



Beyond Beijing: Partnerships for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Presentation by
Joanne Sandler
Deputy Executive Director
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

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It is an honour for UNIFEM to share the podium with organizations that are committed supporters of women's human rights and gender equality in this region. UNIFEM has been supporting governments and women's networks and organizations in collaboration with bi-lateral, UN and private foundation partners in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States since 1999. We are privileged to contribute our voice and perspective to the many excellent papers prepared for this meeting and to the process of reflecting on progress in this region over the past 5 years.

Five years ago, UNIFEM had just published its first edition of *Progress of the World's Women* at the same time as this ECE meeting was being held. And, that analysis together with other regional and national analytical exercises led us inexorably toward a simple message: While there was significant progress in normative changes toward gender equality, **implementation** and **accountability** were lagging behind and failing to deliver changes in options and opportunities for the majority of the world's women.

This message remains the same five years later. The path toward gender equality is, as most people in this room know, a long one. We walk that path in a changing mosaic of opportunities and challenges. The enlargement of Europe and the Millennium Development Goals, for instance, contain concrete commitments to strengthening action on gender equality and increasing women's empowerment. Yet, in each, we see distortions taking place where gender equality expertise is lacking and where trade-offs between different commitments are made.

Given the complexities and diversities in this region, progress toward gender equality that is meaningful requires that every country have adequate capacity to undertake gender analysis and confront specific forms of gender inequality and discrimination. And, while national capacity-building is a cross-cutting priority, if we are to avoid returning here in 2010 with the same message, it is also clear that we need action and commitment that goes beyond current levels. Building on the theme of 'going beyond', I will highlight 7 areas in which it is important to challenge and stretch our thinking and give examples of work that UNIFEM is undertaking in these contexts.

Firstly, we need to think beyond Beijing +10 to the Millennium Summit, the World Summit on the Information Society and other key national and regional venues where decision-makers are framing overall approaches to human rights, human development and human security. This means positioning the Platform for Action strategically in relation to the MDGs, European enlargement, the changing architecture of development assistance, and other mainstream processes. UNIFEM is working with governments, networks and UNDP at the

national level in Kyrgystan and Kazakhstan to build coherence between MDG processes, the Beijing PFA and CEDAW. And we are pleased to introduce, at this PrepCom, our new publication, *Pathways to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs* which we have produced with GTZ and BMZ.

Secondly, we need to think beyond laws and policies: The proliferation of gender equality laws, national plans of action for gender equality, and gender mainstreaming policies are all necessary steps. Security Council Resolution 1325 and CEDAW have strong constituencies in this region. But limited awareness and under-investment in the rights guaranteed – either by the duty-bearers charged with delivering on these obligations or the rights-holders who make claims for these rights – remain a significant impediment.

UNIFEM's support to efforts to move beyond formulating laws and policies to implementing them is central to its work in the region. In both CEE and CIS, UNIFEM is supporting exchanges between countries and consultations to identify weaknesses in existing laws and devise strategies for increasing awareness, implementation and resources. UNIFEM has been supporting implementation of gender equality legislation in Kyrgystan, formulation of recommendations to strengthen implementation of the gender equality law in Kosovo, and engendering land reform legislation in Tajikistan and Kyrgystan. In partnership with OSCE, UNIFEM has sponsored training for law professionals to analyze legislation from a gender equality perspective, leading to expanded technical expertise in the region that is being called on to review draft laws on family, inheritance and property rights. We are supporting networking that brings women civil society and political leaders in the Balkans together to press for stronger implementation of SC1325.

Third, we need to look beyond the standard numbers – The focus of government and UN system partners on the MDGs requires a stronger focus on engendering data and statistics in support of public policy formulation and accountability. Gender equality experts and advocates must be engaged in all aspects of MDG processes to support deeper analysis and understanding of the numbers.

UNIFEM is supporting a programme in CEE to identify "The Story Behind the Numbers" with participation of ILO, UNDP, UNECE, OECD and national research institutes. The initiative supports a more nuanced picture of women's economic situation in the region as a backdrop for national efforts on the MDGs. The programme questions the relevance of gender equality when equality means that both men and women have fewer opportunities in, for instance, labour markets. It highlights the gap in data relating to informal sector and unregulated employment, which more women in CEE and CIS are engaged in. It signals the importance of generating better understanding about inequalities *between* groups of women in the region, taking into account in particular the situation of

Roma women, female-headed households and older women. It points out that de-contextualized quantitative measures of gender inequality do not describe the changes in the situation of women and men very well.

