
United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-sixth session
27 February – 9 March 2012
New York

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

Review theme: Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of CSW 52 on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women"

Panel 4: Progress in financing for gender equality from the perspective of international organizations and multilateral development partners

**Enhancing performance of UN Programmes towards women's rights:
tracking investments and beyond**

by

Saraswathi Menon

Director, Policy Division

UN Women

Implementing governments' commitments towards gender equality and women's rights entails introducing measures that would increase women's access to services and resources; creating opportunities that increase women's economic and political participation, and providing protection to women and girls from exclusion, discrimination and violence.

Introduction:

Applying “gender markers” to institutional programming and financing instruments is one of the good practices that have been adopted by development agencies, national governments, and more recently the UN system. The experience in several UN agencies has increasingly pointed to the added value of these markers not only in mobilizing and coordinating financing towards realizing women's rights, but also in improving the effectiveness of development assistance and more broadly improving the design and implementation of programmes.

The challenge:

The UN MDG Report 2010 which reviewed progress towards achieving the MDGs showed significant gaps, particularly on the gender dimensions of many of the goals. The report showed that 37 million girls were not in primary school in 2008, compared to 32 million boys; that the number of maternal deaths has decreased by 2.3 percent a year since 1990; and that only 14 countries will succeed in reducing maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015.

Efforts in support of gender responsive planning and budgeting are aimed at supporting implementation of interventions that address these gender gaps through making available necessary financing resources for those interventions. These efforts have analyzed investments and budget allocations from a gender perspective with close attention to their various sources i.e. domestic resources, overseas development assistance, or post conflict reconstruction funding. Study after study provided evidence of biases in investments and allocations towards achieving gender equitable outcomes and achieving effective results in support of women's empowerment and gender effectiveness. Such biases are even more problematic in contexts of crises and disasters and in conflict and post conflict contexts.

In the 2008 agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) expressed its concern about the under resourcing in the area of gender equality in the United Nations System and stressed the need for more effective tracking of resources allocated to and spent on enhancing gender equality and the empowerment of women across the UN system, including on gender mainstreaming. On both issues the organization is making strides but a lot remains to be done.

Gender Markers:

Gender markers are a tool for tracking financing and results towards gender responsive development outcomes. They consist of a classification system for programmes, funds or activities that benefit gender equality and the empowerment of women directly or indirectly. The OECD was at the lead of development actors using such mechanisms.

In 2009, UNDP rolled out an adapted version of the OECD DAC gender marker. In 2010, the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) applied a marker on select financing mechanisms in pilot countries (CAPs, CERFs and CHFs in Ethiopia and Myanmar). The OCHA marker was based on the marker developed by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Efforts to develop and apply gender marker are also underway by the Peace Building Fund (PBF), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). These efforts are in line with policy commitments at the highest level within the UN system including the Secretary General report on peacebuilding, the UN Security Council resolutions on women in post conflict and general assembly deliberations. The undg Task Team on Gender Equality chaired by UN Women includes a subgroup on “Accounting for Resources for Gender Equality” co-chaired by UNDP and UNICEF which serves as the platform for discussions on improving and expanding the use of gender markers in the UN system.

The significance of these efforts lies in the evidence generated using sex disaggregated data related to outcome and output level indicators, budget information and administrative data. This evidence provides a useful resource for policy making in relation to budget allocations and implementation of commitments towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The data generated also provides gender equality advocates with much needed evidence on gaps and deficiencies in addressing gender equality priorities.

Those systems have been applied to monitor the implementation of the Secretary General’s Seven Point Action Plan on Women’s Participation in Peace building. Following the Policy Committee’s decision in 2011 that ‘at least 15% of UN-managed funds in support of peace building dedicated to projects whose principal objective, consistent with organizational mandates, is to address women’s specific needs, advance gender equality or empower women’¹, seven UN entities (PBSO/PBF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP) prepared case studies on GEEW financing in Burundi and Nepal.

In the Humanitarian assistance field, the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) created its gender marker in 2009/2010, for its application to the global funding appeal mechanisms for humanitarian action including the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), pooled funding for humanitarian action and response to natural disaster. The adoption of this marker by the interagency Sub working groups (SWGs) involved a coordinated commitment by actors within the UN system, the NGOs and donor community. The implementation of the IASC Gender Marker in 2009 and 2010 in ten countries was assessed in early 2011. The assessment showed that the implementation was highly successful with variations across clusters². In the 2011 CAP preparation cycle, the marker was applied in ten countries with key funding from the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. Implementation included nine CAP appeals with nearly 1000 projects, two pooled funds (PF) and in the Pakistan Flood Emergency Response Plan.

These efforts have proven to be more than a “measuring tool” but rather have led to enhanced quality of programming across sectors in responding to the different realities of women and girls. The data also indicates increased response to gender based violence and increased scale of development assistance that is gender focused in a number of sectors. There was an increase in

¹ A/65/866-S/2010/466. A post-conflict multi-donor trust funds study found less than 6% of spending is budgeted to GEEW.

² IASC, 2011 Gender Marker in CAPS and Pooled Funds, IASC SWG January 2011

the use of gender expertise and resources to enable strengthened mainstreaming of gender concerns in the design and implementation of various cluster interventions with noted variation across clusters working on protection, education, nutrition, food security, water and sanitation, agriculture and coordination.

Conclusion:

Since 2008, there has been significant progress within the UN System in developing systems to track investments in gender equality and develop gender markers in a number of UN Agencies. However, more can be done in order to ensure that these efforts lead to more effective contribution of the UN system towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- Publish this data publicly and on a regular basis
- Complement the tracking systems with institutional measures for quality assurance, evaluation, and capacity development.
- Accelerate efforts towards a UN system-wide gender marker that generates comparable data at country and sector levels and utilizes comparable standards and parameters.

The UN System must also sustain and strengthen support to countries for developing budget tracking methodologies and institutionalizing those within public finance management systems. Beyond budget tracking, there is need to ensure that concrete results are delivered for women and girls, especially in the context of global crises that threaten hard won gains in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.