

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-sixth session
27 February-9 March 2012**

Review Panel

“Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”

Thursday, 1 March 2012

Panel 1: 10a.m. to 1 p.m.

Panel 2: 3 p.m. to 6p.m

ISSUES PAPER

I. Introduction

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the Commission on the Status of Women will be reviewing at its 56th session progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of its 52nd session held in 2008¹ on the theme “Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”.

The review panel is designed to critically examine measures, mechanisms and processes for enhancing financing for gender equality in follow up to the 52nd session of the Commission. The panel will aim to identify good practices and lessons learned, and highlight gaps and challenges requiring further attention. It is expected that the interactive dialogue will lead to strong recommendations for accelerating progress in implementation, taking into account not only the challenges but also the opportunities stemming from the current global context.

II. Background

Investment in gender equality and women’s empowerment is an important measure of governments’ commitment to achieving gender equality and pro poor policy objectives. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, in 1995, governments made commitments on financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment and reiterated these commitments in a number of subsequent United Nations summits and conferences including the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in 2000, the International Conference on Financing for Development, in 2002 and the Millennium Summit.

Importantly, the Commission’s agreed conclusions of 2008 urged Governments, entities of the United Nations system and other stakeholders to enhance financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment by adopting measures to:

¹ link to the 2008 agreed conclusions
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/agreedconclusions/Agreed%20conclusions%2052nd%20session.pdf>

- Increase investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women -- both in domestic resources and through official development assistance (ODA);
- Mainstream gender perspectives in economic policy and public finance management;
- Cost national plans for gender equality and provide adequate resources for their implementation;
- Strengthen institutional frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and capacity building to systematically incorporate gender perspectives into budgetary policies and processes at all levels;
- Strengthen financing for gender equality in a number of strategic sectoral areas beyond social sectors.

Member States and other relevant stakeholders have subsequently identified and implemented a broad range of concrete actions including: strengthening alignment between national development strategies and gender equality commitments; introducing a gender perspective in planning and budgeting and in aid mechanisms; and developing innovative budget tracking methodologies to demonstrate greater accountability for financing for gender equality. In some cases, there have been increases in financing for gender equality priorities and for national mechanisms for gender equality.

Despite these efforts, progress in improving financing for gender equality and implementing the 2008 agreed conclusions remains slow and uneven and is currently further threatened by the multiple crises facing the world.

The following section highlights critical issues for discussion in relation to progress in the implementation of the above-outlined primary action categories of the 2008 agreed conclusions.

III. Critical issues

Accountability for implementation of commitments to gender equality and women's rights and securing the financial resources needed for this purpose rests mainly with governments in developing and in developed countries alike. While public financial resources are generally limited, this accountability requires that public funds are effectively used to address inequalities and achieve development goals. Governments are using different approaches towards this.

Many countries identify gender issues as a priority or a cross-cutting issue that is systematically mainstreamed across all stages of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Some adopt gender equality action plans that complement national policy frameworks or development strategies, although the relationship between the two policy instruments differs greatly by country, depending on the extent to which explicit linkages are established during the formulation of both documents.

A number of other countries seek to incorporate a gender perspective in their planning and budgeting processes. These initiatives have been effective in opening political spaces for gender

equality advocates, demonstrating accountability for gender equality commitments and strengthening national capacity for gender responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring systems. Country experiences have provided examples of good practices on how to effectively address gender issues in sector programmes and institutionalize gender responsive budgeting. These examples have demonstrated that ministries of finance play a leading role in putting in place institutional mechanisms that can facilitate gender sensitive planning, budgeting and performance monitoring. The examples have also identified sector ministries and local governments as key actors for reflecting gender equality priorities in sectoral and local plans and budgets and in service delivery. Upscaling and sustaining these initiatives requires strong political will as well as institutional commitments and capacity.

The development of budget tracking methodologies at country level is one significant area of progress in relation to implementing the 2008 agreed conclusions. Under the leadership of finance ministries, methodologies to identify allocations towards gender equality have been developed and continue to be improved in countries around the world. Tracking methodologies and categorizations of public expenditures adopted by various countries present some commonalities but also important differences with regards to data collection, use and comparability across countries. Gender equality advocates can play a key role in supporting the strengthening of these methodologies so that they provide a clear account of how government agencies are addressing gender issues within their respective mandates.

