



REPORT

from the

Online discussion on Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

**Organized by
Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations**

18 June to 15 July 2007

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I. Background

1. The online discussion “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”, was organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) from 18 June to 15 July 2007, Ms. Rosa G. Lizarde moderated the discussion and contributed to this report.
2. The online discussion covered the following themes during a four-week period:
 - Week 1: Public finance – using budgets for promoting gender equality;
 - Week 2: Bilateral and multilateral assistance – the way forward for promoting gender equality;
 - Week 3: Funds and foundations – mobilizing private and public resources for gender equality;
 - Week 4: Other issues.
3. The Division for the Advancement of Women invited interested individuals and groups to participate in the online discussion. Over 1,300 individuals (88.5 percent women and 11.5 percent men) from 145 countries registered for the discussion. The organizational distribution showed the greatest percentage of participants from the NGO sector (39 percent), followed by governments (16 percent), United Nations (16 percent) and the private sector (5 percent). Geographically, Africa (25 percent) had the highest representation, followed by Asia and the Pacific (24 percent), North America (22 percent) and Europe (19 percent).
4. During the discussion, a total of 257 messages were posted. More statistics concerning the online discussion and the geographical distribution of the discussion members, their organizational backgrounds, distribution, and countries of origin, can be found in Annexes 1 and 2.
5. Over the past two decades, commitments on financing for gender equality at the international level have been made, including through the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), the Millennium Summit (2000), and the Monterrey Consensus (2002). More recently, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) focused on the efficiency aspects of aid delivery, and introduced other dimensions into discussions on financing for gender equality. Despite these commitments, limited progress has been made in channelling and allocating resources to translate these commitments into action.
6. At its fifty-second session, to be held from 25 February to 7 March 2008, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will consider “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” as its priority theme. The report of the online discussion will serve as a resource for the work of the Commission in developing concrete recommendations on this topic.
7. The report does not aim to give comprehensive coverage of all inputs received but rather provides an overview of the discussion, with some illustrative examples of contributions. All postings can be consulted at <http://esaconf.un.org/wb/?boardid=financingforgenderequality>.

II. Theme one: Public finance – Using budgets for promoting gender equality

A. Background

8. The first topic of discussion was gender-responsive budgeting, which is the use of government budgets to increase resources for gender equality. It involves the review of both the expenditure and revenue side of the budget, and provides a means of holding governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gender-responsive budgeting is a tool to enable governments to assess where policies need adjustment and where resources are needed to address gender inequalities.

9. Since the first gender-responsive budgeting initiative in 1983 in Australia, approximately 70 countries have introduced such activities. Despite these efforts to integrate gender perspectives into national budgets, resources remain insufficient to adequately support policies and programmes that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

10. Mobilizations around recent economic meetings, and the run-up to the midpoint of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2007), have highlighted the issues of accountability, implementation of policies to fulfil commitments, as well as meeting and exceeding aid targets. Women's organizations, as an integral part of civil society, continue to advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment as central to meeting the MDGs and all other commitments to the UN development agenda. Gender-responsive budgeting is one of the tools being promoted to increase resources for gender equality.

B. Summary of the discussion

11. Week 1 had over 100 postings and was by far the most visited discussion, with even participation from developing and developed countries. The high level of participation and the quality of the postings indicated an audience well-versed in the topic of gender-responsive budgets.

12. The Moderator started the week with a set of questions to solicit participants' views on (i) gender-responsive budgeting as a mechanism for promoting gender equality; (ii) achievements made, challenges encountered, and the impact of gender-responsive budgeting in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women; and (iii) participation of women's organizations in the budget process.

13. Participants emphasized the need to integrate gender perspectives in all government policies, programmes and budgets, including macroeconomic policies. It was emphasized that international trade impacts on the availability of financial resources for gender equality, and that gender-sensitive macroeconomic planning can increase women's contribution to economic development.

14. Gender-responsive budgets contribute to increased transparency of the budgetary process by promoting the translation of policy commitments into concrete programmes. The discussion demonstrated the range of national experience with gender-responsive budgeting, with some countries far more advanced in the process than others. Country case studies from India and Kenya illustrated the positive impact of continuous lobbying by women's organization on government budgets.

15. Participants discussed the roles of Ministries of Finance and national machineries for the advancement of women, and emphasized the limited capacity of both bodies to carry out gender equality research and analysis. Lack of financial resources was also frequently cited as a limitation. Tools and training applications, as well as sensitization of stakeholders on gender-responsive budgeting, could assist in overcoming these challenges. The sharing of knowledge, lessons learned, and good practices was crucial for making progress in this area.

16. Other challenges raised included lack of political will by governments to prioritize gender-responsive budgeting and women's under-representation in decision-making processes. Participants called for stronger advocacy campaigns, development of the capacity of women's organizations' to lobby for change, and promotion of women's participation in the budgetary decision-making process.

(i) Gender-responsive budgeting as a mechanism for promoting gender equality

17. The discussion indicated an overwhelming support for gender-responsive budgeting as an effective mechanism for ensuring attention to gender equality and women's empowerment in national policies and programmes, including the MDGs. Ferdinand Mouanga of the Ministry of Planning, Democratic Republic of the Congo underscored that: "*Gender perspectives have to be integrated into all policies and programmes of all ministries and all budgets.*" Adam Weiner of the Population Council, United States, emphasized that: "*Using the MDGs as a frame of reference, without gender equality it will be near[ly] impossible to achieve any of the health, education and poverty-related MDGs. [I]t is crucial that [gender equality] be a top priority and that gender-responsive budgeting be one of many strategies ... employed towards this end.*"

18. Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Coordinator of femLINKPACIFIC, Fiji, quoted Rhonda Sharp, University of South Australia, speaking at the 10th Triennial Conference on Pacific Women (27-31 May 2007) to emphasize how important it was to incorporate gender-responsive budgets into national budgets: "*Budgets turn policy commitments (paper promises) into concrete programmes and processes, so it is critical to focus on the national budget. Unless it is funded it is still a matter of theory, it is the budget that is the test. The budget tells us the priorities of a country – what is valued, who is valued, who is missing out.... If you do gender [-responsive] budgets, you become more transparent, accountable and it is essential that civil society and women's groups participate in the budget process.*"

19. Kaputo Liyani, Women for Change, Zambia, supported the view that attention to gender perspectives in government budgets leads to increased transparency in budgetary processes. She remarked that: "*A gender [-responsive] budget is an approach which can be used to highlight the gap between policy statements and the resources committed to their implementation, ensuring that public money is spent in more gender equitable ways.*"

20. Other participants called for a designated percentage of budgets to go towards gender equality. For instance, Sabina Anokye Mensah of the GRATIS Foundation, Ghana, suggested: "*A concerted effort must be made by national and international communities to come out with initiatives that will ensure that specific budgetary allocations are reserved for programmes ensuring gender mainstreaming. For instance, 20 percent of some budgets could be allocated to gender mainstreaming activities, ... International agencies, the private sector and national governments must be made to set aside budgets towards enhancing capacity building programmes especially tailored for women and men.*"

(ii) Progress made, challenges encountered, and impact of gender-responsive budgeting in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women

