

**52<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women  
25 February to 7 March 2008**

**Interactive expert panel**

**Capacity-building for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the  
development, implementation and evaluation of national economic policies  
and programmes and budgets**

**26 February 2008**

**Moderator's Summary**

1. At its fifth meeting, on 26 February 2008, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive expert panel discussion on “Capacity-building for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national economic policies and programmes and budgets”.
2. The panel, moderated by Enna Park (Republic of Korea), Vice-Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, was composed of the following experts: Marème Cissé Thiam, Director of Female Entrepreneurship in the Ministry of the Family, Female Entrepreneurship and Microfinance, Republic of Senegal; Olga Filippova, Social and Gender Policy Expert, Department of Social and Economic Policy of the Office of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic; Purnima Mane, Deputy Executive Director of Programmes, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Julia Benn, Manager of the Statistical Policy, Analysis and Outreach Section of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Co-operation Directorate; and Shireen Lateef, Director of Social Sectors, South East Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB).
3. Gender mainstreaming was endorsed in the Beijing Platform for Action as a strategy for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, which required concerted efforts at all levels, and across all sectors. Participants reaffirmed that efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, through gender mainstreaming and targeted interventions, required both financial resources and strengthened capacity to effectively implement policies, plans and programmes at all levels.
4. Participants recognized the need for political will at the highest level to ensure a commitment to gender equality, and to build capacity for gender mainstreaming across all sectors. Providing sufficient and sustainable resources to efforts to achieve gender equality was seen as a joint responsibility across government. Participants pointed to the need for legal and policy frameworks to establish institutional structures and capacity to promote gender mainstreaming across all sectors. Changes in organizational cultures through systematic awareness-raising, as well as the development of practical tools, such as gender-sensitive guidelines, checklists, and indicators, were also required to increase the capacity of stakeholders to implement gender mainstreaming strategies.

5. The central role of national machineries for the advancement of women in supporting the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy was recognized. For national machineries to effectively engage in the development and implementation of national economic plans and policies, they needed to be strategically located, and given sufficient authority, capacity and financial resources. Participants noted that many national machineries remain marginalized in national government structures and are hampered by a lack of resources and political support. This limits their ability to advocate for, support and monitor policies and programmes on gender equality; to ensure sufficient attention to resource needs for gender equality and empowerment of women in national budgets; and to collaborate effectively with other ministries, particularly ministries of finance, to promote gender mainstreaming in national economic policies and programmes and budgets.

6. Participants identified a number of mechanisms through which capacity could be developed to increase attention to gender perspectives in national economic policies and programmes and budgets. These included legislation to promote gender equality and women's human rights; gender-responsive budgeting initiatives; gender-sensitive lending practices; women's entrepreneurship and micro-credit programmes; efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into national development plans and policies; and initiatives to strengthen and support national machineries for the advancement of women.

7. National development plans and poverty reduction strategies were important tools for identifying priorities and resource needs and provided an opportunity to integrate gender equality in national poverty reduction efforts. A number of participants reiterated the importance of linking national development strategies with gender equality policies to ensure their full and effective implementation. Gender equality should become a key priority of all national development policies – from design to evaluation, and resource needs should be properly estimated from the outset.

8. Programmes to promote women's entrepreneurship development and access to micro-credit illustrated efforts to support women's economic empowerment. Legal and normative frameworks to ensure women's access to strategic resources, including land and credit are needed. Capacity-building activities to support women entrepreneurs included training in marketing, leadership, networking, organizational development, and technical skills acquisition, including in the use of ICTs. In order to create an enabling environment for women's enhanced participation in economic processes, steps had to be taken to reduce women's work load in the care economy, including by guaranteeing access to quality health care, in particular reproductive health care, as well as to education and social support systems.

9. Mainstreaming gender perspectives into national budgets was identified as an important strategy for targeting and tracking resource allocations for gender equality, and for linking resource allocations to gender equality commitments. Experiences with analyzing national budgets from the perspective of women's and men's needs and priorities were highlighted.

