of UN-Women, H.E. Mrs. U. Joy Ogwu (Nigeria), welcoming the Executive Directors of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women and the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of WFP to the session and inviting them to take the floor. The Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, noted that, since taking office, she had been engaged in fruitful consultations with the heads of many United Nations system partners on how UN-Women could participate in or coordinate and, in some cases lead efforts to deliver more effectively results for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Stressing that UN-Women would work with the United Nations system to deliver results, she also stated that UN-Women would not compete with the other funds and programmes; rather, it would prioritize demand-driven country level support, focusing on a few critical thematic areas to generate visible results. She emphasized the need to build partnerships across the system and to create more opportunities for each United Nations organization to support gender equality, based on comparative advantages. She noted that while promoting accountability, UN-Women would not be the "gender police", but would instead step up support for implementation of existing mechanisms, such as performance indicators, as well as advancing a shared tracking system, or "gender marker" for the United Nations with the High-level Committee on Programmes and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

8. Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, took the opportunity to congratulate Ms. Bachelet on the formal establishment of UN-Women and addressed three

issues in his statement: (a) capacity-development for gender mainstreaming; (b) collaboration with UN-Women; and (c) gender accountability. He emphasized the continuing commitment of UNFPA to working with UN-Women together with its partners in the “Health 4” (H4) (World Health Organization, UNFPA, UNICEF and World Bank) to support strong advocacy efforts to ensure universal access to reproductive health. Highlighting samples of some key UNFPA achievements in the area of gender equality, he reiterated the Fund’s commitment to work together with other agencies to achieve greater progress for women and girls.

9. In her remarks, Ms. Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator and Chair of the UNDG, welcomed UN-Women to the UNDG and reiterated the commitment of UNDP to partner with UN-Women. Highlighting some key examples of effective partnership between UNDP and UN-Women she stated that the organization’s International Assessment on what it will take to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is dependent on the investments made on women and girls. Stating that each agency has its own comparative advantage on gender issues, she also highlighted that initial discussions have commenced between UNDP and UN-Women to develop a joint guidance note for Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams on how the UNDG can work together on gender-related issues at the country level.

10. Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF, welcomed Ms. Bachelet and reiterated the commitment of his organization to work with UN-Women in furthering issues relating to children’s rights. He noted that while much had been achieved in reaching goals relating to health, nutrition and education, much more needed to be done. Collaboration with other funds and programmes was key to achieving desired results, he stated. He joined hands with the other Executive Directors in expressing support to UN-Women as it began its operations.

11. Welcoming Ms. Bachelet to her new role, Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of WFP, highlighted how the gender mandate is one in which all United Nations agencies have worked and will continue to work together. He emphasized the

key role women played in agriculture and food production, regretting that despite playing such a vital role, they had little access to services and to decision-making. As long as power and access were inequitably divided, poverty reduction would not be achieved. He underlined that UN-Women would have a key role in giving marginalized women a voice. While there would be some overlaps, there are also gaps and UN-Women should play a role in ensuring that all funds and programmes worked together in a more cohesive manner to achieve desired outcomes.

12. Delegations taking the floor recognized that close collaboration among the various funds and programmes would be key during the transition phase of UN-Women. Many asked for clarification on the role of UN-Women in leading coordination at the country level and how this would take shape in the near future. Speakers noted the importance of working together to develop coordinated strategic plans, to clarify areas of work of the respective organizations, and to ensuring complementarities of results for gender equality, stating that the creation of a separate gender entity should not absolve the efforts of other United Nations bodies in working on gender issues.

13. In response, the Executive Director of UN-Women noted that organizational mandates outlined the division of labour and that this would be further articulated in the organization's strategic plan. She and the UNDP Administrator emphasized the need to be flexible and responsive according to needs and capacities in specific country cases. The WFP Deputy Executive Director reiterated the need for a pragmatic approach and the Executive Director of UNFPA underlined that joint programming and joint funding would be supported under the rubric of the Resident Coordinator, in order to advance inter-agency collaboration and achieve positive results for gender equality.

14. The President of the Executive Board thanked all the representatives for their key contributions and also took the opportunity to again thank the Member States for their continued support in ensuring that gender equality and gender mainstreaming was a shared vision for all.

She expressed optimism about the future of UN-Women, given the commitments made by Member States and United Nations agencies alike to collaborate closely with UN-Women.

C. Efficiency of emergency response and the transition to recovery and long-term development: lessons learned

15. The President of the WFP Executive Board, H.E. Mrs. Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven (Netherlands) opened the session by inviting the WFP Deputy Executive Director for Operations to introduce the paper. In summarizing the contents of the paper, the Deputy Executive Director clarified that due to their mandates in the fields of humanitarian and development assistance, the six agencies were present and active before, during and after a crisis. He pointed out that investments in humanitarian assistance, longer-term social safety and agriculture were indeed complementary. Post-conflict situations presented unique challenges because of the nexus among humanitarian, recovery and development activities; efforts needed to be made to better integrate risk assessment and vulnerability analysis and mapping into early warning and preparedness systems. While there was agreement that the cluster approach had led to greater coherence, cluster response needed to be strengthened during mega-crises.

16. At the invitation of the President, the Guest Speaker for Liberia, Professor Togba-Nah Tipoteh, took the floor. He thanked the United Nations for helping Liberia to move towards recovery, but stressed that until the fundamentals of poverty were properly addressed, the international community would continue to invest millions in temporary measures.