21. Participants stressed that the approach to gender-responsive budgeting varied from region to region and from country to country. Whereas gender-responsive budgeting was a relatively new concept in some countries, including several in Africa, in others such as Australia, it was relatively well-established. Stella Amadi, Center for Democracy and Development (CDD), Nigeria, emphasized that: *“Gender-responsive budgeting is relatively new in this part of the world but I would say from the ... work we have done so far that it is definitely a tool for facilitating the empowerment of women.”*

22. Participants shared specific examples and successes in integrating gender perspectives into budgeting processes in various countries. Margaret Waitherero Mburu, Country Programme Manager, Youth Challenge International, Kenya, noted: *“Women in Kenya have achieved pretty much in that we lobbied the current government and got a 15 percent reduction in tax on sanitary towels. In the Kenyan budget the sanitary towels have always been placed under luxuries. This is because men have nothing to do with the issue though it impacts indirectly [on] their income.”* Benita Sharma, International Foundation for Election Systems, India, reported that: *“India is moving ahead very rapidly in this area. Due to consistent lobbying by women's groups, for the first time, the Ministry of Finance gave a mandate to all ministries to establish a Gender Budgeting Cell by January 2005 and 18 ministries and departments were asked to submit annual reports and performance budgets highlighting budgetary allocations for women...”*

23. Participants indicated that the responsibility for integrating gender perspectives into budget processes remained with the Ministry of Finance and line ministries, with national machineries for the advancement of women assisting in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives. However, a major challenge was the limited resources of the national machineries to carry out this work. Participants called for substantial funding increases for national women's machineries in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

24. The limited capacity of the Ministry of Finance to carry out gender equality research and analysis of the budget was further discussed. From Bulgaria, Lilia Abadjieva and Margarita Spasova emphasized that: *“The legislative framework regulating the procedures and rules of [municipal budget] planning is covered by the Municipal Budgets Act (MBA)... These laws and normative acts are mostly neutral to gender-related issues and gender [-responsive] budgeting, in particular.”*

25. Mahali Sekantsi, Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, Lesotho, further noted: *“Since gender-responsive budget[ing] has been introduced, there are efforts that have been made to try to incorporate gender [perspectives] in the budget. Its impact is hardly noticeable, partly because ... most government officials do not understand the difference between a gender-responsive budget and a non gender-responsive budget. So although there have been efforts [made], very little progress has been made and there is not much difference.”* To help build capacity on gender-responsive budgeting, Nirmala Nababsing, Government of Mauritius, called for the establishment of gender analysis frameworks within the structures of Ministries of Finance and for the establishment and use of gender equality indicators in the preparation of the budget.

26. Other challenges included lack of political will by governments to prioritize gender equality in general, and gender-responsive budgeting in particular. Marie-Ange Kigeme of Initiative Environmental Protection, Burundi, pointed out: *“...you find in many countries... gender*

mainstreaming in new policies and plans. However my impression is that they never proceed ...to translate the theories in practical issues. One may ask then what is missing. From my understanding, lack of funds is the main challenge. But again I wonder is it really gender equality priority for most of [the] governments in our countries.” Jane Durgom-Powers, International Federation of Family Associations of Missing Persons from Armed Conflicts, United States, and Josephina Deng Fashoda of Women Development and Child Care Organization, Sudan, argued that gender equality was not given priority and that priority issues were usually politically or economically motivated.

27. Participants highlighted the urgent need for regional and country-specific tools and training applications for advancing and promoting gender-responsive budgeting. Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, femLINKPACIFIC, Fiji, cautioned against using a ‘one size fits all’ approach: *“There should be specific tools and training applications that are relevant to each regional and national context. For example, there are clearly unique challenges for Pacific island states which means that you cannot and should not “cut and paste” initiatives.”*

28. Participants emphasized that sharing knowledge, lessons learned and good practices was crucial for promoting gender-responsive budgeting at the national level, both through South-South and North-South cooperation.

(iii) Participation of women in budgetary processes

29. The lack of women’s participation in political and other decision-making processes – as a means to maximize and increase available resources for women – was a concern for several participants. Reflecting on her experience from a capacity-building workshop in India, Benita Sharma, International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), India, stressed that women councillors complained that they had no control over the budget and, hence, were unable to take up issues, such as clean drinking water, sanitation and day care centres for children. Mercia Selva Malar, School of Communication and Management Studies, India, pointed out that women’s limited control of budget allocations was due to their lack of knowledge about budget processes, and that education was a means to overcome this challenge.

30. Angela Odah, Joint Donor Basket Fund/UNDP, Nigeria, called for sensitization of governments and the corporate sector on the need to involve women in governance processes. Busola Babalola of Gender and Development Action, Nigeria, suggested mobilizing funds to combat the imbalance of political power between women and men that was a result of patriarchy. She suggested the creation of a foundation for women in politics: *“Considering the situation of women, it is necessary to mobilize both public and private agencies to contribute toward the participation of women in governance. We all know that the patriarchy system in our society has economically endowed only [men] leaving out [women] despite their contributions to all facets of the economy. It is, however, important to [establish a] foundation for women who want to participate in politics”*

31. Participants emphasized the significant potential role of women’s organizations in the budgetary decision-making process. The women’s movement was viewed as both a catalyst for gender equality and women’s empowerment, and as a key stakeholder in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. It was therefore essential to build capacity of women’s organizations to monitor and evaluate results of budget initiatives. To this end, Remi Akinmade, Executive Director of the Community Health Information Education Forum (CHIEF), Nigeria, noted: *“development workers both in [the] public and private sector, working*

on gender equality, ... should be knowledgeable on proposal writing and budgeting and to be able to [assist] the Budget and Finance departments to have an insight to why [the] budget or increase in [the] budget is necessary to promote gender [equality].”

III. Theme two: Bilateral and multilateral cooperation – The way forward for promoting gender equality

A. Background

32. The United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development (ICFfD), held in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002 discussed how financial resources could be mobilized to fulfil the international commitments agreed to at previous United Nations conferences and summits, as well as the MDGs. Pledges were made in the Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the ICFfD, for meeting the target of 0.7 percent of GNP for Official Development Assistance (ODA). In the Monterrey Consensus, the international community highlighted gender equality as critical for achieving sustained and equitable economic development, declaring, “in the increasingly globalizing interdependent world economy, a holistic approach to the interconnected national, international and systemic challenges of finance for development – sustainable, gender-sensitive and people-centred – in all parts of the globe is essential”. The Monterrey Consensus encourages gender-mainstreaming in “development policies at all levels and in all sectors” as one of the actions to strengthen the effectiveness of the global economic system’s support for development, (para 64) and mentions gender-responsive budget policies (para 19).

33. At the United Nations 2005 World Summit, world leaders renewed their commitments to achieving development goals, and the outcome highlighted the importance of gender equality as essential to achieving sustained economic growth, democracy, peace, security and development.