10. Participants shared suggestions for practical ways to incorporate gender perspectives in budgets in order to better monitor and track expenditures and revenues. These included awareness-raising and training; improving the methodology for budgetary analysis; the

development of mechanisms and tools to institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors, and at all levels; and building capacity to improve the budgetary process itself through the use of a standardized system of codes and indicators to enable monitoring and evaluation at all stages of the budgetary process. Participants also called attention to the need for participatory and transparent budgetary processes, including the involvement of civil society; and monitoring of results, including through external assessments.

11. Participants agreed that to fully institutionalize and sustain gender-responsive budgeting initiatives, all stakeholders, including national machineries, line ministries and parliaments, must have the capacity to fully engage in the budgetary process. They advocated customized sector-specific training and sensitization and technical capacity-building at all levels to ensure mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all sector-specific budgetary processes and public policies. Ministries of finance and other line ministries need to build capacity to develop, implement and monitor gender-sensitive policies and programmes and budgets, and national machineries need capacity to promote, support and monitor such efforts. The development and use of tools, such as guidelines, budget instructions, directives, and gender-sensitive indicators, could support such capacity-building efforts.

12. To ensure the effectiveness of gender-responsive budget strategies, and to promote greater accountability among policy makers, systems for monitoring, evaluating and tracking resource flows to support gender equality commitments were needed.

13. Participants stressed that the lack of data disaggregated by sex and gender-sensitive indicators limited effective policy-making and budgetary processes as well as monitoring and evaluation of national economic policies, plans and programmes. Efforts to support national statistical offices to develop core indicators, and increase capacity to undertake the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, were noted as crucial.

14. More work had to be done to build capacity for costing activities in support of gender equality and to demonstrate the economic return of gender-sensitive programmes. Mechanisms used to illustrate gender gaps in financing included gender audits of public expenditures, examining gender budget lines in ministries, and annual ministerial reports on financing for gender equality and women's empowerment. Costing persistent inequality and assessing resource needs for policies, strategies and actions plans to promote gender equality would lead to stronger, evidence-based advocacy for increased financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and better informed policy-making, budgeting and programme development.

15. International development cooperation is an important mechanism for financing gender equality and women's empowerment, and participants underscored the need for adequate and predictable financing. Tools for standardized tracking and monitoring of ODA can identify whether funds target gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) developed the gender equality policy marker to measure the amount of aid focused on gender equality and women's empowerment, by identifying activities that have gender equality as a principal or significant objective. Even though it measured only a portion of ODA, it was felt that the policy marker had been effective in quantifying contributions to support gender

mainstreaming. Participants suggested that the gender equality policy marker could be applied to other development partners, including international financial institutions, regional development banks and the United Nations system, as a useful measurement tool.

16. On adopting the gender mainstreaming strategy, the Asian Development Bank developed mechanisms to make implementation of gender mainstreaming in lending more visible. Project gender action plans (GAPS) were developed as a tool for channelling resource allocations across a variety of sectors to address gender equality throughout its loan portfolio. Earmarks in project lending helped to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in sector-level implementation, and the involvement of women in the implementation of projects.

17. The role of partnerships at national, regional and international levels to strengthen technical assistance and capacity-building for gender mainstreaming across all sectors was stressed, including for national machineries, gender focal points, sector specialists, and women's organizations. In the Asian Development Bank, for example, capacity-building efforts are not only targeted to national machineries but also focus on institutionalizing and strengthening gender policies and this implementation in sector agencies. The goal is to facilitate closer partnerships in implementing sector plans and projects, and to raise the visibility of national machineries in sectoral programmes.

18. Participants recognized that women's organizations and networks play an important role in advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women; keeping critical issues in the national agenda; and promoting accountability for, and monitoring implementation of, commitments made on gender equality at national and global levels. The importance of building capacity of women's organizations to engage in participatory processes related to gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming, and to hold governments accountable on gender equality commitments, was noted.

19. Participants also emphasized the role of United Nations entities in providing technical assistance to governments to achieve policy commitments and implement the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. Participants also identified trust funds and thematic campaigns within the United Nations as strategies for mobilizing funding for specific gender equality issues. Participants further noted the need to systematically mainstream gender perspectives into United Nations financial management systems.