

FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: A BACKGROUNDER

BACKGROUND

Beginning with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 to the international communities' commitment to the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and in numerous declarations and outcome policy documents since then, the necessity of increased financing for development has been widely acknowledged. How that would happen, who would do it, how much money would be needed and where it would come from were just some of the issues on the table at the 2002 UN Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in Monterrey, Mexico. That conference, and its resulting outcome document, the Monterrey Consensus, has triggered a series of meetings that will determine the flow of resources and shape the "aid modalities" for development for years to come. In 2008, a series of meetings will culminate in the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. This conference will be held in Doha, Qatar from 29 November to 2 December 2008. Further deliberations and decisions will be made here on the issue of financing for development. The question is *where are women in this process?*

At the 2008 annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), delegates will take up the issue of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women for the first time in the 52 year history of the Commission. The CSW's agenda will reflect the fact that one of the major obstacles to the realization of the Platform for Action is the continuing lack of adequate financial resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It will also draw upon recent research undertaken by the Association for Women's Rights in Development indicating a decrease in funding for women's organizations. Macroeconomic policies, public finance, including gender responsive budgeting, the mobilization of international resources and new and innovative sources of funding will be key points of discussion.

The Commission will also deliberate these issues with the understanding that their deliberations will fit into the broader policy discussions on financing for development. Standing as a unique, women-specific policy space in the larger deliberations on financing for development, this year's CSW will draw upon the Monterrey Consensus and the Paris Declaration while recognizing their shortcomings, namely that while these documents do identify the persistent lack of funding to implement gender equality, they fail to articulate a comprehensive and cross-cutting gender focus. The outcome document of the 2008 CSW will aim to address these shortcomings and suggest new approaches.

In the lead up to this 52nd session of the CSW, the Division for the Advancement of Women convened an Expert Group Meeting to discuss the landscape and the developments in the area of financing for gender quality and the empowerment of women. In addition to the Monterrey Consensus and other global policies, the following were discussed in the ensuing report:

Public Finance and Gender Responsive Budgeting

Recognized as the largest single source of financing for gender equality and women's empowerment, government budgets, working through national and sub-national budgets, strive to be translated into practical policies and programmes. The gendered impact of public finance systems and the need for gender responsive budgeting and other public finance reforms to address the inequitable effects of certain policies are discussed. Recommendations are made on how governments can better integrate a gender perspective into their public finance systems as well as increase the participation of women in macroeconomic and budgetary policy formulation.

Bilateral and Multilateral Aid

The extent to which donor agencies have fulfilled the gender equality dimension of the Monterrey Consensus is examined, as well as trends observed in aid delivery and the effect of the Paris Declaration. Recommendations include increases in Official Development Assistance, mechanisms for assessing the performance of the bilateral and multilateral agencies and the push for the implementation of a dual approach to achieving gender equality.

Funding the Women's Movement

This section of the Report examines the funding environment for the women's movement and discusses the need for a complementary approach to funding, one which recognizes the necessity of involving all stakeholders, including government, civil society, women's organizations and the private sector. Innovative funding approaches, such as diaspora funding and social enterprises, are examined and recommendations are made, including a call for a significant increase in investment in women's rights organizations, a stronger move towards alliance building and a greater exchange of information and training in fundraising.

These recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting along with the Report of the Secretary General and the draft Agreed Conclusions will propel the discussions of the CSW.

LOOKING FORWARD

Given the severe under representation of women and women's organizations in the processes leading up to the financing for development conferences and the weak references to gender equality in the global policies that have ensued, including no reference of gender in the Paris Declaration, the CSW offers a window of opportunity for women's substantive participation within the financing for development debate. The CSW provides a space to advocate for more gender sensitive and gender responsive measures to be included in global discussions.

It is anticipated that the Commission will adopt Agreed Conclusions that will, among other things, call for the following:

- Increase resources for gender equality work throughout the United Nations system, including for gender mainstreaming and for the interagency work on gender equality to enhance coherence and coordination;
- Develop a more coherent and transparent system for tracking financial resources across the United Nations system, including on gender mainstreaming, and institute systematic reporting on resources invested;
- Ensure that resource allocation is incorporated in all evaluations and audits of United Nations entities' implementation of gender equality policies and programmes;

- Ensure that direct funding goes to women's organizations to advance their autonomy and sustainability, and increase support for women's funds which provide small grants to women's initiatives

Once finalized, the 2008 CSW Agreed Conclusions will be fed into the larger preparatory process for the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus Conference to be held in Doha, Qatar from 29 November- 2 December 2008. The Agreed Conclusions may well be one of the most important gender specific documents to feed into the deliberations in Doha.

In addition to the Doha Conference and its preparatory meeting series, several other meetings on financing for development will be occurring throughout 2008. In April of 2008, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will be held in Accra, Ghana. The conference will address the key opportunities and challenges globalization creates for development. In July, 2008, the first biennial ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum will review the trends in international development cooperation. In September, 2008 the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness will assess the progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration. Finally, in November and December of 2008, the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus will take place. The conference will provide a strategic opportunity for the international community to advance concrete action-oriented gender-sensitive policy recommendations.

For a more detailed explanation of the international meetings on financing for development and the outcome documents of these sessions, please see Item 4 on the CD-ROM, entitled "From Beijing to Doha: Tracking the Gender Dimension of Financing for Development and Gender Equality".