34. Also in 2005, through the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, new political commitments on development cooperation reform were outlined by 35 donor countries, 56 recipient countries, and 27 multilateral agencies. 14 civil society organizations also signed on to the Paris Declaration. The Paris Declaration forges a partnership between donor and recipient countries and aligns development assistance with national development priorities, with a focus on poverty reduction. It rests on five major pillars: (i) *Ownership*: Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and co-ordinate development actions; (ii) *Alignment*: Donors base their overall support on partner countries’ national development strategies, institutions and procedures; (iii) *Harmonization*: Donors’ actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective; (iv) *Managing for results*: Resource management and decision-making are focused on results; and (v) *Mutual accountability*: Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

35. The Paris Declaration focuses narrowly on development assistance and mentions gender equality only once as a cross-cutting issue in the context of harmonization efforts (para 42). A number of gender equality advocates and women’s organizations have been involved in a limited way in ensuring the gender-sensitive monitoring of the Paris Declaration.

B. Summary of the discussion

36. The Moderator started the second week with a set of questions soliciting participants' views on attention to gender equality in bilateral and multilateral development cooperation and the impact of the new aid modalities on gender equality. Issues raised included conditionality, problems with delivery due to corruption, and the need to engage men in the promotion of gender equality in all development proposals.

37. Participants emphasized the centrality of bilateral and multilateral assistance in financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, while also pointing out the current shortcomings. Despite existing mechanisms and international frameworks for this type of assistance, insufficient resources are allocated to support policies and programmes promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Participants stressed that a firm commitment to financing gender equality and the empowerment of women is necessary in order to achieve the goals and targets in the international development agenda, including the MDGs.

38. A number of participants called attention to the constraints arising from the conditions that donor countries often attach to their development assistance. At the same time, other participants pointed out that increased conditionalities could be put in place to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, by addressing specific gender equality needs through policy, guidelines, strategic frameworks, and system strengthening.

39. Many participants also focused on the issue of corruption with regard to bilateral and multilateral assistance, commenting on the need for a stronger focus on good governance. Some participants pointed out that donors and international NGOs may lack the political will or ability to deal with governance issues.

(i) Gender equality in bilateral and multilateral assistance

40. Participants called for a firm commitment to financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, asserting that this is necessary for achieving the goals and targets of the international development agenda, including the MDGs. As Beatrice Simwapenga Hamusonde, Gender and Child Rights Advisor in Zambia, stated: "*Gender equality does not seem to be an issue to those [who] have "financial muscle".*"

41. Remi Akinmade, Executive Director at the Community Health Information Education Forum (CHIEF), Nigeria, emphasized the need to ensure that all stakeholders, at different levels, have in-depth knowledge and clear understanding of gender equality issues as an integral part of international, national and local development programmes. Lisa Crisosomo, Eurostep, Belgium, indicated websites that provided updated information and guidance on how civil society could get engaged in development assistance programming in the European Commission.

(ii) Impact of new aid modalities on gender equality

42. The online discussion highlighted the impact of the changing modalities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation on gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the process of consultation with women's organizations.

43. Kinga Lohmann of the Karat Coalition, a network of women's NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (EEC/CIS), Poland, described the difficulties of maneuvering in the new development assistance landscape: "*Firstly, development assistance is a relatively new issue for the government and for civil society, secondly ... women's*

NGOs are not involved in it so far.” She stressed an unexpected result of the European Union (EU) accession by Eastern European countries: the weakening of the women’s movement in the region. Since joining the EU, the financial situation of women’s NGOs in these countries has dramatically worsened, as non-EU donors withdrew from the region. Assumptions that EU funds would be available and that democratic mechanisms would be in place, however, were not well founded. In addition, she explained that because of limited experience with EU application procedures, NGOs from Eastern European countries had much lower chances (in comparison with NGOs from ‘old EU member states’) of receiving EU funding.

44. A number of participants expressed concern about the limited consultation with civil society organizations despite governments’ commitment to the principle of mutual accountability. Stuart Halford of the International Planned Parenthood Federation UK noted that: *“One of the problems being created by the new aid architecture is that consultation between recipient governments and civil society is not actually happening as it is meant to be, in regards to (MDG based) Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), etc., and other consultative mechanisms.”* Stella Amadi, Center for Democracy and Development, Nigeria, highlighted the complexity of the issue: *“The ‘us versus them’ nature of most government/civil society relationships also makes it difficult for civil society to advocate, [let] alone to break through in this area.”*

45. On the other hand, Rose Plang, UNDP Nigeria, noted the changing nature of policy: *“The government is in the process of launching a policy on development assistance. There has always been a policy guiding assistance from bilateral and multilateral organizations but this one is different in the sense that one of its cardinal principles is the inclusion of civil society organizations in the evaluation and implementation of proposed official development assistance projects and programmes.”*

46. On the principle of harmonization, Lisa Crisostomo from Eurostep, Belgium, assessed risks in relation to gender equality: *“Different donors have different strategies for each sector. The risk of donor harmonization is that gender equality may be treated differently by different donors on a strategic level or may even not be considered at all.”*

(iii) Conditionalities

47. A number of contributions described the conditions that donor countries often attach to their lending. Margaret Mburu, Youth Challenge International, Kenya, pointed out that there were too many strings attached to assistance from donors, and only organizations that used the right “wording” in their reports would get funding.

48. On the other hand, participants called for further specific conditionalities related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Philippa Amable of the Anglican Communion, Ghana, noted that: *“A more acceptable ‘string’ would be to ensure that some donor funds are directed specifically to women's issues and the financing of women's [participation] in political structures.”* This was echoed by Rehana Khilji, Concern Worldwide Pakistan, who called for debt relief with built-in conditionality for increasing allocations towards gender-sensitive implementation of the MDGs.

49. Kinga Lohmann of the Karat Coalition, Poland, provided an example from Eastern Europe on the new situation for women’s organizations in this region: *“The ‘sandwich approach’ toward government – the push from the top [donor countries] and the bottom [women’s organization] – in the case of new Eastern European members of the EU could be an effective tool [for financing for*

gender equality], on conditions that there are clear and strong requirements (i.e. gender equality as essential to achieving sustained economic growth) in the EU documents as well as in the monitoring system.”

(iv) Corruption

50. Many participants drew attention to the issue of corruption with regard to development assistance. Risto F. Harma, researcher with Save the Children UK, indicated: *“Perhaps the key area for aid and gender [equality] missing from the discussion...is corruption in recipient countries and donors’ lack of willingness or ability to deal with it. This is, therefore, the crucial first issue to be addressed in achieving effective gender [-responsive] budgeting and in promoting gender equality and in using aid to do it.”* He highlighted the lack of willingness on the part of large ‘western NGOs’ in tackling the issue of corruption, citing an example from a programme in India. He noted that grassroots NGOs working in India raised many questions to the donor agency about governance, *“specifically how [could] they get the money through given the spectacular level of corruption. This was the single most asked question, and it was interesting because it came from people who actually work on the ground and are from India. The western NGO people...did not focus on governance at all. This lack of focus from big western NGOs... at least of their campaigns teams, is that they do not understand the governance issue, and they are not interested in it.”*

51. Jane Durgom-Powers of the International Federation of Family Associations of Missing Persons from Armed Conflicts, United States, brought up the matter of corruption within NGOs: *“Often, I have encountered other NGOs who add to the government corruption by paying governments an enormous amount of money to allow the NGOs to work in those countries. They justified their actions by calling it ‘a cost of doing business’ with the governments, and hide these payments within their project proposals or direct agreements with governments. This gives a very bad message to the people about all NGOs. ... It also encourages resentment [among citizens towards staff of] those NGOs. There [can be] distrust and polarization of relationships.”*

IV. Theme three: Funds and Foundations – Mobilizing private and public resources for gender equality

A. Background

52. Access to funding and other resources in the face of changing circumstances and new aid modalities has raised some concerns. The financial sustainability of women’s organizations and networks, which traditionally have relied on bilateral and multilateral development assistance and private foundations for support, has also been brought into question, particularly given the shifting aid landscape.

