

Civil Society Alliance on UN WOMEN

UN WOMEN - PERSPECTIVES FROM PAKISTANI RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

The UN has, over many decades, taken steps and established mechanisms to promote gender justice and equality and women's empowerment, both in terms of human rights and economic development. Despite some progress, socio-economic and political gender inequalities persist in every society and Pakistan is no exception. Global challenges faced by the UN's efforts for women have included the absence of a single entity, adequately resourced and strongly mandated with directing the UN's women focused activities.

As part of the UN's initiative towards developing system-wide coherence and 'bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact', the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) set up a High-Level Coherence Panel in May 2006, with three Co-Chairpersons – Pakistan, Norway and Mozambique. The Panel's report of November 2006 recommended setting up a "One UN System" at the country level, with one leader, one joint programme, one budgetary framework, one management practice and joint premises. Subsequently, Pakistan was one of the 8 countries volunteering to Pilot the new approach and conceptual framework of the "Delivering As One UN System". The Pakistan Pilot started in 2007 and is due to end in 2010.

While the SG's High-Level Panel was carrying out its fact-finding and report-writing, and while there was an ongoing debate within and beyond the UN on the need to review and change the manner in which the UN System was addressing gender justice and equality and women's empowerment, a number of INGOs and NNGOs worldwide also started discussing, amongst themselves and with the UN System, the existing architecture and mechanisms for addressing women's issues in the UN, and of how to bring about the much-needed coherence and reforms. This resulted in the global Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign.

The GEAR Campaign provided the empirical base, facts, motivation and women's voices to the UN System and to the Member States through the General Assembly (UNGA), to change both the architecture and the mechanisms. To this end, in 2009 GEAR carried out reviews in the One UN System Pilot countries (including Pakistan), to assess the vision, policy and programme focus, strategic approach, concrete mechanisms, processes, and, wherever possible, the actual or potential impact of the Pilot on women's issues, gender justice and equality, as well as to convey recommendations for the UN System to restructure and reform its gender equality architecture. Eventually, in July 2010, through UNGA Resolution 64/289, UN member States have committed to establishing a composite UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women namely, 'UN Women', to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General (USG), reporting directly to the UNSG.

The creation of UN Women involves merging and building upon the work of the four existing units of the UN dealing exclusively with women's rights promotion, namely the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

AGHS
Legal Aid Cell

ASR
asr resource centre

AF
Aurat Foundation

KK
Khwendo Kor

PODA
Potohar Organization for Development
Advocacy (PODA)

Rozan

SHCH

Shirkat Gah
Women's Resource Centre

SIMORGH

SPO
Strengthening
Participatory
Organization
ادارہ و تنظیم کا مہترقی ترقی

Sungi
Development Foundation

WORD
Women Organization for
Rights & Development

The mandate of UN Women, with its proposed presence at headquarters, regional, sub-regional and country levels, is:

- to support Member States and inter-governmental bodies towards a sustained and comprehensive movement for women's equality, empowerment and justice; and,
- to hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments to achieving gender justice and equality and the empowerment of women.

Achievement of this mandate depends upon:

- the nature and level of political commitment, and the human and financial resources made available to the new Entity;
- the shape of its global, regional, sub-regional and national organization and structure;
- other UN Offices' and Funds' fulfillment of their own gender equality and women's empowerment policies and mandates, as per their respective sectoral areas of expertise.

In terms of UN system-wide coherence, UN Women is expected to focus more on areas not addressed by other UN agencies, such as, *inter alia*, human rights, peace and conflict resolution, feminization of poverty, structural adjustment, IFI/WTO policies, food insecurity, landlessness, gender-based violence. UN women will provide technical support for the implementation and monitoring of other UN agencies' mandates and programmes towards the UN's global standards for gender equality, justice and women's empowerment; and to monitor progress towards CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and MDG goals. For the latter, UN Women will work closely with the CEDAW Committee and the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The GEAR Process in Pakistan

As members of the GEAR campaign, many women's rights groups and individuals in Pakistan have actively participated in the long struggle to make the UN system more responsive and accountable to women.

