



**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards  
of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP  
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**Mainstreaming gender through the work of the agencies  
and envisaged collaboration with UN-Women**

Concept paper prepared jointly by  
UNDP, UNFPA (co-coordinator), UNICEF, UN-Women (co-coordinator) and WFP

## I. Introduction

1. The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in July 2010 by General Assembly resolution 64/289 could herald a new era of leadership and accountability for United Nations support to countries on gender equality - its partnerships with different parts of the United Nations system will be a determining factor. As UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP collectively have a nearly universal presence, the ability of UN-Women to be effective on the ground is contingent on strong partnerships with each organization and collaborative work with all.

2. The present paper aims to take a clear view of how the five organizations represented in the joint meeting of the Executive Boards can work both independently and collaboratively to transform unequal gender relations and end gender-based discrimination against women and girls. It is important to highlight the significant progress the United Nations system has made with regard to its commitments to gender equality. It is equally important to emphasize the areas where there has been uneven progress. The slow and uneven progress to date on gender equality is indicative of the need for all agencies to redouble their commitment, allocate significant resources, sharpen their focus and targeting and strengthen accountability to demonstrate results.

3. Over the past year, United Nations Member States engaged in strategic reflection on progress toward gender equality through a number of different exercises including: the 30-year review of progress on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 10-year reviews of progress in implementing Security Council resolution 1325 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Analyses produced by regional groups, United Nations organizations and women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for these reviews highlight and emphasize lessons learned, including the following:

- Sustainable progress toward the goals of development, peace and security is dependent on progress toward gender equality and vice versa.
- Progress made in strengthening the normative and legislative framework for gender equality at the national level has not been accompanied by sustained implementation. To ensure this happens all agencies must commit the technical and financial resources required to support transformational change in gender relations and women's status relative to that of men.
- Accountability for commitments made to advance gender equality and women's empowerment needs significant strengthening, both within the United Nations system and at the national level.
- Progress toward the goals of gender equality requires budget and policy frameworks to match the scale of the challenge, for instance, progress in speeding up girls' completion of primary and secondary school requires relevant policy changes (e.g., elimination of school fees for the poorest girls; feeding programmes to improve girls' nutritional status and ability to learn; presence of more women teachers, etc.). There

is a need for increased political leadership and engagement with civil society organizations, especially those at the grassroots level.

4. By establishing UN-Women, the Member States of the United Nations have recognized the need for a more cohesive and coordinated approach to promote gender equality<sup>1</sup>. The establishment of UN-Women is meant to enhance system-wide efforts and does not diminish the responsibilities of other organizations to continue their support for gender equality.

5. The present paper, produced at the request of the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP, identifies principles and practices that have emerged from a robust history of results-oriented and rights-based partnership among UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP and the four entities that have merged to form UN-Women (UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW). By clarifying types of interventions and their underlying principles, United Nations agencies are better able to collaborate and contribute to well-aligned and harmonized programmes that support the needs and priorities of Member States in their promotion of gender equality and the advancement of girls and women.

## **II. Converging mandates to strengthen support to countries to advance gender equality**

6. UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women address complementary aspects of gender equality in line with their mandates, their areas of comparative advantage and their strategic plans. At the global level:

- UNDP focuses its efforts on supporting achievement of the MDGs and integrating gender equality and women's empowerment through its core areas of work: democratic governance, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment and energy.
- WFP recognizes that its mission can only be achieved if women, men, girls and boys are equal in terms of opportunities, access to resources, services and participation in decisions. WFP therefore continuously seeks opportunities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women to fulfil its mandate in food and nutrition security. Women are empowered in careful and innovative ways to increase the efficiency and sustainability of WFP programmes addressing extreme hunger and poverty and contributing to the achievements of the MDGs, particularly MDG 1.
- UNFPA is guided by the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which explicitly directs the organization to empower women so they can achieve their human rights to health, and specifically reproductive health. In the context of population dynamics, UNFPA ensures gender analysis is applied to emerging issues such as migration and aging, and supports Member States to develop a strong set of gender statistics.