53. The extensive study by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) on *“Where is the Money for Women’s Rights?”* highlights a number of recent trends around funding for women’s rights and gender equality. Of the women’s organizations surveyed, over half received less funding in 2006 than they had five years ago. The study highlighted that the difficulties in securing funding and accessing resources – in view of changing financial and political circumstances – had forced women’s organizations to develop a variety of new

fundraising strategies and alternative funding sources, such as corporations, churches and other religious organizations, and international non-governmental organizations.

54. Corporate philanthropy was identified as one of the most promising alternative funding sources. Businesses have increased their contributions to “social investment” causes, such as women’s empowerment, poverty reduction, tsunami/disaster relief and climate change and other “green” causes, in recent years. Many corporations have also established independent foundations to handle their grants. Multinational companies may link their grant-making to the communities in which they operate and where their markets are concentrated, acting as a bridge-builder between the needs and interests of civil society and businesses.

B. Summary of the discussion

55. The Moderator started the week with a set of questions to participants, requesting their views on: (i) trends in funding for women’s organizations; (ii) role of international NGOs in funding for gender equality; (iii) the role of corporate philanthropy; and (iv) other forms of funding.

56. Numerous participants lamented the decline in funding for women’s organizations coming from funds and foundations, and noted that greater effort was being made to attract alternative sources of funding. Whereas women’s organizations had experienced some success in fundraising from corporations and religious organizations, the need for gender sensitization training for these bodies was raised. Some participants also recommended setting up monitoring committees to oversee investments in gender equality.

57. The discussion on corporate philanthropy attracted a large number of contributions with some participants providing concrete examples of the corporate sector’s work with civil society organizations. Suggestions were made to form alliances between the corporate sector and non-governmental organizations to make it mandatory for the corporate sector to establish gender equality plans; and to establish alternative criteria to rate corporations’ performance, for example, their contribution to the achievement of the MDGs, including gender equality. Participants noted the important contributions that international organizations could make in building alliances with the corporate sector.

58. Many participants commented on the role of churches and other religious organizations in generating and dispensing funds for gender equality. The online discussion provided an opportunity for participants to share recommendations and information about fundraising, as well as provide an outlet for networking for women’s organizations. A variety of information was offered, ranging from how to attract funds from different sources to networking tips.

(i) Trends in funding for women’s organizations

59. A number of participants described the challenges facing women’s organizations and networks in accessing resources from more traditional funding sources, particularly private funds and foundations. For example, Linda Basch, President of the National Council for Research on Women, United States, commented on the changing financing situation for women’s organizations by the large foundations: *“Private funds, like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, have been critical for the establishment and development of the [National Council for Research on Women]. But although nearly 70 percent of our annual budget was covered by foundation money only six years ago, now, only 10 percent comes from foundations.”*

60. Alwin Khafidhoh of Bandung Institute of Governance Studies, Indonesia, pointed out the need to adapt to the shifting donor landscape and emphasized efforts to engage mosques, religious organizations, and local women's organizations in raising funds for gender equality. He also noted that corporations could do more to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including by producing medicines targeting women's health needs.

61. Jayne Cravens, UNDP Afghanistan, noted how moving from dependency on the State to private funding is possible, and recommended that NGOs focusing on gender equality and human rights seek private funding from corporations. She advised NGOs to invite private corporations and funders to visit their workplaces so they could see first-hand what work they were doing, as well as have the opportunity to examine their financial records. She also shared a document, prepared together with other volunteers from the AidWorkers Network, to help small NGOs in developing countries raise funds.

(ii) Role of international NGOs in funding for gender equality

62. Some participants noted the value of the larger, media-attracting international funds in raising awareness of key issues in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly acknowledging the potential of the star power and celebrity persona of the leaders behind some funds. Risto F. Harma, formerly of Global March Against Child Labour, India, and Save the Children in the United Kingdom, highlighted that: *“Large funds – such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Fund on HIV/AIDS and Bono's Product RED [campaign which] sell[s] various goods like mobile phones [and] donate[s] a percentage of [the] profits – have large potential to benefit gender [equality] funding. This potential is due to their large and growing size, and coupled with their well known patrons, [who] have the potential to increase awareness of key issues as well as funding. The point of focus of organizations directly involved with gender [equality] is to see to what extent these two large funds are aware of the inter-related issues of gender [equality] in the choice of programmes they fund, and where necessary lobby them to include overlooked issues.”*

63. Other suggestions, offered by Youssef Brahimi, Programme Coordinator, South-South Programme of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, emanated from a recent meeting on Empowering Women to Invest in Sustainable Land Management, held in Bamako from 5 to 7 June 2007. The participants at this meeting agreed to create the International Coalition *“Tchém'sou’, a multi actors partnership platform for lobbying, exchange of information and resource mobilization to the benefit of North, Central and West African women networks active in natural resource management.”* He emphasized that in order to mobilize resources for gender equality in a sustainable manner, it is essential to build multi-actor partnerships, bringing together representatives of civil society, government, bilateral cooperation agencies, international organizations and international NGOs. The importance of such multi-stakeholder partnerships was also echoed by Griselda Lassaga, Women in Action, Argentina.

(iii) Corporate philanthropy

64. The discussion on corporate philanthropy addressed matters relating to the global power of corporations, corporate social responsibility, and partnerships and alliances between the corporate sector and non-governmental organizations.

65. Nadia Johnson, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), United States, asserted that since corporations were the drivers of globalization, their interests had enormous influence on both global economic decision-making and national development strategies. She claimed that women bear the brunt of human rights violations of transnational corporations, and that these corporations tended to exacerbate existing gender inequalities in social, political and economic arenas. This was echoed by Nirmala Nababsing, Government of Mauritius, who pointed out that: *"The profit motive is so high in this globalized economic environment where competitiveness and productivity are the key business concepts, that gender equality is marginalized. Women are more likely to lose their jobs in difficult situations and less likely to be recruited after a certain age. In my own country, the percentage of women unemployed is much higher than that of men and the percentage of women who have to wait for more than one year to get a job is twice that of men, showing that women have more difficulties in accessing jobs."*

66. Participants highlighted ways in which businesses, including multi-national corporations, could contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. Suggestions included linking corporate grant-making to women's needs and building bridges with civil society organizations. A number of participants also called upon women's organizations to approach corporations to explain the importance of gender equality and form alliances to address gender inequalities. Irma Loemban Tobing-Klein, Adviser to the Minister of Home Affairs in Suriname, emphasized that: *"Business is a powerful sector in reaching people. We should not leave this major player out of the loop, as it can be a very influential one."*