Following the July 2010 UNGA Resolution, women's rights activists and 12 NNGOs¹ formed a Civil Society Alliance (CSA) on UN Women, to support both Governmental and civil society's advocacy efforts at the upcoming UNGA session, in order to influence UN decisions regarding the evolving structure and mandate of UN Women. Through a nationwide consultation process, the CSA has evolved its position regarding UN Women's normative and operational aspects. An initial meeting in Lahore in August helped to consolidate civil society understanding about possible challenges and opportunities associated with UN Women's work, and the political, human and financial resources required for it to effectively fulfill its mandate. A draft position paper was shared and discussed with Government, civil society and donor representatives at a National Consultation in Islamabad on 8th September, followed mid-September by this agreed document. The key recommendations of the Consultation are given below.

Recommendations from Pakistani Women's Rights Advocates to Government of Pakistan for UNGA Session/ Committees on Newly-Established Entity: UN Women

UN Women needs to be a strong entity, which must be facilitated to achieve its mandate. The current structuring process must result in ensuring adequate institutional and financial arrangements. The impact

¹ Civil Society Alliance on UN Women: 12 NNGOs, AGHS, Asr Resource Center, Aurat Foundation, Khwendo Kor, Potahar Development Organization, Rozan, Sach, Shirkat Gah, Simorgh, Strengthening Participatory Organization, Sungi Development Foundation and Women Organization for Rights and Development.

of UN Women's work will be seen and felt mainly at the country level, so the engagement of national governments in its structuring process over the next three months is critical.

It is therefore important for the GoP delegations going to the September 2010 UN General Assembly session and participating in the relevant Committees (e.g. MDGs) to strongly advocate for the following:

UN Women:

1. Functions and Structures

1.1 UN Women's mandate requires powerful, capable and effective leadership from HQs to Country level. In addition to regional and sub-regional representation, an in-depth knowledge and experience of women's rights movements and issues must be considered essential criteria for appointments to all policy making, managerial and professional posts at HQs, Regional and Country levels. Office teams need to reflect a mix of thematic expertise.

1.2 The composition of the first Executive Board of UN Women is particularly important because of its critical role in shaping this new organization. The July 2010 UNGA Resolution paragraph 60 clearly states that there will be a 41 member Board with 10 from the Asia region. As Pakistan, is one of the 8 Pilot countries worldwide, for the "Delivering As One" within the UN System, it is critical that one seat on the Board be for a strong woman representative from Pakistan.

Regional Level

1.3 The mix of thematic expertise of staff at Regional and Sub-Regional levels, should reflect the particularity of women's concerns in the respective regions and sub-regions.

1.4 To determine regional and sub-Regional specificities, it is important to conduct assessments and mapping exercises of regional experiences and processes.

1.5 While keeping in focus Regional priorities and particular needs, regional mandates should not deviate from the overall norms and standards set at the global level.

Country Offices

1.6 At the Country level UN Women must be represented by a senior-level Country Representative, at par with other UN Agency Heads.

1.7 National level assessments and mapping exercises are needed to feed into the Regional and Sub-Regional mapping exercises.

1.8 UN Women's Country Offices must be adequately resourced, in order to not only meet country specific programmatic requirements, but also, more importantly, to prevent UNW competing for funds with national NGOs, as has hitherto been the case.

1.9 Country Offices must have multi-year Country Programmes and secured funding for them, rather than projectized "noted"/Trust Funds, to prevent ad hocism and short-term output-based results.

1.10 UN Women needs to focus more on institutional strengthening of national mechanisms for women, e.g. National Commissions on the Status of Women (NCSW), Ministries of Women's Development (MoWD) and their provincial departments.

1.11 UN must strongly support the institutional strengthening of women's rights groups and organizations, rather than vertical, ad hoc, activity- or project-based, temporary, unsustainable "supplements" to their core programmes.

