Preparing for the 2014 Development Cooperation Forum
Vienna Policy Dialogue

Conference Room M2 – UN Office in Vienna - 13 and 14 December 2012

Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women: role of development cooperation

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have made a great difference for development in helping set global and national priorities and fuel action on the ground. They have raised awareness and shaped a broad vision that remains the overarching blueprint for development work across all regions.

Member States have anchored and reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality in several normative frameworks.1 Yet, too many women have not been able to benefit from progress made in meeting the MDGs. Their rights are often not respected and they are left voiceless, excluded from social protection, access to services and economic opportunities. Women and girls continue to face gender-based discrimination and violence as internationally agreed commitments on women's rights and the empowerment of women are not met in many countries.

The growing number and diversity of actors, approaches and flows in international development cooperation in recent years have also significantly impacted progress on the MDGs. Gender equality is a central goal of development in and by itself. Given the centrality of women as critical drivers of development, development cooperation must explicitly target women and girls facing multiple forms of inequality and discrimination.

Against this backdrop, the Vienna Policy Dialogue in preparation of the 2014 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) will explore how to firmly position gender equality and the empowerment of women and the protection of their rights in the changing landscape of international development cooperation and in the evolving post-2015 UN development agenda.

Organized by UNDESA in partnership with UN Women and the Government of Austria, the Vienna Policy Dialogue will bring together senior representatives, experts from national and local governments, civil society organizations, parliaments, women’s organizations and the private sector with representatives of international organizations to develop concrete policy recommendations by gender and development cooperation actors to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in response to the profound shifts in international development cooperation.

Deliberations in Vienna will build on recommendations of previous DCF events, in particular a Symposium on “Coherent development cooperation: maximizing impact in a changing environment” held in Finland in 2010, which dedicated part of its programme to making development cooperation more responsive to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Within this context, the Vienna Policy dialogue specifically aims to:

- Identify practical solutions and good practices of gender-responsive development cooperation policies and programmes that deliver sustainable results;
- Discuss how gender equality and the empowerment of women can be placed at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda;
- Identify how accountability mechanisms can help reinforce efforts to promote effective development partnerships focused on promoting gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women;
- Assess progress and challenges in collecting timely information on development cooperation related to gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Promote meaningful inclusion of advocates for women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women in national and international policy dialogue and decision-making processes.

The Vienna Policy Dialogue is the first in a series of multi-stakeholder consultations in the run up to the 2014 DCF. Preparations for the 2014 DCF will foster an open and inclusive dialogue on the future of development cooperation in the post-2015 development agenda. The meeting outcome will also inform ongoing consultations on the post-2015 development agenda.

1 These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and the outcome documents of the 2010 MDG Summit and the Rio+20 Conference. Commitments in the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation both recognized the critical importance of gender equality in advancing progress.
SESSION 1: Development cooperation and gender equality: Achieving MDGs and translating gender equality commitments into national policies, practices and systems

FOCUS
The objective of this session is to identify challenges and identify practical solutions and good practices in gender-responsive development cooperation policies and programmes in promoting progress on IADGs, including MDGs. It will explore how to position gender equality and the empowerment of women in national development planning and policy making in light of new challenges and a changing landscape of development cooperation.

CONTEXT AND ISSUES
While important progress on the MDGs has been made, it has been uneven between and within countries. Gender disparities remain manifested in many sectors with progress differing by region and country. The growing number and diversity of actors, approaches and flows in development cooperation in recent years have also significantly impacted progress on the MDGs and other IADGs.

Further progress by 2015 and beyond depends largely on the empowerment of women and equal access by women to education, work, health care and decision-making, as well as the promotion of human rights for women. While evidence shows that without progress on gender equality, other development goals will not be attained, only MDGs 3 and 5 explicitly address gender inequalities.

This session is an occasion to discuss good practices in MDG achievement with regard to gender equality that can help improve the way in which development cooperation promotes gender equality in a more systematic way while also improving its own effectiveness and coherence in line with national and international agreements.