67. Angela Odah, Gender Specialist, Joint Donor Basket Fund and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Nigeria, reported on ongoing activities by the corporate sector in supporting the work of civil society organizations: *"Some corporate organizations especially within the oil/gas and telecommunications sectors have set up foundations in Nigeria to channel support to civil society organizations."* Similarly, Linda Basch of the National Council for Research on Women, United States, stressed that: *"Today, most of our budget is contributed by members of our Corporate Circle which is made up of major corporations that have an interest in advancing women and other underrepresented groups in their companies. In a globalized economy, businesses increasingly value the importance of attracting and recruiting a diversified workforce and management team."*

68. Participants noted the important role that international organizations could play in developing guidelines for businesses to facilitate the preparation of a gender equality component in their corporate responsibility programmes. Nirmala Nababsing, Government of Mauritius, recommended that it be mandatory for the corporate sector to have a gender equality plan, with human resource personnel fully sensitized on gender equality. These plans would address gender equality and support schemes for working women. Mercia Selva Malar, School of Communication and Management Studies, India, recommended the establishment of alternative criteria to rate a firm's performance, such as their contribution to the MDGs and gender equality. Lisa Crisostomo, Eurostep, Belgium, pointed out that: *"Just like political will, it takes [a] committed CEO [of a company]to take gender equality as a philanthropic initiative."*

(iv) Other sources of funding

69. A considerable number of discussants raised the issue of alternative forms and sources of funding, with many mentioning churches as an important source of funding for gender equality.

Joyce Bediako, University for Development Studies, Ghana, asked the question: “*How do we involve women in fund raising to fight the cause of women?*”, including raising funds from churches. Mercia Selva Malar, India, pointed out that: “*The church can be the first source of funding for women development projects... Church leadership internationally and at national level has done some amount of fund raising to develop women.*” However, she conceded that the church could do much more in helping to achieve the MDGs and gender equality.

70. The discussion also included a critical analysis of how churches have marginalized women. For example, Tebello Ralebitso, Catholic Relief Services, Lesotho, pointed out: “*The church can rightly be the first source of funding for women's projects. However, the apparent unresponsiveness we may be seeing from the church is due to the marginalization or 'othering' of women's issues...which is surprising seeing that congregations, at least here in the South, comprise mostly of women and they are the most active members. For most the church is also the first port of call in times of need. It becomes disappointing in light of this that support (beyond just financial support) for women's advancement does not register as a legitimate concern in some institutions.*”

71. To overcome women’s marginalization, Anne Mikkola, University of Helsinki, Finland, recommended gender sensitization training for churches. To ensure accountability, Risto Harma, formerly of Global March Against Child Labour, India, and Save the Children in the UK, suggested that women involved in the church establish monitoring committees to oversee investment in gender equality, including funding of school fees for their children, health care, and microfinance. Tebello Ralebitso, Catholic Relief Services, Lesotho, emphasized that this will only be successful: “[w]hen accompanied by transparency, openness and willingness on the part of the church leadership to be held [accountable] by their congregations.”

72. The online discussion also provided an important space for sharing recommendations, tips and information about fundraising and networking for women’s organizations and networks. For example, Jayne Cravens, UNDP Afghanistan, stressed the importance of networking—face-to-face—with corporations, foundations, and private business people, and highlighted certain criteria commonly used by funders to select non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for funding. Among others, she advised that NGOs should be run by more than one person (and not be ‘one-person shows’) and volunteers could be used to show local support for the organization’s mission. She also stressed the importance of making financial records available to funders.

V. Theme four: Other issues

73. The last week of the online discussion was devoted to pending and emerging issues, wrap-up, and recommendations for future action. Participants were solicited for comments on innovative sources of finance, the Financing for Development process, and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness review process. Rather than taking up these issues, most participants chose to focus instead on the reform process in the United Nations system.

74. In the 1990s, there were many gains by women’s organizations at the major UN conferences and summits. As called for in the outcome of these conferences, governments were expected to implement programmes which would advance gender equality and women’s

empowerment. Unfortunately, governments have largely fallen short of meeting the commitments and goals pertaining to gender equality.

75. In this context, the instrumental role of the international women's movement in promoting the advancement of women's rights within the United Nations was recognized.

76. The topic which received considerable attention was the financing implications of the proposed reform of the United Nations "gender equality architecture", which is part of the larger reform process in the UN currently under review.

77. Writing on behalf of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Alexandra Garita stated: "*As many of the submissions to this online discussion can attest to, the United Nations system plays a fundamental role in implementing strategies and programmes with local countries, NGOs and other actors to ensure women's rights worldwide.*"

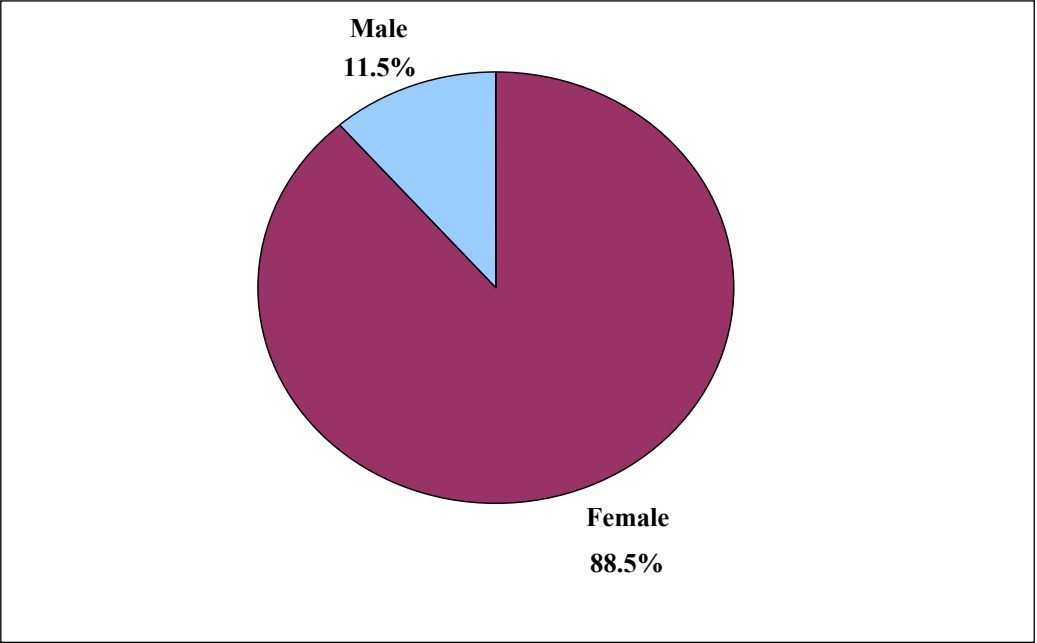
78. Simon Chase, Action for Southern Africa, United Kingdom, spoke of the need for greater funding for gender equality within the United Nations system, adding: "*The funding of the existing gender machinery at the United Nations is woefully inadequate to fulfill even the limited mandate of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), let alone the ambitious goals of the Beijing Platform of Action or CEDAW.*"

79. Alexandra Garita stressed the need for a stronger gender equality architecture that will ensure greater access to resources for the promotion and protection of women's rights around the world. She noted: "*The United Nations lacks an effective mechanism to deliver on these promises: an independent, women-specific agency with adequate stature, resources, operational capacity, and a mandate to drive this agenda. A lead women's agency is needed along with well-resourced, effective mainstreaming efforts*" that give adequate priority to work on gender equality.