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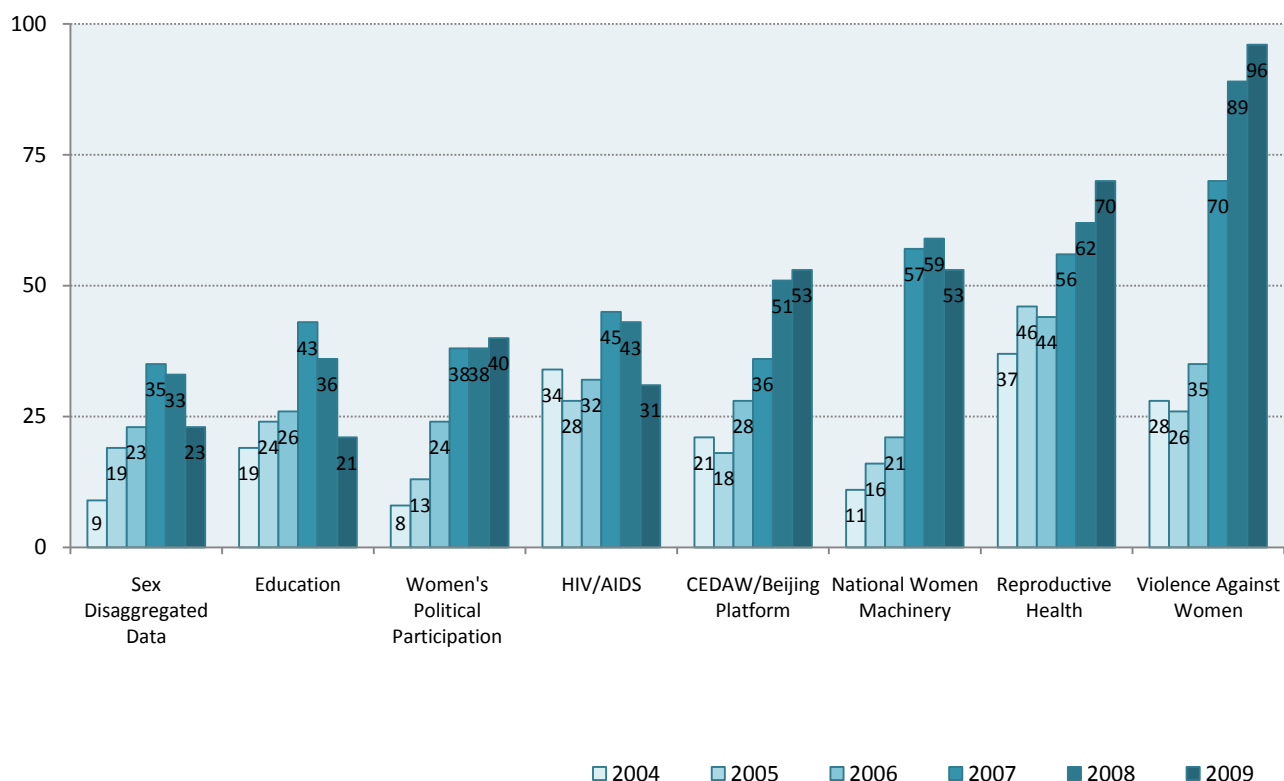
<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 64/289.

- UNICEF is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Its mission is to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities. UNICEF recognizes the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination as central to the consideration of gender equality and therefore advocates for equal opportunities for excluded and marginalized children, especially those affected by disabilities as well as those from indigenous and minority backgrounds.
- UN-Women is guided by CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs. UN-Women was requested by the General Assembly to “provide, through its normative support functions and operational activities, guidance and technical support to all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming” and to conduct its work in ways that “lead to more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system”.

### **III. United Nations system indicators of performance on gender equality**

7. There are a number of indications that the United Nations system is making progress in relation to its support for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Successive reviews of the Resident Coordinators annual reports conducted by the 17-member United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Task Team on Gender Equality continue to show overall positive trends in reporting on stronger United Nations country team (UNCT) support for gender equality and the empowerment of women. For example, since tracking began in 2004, there has been a four-fold increase in reporting on joint initiatives to end violence against women, as well as increases in other programmatic areas. While the reviews do not verify the impact or quality of these efforts or document promising practices, the UNDG thematic paper on MDG 3, “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women”, does identify successful country experiences and the factors that have contributed to success in moving toward MDG 3.

