



52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

UNFPA & UNIFEM Panel: ***“Experiences of Financing for Women’s Health”***

Tuesday, 26 February 2008

1.15-2.45pm

at UN Secretariat Conference Room 7

The 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women 2008 is focusing on the theme *“Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”*. At this occasion, UNIFEM and UNFPA are co-organizing a panel on ‘Experiences on Financing for Women’s Health’. This event builds on the partnership between UNIFEM and UNFPA, launched in 2005 to strengthen support to gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in the areas of Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and Violence against Women (VAW).

The panel will highlight key challenges facing women’s right to health and discuss the gender dimensions for effective financing in the health sector including women’s unpaid care work, access, gender relations and poverty. The event will showcase good practices that have contributed to improved responsiveness to women’s health needs in financing legislation, plans, sector-wide approaches, and programmes.

Co-chairs:

Dr. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA
Ms. Joanne Sandler, Executive Director a.i., UNIFEM

Panelists:

Russian experience on using Gender budgeting work in women’s health protection
Glebova Lubov, Deputy Minister of Health and Social development, Russian Federation

CONAMU’s work on the Free Maternity Law and gender responsive budgeting
Ximena Abarca, Director of Ecuador’s National Women’s Council (CONAMU)

Gender analysis of HIV/AIDS financing and policy implications
Robert Carr, Senior Lecturer, Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication, University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Engaging in Sector-wide approaches in Tanzania:
Negotiating financing for women’s health
Nicola Jones, UNFPA Country Representative, Tanzania

Background:

The 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women 2008 is focusing on the theme “*Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*”. At this occasion, UNIFEM and UNFPA are co-organizing a panel on ‘Experiences on Financing for Women’s Health’. This event builds on the partnership between UNIFEM and UNFPA, launched in 2005 to strengthen support to gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in the areas of Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and Violence against Women (VAW).

During the 1990s many developing countries introduced a range of health sector reforms which aimed to address problems of quality, access, inefficiencies and funding. These reforms had direct implications on health budgets and health financing mechanisms, such as: social and private insurance, user fee, and decentralization of health service delivery. However, women continue to face grave obstacles to accessing needed services. For instance, in Kenya, the introduction of a small fee for outpatient visits to a health centre resulted in a 52% reduction in outpatient visits. In Nigeria, maternal deaths increased by 56% and hospital deliveries fell by 46% after user fees were introduced. Maternal mortality rates continue to rise in some countries, prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS amongst women continues to be high, and women’s time spent in caring for the sick is increasing.

The panel will highlight key challenges facing women’s right to health and discuss the gender dimensions for effective financing in the health sector including women’s unpaid care work, access, gender relations and poverty. The event will showcase good practices from Russia, Tanzania and Ecuador that have contributed to improved responsiveness to women’s health needs in financing legislation, plans, sector-wide approaches, and programmes.

The presentations and following discussions will allow exchange over the relevance of GRB as an effective tool to hold governments accountable for their commitment to gender equality and women’s rights including the right to health.

Summary of Initiatives to be presented at the panel:

Russia
Ms. Glebova Lubov, State-Secretary, Deputy Minister of Health and Social development of the Russian Federation and Chair of the Women’s National Machinery will speak about Russian experience on using Gender budgeting work in women’s health protection. GRB work in Russia has generated interesting results, namely, increased maternity leave, increase in pay of medical staff, and increased budget resources for health care. Indicators of maternity and child mortality also show a positive trend.
Ecuador
Ms Ximena Abarca, Director of Ecuador’s National Women’s Council (CONAMU) will speak about CONAMU active role in advocating for budgeting for implementation of the Free Maternity law as well as the Law on Violence against Women.
The Caribbean
Robert Carr will be sharing findings of a gender assessment of HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plans (NSPs) of select Caribbean countries. He will also share findings of research analyzing major donor agencies’ HIV/AIDS funding policies and assessing the implications for gender equality in HIV/AIDS programming.
Tanzania
Nicola Jones will share lessons learnt on integrating a gender perspective in health SWAps in Tanzania in her capacity as UNFPA Country Representative