

UNDP-Spain MDG Achievement Fund

Terms of Reference for Thematic Window on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

This document provides policy guidance to UN Country Teams applying for funding under the UNDP-Spain MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Thematic Window for **Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment**. The framework elaborated below, aims to set out the policy goals of the Fund in this area and illustrate the types of interventions the Fund will support. This guidance will also be applied by the technical assessment process that will review applications. These Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the Fund’s “**Framework Document**” which sets out the overarching strategy for the MDG-F and the “**Concept Note Format**” which provides the format for submissions. These can be viewed at the Fund’s home page at www.undp.org/mdgf. Kindly note that MDG-F Thematic Windows will only accept applications from UN Resident Coordinators in eligible countries, applying on behalf of their UN Country Team.

1. Background and Rationale

There have been profound changes in the status and role of women over the past decades. Women have entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, increasing their potential participation in decision making at various levels, starting with the household. These are important assets for new generations of young women.

But the Beijing+10 reviews also showed such progress to be slow and uneven. Two thirds of the world’s 876 million illiterates are female. Of the world’s one billion poorest people, an estimated three-fifths are women and girls. Women represent a growing proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS, and in countries with high HIV prevalence young women and girls with little or no education are at much higher risk of contracting HIV than their male counterparts.

In addition to basic inequalities in access to education and resources, and an unequal share of the burdens of poverty, women continue to be under-represented in formal decision-making structures. Although women are increasingly active in community support systems, gender disparities persist in public positions at all levels; local, national, regional and global.

Despite the fact that the majority of the world’s poor are women and girls, poverty reduction strategies do not sufficiently address the differential impact of poverty on women and girls and inadequately target gender equality as a core objective. Whereas women’s contributions to the global economy are growing rapidly, women’s labor remains undervalued and under-counted in national accounts; data disaggregated by gender are still poorly developed.

In spite of commitments and campaigns to eliminate violence against women, women’s human rights are also still widely denied and violated. An estimated one-quarter to one-half of all women has suffered physical abuse. National and international crises and conflicts impact differently on men and women and increase women’s vulnerabilities. According to UN data, women and children comprise about 80 per cent of the world’s 35 million refugees and displaced people, and they are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence while in flight, in refugee camps, and/or during resettlement.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) embody the powerful agenda of a global partnership to fight poverty, offering a shared vision of a better world and specific goals to be reached by the year 2015. Goal 3, dealing specifically with Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, encompasses the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

2. Key challenges and opportunities in the sector

Seven priorities were identified by the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and subsequently enshrined by UN Member States in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document:

- Eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by the earliest possible date and at all educational levels by 2015;
- Guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own and inherit property and ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women;
- Ensuring access to reproductive health services;
- Promoting women’s equal access to labor markets, sustainable employment and adequate labor protection;
- Ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit, and technology,
- Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl child, during and after armed conflicts in accordance with the obligations of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;
- Promoting increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies, including through their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.

These priorities cover three interlinked domains of gender equality and women’s empowerment defined by the Task Force as:

- Capabilities: basic human abilities as measured by education, health, and nutrition that are fundamental to individual well-being and are the means through which individuals access other forms of well-being.
- Access to resources and opportunities: equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets and resources, as well as political

opportunity. Without these women will be unable to employ their capabilities for their well-being and that of their families, communities, and societies.

- Security: defined as reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict. Violence and conflict result in physical and psychological harm and lessen the ability of individuals, households, and communities to fulfill their potential.

Advancing these issues at the country level requires progress both ‘upstream’ in terms of public policies and planning and ‘downstream’ in terms of designing and implementing targeted interventions.

The first ‘upstream’ challenge relates to the integration of gender equality issues into national and local development planning processes. Recent gender analyses of PRSPs show that integration of gender issues is not systematic, and is mostly centred in social sectors. The economic sectors, especially the macro-economic pillar, are in most cases assumed to be “gender-neutral.” In most PRSPs, inconsistencies and policy incoherence exist between the objective of reducing gender inequalities and maintaining a stable macro-economic framework. There is a need to fully integrate a gender dimension in national poverty reduction frameworks and to ensure that poverty policies are consistent with macro-economic frameworks and funding modalities. To make this fundamental shift, additional studies and surveys, capacity development of state and non-state actors and policy dialogue and advocacy are required. An understanding of the link between loan conditionalities and gender equality objectives in PRSPs is also extremely important.

A second key challenge in terms of policy and planning arises from the implementation of new aid modalities spurred by the Paris Declaration: challenges of how to integrate gender issues across sectors and monitor and account for progress in the context of Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs), basket funding, and direct budget support. Without gender responsive policies and new and innovative implementation and monitoring mechanisms, women risk not benefiting equitably from expanded budgets.