Achievement of such commitments is a key driver of effective development cooperation on all fronts. In this regard, it is essential to promote existing frameworks (such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action) and take concrete steps to integrate gender equality into all development strategies to achieve the MDGs. Recent years have seen advances in terms of commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women, both nationally and globally. There is a broad consensus that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the MDGs, both with regard to gender-specific goals and the clear gender equality dimensions in all of the goals.

These efforts should be underpinned by a commitment to the Global Partnership for Development which has produced important achievements, including a record volume of Official development assistance (ODA) in 2010, increased aid to LDCs and increased South-South and other cooperation for development.

The DCF has placed emphasis on the need for aid for gender equality to be on budget and to use national systems to promote transparency, accountability, cost-effectiveness, alignment and long-term results to promote gender equality. The Forum can play an instrumental role in further evolving the thinking on how the Global Partnership for Development can have gender equality at the centre of jointly negotiated commitments, pledges by different actors and deliberations on increasing the coherence of policy actions.

The recognition of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in the Paris Declaration and the OECD-DAC’s gender marker system to assess the contribution of overseas development assistance (ODA) to gender equality goals have also been important contributions to greater effectiveness. With its emphasis on development effectiveness and the recognition of gender equality and the empowerment of women as critical to achieving development results, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation also advances progress through a series of concrete commitments. It resulted in a specific gender indicator that attempts to incentivize targeting of public expenditures to benefit both women and men by tracking and making public allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Women’s groups and gender equality advocates called on all governments and development actors to consider the following imperatives:

- International development cooperation must be based on human rights, including women’s rights, and move beyond aid effectiveness towards human rights-based development cooperation.
- Development effectiveness requires democratic ownership by women and meaningful and systematic participation by civil society, especially women’s and feminist organizations.
• Accountability systems for women’s rights and gender equality must align to the multiplicity of existing structures of answerability and supported by improved monitoring systems.

• International development cooperation to the countries in situations of fragility and conflict must acknowledge the differential and disproportional impact of armed conflict on the lives and rights of women and girls.

A critical reflection on commitments made is vital in response to the profound shifts in international development cooperation to lead to better implementation and better results for women and girls and more effective and equitable development outcomes that empower women and girls.

Key questions to be examined include:

1. What are innovative practices of development cooperation to effectively accelerate progress on gender equality and how can they be brought to scale? What are specific challenges in conflict-affected and vulnerable countries?

2. What are good country examples of national action plans on gender equality that are widely discussed and integrated in national development strategies and aid/partnership policies?

3. What is needed to ensure that international commitments on gender equality and human rights are respected at country level by all stakeholders?

4. In light of trends to promote coherence and effectiveness of development cooperation, how can it be ensured that women and girls remain targeted through existing allocation mechanisms?

**FORMAT AND DELEGATED ROLE**

The session will open with a series of substantive inputs by high-level speakers, practitioners and experts on how to advance gender equality in light of new challenges faced by international development cooperation to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Participants will be asked to engage in an interactive plenary discussion in response to these off-the-cuff remarks.

**OUTCOME**

The session will capture policy recommendations and views on priorities to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in response to the profound shifts in international development cooperation to promote MDG achievement.

**FURTHER READING**

- The UN Secretary General’s Report The Millennium Development Goals Report (UN, 2012)
- Progress of World’s Women: In Pursuit of Justice (UN Women, 2011)
- Women’s organizations key demands for Busan and 2012 DCF (Collective Women’s rights organisations and gender equality advocates document, 2011)

**Parallel caucus of DCF stakeholder groups**

Participants from DCF stakeholder groups (provider countries / recipient countries / civil society and parliamentarians / UN system) are expected to brainstorm within their respective groups on how to advance gender equality in light of new challenges faced by development cooperation, including the transition to sustainable development and the coordination among different actors, approaches and flows to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Each group is expected to present their unique perspective and policy recommendations in this regard to the plenary in the beginning of the afternoon session. Groups will manage themselves, usually by appointing one moderator and one rapporteur ahead of the meeting.

