

# Gender Mainstreaming



## **GENDER EQUALITY:**

### **A CORE UNDP COMMITMENT**

Equality between women and men is fair and right. It is a worthy goal in and of itself, one that lies at the heart of human rights. But it is also central to progress in human development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is committed to making gender equality a reality, not only because it is a moral imperative, but because it is a way to promote prosperity and well-being for all.

## **DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IS**

### **PERVASIVE AND SEVERE**

The needs and priorities of half of humankind have yet to make it to the forefront of the development agenda. Of the world's 1 billion poorest people, three fifths are women and girls. Of the 960 million adults in the world who cannot read, two thirds are women. Seventy percent of the 130 million children who are not enrolled in school are girls. And with notable exceptions, such as Rwanda and the Nordic countries, women are conspicuously absent from parliaments, making up, on average, only 16 percent of parliamentarians worldwide.

Women everywhere typically earn less than men, both because they are concentrated in

low-paying jobs and because they earn less for the same work. Although women provide about 70 percent of the unpaid time spent caring for family members, that contribution to the global economy remains invisible. Up to half of all adult women have experienced violence at the hands of their intimate partners. Systematic sexual violence against women has characterized almost all recent armed conflicts and is used as a tool of terror and 'ethnic cleansing'. Moreover, women and girls are frequent victims of rape in refugee camps. In sub-Saharan Africa, 57 percent of those living with HIV are women, and young women aged 15-24 are at least three times more likely to be infected than men of the same age. Half a million women die and at least 9 million more suffer serious injuries or disabilities from preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

## **WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING?**

'Gender' refers to the socially constructed rather than biologically determined roles of men and women as well as the relationships between them in a given society at a specific time and place. These roles and relationships are not fixed, but can and do change. 'Gender mainstreaming' was defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1997 as 'a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring



and evaluation of the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated'. The relative status of men and women, the interaction between gender and race, class and ethnicity, and questions of rights, control, ownership, power and voice – all have a critical impact on the success and sustainability of every development intervention.

In practice, gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps in gender equality through the use of gender-disaggregated data; developing strategies to close those gaps; putting resources and expertise into implementing strategies for gender equality; monitoring implementation; and holding individuals and institutions accountable for results. Despite good intentions and some real progress, the development community, UNDP included, is still falling short in delivering on its promises. Many of the problem areas were identified in the UN Secretary-General's Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. These areas include the capacity for gender analysis; development of accountability mechanisms; allocation of sufficient resources; explicit, coherent and sustained attention to gender equality; targeting not just 'soft' areas for gender mainstreaming (such as health and education), but also supposedly 'gender-neutral' areas, such as infrastructure development and economic policies; and strong political commitment and will.

## WHAT IS UNDP DOING?

UNDP promotes gender equality through gender mainstreaming. The organization's new corporate strategy on gender is designed to integrate the promotion of women's empowerment and equality fully in the organization's core business. The new strategy calls for gender mainstreaming to become *everyone's job* – not the responsibility of a small number of specialists. It rests on three pillars:

- Developing capacities – both in-country and in-house – to integrate gender concerns in all practice areas and in global, regional and country cooperation frameworks;
- Providing policy advisory services that promote gender equality and women's empowerment; and

- Supporting specific interventions that benefit women and scale-up innovative models, such as those developed and tested by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Priorities of the corporate gender action plan include monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a 'gender lens'; promoting gender-sensitive budgeting; reducing the incidence of HIV among vulnerable women; engendering macroeconomic policies and trade negotiations; promoting women's empowerment through democratic governance, decentralization and civil society participation; and developing women's capacities through training, knowledge-sharing and networking.

UNDP's new multi-year funding framework includes a mechanism to ensure that gender equality is effectively integrated in all UNDP service lines and programmes, and identifies specific performance indicators. Accountability tools include a gender mainstreaming scorecard, which tracks overall progress at the corporate level; the review of manager and staff performance in gender mainstreaming as part of the yearly appraisal process; and new indicators to track results.

## WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

The gender page of UNDP's website includes links to a host of online resources. For practical gender mainstreaming tools and training packs, go to:

<http://www.undp.org/gender/tools.htm>

For links to other online resources, go to:

<http://www.undp.org/gender/resources.htm#other>

For UNDP's Gender Policy Note, go to:

<http://www.undp.org/gender/policy.htm>

UNIFEM's website has a list of resources covering a wide range of gender-related issues and topics. Go to:

[http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f\\_page\\_pid=8](http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=8)

BRIDGE is a gender and development research and information service within the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom. BRIDGE supports gender advocacy and mainstreaming efforts by linking theory, policy and practice with accessible and diverse gender information in print and online at <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/>