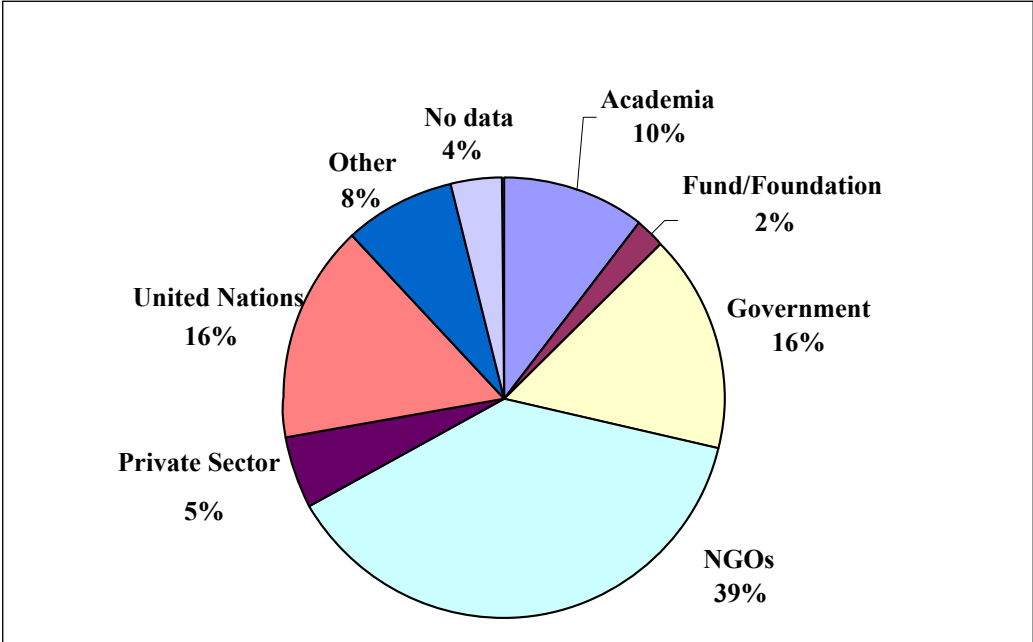
80. To ensure sufficient resources for the new "gender equality architecture", participants recommended that any new body set up be fully and ambitiously funded. Calls emerged for 1 per cent of the total Official Development Assistance (ODA)—currently US\$100 billion per year—to be allocated for the new "gender equality architecture" initially.