**SESSION 2: Gender equality in the post 2015 UN development agenda**

**FOCUS**

The session will explore how to best anchor gender equality and the empowerment of women at the centre of a future post-2015 UN development agenda. The session will also review how international development cooperation can best help accelerate progress towards gender equality and its implications for the design of such an agenda.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES**

Over the past 20 years, hard won gains have been made on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gender equality has arrived at the forefront of the development dialogue but gender inequality on the ground remains pervasive. The key challenge today is to move from rhetoric to implementation. Many important lessons on the strengths and
weaknesses of gender goals and targets have been learned which should be built upon when designing a future global development agenda.

By now, it is widely recognized that gender inequality is both a serious brake on development and a denial of the rights of women and girls. The United Nations System Task Team Report on a Post 2015 Development Agenda therefore recommended that a future global development agenda should not only seek to address and monitor the elimination of specific gender gaps. It should also transform the structural factors that underpin the widespread persistence of gender based violence, discrimination and unequal development progress between women and men and girls and boys.

The Rio+20 conference recognized the central role of women and girls as leaders, participants and agents of change. Member States committed themselves to promote enabling environments, equal rights and political, economic and financial opportunities among other issues. They also committed to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals. This session provides an opportunity to explore how gender equality can be part and parcel of the discussion around the Sustainable Development Goals.

Drawing upon the MDG experience, this session offers an opportunity to reflect on how to put the empowerment of women and girls and the protection of their rights at the centre of a future global agenda. Two related questions in this regard are how gender equality could be strengthened by (a) modifying and broadening the indicators for MDG3 and (b) by focusing on gender equality as a theme across the new development agenda. Many seem to propose a two-pronged approach of mainstreaming and a standalone target for gender equality.

A gender specific goal is seen as essential to tackle the underlying causes of gender inequality. Studies have shown that political commitment to gender equality is declining when gender is only mainstreamed. The importance of gender targets for securing funding is also being stressed. In addition to a standalone goal, considering gender equality throughout the post 2015 framework is also seen as crucial by many. Concerns are being expressed that without gender sensitive targets and indicators and sex disaggregated data under each goal, there is a real risk of persistent poverty of women being hidden behind average numbers. While the general focus on the poorest and most marginalized in a future development agenda has been broadly welcomed, some have cautioned that an equity agenda without emphasis on gender issues runs the risk of them being ignored.

In addition to the discussions on whether a two-pronged approach should be adopted, the session also offers an opportunity to discuss which gender issues should be prioritized in a future development agenda. There has been a call to focus on women’s strategic priorities which will help to transform women’s lives in the long-term. It has also been suggested that the new goals should reflect an understanding that women’s poverty is, in part, a result of their socially enforced gender roles and relations. It has also been stressed that the priorities should reflect and build on gender equality commitments already made under existing international agreements. Given that one in five women worldwide is a victim of rape at some point in time in her life, there has also been a call to include violence against women in a new global development framework that has gender equality at its centre.

This session aims to benefit from the presence of both gender and development cooperation experts. Participants are encouraged to reflect on the above issues in the context of a world faced with new challenges and a rapidly changing development landscape. The question of how to best ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women given the multiplicity of actors and new approaches is one question which could be discussed. The implications of the changing geography of poverty, where the majority of poor are projected to once again live in least developed countries and countries emerging from conflict and where inequalities in middle income countries are on the rise, is another important aspect which could be considered here.