**United Nations country team initiatives on gender equality by area of support (number of countries) from Resident Coordinator annual reports**



8. The most recent generation of common country assessments (CCAs)/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), 2006-2009, exhibit consistent attention to developing clear gender equality outcomes, gender equality outputs connected to other outcome areas, and better connections between what needs to be measured and the indicators identified to do so, along with better sex-disaggregated data. At the same time, the UNDAF review reveals that where there are specified budgets for gender equality they average only about 4 per cent of the total. This figure is corroborated by the findings of the UNDP gender marker in its own programmatic areas.

9. In addition, high-level decision-making bodies of the United Nations – from the Chief Executives Board to undg and the High-level Committee on Programmes – are more frequently agreeing to system-wide standards and tools to enhance performance and accountability of individual organizations and the UNCTs. These include:

- CCA/UNDAF Guidelines which now identify gender equality as one of the key programming principles for CCA/UNDAF processes.
- A set of UNCT performance indicators on gender equality sent to all Resident Coordinators in August 2008 urging UNCTs rolling out new UNDAFs to establish

baselines for their performance using the indicators. Fourteen UNCTs have completed the assessment and are in the process of implementing findings to promote gender equality.

- The 2005 *Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups* was translated into French and Spanish to ensure that UNCTs in more regions could take advantage of the guidance it provides.
- An e-module on gender equality was developed as part of a set of modules for programme staff of UNDAF roll-out countries.

#### **IV. Envisioning new opportunities for engagement and action**

10. With the establishment of UN-Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP have an opportunity to better support Member States in their work on gender equality through a shared vision about the standards and types of interventions required to achieve progress on gender equality. A sample of success factors are listed here and followed by illustrative examples of how agencies are working to mainstream them in their collaborative work:

- Ensuring stronger support to governments to implement internationally agreed development goals, norms and standards.
- Ensuring initiatives are context-specific and aligned with national priorities.
- Using evidence-based programming approaches to support South-South learning and replicate good practice from lessons learned.
- Ensuring inclusion and participation of all stakeholders, including new constituencies.
- Ensuring attention to gender equality in conflict and humanitarian settings.

#### **Ensuring stronger support to governments to implement internationally agreed development goals, norms and standards**

11. Bringing the comparative advantage of normative and operational parts of the United Nations system together to strengthen the conducive environment for gender equality is critical. Five United Nations organizations (UNIFEM, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Habitat) pooled resources for a United Nations joint programme to facilitate the implementation of the CEDAW Concluding Comments, 2007-2009, in the Philippines. The programme was developed as a follow-up to the State report that the Government made to the CEDAW Committee in August 2006 and aimed to support the Government in fulfilling its obligation to implement CEDAW. Civil society groups monitored government actions and supported disadvantaged women to claim their rights. The main components of the programme involved advocacy for the application of the Convention in the national legal system, capacity-building among national government agencies and civil society partners to address the priority areas of women's human rights, including concerns of indigenous, Muslim and rural women.

## **Ensuring initiatives are context-specific and aligned with national priorities**

12. In Albania, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and UNIFEM, all with strong commitment to gender equality from their leadership, are involved in a joint programme under the Delivering as One initiative. The joint programme focuses on supporting implementation of the country's first law on domestic violence and the national gender equality law, and comprises different interrelated initiatives with different combinations of agencies.

13. UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNDP were active on the women and elections component of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and took the lead by working with political parties to promote a quota for women in the new Electoral Code that was adopted in 2008. In early 2009, before the poll, the three organizations jointly sponsored a national survey on women's participation as voters. The survey found that nearly a quarter of women – compared to 10 per cent of men – were choosing not to vote.

14. The organizations agreed to focus on activities where each was best equipped to promote women's political participation as candidates and voters. UNIFEM drew on long relationships with women's groups and gender advocates within the government to mobilize women and monitor the application of the quotas. UNICEF worked through Albania's system of youth parliaments to advocate for the importance of women as candidates and voters. UNDP and UNIFEM came together to work with journalists on fair media coverage of gender equality issues relevant to the elections. More voters turned out than ever before since the advent of democracy in Albania; in regions where United Nations organizations advocated for women's political participation, half the voters were women. When the results had been tallied, the percentage of women in parliament had more than doubled, from 7 per cent to 16.4 per cent.