National machineries require adequate resources and the necessary authority to carry out their function of advocating for and monitoring the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, including resource allocations. A 2010 study on national mechanisms for gender equality² found that despite their mandates and responsibilities, national machineries for gender equality continue to receive a disproportionately small percentage of national budgets and continue to face challenges in their roles as catalysts for gender mainstreaming. In many countries, institutional mechanisms with the mandate of promoting gender equality remain isolated from key policy spaces that define priorities for action, budget allocations and accountability measures. Very few countries have attempted to cost their gender equality plans or to effectively link those with mainstream planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation systems used by donors and national governments at country level which could lead to better financing and implementation of gender equality commitments.

Donor countries are making greater use of the gender equality policy marker, a methodology developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) for members to track official development assistance (ODA) allocated for activities that advance gender equality. As of 2011, all members of the DAC report annually against the marker. The OECD gender marker provides a useful snapshot of the status of financing for gender equality through ODA and reveals that the portion of aid that directly addresses women's priorities remains marginal and predominantly focused in social

² http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/TechnicalCooperation/GLOBAL_SYNTHESIS_REPORT_Dec%202010.pdf
 Jahan, R. (2010). *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, a global synthesis study*. Retrieved February 2012 from
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/TechnicalCooperation/GLOBAL_SYNTHESIS_REPORT_Dec%202010.pdf

sectors at the expense of empowerment related sectors such as infrastructure, energy, agriculture, and employment

Beyond examining the scale of financial contribution of ODA to gender equality goals, it would be important to explore ways to improve the quality of aid in relation to gender equality through inclusion of gender-related measures and standards in aid management systems and structures. For instance, the work carried out by gender equality advocates over the past five years has demonstrated that despite national commitments and policy guidelines from donors and national governments, gender equality as a development priority is still often absent from aid management processes and instruments³. Direct budget support coordination groups, sector-wide approaches (SWAPs), donor country strategy papers, and performance monitoring indicators are not adequately inclusive of gender equality issues. Gender responsive aid management requires more inclusive decision making processes whether in individual donor practices or in joint aid coordination mechanisms and instruments.

Multilateral organizations are making significant strides in relation to increasing financing for gender equality and tracking such funding. Discussions are ongoing on the development and use of a United Nations system-wide gender marker, building on previous efforts by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and OCHA to systematically track their gender-related investments and expenditures.

There are remarkable examples of targeted measures in the United Nations system and the international financial institutions (IFIs) that are contributing to increasing financing for gender equality. For instance in 2010, the report of the Secretary-General on women's participation in peace building⁴ presented a seven-point action plan which committed the United Nations system to work with Member States towards allocating at least 15 per cent of United Nations-managed funds in support of peace building to projects that address women's specific needs, advance gender equality and/or empower women as their principle objective. More recently, the Governing Instrument of the Green Climate Fund, adopted by the Seventeenth Conference of the Parties in Durban in 2011, has become the first multilateral climate finance mechanism to include gender considerations from the outset. Finally, gender equality was introduced as one of four special focus themes in the sixteenth replenishment of the International Development Association funds (IDA 16), the World Bank's Fund for the poorest countries; a measure seen as part of broader efforts to address gender equality priorities in the Bank's grant making and lending operations. These efforts could be strengthened and expanded.

Women's organizations and non-governmental organizations considerably contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Increased funding for women's organizations has been recognized as an essential measure for sustaining a vibrant women's movement.⁵ Research carried out by the Association for Women's Rights in Development

³ See, for example, Gender Responsive Budgeting and Aid Effectiveness Knowledge Briefs, 2010, UNIFEM (now UN Women) http://www.gender-budgets.org/index.php?option=com_joomdoc&task=cat_view&gid=277&Itemid=189

⁴ A/65/354 http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/seven_point_action_plan.pdf

⁵ AWID. (2010). *FundHer Report 3*. Retrieved from <http://www.awid.org/Library/Context-and-Trends-Influencing-the-Funding-Landscape-for-Gender-Equality-and-Women-s-Organizations-Movements>

(AWID) points to a number of positive changes, as well new and persistent challenges, including that for many women's organizations with relatively small budgets and limited access to international funders, available funding remains limited and at times inaccessible.