Key questions to be examined include:
1. How can the lessons learned from the MDG experience be brought to bear on a post-2015 development agenda? How can the centrality of gender equality and women’s rights be guaranteed in the post-2015 development agenda?
2. How can gender equality be better mainstreamed given the increased recognition of “inequality” as a predominant concern at global level while also ensuring that it becomes a core focus in every policy area of development cooperation at the same time?
3. How can development partnerships among all different development cooperation actors be geared towards the achievement of a gender-responsive development agenda and lead to long-term, inclusive development results?
FORMAT AND ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS
The session will open with presentations by panellists on how to best anchor gender equality and the empowerment of women at the centre of a future post-2015 UN development agenda within an international development landscape that is in flux. An interactive moderated discussion among the panellists and participants will follow.

OUTCOME
The session will capture policy recommendations and views on priorities on how to put gender equality at the heart of a future development agenda which will be made available for consideration to the High Level Panel on post 2015 and the 2014 DCF.

FURTHER READING
- “Realizing the Future We Want” – UN Task Team Report on the post 2015 UN development agenda - Executive Summary
- Addressing inequalities: The heart of the post 2015 agenda and the future we want for all – UN Nations Task Team Think Piece

SESSION 3: Development partnerships for gender equality: How can actors be more accountable for gender-specific development impact?

FOCUS
This session will be an opportunity to reflect on how development cooperation actors can best hold each other to account for commitments made on gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women at sub-national, sector, national, regional and global levels. As a structured series of conversations, this session will build on an evolving body of evidence that suggests that gender targets are needed, especially in light of the growing diversity of development partnerships, stressing a need for balanced development partnerships to promote compliance with commitments on quantity, quality and effectiveness of development cooperation and delivery of long-term, sustainable development results.

CONTEXT AND ISSUES
Mutual accountability is at the core of effective development partnerships that use financial resources in an adequate, predictable and targeted manner and thereby maximize results for development. The concept refers to the diverse ways in which providers and recipients of development cooperation hold each other to account for commitments, building on strong democratic ownership and inclusion of parliamentarians and civil society organizations in oversight, planning and evaluation processes.

Effective development partnerships are a priority of the evolving post-2015 UN development agenda and can be expected to gain more prominence in multi-stakeholder discussions at global level in the future. The 2010 High-level Plenary meeting of the General Assembly, Rio+20 and the Busan Global Partnership all make explicit reference to this important engine to fulfil commitments for effective development cooperation. The Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation also acknowledged the need to enhance the development effectiveness of South-South Cooperation by continuing to increase its mutual accountability and transparency. Rio+20 also reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to actively promote the collection, analysis and use of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data in policy, programme design and monitoring frameworks, in accordance with national circumstances and capacities. The Busan High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness agreed on a monitoring indicator to track and make public allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Despite the prominence of gender issues in the IADGs, effectiveness of development cooperation has not focussed enough on outcomes of gender equality and women’s rights in terms of either the inclusion of indicators tracking the focus of development cooperation on gender equality or the participation of women’s organisations in initiatives to hold actors to account. 2012 analysis conducted for the DCF shows that aid/partnership policies, targets and mutual accountability processes do not focus adequately on the gender impact of development cooperation. Gender-disaggregated data is the least performing indicator in this analysis. DCF analysis also highlighted the importance of national aid information management systems or databases to track effective development cooperation targets, including on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and to make such information widely available for accountability purposes.
This session will consist of the following three dialogues with the objective to identify concrete solutions to position gender equality at the heart of partnership frameworks and mutual accountability mechanisms at all levels:

**Dialogue 1: Gender targets for development results: What can sectoral working groups and partnership policies achieve?**

Building on concrete examples of how mutual accountability enablers and structures, such as partnership policies and sectoral or thematic working groups, can effectively promote gender-related development results, this dialogue will address what targets mutual accountability frameworks should have in place to assess commitments on gender equality and measure related development results, such as, for example, the number of girls with access to schooling. It should showcase challenges and effective ways to introduce targets and indicators in MA frameworks at country level and may also touch upon ways to measure the amount of development cooperation that targets gender equality. It will also address the role of systems in place to track public expenditure for gender equality as proposed under the new Busan indicator on gender equality.