15. The Government also called for United Nations assistance in formulating a new law and strategy to curb domestic violence, through the joint programme. In response, UNDP is training police officers and judges, while UNFPA helps doctors and nurses understand the law and methods for detecting domestic violence. UNICEF has engaged school counsellors in identifying child victims and initiating referrals. Building on lessons learned, the UNCT has begun advocating for "one-stop" community service models. Pilot centres have been set up in four municipalities, offering proof of the merits of giving survivors of violence ready access to prevention, protection and support services.

16. In Mali, UNICEF and WFP are working to improve gender equality in education. Access to basic education remains a concern with low-enrolment levels, particularly for girls (56 per cent). A joint programme of WFP and UNICEF on education implements the Essential Learning Package, an integrated set of interventions developed by WFP in partnership with UNICEF in 2002. It is designed to improve the nutritional status and health of schoolchildren as well as learning outcomes. The initiative provides incentives that lead to increased attendance of girls at school and better nutritional outcomes. Additional contextualized and practical learning is linked to construction of school kitchens with improved stoves, school gardens for agricultural learning and practical education programmes on development of woodlots. WFP seeks to increase gender equality in school enrolment, promote regular attendance and reduce drop-out rates through its

school feeding programme. The resulting increased access to education for girls improves their opportunities to benefit from the development process.

### **Using evidence-based programming approaches to support South-South learning and replicate good practice from lessons learned**

17. The Government of Rwanda addresses gender-based violence as a security issue under the mandate of the police and the national army. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNIFEM (now part of UN-Women) since 2004 have supported Rwanda in developing a model of a comprehensive and multisectoral approach to addressing violence against women, and with well-defined roles for security actors in implementing the model. The Agaseke One-Stop Center was established at the National Police headquarters in Kigali with the support of the United Nations system in Rwanda. In addition, a network of 69 gender-based violence desks has been established across the country. These gender desks provide women and girls with a comprehensive package of tools and support including legal, health, psychosocial and forensic services. Indications suggest a decrease in violence against women since the creation of the gender-based violence desk. The report of the joint field visit to Rwanda by the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, 20-30 March 2010, endorsed “the regional gender-based violence training services offered by the Rwanda police force as an initiative worth replicating”. The report also noted that neighbouring countries are familiar with this initiative, and it serves as a good example of South-South cooperation.

18. In October 2010, under the rubric of the Secretary-General’s UNiTE campaign, Rwanda hosted the International Conference on the Role of the Security Sector in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, where 12 countries in Africa agreed to replicate this model in their own countries.

### **Ensuring inclusion and participation of all stakeholders, including new constituencies**

19. In 2008, an inter-agency working group issued a joint statement on eliminating female genital mutilation. Signed by OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM and WHO, the statement is a call to all States, international and national organizations, civil society and communities to uphold the rights of girls and women. It also calls on those bodies and communities to develop, strengthen and support specific and concrete actions directed towards ending female genital mutilation.

20. UNFPA and UNICEF set out to operationalize the joint statement through a joint programme that started in 2008, in which they are leading efforts to end female genital mutilation/cutting, as a persistent violation of the basic human rights of girls and women in one generation. Called "Accelerating Change", the joint programme covers 17 countries. By 2012, the two organizations, working closely with governments, NGOs, religious leaders, media, professionals and small community groups, hope to bring about a 40 per cent reduction of the practice in target communities, and to have at least one country declared free of female genital mutilation/cutting.



21. The holistic approach used by the programme brings together legal reform and culturally sensitive strategies. These include media campaigns, community dialogue and debates, garnering the support of stakeholders (especially professional associations, religious leaders, parliamentarians, civil society and NGOs), group commitments to abandonment of the practice, and legal measures. With regard to the sexual and reproductive rights of the thousands of women and girls who are subjected to female genital mutilation/cutting, the joint programme is building the capacities of health care providers to alleviate their suffering and enhance their well-being.

