



ACTION

ON GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AFRICA

Media Brief Financing for Gender Equality*

Consult the ADF Background Paper on Financing for Gender Equality for more information

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Media Brief

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1. Why is financing for gender equality important for development?

- **Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment is an obligation** assumed by countries through the sovereign act of ratification of various international human rights instruments.
- **Financing for gender equality yields high social and economic returns.** It is estimated that missing MDG 3 targets could result in countries having 0.1-0.3 percentage points lower per capita growth rates. In the 2007 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, estimates showed that the region was losing \$42-47 billion annually because of women's limited access to employment opportunities, and another \$16-\$30 billion annually as a result of gender gaps in education (United Nations, ESCAP, 2007). There is a lesson here for Africa to draw on.
- **Investment in gender equality has intergenerational spillover effects.** Evidence shows that educated mothers have lower fertility rates and their children attend school and lead healthier lives.
- **Increasing resources for gender equality and women's empowerment would contribute significantly to the achievement of all other development goals, including the MDGs.** "Progress for women is progress for all" (General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 58).
- **Investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth.** As the World Bank's new Gender Action Plan explains, "the business case for expanding women's economic opportunities is becoming increasingly evident; this is nothing more than smart economics".¹

2. What commitments have been made, so far towards gender equality and women's empowerment?

- The obligation for financing for gender equality is an integral part of all the commitments made by African countries and their international development partners towards gender equality and women's empowerment.
- African countries have made commitments under the different international and regional instruments that guarantee human rights for women, including CEDAW, Security Council Resolution 1325, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, as well as the BPFA. That obligation also arises from the international commitment to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The Monterrey Consensus embodies an agreement framework for financing for development, including gender equality and women's empowerment.

1 Ibid, para 14.

3. What are some Key Concerns Expressed with Regard to Recommendations Made so Far in Financing Gender Equality?

Financing for gender equality must be viewed within the broader ongoing dialogue on financing for development.

Key Concern: During its fifty-second session in March 2008, the Commission on the Status of women (CSW) expressed its concern *that insufficient political commitment and lack of budgetary resources continued to pose obstacles to achievement of the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment.*

Proposals made:

- The Commission emphasized the need **for political commitment** in making the necessary human and financial resources available for the empowerment of women. It also underscored the need for **funding to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors** to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women.²
- More specifically, CSW **urged governments to carry out gender-sensitive analysis of revenues and expenditures in all policy areas and to take review and evaluation results in budget planning, allocation and revenue-raising into account**, in order to enhance the contribution of government expenditures to accelerate, full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and BPFA.
- CSW also urged **developed countries that had not yet done so in accordance with their commitments, to make concrete efforts towards meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of their GNP for ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 to least developed countries.**

4. What are the key areas of progress and challenges in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment?

In assessing the progress, it is important to evaluate performance in the context of the three broad areas of empowerment (i.e., political, economic and social). Even though data on resource flows are limited to women's empowerment interventions, clearly, analysis of outcomes and impacts in this area suggests that some advances have been made:

■ **Political empowerment**

- National constitutions in many African countries guarantee human rights including equality and non-discrimination. **Women are running for public office in growing numbers** and have currently reached an average of 18.4 per cent of seats in national assemblies, exceeding 30 per cent of representatives in national assemblies in 22 countries.³
- **Africa has performed reasonably well** mainly due to the number of countries that have introduced affirmative action quota systems for women's representation in parliament and in local government. In the September 2008 elections in Rwanda, a landmark was reached when women won 44 of the 80 seats in parliament, the highest percentage of women elected to parliament in the world.

² Ibid, para 1.

³ IPU. 2008. "Women in National Parliaments: World Average Table, situation as of 31 May 2008." As quoted in UNIFEM 2008, Progress of the World's Women, 17.