**Dialogue 2: Accountability for commitments and results at global and sectoral level in a changing development context**

This conversation is an opportunity to rethink how commitments on gender equality can be anchored in development partnerships with different actors in the context of post-Rio and post-2015. Participants are expected to discuss innovative thinking on how MA must advance conceptually and how gender equality can be anchored at the heart of this discussion. Suggestions should be made as to how gender advocates can be supported in the implementation and influence of MA enablers at all levels to achieve measurable results while promoting a smooth transition to sustainable development and a unified post-2015 UN development agenda.

Special emphasis in this conversation will be placed on the role of international mechanisms can play as relevant drivers of behaviour change, notably those focusing on relevant sectors and able to produce information that is responsive to the needs of national stakeholders to promote gender equality. Speakers will show how evidence on gender equality can be used to hold actors to account at the international level and what challenges remain. The impact of global sectoral initiatives in the areas of agriculture and food security on the livelihoods of women will be one case in point with the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition of the G8 serving as an example where a strong focus on women is as much a priority as are principles of country ownership, alignment to countries’ sectoral investment and action plans, effective coordination among different actors and a focus on predictable funding and engagement with non-state actors. The conversation is expected to also touch upon other sectoral initiatives where global commitments have had impact on behaviour of actors at country level, such as in the areas of health and education and their successes in keeping track of commitments and ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement in these reviews.

**Dialogue 3: Transparency for gender equality. The effectiveness of information systems measuring aid that targets gender equality**

Recent DCF analysis highlighted the importance of improved national aid information management systems to better track effective development cooperation targets, including on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and to make a wide range of timely and forward-looking information (on disbursements, forecasts, progress on results, and gender issues) widely available to all stakeholders for accountability purposes. This third conversation will address the role of transparent aid information on the amount or share of development cooperation that targets gender equality as a basis for effective accountability processes – domestically, nationally and at global level. Participants will discuss latest developments in how such information is being generated, used and channelled to promote gender equality through specific examples and how stakeholders have access to such information. The dialogue will also serve to discuss how the capacity of non-executive stakeholders can be developed to analyse such information and (for parliaments) to support their decision-making on development cooperation.

The three dialogues in this session will:
- showcase the effects of strong accountability for effective partnerships on the basis of concrete examples
- reflect on incentives to instil behaviour change in different contexts
- identify capacity requirements to provide the enabling environment for accountable development cooperation
- develop a scenario by which gender equality and women’s rights are strongly anchored in the accountability provisions of the post-2015 development agenda
Key questions to be examined include:

1. Judging from existing examples, what are incentives to ensure that sectoral, national and global mutual accountability mechanisms and tools include gender-related targets and indicators to hold providers answerable and involve national advocates for gender equality in their deliberations?
2. What indicators and targets could be used to better monitor the gender impact of development cooperation in the future? What role will the Busan indicator to track and make public allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women have? What are other existing good examples of indicators and targets?
3. How can accountability and transparency mechanisms help to track and monitor financing for gender equality and show their contribution to achieving development results?

**FORMAT AND DELEGATED ROLE**

The session will be structured in four short conversations or dialogues, each about 15-20 minutes, where a moderator presents a specific aspect of accountability and challenges to advance gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women, inviting speakers to respond and have an initial discussion. Participants are then encouraged to provide comments and questions to the speakers and other participants. They will be asked to highlight how successful development partnerships manage to deliver on quantitative and qualitative commitments and suggest ways in which MA mechanisms can be simplified and streamlined in order to ensure country leadership, broad democratic ownership and avoidance of duplication without overburdening existing capacities.

**OUTCOME**

This session will develop key messages to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women by suggesting how to advance development partnerships based on mutual accountability enablers, such as partnership policies, performance assessment frameworks with individual provider targets, high-level policy dialogues, and others.