A third set of critical challenges relate to measuring and accounting for gender equality policy impact. The weak capacities of national statistical agencies and stakeholders and lack of common sets of indicators across all sectors to enable cross-country, cross-regional comparison, hinder efforts to address gender inequality issues at the policy level and to monitor progress on their implementation. Improvement of countries’ capacity to enhance the coverage, quality, and frequency of collection of sex-disaggregated data remains a priority. Similarly, application of gender responsive budgeting tools at national and sub-national levels needs to be widened.

In addition to the ‘upstream’ challenges identified above, most developing countries have little capacity to design and implement multi-sectoral interventions to reduce gender inequalities. Issues such as violence against women, feminization of poverty, sexual reproductive health, access to and retention in (primary and secondary) education and threats to women’s human rights, cut across several sectors and therefore demand holistic approaches. To address an issue as pervasive as violence against women, the right sequencing of multiple interventions is also critical. The importance of bringing together

different parts of the UN under one multi-sectoral initiative cannot be overstated. Some innovative strategies piloted by UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNICEF UNDP, ILO and other partners need to be scaled up, their impact measured and results shared broadly, to better address this challenge.

The MDG Achievement Fund seeks to facilitate the achievement of MDG 3 and all other MDGs through interventions addressing three dimensions of gender equality and women’s empowerment; capabilities, access to resources and opportunities, and security.

3. Illustrative interventions

The MDG-F will welcome funding applications that aim to:

- Promote and strengthen gender responsive planning within national and local development planning processes, such as PRSPs, Development Policy Loans and SWAPs;
- Build the knowledge and capacity of gender equality advocates in holistic quality programming for women’s rights; and increase their influence in policy decision-making and planning;
- Enhance institutional capacity to monitor the implementation of gender equality policies and institutional accountability to gender equality goals;
- Scale-up and/or pilot innovative, targeted interventions to advance women’s rights and reduce gender disparities;

In order to achieve these kinds of outcomes, proposals could contain some or all of the following illustrative elements:

With regard to policy and planning:

- Supporting measures to systematically integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment issues in national planning cycles including budgets and loan instruments;
- Bringing a gender perspective to global and national policies through policy research, advocacy and capacity development.
- Exploring and addressing the impacts of external/global policies (for example: aid, debt relief, trade or migration) on the goal of gender equality at the national level;
- Examining the burden of care in countries with less formalized labour markets and weaker forms of state social provisioning, and identifying the mix of policies needed to reduce, support and redistribute care work to enable overall well-being and enhance gender equality (for example in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic);
- Ensuring that policies and practices of global, national and local institutions that determine the opportunities for poor women to have access to and control over resources, are based on principles of gender equality and women’s human rights – policy research and advocacy targeting IFIs, ministries of finance, labor, health, national aids councils, judicial institutions, local governments etc.;

- Establishing mechanisms to mainstream gender equality in the new aid modalities with respect to the principles of the Paris Declaration at the country level;

With regard to gender-advocates:

- Consolidating women’s rights constituencies within and outside government;
- Capacity building on key policy issues (economic policy analysis, gender responsive budgeting, etc.);
- Fostering women’s participation in the political sphere;
- Strengthening gender mainstreaming capacities among key policymaking bodies: The capacities of various national stakeholders to engage in the stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation can be developed, and awareness-raising campaigns supported, to generate and sustain demand for gender equality and women’s empowerment;

With regard to monitoring and data:

- Conducting base line studies; collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data; identifying concrete, quantifiable and time-bound targets and indicators;
- Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.

With regard to targeted interventions:

- Designing and piloting gender equality interventions, rolling out what has been tested: countries that have undertaken gender needs assessments and costing exercises may move to implementation of targeted interventions to strengthen protection of women’s rights, reduce gender disparities and empower women. The Fund will welcome multi-sectoral interventions to address violence against women and girls, school-based and community-based interventions to retain girls in school, policy advocacy and development of women’s entrepreneurial potential, initiatives that empower women to prevent or recover from conflict/natural disasters, interventions to increase women’s access to sexual and reproductive health services and to productive work etc;
- Promoting interventions that aim to speed up or strengthen implementation of an agreed-upon policy, plan or law related to achieving gender equality or addressing gender discrimination. This could be a comprehensive gender equality plan or a specific law or policy, e.g. labor law, electoral law, removal of restrictions to women’s inheritance rights, follow up to concluding comments of CEDAW, etc. This could also include scaling up proven or innovative programmes.

Country teams should be guided by the seven strategic priorities identified in the 2005 Summit Outcome document and by the above examples of possible interventions, in identifying specific actions to undertake. The proposals should be based on the particular

situation of gender equality in the national context. Capacity development of women and of government and civil society organizations and institutions to sustain, expand or replicate the activities should also be considered as a key element.

4. How will we know we are having an impact?

Programmes financed by the MDG-F in this sector, will be expected to demonstrate credible, measurable results. Applications to the Fund will therefore be required to identify the baseline key indicators, as well as performance and results indicators that can be used to measure and monitor success of the programme, and the means to collect that data during and after the proposed programme period.

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