■ **Social empowerment**

- In the area of social empowerment, there has ***been commendable progress*** towards gender parity in school enrolment for basic education (United Nations, 2008b). ***However, there is a problem with retention; girls are dropping out at a higher rate than boys.***
- ***Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high*** across much of the developing world. In 2005, more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy, childbirth or in the six weeks after delivery. Ninety-nine per cent of these deaths occurred in the developing world, with sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Southern Asia accounting for most of the deaths. In SSA, a woman's risk of dying from treatable or preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth over the course of her lifetime is 1 in 22, compared to 1 in 7,300 in the developed world.⁴
- ***Women and girls remain more vulnerable to HIV infection***, despite the progress made in availability of and access to prevention information. Prevalence rates have dropped in some countries while others have witnessed a rise in new infection rates.

■ **Economic empowerment**

- There has also been modest ***progress in economic empowerment***. The percentage of women in gainful employment outside the agricultural sector increased from 25 per cent in 1990 to 31 per cent in 2006.⁵ However, ***most women still work in the informal sector, especially in the more vulnerable low-paying jobs of the informal sector.***

5. **What are some key considerations that should be borne in mind in assessing progress made?**

- The progress being made ***should not mask its slow pace and at times overall reversal***. In 2005, UNDP reported that 18 countries with a combined population of 461 million registered a lower human development index in 2003 than in 1990. Thirteen of these were in Africa.⁶
- The spread of HIV and AIDS and economic stagnation was thought to have contributed to this reversal. ***Substantial and systemic inequalities based on sex and gender were also rampant***. A pregnant woman in Africa was 180 times more likely to die of pregnancy complications than in Western Europe.⁷
- ***Violence against women remained rampant*** and very few African countries had taken the necessary measures towards prevention, or successful and systematic prosecution of perpetrators, or provision of adequate and timely justice and services to women surviving violence. ***Widespread rape, mass rape and other forms of sexual violence targeting women in conflict and post-conflict areas were common in all of Africa's armed conflicts***. The intersection between gender and other specificities including HIV and AIDS status, marital status, class, rural/urban location, and physical or other disability makes the inequality significantly worse among women.

4 Ibid, 24

5 Ibid, 18

6 UNDP, Human Development Report 2005, 21

7 World Economic Forum, 2005, Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap, 4

6. How much is needed to meet the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment?

- A study commissioned by the World Bank identified the **minimum resource envelope** needed to meet the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment. The study proposes that interventions directly aimed at promoting gender equality would cost on average \$US7 to 13 per capita from 2006 to 2015.
- Presenting a number of scenarios and projections for costing, the study noted that **the gender equality financing gap was between \$12-30 billion in 2006 and was expected to rise to between \$24 billion and \$83 billion by 2015 (UNIFEM, 2008).**
- In his report to the CSW in February 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General noted that there had been **limited assessment of resource allocations to translate global commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment into action at the national level.**⁸

Note: Inadequate data on resource allocations to women's empowerment programmes and projects make a definitive analysis of progress in financing for gender equality under each of the financing pillars difficult if not impossible.

8. Where are the resources mobilized?

■ *Mobilizing foreign sources:*

- There are two **sub-categories, namely foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA).**⁹ Foreign sources are classified under three broad categories - political empowerment, social empowerment, and economic empowerment. Cutting across these broad areas is the creation of an enabling policy and institutional framework that legitimizes and institutionalizes women's empowerment.
- A note on FDI: *As in other areas, there is little data on the contribution of FDI to gender equality and women's empowerment goals in Africa. There needs to be a more explicit link at policy level, and in the priority areas for investment. National machineries for the advancement of women and advocacy groups need to play a more active role in investment policy formulation and monitoring.*

■ *Mobilizing domestic resources: Domestic resources can be mobilized and disbursed either through the budget (i.e., on-budget) or outside the budget (i.e., off-budget).*