Fourth, it is critical to move beyond dealing with symptoms rather than root causes. Work worldwide on ending violence against women has suffered from a preoccupation with effects rather than causes. For instance, the influence of poverty, discrimination and unemployment – and the demand for cheap, unprotected labour – contributes directly to increasing the numbers of trafficked women and girls. Yet this is rarely a central axis in programmes that address this violation of women's rights.

Increasing women's economic security may be a preventive measure related to ending violence against women in all of its forms. That is one reason that UNIFEM is concentrating on women's land rights in Central Asia. UNIFEM has worked with partners in Kyrgyzstan to raise awareness of women's land rights in the context of broader land reform by holding nation-wide contests that generated creative television programmes on the issue. And in Tajikistan, we are supporting a Coordination Council government and public sector agencies, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, that oversees the process of engendering policies and legislation on land reform in the country.

Fifth, we need to move beyond a simplistic understanding of gender mainstreaming – In the lead-up to the Beijing +10 review, there have been many consultations and discussions about the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality, including in the 2004 ECOSOC session on gender mainstreaming. Countless assessments have documented how gender mainstreaming is inadequately applied to invisibilize instead of highlighting gender inequalities.

Unwavering high level support and tools to increase transparency and accountability are essential for effective gender mainstreaming. The institutional mechanisms created to support progress toward gender equality remain under-funded, under-staffed and poorly positioned to exert the influence needed to guarantee progress. The background paper for this meeting on gender-responsive budgeting highlights that this region has had fewer experiences in gender budgets than others, but that there is a positive environment for learning from other regions. UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, bi-lateral donors and many others are investing in building capacities in gender-responsive budgeting amongst government and civil society organizations in the region. And long-term investments in gender expertise remains a priority. In Kosovo and Komi Republic of Russia, UNIFEM has witnessed how longer-term support for building national expertise is paying off: Gender experts trained by UNIFEM in 2003 are now being

contracted by the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration to build capacity on gender equality issues of government officials.

Sixth, we need to move beyond the practice of under-investing in women's empowerment, either because of misunderstanding gender mainstreaming as a strategy or due to stereotypical notions about women's work. If the promising changes in laws and policies are going to translate into concrete gains for communities and countries, greater investments – not lesser – are needed in women's empowerment. Women's networks and organizations in accession countries are concerned about withdrawal of donor funding based on the assumption that there will be additional funds from the EU. They are also concerned about the creation of new inequalities within women's networks across the region. These networks and organizations need support to become knowledgeable about new sources of funds. The women's rights NGOs that we were privileged to support to come to this meeting through our partnership with the Open Society Institute have made it clear that they have much to gain and much to offer from stronger partnerships that ensure them a voice in shaping the future of the region.

Transformations in development assistance are, undoubtedly, going to have an impact on the options and opportunities that advocates for gender equality will have to further work begun over the past 10 years. Gender equality advocates must have a place at the tables where changes in development assistance are being negotiated. Ministries and Bureaux for gender equality and women's empowerment need staff, resources and status to have the needed influence on development policies and priorities.

Finally, we need to move beyond traditional partnerships in support of gender equality and women's empowerment and bring in new constituencies. In the context of enlargement, partnerships between women's organizations and networks in EU, accession and non-accession countries need to be strengthened. Linkages to ensure that national-level achievements can be scaled up into assets upon which to build region-wide momentum are needed. This is what UNIFEM is trying to do, for instance, in support of peace initiatives in the Southern Caucasus and the Balkans. Supporting partners can complement each others' efforts more effectively as we have recently learned in our partnership with the Network Women's Programme of the Open Society Institute, where they are now supporting a region-wide portal on ending violence against women that was created by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights with seed funding from UNIFEM. And there is a need to find context-specific ways of strengthening partnerships between men and women to advocate for and sustain gender equality initiatives.

On behalf of UNIFEM, I thank you for your attention.