Annex 1: Statistics on participation

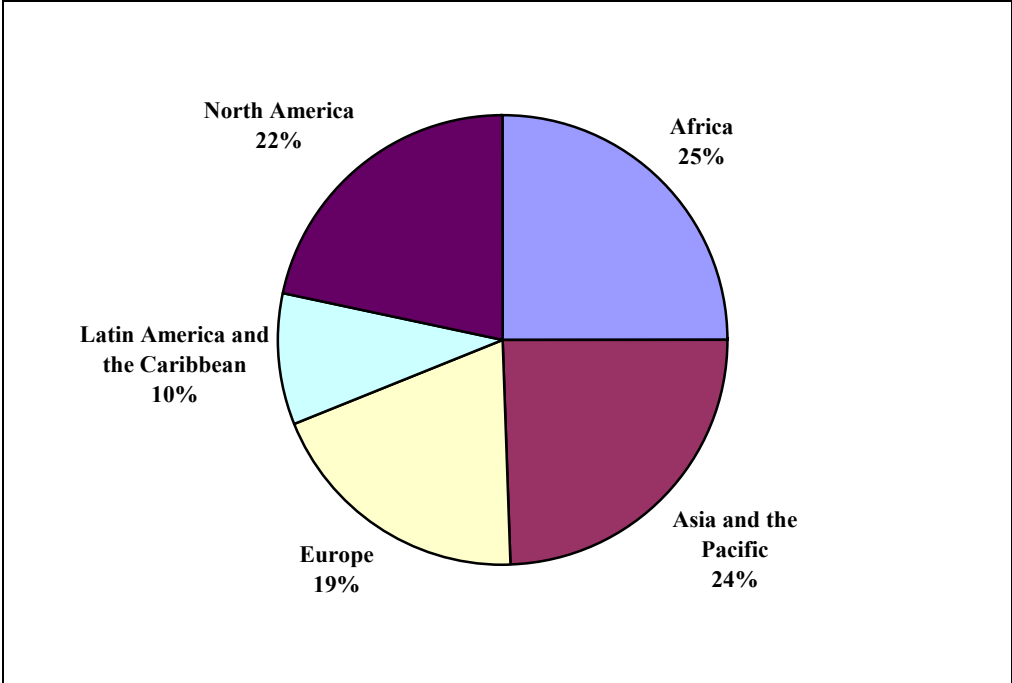
Participants by sex



Participants by affiliation

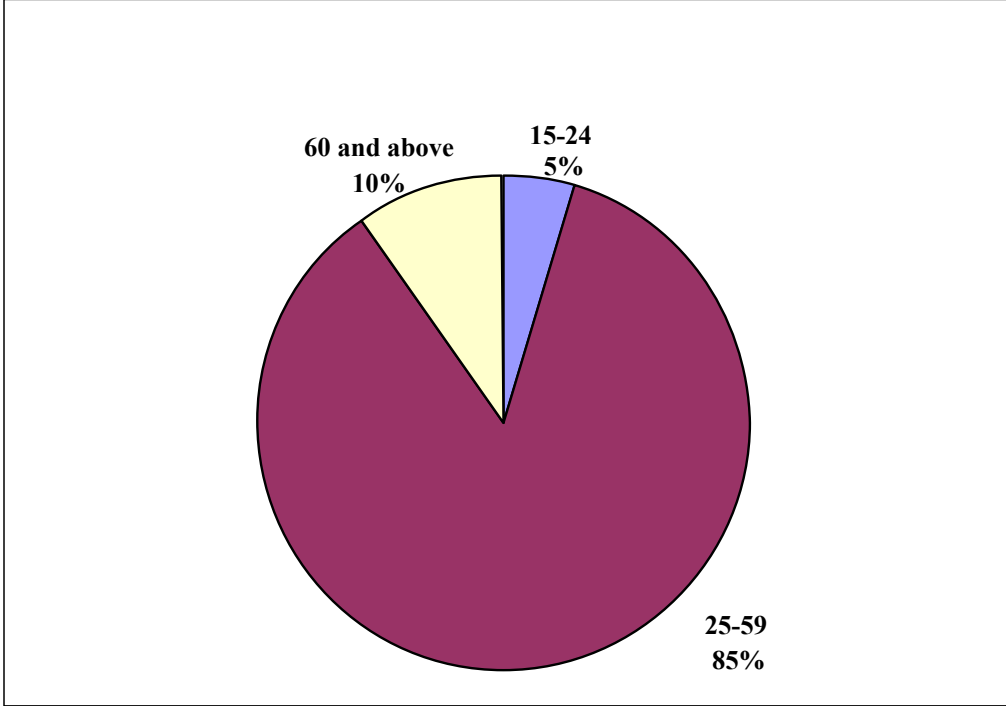


Geographical distribution of participants*

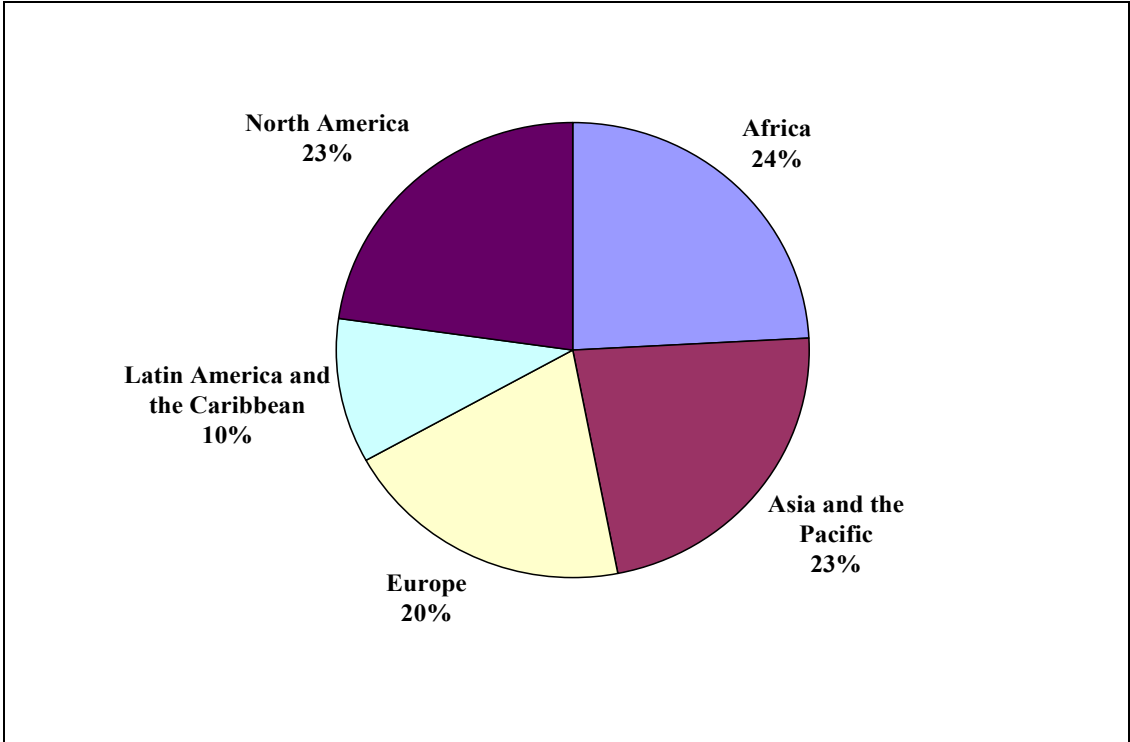


**Please note that this is an unofficial geographical grouping of countries.*

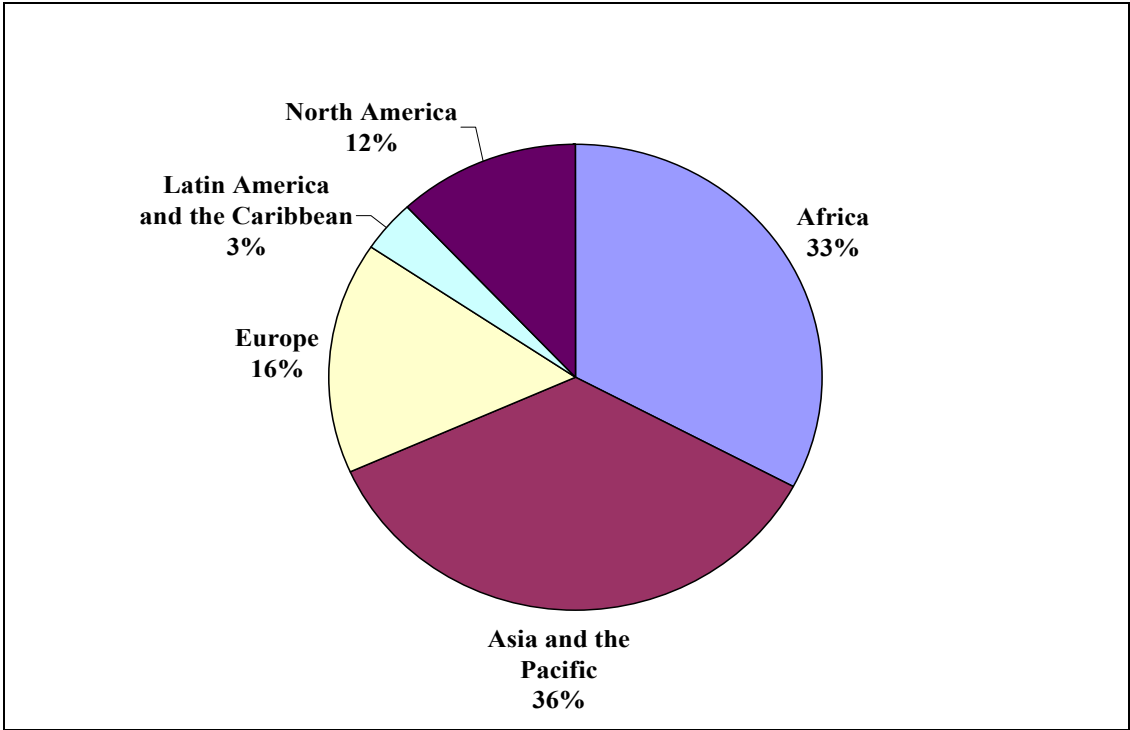
Participants by age



Geographical distribution of female participants



Geographical distribution of male participants



Annex 2: Number of participants in online discussion by country

AFRICA	Algeria	2
	Angola	1
	Benin	3
	Botswana	1
	Burkina Faso	1
	Burundi	3
	Cameroon	12
	Congo, Republic of	2
	Côte d'Ivoire	5
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3
	Djibouti	1
	Egypt	5
	Eritrea	5
	Ethiopia	5
	Gambia	2
	Ghana	26
	Kenya	33
	Lesotho	3
	Liberia	4
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2
	Madagascar	1
	Malawi	7
	Mauritania	2
	Mauritius	5
	Morocco	5
	Mozambique	2
	Namibia	3
	Niger	2
	Nigeria	44
	Rwanda	11
	Senegal	9
	Seychelles	1
	Sierra Leone	4
	Somalia	1
	South Africa	28
	Sudan	10
	Togo	2
	Tunisia	5
	Uganda	30
	United Republic of Tanzania	14
Zambia	12	
Zimbabwe	9	
Total	326	

