

"Managing the learning function in an environment of decreasing resources".

"Orienting training and capacity building towards Delivering As One in light of the current financial crisis: A gender perspective"

UN Learning Managers Forum

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Chairperson,

Mr. Carlos Lopes, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the United Nations System Staff College,

Colleagues and friends,

It is an honour and great pleasure for me to participate in this year's *UN Learning Managers Forum*.

I have been invited to address the topic of "Orienting training and capacity building towards Delivering as One in light of the current financial crisis: A gender perspective," a topic of great significance in these times, and of particular interest to me.

In the midst of a financial crisis and shrinking economies, no organization is immune from its impacts, including the United Nations. The challenge is how to prepare the work force to remain committed to its mission, be productive under tight financial constraints and remain motivated. In this context, the expertise of the United Nations System Staff College becomes indispensable and its counsel critical. How you design and deliver training and capacity development will play a key role in preparing

the United Nations to be responsive and remain relevant and competitive in the context of the current financial crisis and indeed any future challenges.

Training is more than a goal in itself; it is a precondition for the achievement of all other goals of the United Nations. Organizations must change with the times. Timely realization of this requires more than self-generated introspection and attitudinal change on the part of its individual members. It needs a catalyst, an engine where new ideas and trends are crystallized, packaged, articulated and then disseminated. This engine is training. Without it, our organization cannot effectively synchronize itself with the best of modern developments, or, meet the challenges either created or left unaddressed by prior times and methods.

Therefore, if training is our instrument, how do we use it to strengthen the capacity of United Nations entities and their staff to effectively embrace change and, in this case, move towards Delivering as One?

The 1995 Human Development report stated, “human development if not engendered, will be endangered”. We must therefore incorporate a gender perspective into all that we do, beginning with the substance of all training. Without it we cannot excel. This is no longer a choice; it is an imperative. We can survive, as we have, but that is no longer enough. And, there is no area where such a perspective cannot be introduced – for there is no area where both men and women are not impacted. They are just impacted differently, which is what creates differences in perspectives. It is this difference in perspectives that must each be recognized, and legitimized

and then incorporated in the work of the Organization in every sphere. This is what will give meaning to the term “gender perspective.”

The achievement of gender parity is valuable not only in terms of the UN’s moral authority and image as an organization that actually translates its words into action, but it also makes good operational sense. This is why the General Assembly mandated the achievement of gender parity at all levels in all occupational categories by the year 2000. Last year, the Secretary-General made clear that rapid advance toward this long-delayed goal has high priority. Yet, at the current pace of increase in the representation of women, gender parity will not be reached in some areas until 2070 and in a few others, for some centuries. The representation of women at the P-4 level, for example, has all but remained stagnant in many entities for a decade. Greater representation of women is thus an imperative and is made more acute by changing financial times which require corresponding effective policy formulation and implementation, and appropriate training for now and the future.

The incorporation of gender perspectives into training modules and in the minds and methods of trainers and trainees needs to be better embraced. Even as there is disagreement among experts about how best to break out of the current financial crisis, the benefits of ensuring a strong gender perspective and gender mainstreaming in training are clear. It allows our Organization to position itself to truly deliver as one, harnessing and honing the skills both women and men to comprehensively address the development challenges of today and tomorrow. In this sense, ensuring gender equality and balance is one prong of a recipe central to success in delivering as one.

The imperative of gender balance and gender mainstreaming must resound and be echoed across diverse audiences. All efforts must be made to ensure gender balance among trainers trainees and among participants in panels, debates and symposia. The benefits extend well beyond the individual trainees. In the private sector the link between gender diversity and companies' financial performance has been well documented. *Catalyst*, a non-profit research and advisory organization has found that companies with a more balanced representation of women in their top management teams had a return on investment that was much higher than companies with the lowest proportion of women. The lesson is clear. Leveraging diversity yields better results. Therefore, gender diversity is not only about numbers or balancing opportunities. It is about organizational productivity.

The United Nations must remain competitive and effective. Training must aim to ensure this, but also ensure equity and opportunities for both women and men at all levels in the Organization. Training that furthers growth, which may be interpreted as the widening and deepening of perspectives and methods, be it of gender perspectives or of engendered work methods and institutional structure, must also be tailored to the needs of the different sexes and generations. In this regard, a few years ago, only women advocated for maternity leave; paternity leave was not an option. Now, the Organization has become responsive to the need and calls for paternity leave. This change has made the Organization more competitive. Similarly, demands for policies and methods to promote work –life balance will benefit men and women. Further, there are cost savings which enhance competitiveness. Training must be directed not only at enhancing the skills

of staff members so that they can contribute to the work of the Organization. It must also be directed at changing old approaches and management practices that have perpetuated gender inequalities that are untenable and costly in the context of current financial pressures.

As an Organization, the United Nations must be positioned to respond to changing intergenerational views, positions and cultures. Younger generations, who will slowly fill the positions that you and I – the older ones – occupy, view the world in a new way. Gender equality -- indeed equality of all -- is at the heart of the thinking of the younger generation. In our training materials and approaches, we must reflect the readiness of the Organization to be responsive to this change. It is all the more essential because the current financial crisis has occurred at a time when, through the efforts of the United Nations and other development organizations, the world has moved much closer to the goal of providing equal opportunities in education for girls and boys. How then do we position the Organization to provide equal opportunities for all in the work place? In short, we must become inclusive for both women and men, young and older, as we design training.

We must ensure capacity development in a holistic way, bearing in mind both the impact in the workplace and on the home front. Therefore, programmes that you, as chiefs of learning devise, must support staff on these two fronts. Our training must also be gender-sensitive in content, delivery and timing. Anything else will not do.

Let me finish with a few concrete recommendations.

- The United Nations is a recognized world leader and must be perceived as a pace setter in the area of training and gender mainstreaming. To increase the access of all staff to gender related training, managers must encourage training in gender perspectives for their staff. Training courses should be reviewed to ensure that the “gender lens” is included.
- It is difficult to increase awareness without increasing measures for accountability. In order to ensure that there is equal participation of men and women in both the attendance and leadership of training, it is crucial to monitor and report on numbers so that departments and offices can compare themselves against others and know which areas they can improve on.
- In order to ensure that the gender component is addressed in training, it is crucial to solicit and incorporate the inputs of gender experts, departmental gender focal points or gender experts in training modules. Their observations benefit the instructors who can then insert relevant issues into future training sessions.
- Among the greatest obstacles to gender equality are the personal biases and stereotypes that we all hold and that often go unnoticed and unexplored. Training can and should be used as an instrument to help individuals recognize and eradicate these biases, including, may I add, the biases of trainers themselves.

- The timing and duration of training can result in exclusion. We must devise ways to ensure that training schedules are appropriately flexible to accommodate all – both men and women.

Thank you for your attention.