2. **Civil Society Role in supporting and reinforcing the work of UN Women**

2.1 The global GEAR campaign which led to this historic development, not only reaffirms the strength of the global women's movement but renews the spirit of collectivity and joint struggle. Given the immense role and contribution of CSOs in this process, open dialogue with civil society can contribute towards establishing the key priorities of the new entity and how best UN Women can become a powerful voice for women and girls at the global, regional and local levels. Particular notable in this respect are the July 2010 UNGA Resolution paragraphs 54, and 55, the former recognizing civil society's role in promoting women's rights gender equality and women's empowerment, and the latter requesting the USG to continue effective consultation with such organizations.

2.2 It is therefore hoped that the USG will lead the establishment of effective mechanisms and dynamic processes to regularize engagement/consultation with grass root women's organizations at country level, as well as with national and international civil society groups at Regional and Global levels.

3. **Mandate**

The consolidation of the four UN gender equality mechanisms into the UN Women entity, needs to evolve into more than just the sum of their previous parts and functions, and needs to include a focus on:

- including and reflecting the voices of marginalized rural and urban women at all high-level fora;
- reinforcing the knowledge base;
- building in-house and UN system-wide capacity on gender responsiveness;
- strengthening national institutions and national policies;
- reinforcing the effective integration of women's rights into national social, economic and political development policies and processes, as well as disaster management plans;
- ensuring the participation and inclusion of marginalized urban and rural poor women at all fora, especially home-based workers, landless farmers, fisherwomen, livestock and horticultural women, bonded women labourers (e.g. brick kiln workers), domestic workers, amongst others;
- carefully handling the "women-specific" vs. the "cross-cutting gender-mainstreaming" debate; as they are not mutually exclusive - both need to advance side by side;
- achieving poverty eradication by addressing the unacceptably high feminization of poverty;
- focusing on women's food insecurity and hunger, landlessness and increasingly unbalanced dependence on fast-depleting natural resources left un-renewed despite being renewable (e.g. forests) and environmental degradation, exacerbated by the WTO, IFIs and their local partners;
- focusing on inequities in the ownership of assets and wealth and the means of production;
- focusing on peace, and conflict resolution, especially as it impacts on women in the context of war, in-country armed conflicts, sectarianism and terrorism;
- assisting Government and civil society awareness, advocacy, training, inter-generational experience sharing and institution-building initiatives, not limited to the projectized approach.

4. **Financial Architecture - Regular Budgets and Trust Funds Resources**

4.1 UN Women's sustainability and success will depend upon a solid financial architecture, comprising a judicious mix of regular budgets/core funds, along with trust funds and "noted" budgets.

4.2 While the Pakistani women's movement welcomes the principle of establishing UN Women as the new composite entity for women's empowerment, gender justice and equality, we caution the UN System that a great deal more global consultation is required in fine-tuning its vision, mission, mandate and operational focus. For instance, ref [doc UNGA/A/64/588 of 6 January 2010](#), Pakistani activists for

gender justice and equality, human rights and social justice do not agree with para III.C.11(g) on page 10, recommending the development of “**strategic partnerships** [our emphasis] with multilateral...agencies...including international financial and trade organizations (such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO), regional development banks and other...entities...”. Similarly, para I.C.8(e) on page 7 of doc UNGA/A/64/589 of 22 December 2009 recommends building “**greater synergy ... and promoting enhanced coherence in operational policies** ... in the work of the UN system ... the Bretton Woods institutions ... regional development banks and coordinating bodies”.

4.3 We believe that the structural adjustment policies and programmes of the IMF, WB, regional banks and WTO have actually exacerbated global poverty as well as the feminization of poverty. Thus, in line with para 342 of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) will need “to ensure that investments and programmes benefit women and contribute to sustainable development”. As such we urge the UN Women to play a strong, proactive role in ensuring this, and actually going further to work on eliminating such anti-women and anti-poor policies, instead of “teaming up” with the Bretton Woods institutions/IFIs to promote such negative policies.

Pakistan, as one of only 8 Pilot countries worldwide, for the “Delivering As One” UN System framework, is under the microscope, and thus has an extra responsibility, which it needs to shoulder both within the country and at the various UN fora, such as the imminent UNGA session at UN/HQ, as well as at the UNCSW, CEDAW Committee and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).