17. The UNICEF Representative indicated that issues related to the aid architecture in transition/fragile situations remained unaddressed, while the incidence, scale and complexity of emergencies were likely to grow in the coming years. There was a need to bridge the critical gap during the first 6 to 18 months, using existing funding mechanisms as necessary. The Representative of UN-Women insisted on the need to ensure that women's issues be tackled in a

coordinated manner in emergencies and to improve the notorious underfunding of their needs.

The Representative of UNDP indicated that it was necessary to bring development thinking into humanitarian operations, starting development earlier and keeping humanitarian assistance longer, building on existing local capacities and coordination mechanisms.

18. The President invited questions and comments from the floor and the ensuing observations were made:

(a) Transition was not given enough thought; emergencies should not be seen in stages; the Delivering as One concept should be applied to transitional and fragile countries;

(b) Donor funding should be improved and be more flexible during transition/fragile situations;

(c) Local purchase initiatives and cash transfer programmes were encouraged;

(d) When it came to addressing poverty, a differentiation was to be made between chronic and sudden emergencies;

(e) The Humanitarian Coordinator and the United Nations country teams were critical to coordination and to implementing clusters; disaster risk reduction should be integrated in clusters and preparedness mechanisms had to improve;

(f) Coordination among the United Nations organizations, peacekeeping missions and multilateral institutions should improve to help manage better complex operations, building on national capacity after the emergency is over; the importance of investing in local communities was stressed;

(g) Lessons learned in building resilience and capacity in mega-crises should be shared, as well as best and worst practices, and more examples given.

19. The WFP Deputy Executive Director for Operations answered that resources received were earmarked, which prevented a holistic approach. While funding was linear, the situations were not; adaptive tools were therefore needed. He stressed that there were risks to staff and operations and reputational risks for undertaking activities in such environments. A joint United Nations approach to capacity-building was also needed to ensure sustainability.

20. The President concluded the session, suggesting that transition be the main topic for the 2012 joint meeting of the Executive Boards.

D. Delivering as One: follow-up to Hanoi

21. The meeting was chaired by the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, H. E. Ms. Edita Hrdá (Czech Republic). Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP, delivered an introductory statement on behalf of the United Nations organizations represented at the joint meeting.

22. Presentations were made by Mr. Diego Canepa, Under-Secretary to the Presidency of Uruguay, and Mr. Henrique Banze, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique, on the experiences of the two countries as part of the Delivering as One initiative.

23. Following the presentations, the floor was opened for comments and questions to the panel. Delegations raised the following issues:

(a) It was asked what might be done to strengthen the political will to promote the initiative;

(b) It was said that work needs to be done at Headquarters to reduce the reporting burden on United Nations country teams. There was a further call on organizations to implement the management and accountability system, and a request was made for an update on this;

(c) A request was made for information about the work to empower United Nations Resident Coordinators;

(d) It was asked how the system can ensure the right balance between resource allocation and country-specific funding needs;

(e) It was stressed that Delivering as One is not an end in itself but a tool, and further noted that earmarked funding erodes the principle of national ownership and leadership;

(f) A request was made for the views of the panel on how the Delivering as One evaluation might be made accessible to Member States, and how this could be done in a way that led to a broadly supported outcome going into the quadrennial comprehensive policy review;

(g) It was asked whether there were funding gaps for the independent evaluation and what might be done to harmonize reporting.

24. The following responses were provided by Ms. Clark:

(a) A firm of consultants is working on the review of the management and accountability system. The outcome of that work will be relevant to the empowerment of the Resident Coordinators;

(b) The independent Delivering as One evaluation is coordinated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, not the United Nations Development Group, and there is a funding gap of \$600,000;

(c) The United Nations system is aware of the sustainability issues surrounding the Delivering as One initiative, and there have been discussions on this with other principals.

Agencies do not have the necessary resources, however, and a formula needs to be found for an equitable alignment;

25. Additional comments were made by representatives of UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UN-Women and UNOPS.

(a) Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF, emphasized that UNICEF was firmly on board with Delivering as One. While there are short-term transaction costs, these are redeemed by the long-term results at the country level. He stressed the need for agencies to retain their identities;

(b) Ms. Mari Simonen, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA, said that the United Nations system needs to invest in change-management capacity. The work on business practices includes bringing to scale initiatives that have taken place so far, such as common procurement and common services. Some gains are relatively easy to accomplish, but there is a lot of work involved, and in areas such as information and communications technology (ICT), up-front investments are needed. As was shown in the case of Mozambique, these investments pay off in the end.

(c) Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, WFP, further noted that up-front capital investment — particularly for ICT — can pose a challenge. He stressed the importance, as regards Delivering as One, of the role played by the regional teams, as well as the need to focus on delivering “a joint programme”, i.e., a fully coordinated “one UN” programme, rather than many joint programmes.

(d) Ms. Gulden Turkoz-Cosslet, Senior Adviser, UN-Women, stated that UN-Women will seek to add value to existing coordination mechanisms. The Delivering as One approach has helped in addressing the lack of a coordinated approach on gender;

(e) Mr. Bruce McCarron, Director of the North America Regional Office, UNOPS, emphasized the firm commitment of UNOPS to Delivering as One and shared experiences of country team joint delivery in Afghanistan.
