

Opening Statement
by
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Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality

Workshop:
Meeting the Challenge of Gender Mainstreaming in the Programme Budget Process

Organized
by
The Taskforce on Gender Mainstreaming in Programme Budget Processes

Hosted
by
UNFPA, New York
16 June 2003

As the Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, I would like to warmly welcome all of you to this one-day workshop on "Meeting the Challenge of Gender Mainstreaming in the Programme Budget Process". I am sure you will find it both interesting and useful.

I would also like to thank UNFPA for agreeing to host the workshop. The Inter-Agency Network is grateful for the active participation of UNFPA on the taskforce and in the case studies carried out. The commitment of UNFPA to the issue of gender mainstreaming in programme budget processes is well-illustrated by your willingness to open your conference facilities to us today.

I would like to thank the Members of the Network who have collaborated with my Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women in the work of the taskforce over the past few years – UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and WFP. I would also like to mention the entities which have participated in the in-depth case studies – DPA, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, ILO, ITU, OCHA, WHO, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP. I want to particularly acknowledge those entities which have agreed to share their experiences at the workshop. These include ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, the Programme Planning and Budget Division in the Department of Management in the Secretariat as well as the Office of Internal Oversight Services. I also welcome and thank the two consultants, Mr. Tony Beck and Ms. Isabella Bakker, who will facilitate the workshop.

I would like to say a few words of introduction to the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The Network consists of approximately 60 members representing the entities of the United Nations system, i.e. the offices and departments of the United Nations Secretariat, regional commissions, funds and programmes, specialized

agencies, WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions and at least two taskforces have included NGO partners.

The Network has played a central role in promoting gender equality throughout the United Nations system, in follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000. The Inter-Agency Network has always been strongly issue-driven and has responded proactively to critical issues on the development agenda. This includes the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation of and follow-up to international conferences and summits. The most recent work undertaken by the Network responds to ongoing and emerging challenges identified by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, ECOSOC, the General Assembly, and the Security Council. The work on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets, which we are discussing here today, for example, responds to General Assembly resolution 52/100 which: ‘Requests all bodies that deal with programme and budgetary matters.... to ensure that all programmes, medium-term plans and programme budgets visibly mainstream a gender perspective’.

The Network has co-ordinated the system-wide approach to integrating gender perspectives in a range of important themes and events. It has supported and facilitated gender mainstreaming within entities through collaboration and exchange of good practices across the United Nations system and through the development of common tools, guidelines and indicators. Members jointly identify and tackle issues and processes requiring further attention in the implementation of gender mainstreaming, particularly in the area of methods development. The Network provides support to gender mainstreaming through opportunities for exchange of experience and good practice at the annual meetings as well as at informal meetings. For the past three years a specific one-day workshop on gender mainstreaming has been organized in the context of the annual meetings of the Network to promote greater understanding and implementation of the strategy.

The Inter-Agency Network works through a system of ad hoc taskforces with designated task managers which have informal inter-sessional meetings and do a lot of electronic networking. Many of the taskforces also explicitly promote gender mainstreaming in different areas, including in the areas of ICTs, financing for development and peace and security.

The Taskforce on Gender Mainstreaming in Programme Budgets which has organized the workshop today has had a strong focus on bringing greater attention to gender perspectives in programme budgets and strategic planning processes within the United Nations. The task manager for the projects carried out by the taskforce, Ms. Carolyn Hannan, and the two consultants to the taskforce, Mr. Tony Beck and Ms. Isabella Bakker, will shortly give you more information on the work and findings of the taskforce.

The taskforces of the Inter-Agency Network have clear mandates and specific time schedules. This taskforce has been working since 1999 and will now finalize its work. This does not mean, in any way, that the work on gender mainstreaming in programme budget

processes will conclude. The work of the taskforce has provided important impetus and other means of furthering this work, particularly in the context of individual entities, will be found.

Given the expressed felt need and interest in the topic to be discussed today, I am sure you will all be very active participants in the workshop. I urge you to share your knowledge, experience and ideas freely, on both constraints and potentials. I wish you a successful workshop and look forward to your findings and conclusions.

Thank you.