### **Ensuring attention to gender equality in conflict and humanitarian settings**

22. Due in part to the collective advocacy of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, with its membership of 13 United Nations organizations, sexual violence as a tactic and consequence of conflict is now understood as a peace and security issue that demands full attention from peace and security actors, and is recognized in some contexts as a priority challenge for humanitarian and peacekeeping practice. There are also many “tools” in the pipeline involving several United Nations agencies that are designed to improve the response on the ground. For example, WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA are developing a survey tool in collaboration with the United States Centers for Disease Control that will provide the system with a much-needed common measure for prevalence of sexual violence, as well as trends, patterns, risk factors, and profiles of victims and perpetrators.

23. In a similar vein, UNDP, in collaboration with a number of United Nations organizations, has produced the 2010 report *The Price of Peace: Financing for Gender Equality in Post-conflict Recovery and Reconstruction*, which links accountability for women’s rights to use of resources. The report examines how resources were mobilized, allocated and spent, and how they can be used more effectively to achieve gender equality. In addition, UNDP has led inter-agency initiatives to produce a range of gender-responsive tools to facilitate capacity strengthening and transition from conflict and disaster to development. These cover topics such as gender dimensions of violence in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, post-disaster needs assessment for recovery and gender equality, and gender guidelines for mine action programmes.

## **V. The way forward**

24. Though there has been some positive evolution since the last joint meeting of the Executive Boards, the United Nations system needs to make more progress in building in-house capacity to implement the wealth of guidance and to benefit from lessons learned. There is ongoing fallout from lack of coherence, limited resources and weak accountability.

25. Drawing upon experiences to date, both positive and negative, UN-Women is in a position to provide enhanced support in key areas for a more coherent United Nations system-wide response that brings together the collective strengths of United Nations organizations. During its first year, UN-Women proposes to mobilize the collective weight of gender equality expertise in the United Nations system to secure commitments to the following:

- In collaboration with United Nations and national partners, identify a standard package of services that UN-Women can be relied on by the United Nations system to deliver, taking into account the comparative advantages of the various United Nations organizations.
- Mapping the full range of gender expertise within the United Nations system to make it more accessible to all United Nations organizations.
- Enhancing coordination and coherence around gender equality through United Nations planning processes, UN-Women will deliver greater technical support to UNDAF processes right from the beginning, as these constitute the programme framework for UNCTs. In that regard, strengthening accountability, standards, availability of gender expertise and leadership of theme groups is essential.
- Promoting accountability in the United Nations system on gender equality including by securing the commitment of the Chief Executives Board to performance standards for the highest level of leadership and UNCTs (e.g., revising and making mandatory performance indicators for UNCTs) as well as developing standards for United Nations system-wide, gender-responsive reporting on budget allocations.
- Supporting stronger knowledge generation by, for example, exploring the feasibility of producing a meta-evaluation of United Nations system evaluations of gender equality programming and a process for regular joint evaluation of United Nations joint programmes for gender equality.

## **VI. Conclusion**

26. The establishment of UN-Women gives UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA and UNDP a key ally to advocate and transform discriminatory behaviours, systems and structure, particularly in regard to the interaction of gender discrimination and various other forms of discrimination based on ethnic or social origin, disability or other status. In return, the four agencies provide UN-Women and each other with alliances, networks and specialized knowledge that can be used to create a collaborative and sustainable front for progress on gender equality including gender-responsive programming across all types of development initiatives. Together the work of the five organizations – even with a large injection of new resources – will not be enough to eliminate gender inequality. But with a mindset of collaboration rather than competition, building on what are clearly defined comparative advantages and mandates, and in the spirit of aid effectiveness, there is potential to make progress. The United Nations can mainstream gender in a more effective manner, taking advantage of emerging evidence about what works and investing in analysis of this work so as to improve planning and implementation processes. Using this information, successes can be scaled up in an informed manner to promote gender equality.

27. UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and WFP look forward to working together with UN-Women to further integrate gender into all core mandates and improve gender-responsive support to the priorities of national partners. By working side-by-side and collaboratively for the same goals, the five organizations will speak with increased authority; raise standards of accountability for

gender and development initiatives in the United Nations; and work more effectively with all development partners to catalyse transformational change and move toward true gender equality.

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