



Economic and Social Council
2010 Operational Activities Segment
New York, 9 -13 July*

1-3 pm, on 8 July 2010

**Special session - Official luncheon co-hosted by UNIFEM and UNDESA on
“Operationalizing UN system support to national priorities on gender equality”
(strictly by invitation in the Private Delegates Dining Room)**

Introduction

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) endorsed *gender mainstreaming* as a major strategy for the promotion of gender equality. Two years later, the Economic and Social Council adopted agreed conclusions 1997/2 on “Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system”. In those agreed conclusions, ECOSOC defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It defined it as a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated with the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality.

Moreover, 2010 is a milestone year for reviewing global commitments to gender equality and women’s human rights. The main UN events in this regard include - the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (1–12 March), which focused on the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action; this session of ECOSOC, with the Annual Ministerial Review having focused on the implementation of the MDG’s in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women; and the High-Level Plenary meeting of the GA, “MDG Summit” (20-22 September). In addition, there will be ongoing events throughout the year for the 10-year anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Throughout, we have been in the midst of the UN reform process on system-wide coherence, which culminated with the adoption of a resolution establishing of a new gender equality entity (UN Women).

* An informal Experts’ Roundtable discussion will be held on 8 July. (See Annex to this programme)

Gender equality in operational activities

Achieving gender equality at the country level, through gender mainstreaming and specific activities to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in operational activities, is not only an end in itself but also a prerequisite for the effective outcome of all United Nations programmes and activities.

The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for development of the United Nations (TCPR 2007)¹, asserts that the promotion of gender equality is one of four contributing factors of United Nations operational activities to national capacity development and development effectiveness. Country development instruments such as the Common Country Assessments (CCAs), United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and Consolidated Appeal Processes (CAPs), have proven to be vital tools in this effort. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which serve as guideposts for the United Nations development agenda, also have the potential to play a key role in furthering the cause of gender equality.

United Nations country teams (UNCTs), led by the Resident Coordinators (RCs), have provided support to governments of programme countries as they seek to integrate gender perspectives into their policies, programmes, legislation, budgets, and data-collection mechanisms. The UNCTs have also provided valuable assistance in ensuring that gender equality is integrated into country development programmes. The CCA/UNDAF processes have provided useful frameworks for incorporating gender perspectives into operational activities.

In 2006 the undg Task Team on Gender Equality commissioned two important reviews in order to strengthen the attention to gender equality within UN Common Country programming processes.

The first was a review of a set of most recent (26) UNDAFs to ascertain the extent to which UN coordination processes, particularly CCA/UNDAFs were supporting or inhibiting stronger action on gender equality in order to recommend tools and coordination processes that will improve attention to and action on gender equality and women's human rights in the UNDAF cycle (from formulation to implementation and evaluation). The study showed that while the quality of gender analysis in the CCAs had improved considerably, the programming response articulated in the UNDAF was still very inadequate.

The second was a study focusing on the review of United Nations Development Group (undg) Members' accountability mechanisms for gender equality. This organizational review of corporate policies was commissioned with a view, ultimately, toward providing guidance on how to strengthen UNCT performance on gender equality.

As follow-up to recommendations from the studies a number of initiatives have been taken over the last three years to strengthen gender equality within CCA/UNDAFs:

1. Two rounds of major revisions were carried out to the CCA/UNDAF guidelines which now identify gender equality as one of the key programming principles for CCA/UNDAF processes.

¹ A/RES/62/208

2. A set of UNCT performance indicators on gender equality drafted by the 17 member Task Team on Gender Equality was finalized and sent to all Resident Coordinators with a letter from the Administrator in August 2008 urging especially those UNCTs rolling out new UNDAFs to establish a baseline for their performance using the indicators together with the gender audit methodology developed by the ILO. So far, 40 UNCTs have been in touch with UNIFEM or other members of the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality concerning using the Scorecard, of which 28 are planning the exercise. At this time 11 UNCTs have completed the assessment and are in the process of implementing findings towards stronger UNCT response to gender equality.
3. An Action Learning initiative has been launched in 3 countries: Morocco, Albania and Nepal to study and identify the elements which contribute to a more effective and holistic programming on gender equality.
4. The 2005 *Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups* was translated into French and Spanish and widely distributed amongst country teams.
5. An e-module on gender equality was developed as part of a set of modules for programme staff of UNDAF roll-out countries.
6. The RC Annual Report template and guidance has been strengthened with the inclusion of sections on gender equality and the RC Annual Reports have reviewed annually by UNIFEM since 2004 to track how gender has been reported and whether there are any changes or trends. These synthesis/reviews have been shared by DOCO with all UNCTs.

The latest CCA/UNDAF guidelines – developed by the UNDG – identify gender equality as one of the key programming principles for guiding common country programming in all areas including consultation with national partners, results planning, implementation, budgets, monitoring, and evaluation.

The analysis of the RC Annual Reports reveal that the number of UNCTs that reported on joint initiatives on gender equality more than doubled, as have the number of reported gender theme groups, since tracking began in 2004. The largest area of increase from a programmatic perspective is in the area of ending violence against women, which has nearly quadrupled (from 28 UNCTs reporting in 2004 to 96 in 2009). However, there appears to be a reduction of the number of UNCTs reporting work in important areas such as girls' education and addressing the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS since 2004.

In 2009 UNDG Principals endorsed the following recommendations that emerged from the 2008 retreat under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator of Viet Nam and UNIFEM in its role as Chair of the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality, to strengthen gender equality in the context of Delivering as One pilots (DaO): 1) Piloting a system of gender disaggregated tracking of the One Budget Framework of DaO Pilots 2) Making available high quality technical expertise on gender equality for DaO Pilots through Regional Directors' Team (RDTs) and other Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs), and a system-wide review to establish benchmarks for an adequate level of such expertise 3) The mid-term assessment (country led process evaluation) of the One UN pilots should include specific indicators and benchmarks for assessing UNCT performance on gender equality.

Issues for Consideration

- How can the UN country teams maximize their support to country priorities on gender equality?
- How can the United Nations entities work to build staff capacity and enhance gender mainstreaming mandates, in all country level theme groups and across the system?
- How can collaboration on gender mainstreaming among United Nations entities be encouraged at the operational level?
- What accountability mechanisms (e.g. gender budgeting) are required to successfully mainstream gender perspectives throughout the United Nations system?

Programme

1:00 -3:00 pm
On 8 July 2010

Special session - Official luncheon co-hosted by UNIFEM and UNDESA on “Operationalizing UN system support to national priorities on gender equality” (strictly by invitation) (Private Dining Room: 1,2,3)
Introductory remarks

Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director, Office of ECOSOC Support and coordination, DESA

Chairperson:

H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations

Moderator: Ms. Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director, UNIFEM

Speakers:

Ms. Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director, UNIFEM

Mr. Daniel Seymour, Chief of the Gender and Rights Unit, UNICEF

Mr. John Hendra, Resident Coordinator, Viet Nam

Questions and Answers