Increasing financing for gender equality is essential for delivering results for women and girls. Despite the positive trends that have been noted in some countries with sector ministries allocating a share of their budgets towards addressing gender equality priorities in their respective sectors, increases in budgets of national women's machineries and other efforts, inequalities persist and demonstrate that current levels of financing for gender equality remain inadequate. To achieve equitable and sustainable development results, a stronger response to the issue of financing for gender equality is needed. As mentioned in the outcome document of the 2010 Millennium Summit, "investment in gender equality in all sectors and at central and local government levels is necessary for accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)." This and the other issues outlined above should be the focus of the review by the Commission on the Status of Women, and thus enhance accountability of stakeholders for action taken to implement previous commitments.

IV. Format of the interactive dialogue

This year for the first time, two panels will be organized to allow for a thorough review of progress in implementing the 2008 agreed conclusions. Each panel will last three hours. The first panel will be held from 10am to 1pm and the second panel from 3pm to 6pm.

Each panel will begin with presentations of four to five case studies (of not more than 10 minutes each) demonstrating progress in implementation of the agreed conclusions. Member States, entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations will participate in the ensuing dialogue, and are encouraged to share their experiences in implementing the agreed conclusions, highlighting achievements, gaps and challenges, as well as good practices and lessons learned. Interventions from the floor will be limited to three minutes.

The panels will also be available via live webcast. See <http://www.unwomen.org/csw/csw56> for more information.

Panel 1 will examine National experiences in implementing the Commission's agreed conclusions of 2008, with a focus on specific thematic areas, such as the role of ministries of planning and finance in setting up gender responsive public finance management systems and bolstering financing for gender equality; the issue of financing for gender equality priorities at sector level and at local level in decentralized contexts; and, financial resources for national mechanisms for gender equality.

Presentations will identify progress, challenges, opportunities, and results achieved to enhance financing for gender equality, since 2008. The role of partnerships and support for implementation of the agreed conclusions will also be addressed.

This panel will conclude with comments and observations by a discussant who will offer a critical analysis of stakeholders' progress; reflections on the need for greater policy coherence; and presentation of policy options for accelerating the implementation of the 2008 agreed conclusions.

Panel 2 will discuss Progress in financing for gender equality from the perspective of international organizations, multilateral development partners and civil society organizations.

Presentations will identify progress, challenges, opportunities, and results achieved in enhancing financing for gender equality from the perspective of multilateral institutions, international organizations and women's organizations, since 2008. Presenters will share updates on global developments and current status and direction of financing for development more generally and for gender equality specifically; discuss new challenges that have emerged since 2008; and draw strategic linkages between the issue of financing for gender equality and broader policy processes.

Expected outcome of the review

A moderator's summary will highlight key findings and recommendations of the event. Discussions at the review panel are expected to lead to strong recommendations for accelerating progress, taking into account not only the challenges but also the opportunities stemming from the current global context.

V. Issues for consideration in the interactive dialogue

The review panel is being convened in the context of multiple crises that stall or threaten to reverse hard-won progress. It is therefore essential that governments commit to identify ways to enhance financing for gender equality and to identify innovative measures that respond to unprecedented changes in political, economic and social contexts.

Adequate financing for gender equality and women's empowerment should be considered as critical for mitigating the impact of the current crises and stimulating economic growth. Such efforts should be anchored in human rights frameworks and be aligned with efforts to achieve coherence between macroeconomic policies and the internationally agreed goals on gender equality and women's empowerment.

During the inter-active dialogue, participants will focus on lessons learned, challenges and good practices, and identify means to accelerate implementation of the 2008 agreed conclusions. They will focus on national, regional and global activities in support of the implementation of the agreed conclusions, and will provide supporting data, statistics and other quantitative and qualitative information to illustrate monitoring and reporting.

Specific questions for consideration during the interactive dialogue include:

1. What are examples of effective measures taken to ensure that domestic resources and official development assistance (ODA) promote gender equality and women's empowerment?

2. What has been the impact of some of these measures in terms of improving women's access to services at sector and local level?
3. Have national machineries for gender equality, and gender equality advocates acquired a stronger role in decision making around financing? What measurable impact has their strengthened participation had?
4. What are some good practices and lessons learned in tracking financing for gender equality both by governments and by multilateral organizations?
5. What are the remaining gaps and key challenges constraining efforts towards enhancing financing for gender equality?
6. What measures have been implemented/are needed to ensure greater coherence between macroeconomic policies (debt, aid, trade, labour and fiscal policies) with poverty reduction strategies and gender equality commitments?
7. What effective policy options for enhancing financing for gender equality could be promoted in a context of multiple crises?