**FURTHER READING**

- 2012 DCF analytical study: Mutual accountability for development results: Where next?
- Summary of 2012 DCF workshops on mutual accountability
- Dialogue 1: Recommendations from the Helsinki Symposium in 2010
- Dialogue 2: Recommendations from the Australia Symposium in 2012 and Messages of Expert Group meeting on global accountability in 2011
- Dialogue 3: 2011 analytical study on transparency

**SESSION 4: Gender-sensitive development cooperation hands-on: The success of gender-responsive budgeting and planning**

**FOCUS**

The objective of this session is to highlight the advantages of gender responsive budgeting and planning processes by showcasing best practices. It will focus on how it can support gender mainstreaming in macroeconomic policy making and be used to enhance linkages between economic, social and environmental policy outcomes.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES**

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is government planning, programming and budgeting that contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of women’s rights. It entails identifying and reflecting needed interventions to address gender gaps in policies, plans and budgets of all levels of government. GRB also aims to analyze the gender-differentiated impact of revenue-raising policies and the allocation of domestic resources and ODA. It is highly important to acknowledge GRB as a catalyst to enhance the results for invested budget for women instead of simply seeing it as a way to steer funds to women without any regard to results.

GRB initiatives seek to create enabling policy frameworks, build capacity and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to support accountability to women. By using the budget as a lever for addressing inequalities between men and women, gender responsive budgeting can be an effective tool to empower women by the adequate use of public resources. It can support gender mainstreaming in macroeconomic policy making and should be better used to enhance linkages between economic, social and environmental policy outcomes. GRB can also strengthen participation of non-executive stakeholders in national planning and policy making.
There are three main stages of engendering a budget. Firstly, the budget has to be analysed from a gender perspective to determine the differential impact of the budget on women and men. Secondly, the budget has to be restructured based on this analysis, with GRB being identified as the essential dimension, and budgetary policies need to be reformulated and resources redistributed in order to achieve gender equality outcomes. Thirdly, it has to be ensured that stage one and two are repeated on an ongoing basis, thus changing decision-making structures and assumptions in formulating the budget permanently. By that, mainstreaming gender can be achieved as a category of analysis in the budgetary processes.

The role of civil society organizations continues to be critical as they were pioneers in introducing and implementing gender responsive budgeting. Thus, successful cooperation between governmental organizations and civil society is essential to ensure that gender equality can be mainstreamed in the long haul.

There has been a strong call for integrating GRB into the aid effectiveness agenda in the last years. However, in the context of new aid modalities, such as untied aid, there is rising concern in how to track gender sensitivity of aid. To be able to successfully mainstream gender in aid management, it is highly relevant that national planning strategies and budget are already gender-responsive.

Many lessons have been learned in recent years: What is needed is political will articulated in clearly defined gender equality objectives and translated into achievable targets. It is important that national gender equality policy is treated as a key policy dimension and thus translated into policies of all government departments and agencies. For example, efforts to implement GRB are most successful in influencing budgeting and allocation decisions when political commitment in the Ministry of Finance is strong and performance monitoring systems enable tracking of gender equality-related results and investments.

Key questions to be examined include:
- What makes gender-responsive budgeting and planning a success story, both in provider and recipient countries? What are incentives and how can collaboration with a wide range of actors, including local governments, civil society, parliaments, and providers, be improved?
- How can GRB contribute to the transition to sustainable development and more inclusive development cooperation?
- How can providers best contribute to demand-driven efforts to build or strengthen national capacity for gender-responsive budgeting and planning?

FORMAT AND DELEGATED ROLE

The session will start with short substantive interventions by budget experts from national and local governments. Delegates will be asked to engage in a discussion in response to the introductory remarks. The focus of the discussion should be on how to overcome obstacles to mainstream gender in national budgets and on best practices.

OUTCOME

The session will capture delegates’ views on the importance of including a gender aspect in the budget in both developing and developed countries and show ways of how to support budget-making processes towards mainstreaming gender.

FURTHER READING