- On-budget domestic resources on the other hand, are mobilized largely **through taxes and fees levied at the national and sub-national level.** Furthermore, such resources are disbursed through the budget. **On-budget or through the budget** is important because it avoids duplication of effort and is more likely to ensure that programmes are undertaken within the context of national priorities. In some countries, Ministries of Finance are starting to introduce results-based budgeting to complement the process-based budgeting being used in recent years. *This trend is crucial as it explains in many cases, such as in Morocco, the willingness to include gender impact assessment and indicators.*

⁸ United Nations, ECOSOC,(2007), "Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women", Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2008/2, para 12

⁹ See details in the Monterrey Consensus; see also UNDP, "International Cooperation at a Crossroads: aid, trade and security in an equal world", Human Development Report 2005.

- **Off-budget resources** are not disbursed or captured in the budget. They can be mobilized through **voluntary donations (e.g., fundraising, corporate donations)** and through interventions financed by the private sector. **Off-budget resource mobilization and spending:** There has been an increase in private-public partnerships (PPPs) in which government has encouraged private businesses to partner with government in developing communities and sectors in which they carry on business. In addition to grants made to projects as part of corporate responsibility, local businesses have invested heavily in the education sector accounting for the large increase in the number of private schools and universities established in the past few years. *There is, however, little evidence of planned effort to channel the resources generated through PPPs towards achieving gender equality or women's empowerment.*
- **Trade revenues:** Apart from the tax revenues generated through trade, targeted trade expansion initiatives may promote gender equality and women's empowerment by providing employment and self-employment opportunities and increased income. *However, fair terms and conditions of trade, particularly between developed and developing countries are a precondition.*

9. How are the resources used?

- Gender empowerment interventions are often not explicitly identified in either the budget or national development strategies. As a result, there are no systematic data on the proportion of national or sector budgets that go towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Many so-called gender budget audits have been spearheaded by women's advocacy organizations, though in some countries, Ministries of Finance and Standing Committees of Parliament are playing an increasing leadership role.

10. Conclusions and Key Messages on Financing Gender Equality

- While there has been some progress in financing for development, there are fears that the progress may not be adequate for achievement of the MDGs by 2015.
- The funding gap and consequent calls for urgent and sustained action are traceable through major international meetings, including the Beijing+5 and Beijing+10 review meetings, the special sessions of the UN General Assembly on the MDGs in 2005 and 2008, and the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women that focused on financing for gender equality. The Commission has reaffirmed that BPFA implementation requires adequate financial resources committed at national, regional and international levels.
- Strengthening national capacities in developing countries in this regard requires striving for the fulfilment of the agreed ODA targets as soon as possible. The Commission has recognized the importance of the full utilization of all sources of development finance.
- Increased and sustainable financing for gender equality requires the effective engagement of African countries, developed countries, civil society organizations, multilateral agencies, and the private sector. CSW made wide-ranging recommendations at its 52nd ses

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A list of useful key questions to be addressed during the various sessions

- (1) National level budget guidelines should reflect sector and national obligations for financing gender equality. What progress has been made in gender budgeting in Africa? Where are the good practices and how can they be scaled up? What impacts have gender-responsive budget initiatives had in African countries?
- (2) What are the main facilitating factors and the main constraints to be addressed to ensure financing for gender equality to the magnitude that could facilitate achievement of MDG 3?
- (3) What can be done to further progress?
- (4) Does Africa need a strategic plan for financing gender equality and women's empowerment? If so what role should the member States of AU, RECs, ECA, and AfDB play in developing and implementing such a plan?
- (5) What must be done to ensure systematic and regular collection and dissemination of data on financing for gender equality in Africa? What are the most efficient strategies for doing this? How do we build on existing efforts?
- (6) What is the best mechanism for developing the capacities of gender equality and women's empowerment advocates and for broadening their understanding of the different aspects of financing for gender equality?
- (7) What are the impacts of the current financial crisis on financing for gender equality?
- (8) What can be done to mitigate these impacts and ensure that financing for gender equality improves?

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