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	Afghanistan	3
	Australia	29
	Armenia	1
	Azerbaijan	4
	Bangladesh	12
	Cambodia	1
	China	2
	Fiji	7
	Georgia	7
	India	93
	Indonesia	10
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1
	Iraq	1
	Israel	1
	Japan	14
	Jordan	6
	Kazakhstan	2
	Kyrgyzstan	3
	Lao People's Democratic Republic	3
	Lebanon	1
	Malaysia	5
	Nepal	23
	New Zealand	16
	Occupied Palestinian Territory	2
	Pakistan	21
	Papua New Guinea	2
	Philippines	19
	Republic of Korea	5
	Samoa	1
	Saudi Arabia	1
	Singapore	3
	Sri Lanka	5
	Syria	3
Tajikistan	1	
Thailand	5	
Uzbekistan	1	
Vanuatu	1	
Viet Nam	1	
Yemen	2	
Total	318	

EUROPE	Albania	2
	Austria	5
	Belgium	6
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
	Bulgaria	12
	Croatia	1
	Cyprus	5
	Czech Republic	3
	Denmark	2
	Estonia	1
	Finland	4
	France	12
	Germany	19
	Greece	3
	Hungary	3
	Ireland	11
	Italy	14
	Latvia	1
	Lithuania	4
	Malta	3
	Netherlands	21
	Norway	7
	Poland	3
	Portugal	2
	Republic of Moldova	2
	Russian Federation	1
	Serbia	3
	Slovak Republic	1
	Slovenia	2
	Spain	16
	Sweden	12
	Switzerland	7
Turkey	9	
Ukraine	3	
United Kingdom	50	
TOTAL	252	

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	Argentina	5
	Bahamas	2
	Barbados	1
	Bolivia	2
	Brazil	10
	Chile	3
	Colombia	9
	Costa Rica	2
	Cuba	1
	Ecuador	4
	El Salvador	3
	Grenada	2
	Guatemala	1
	Guyana	2
	Haiti	3
	Honduras	1
	Jamaica	5
	Mexico	31
	Nicaragua	4
	Panama	2
	Paraguay	1
	Peru	14
	Puerto Rico	2
	Suriname	3
Trinidad and Tobago	1	
Uruguay	7	
Venezuela	3	
Total	124	

NORTH AMERICA	Canada	58
	United States of America	223
	Total	281

Annex 3: List of related web links

The following list of links is compiled from links mentioned in the online discussion and/or sent by discussion participants to the discussion moderator by email.

“Public Finance: Using budgets for promoting gender equality.”

- Task Force on Gender and Financing for Development
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/tffindevelop.htm>
- UNIFEM www.gender-budgets.org
- Financing Gender Equality: Commonwealth Perspectives 2007
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/165726/200607newbook.htm>
- Oxfam Gender-Responsive budgeting
http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/oxfam_edPaper7.pdf

“Bilateral and multilateral assistance: The way forward for promoting gender equality.”

Updated information and guidance on how civil society can get engaged in EC aid programming:

- Asia(www.asia-programming.eu),
- Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (www.acp-programming.eu)
- Latin America (www.la-programming.eu)
- European neighborhood (www.enpi-programming.eu)

UN Financing for Development

Monterrey Consensus, A/CONF.198/11, International Conference on Financing for Development, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002

<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/indexDocuments.htm>

Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonization, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability, High Level Forum, Paris, 28 February – 2 March 2005.

(Para 42 on gender equality)

<http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/Paris/FINALPARISDECLARATION.pdf>

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

www.oecd.org OECD-DAC Network for Gender Equality: www.oecd.org/dac/gender

OECD 2007 “Gender equality and aid delivery: What has changed in development co-operation agencies since 1999?” <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/0/38773781.pdf>

The Challenges of the European Development Consensus and the current EU aid agenda

Helen O'Connell, One World Action, WIDE's Annual Conference 2007 "New aid, expanding trade: What do women have to say?" 15 June 2007

<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/The%20Challenges%20of%20the%20European%20Development%20Consensus%20and%20the%20current%20aid%20agenda.pdf?id=397>

The Reality of Aid, *Reality Checks* – official newsletter (January 2007 issue). Provides an overview of the Paris Declaration and highlights donor commitments that purport to improve aid effectiveness. The papers present critiques to the Declaration and pose challenges to donor countries, local and national governments as well as civil society organizations working towards aid effectiveness.

<http://www.realityofaid.org/rcheck.php> (download January 2007 issue)

Promoting Gender Equality in New Aid Modalities and Partnerships

UNIFEM Discussion Paper – March 2006

http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/11429447581PromotingGenderEqualityInNewAidModalities_eng.pdf

Owning Development: Promoting Gender Equality in New Aid Modalities and Partnerships, UNIFEM conference website, November 2005

http://www.unifem.org/news_events/event_detail.php?EventID=31

Financing for Development: Aid Effectiveness and Gender-Responsive Budgets

Background paper prepared for the Commonwealth Secretariat, June 2007

by Debbie Budlender, Community Agency for Social Enquiry, Cape Town, South Africa

http://www.thecommonwealth.org/shared_asp_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=164468

Financing Gender Equality for Development and Democracy, The Eighth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, 11 to 14 June 2007

<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/164331/papers/>

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

Policy statement on Aid Effectiveness <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/aideffectiveness>

Eurostep

Four websites on country strategy papers that form the basis of aid in the recipient country: *Asia*: www.asia-programming.eu; *Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific*: www.acp-programming.eu; *Latin America*: www.la-programming.eu; and *Europe*: www.enpi-programming.eu.

“Effective Strategies for Promoting Gender Equality: How can we increase the likelihood of women benefiting equally from development activities? What strategies have proven to be effective in the field?” Hunt, Juliet/Brouwers, Ria, April 2004
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/2/32126577.pdf> OK

Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANGWE)

www.un.org/womenwatch/iangwe/

Task Force on Gender and Financing for Development

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/tffinfdevelop.htm>

Day of Dialogue on Gender and Financing for Development, Inter-Agency Taskforce on Gender and Financing for Development, New York, 25 February 2002

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/activities/PublicationDayDialogue.pdf>

Intergovernmental mandates on incorporating gender perspectives in the issues covered by the International Conference on Financing for Development, Interagency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality Taskforce on Financing for Development, April 2001

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/activities/mandaterev.pdf>

Notes on the Gender Perspective in Financing for Development and the Monterrey Consensus, June 2004

http://www.uninstraw.org/en/images/stories/Financing/financing_for_development_notes_en.pdf

Issues and Concerns in Financing for Development, Floro, M./Cagatay, N./Willoughby, J./Erturk, K.: Gender INSTRAW Occasional Paper No. 3, April 2004

http://www.uninstraw.org/en/documents/stories/Financing/financing_for_development.pdf

“Funds and Foundations: Mobilizing private and public resources for gender equality.”

“Where is the Money for Women’s Rights?” An action research project of AWID with Just Associates, *February 2006 Revised Edition*

http://www.awid.org/go.php?pg=where_is_money

Aid Workers Network

Document for small NGOs in developing countries to help them raise funds,
www.aidworkers.net.