



## CIS REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN MDG-ISED PRS

Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek  
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### SUMMARY REPORT

The Regional Consultations on promoting gender equality in MDG-ised Poverty Reduction Strategies was organized and hosted by UNIFEM in October 2005 in Kyrgyzstan. The Consultation aimed at contributing to the process of increasing the effectiveness of government and civil society efforts towards implementation of gender equality commitments in the countries of CIS and CEE sub-regions by using MDGs as a conceptual framework for mainstreaming gender into national socio-economic programmes, including the PRS.

This event was given high importance by the participants in light of the new trends in donor aid for development established by the Paris High Level Forum, Outcomes of Millennium Summit +5, Beijing +10 and the ongoing UN reform. Also the consultations took place in the environment of increasing importance and recognition of the Poverty Reduction Strategies of Governments in meeting the national and contributing to the global MDGs by 2015.

The consultations were held around defining how global commitments can reinforce national efforts towards Gender Equality and identifying opportunities and challenges in engendering PRSs at the countries in CIS and CEE regions. The event brought together 60 participants from 10 countries (namely, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia) comprising of the representatives from the Governments, Women's National Machineries, Civil Society Organizations and International Organizations.

The three-day Regional Consultation has resulted in (1) mobilizing a core group of CIS gender experts/analysts to work out practical strategies for how to use MDGs to promote gender equality and mainstream it into national socio-economic programmes (PRS) and (2) elaborating country specific action plans to undertake follow up initiatives for advocating usage of MDGs to promote gender issues into the PRS and other socio-economic programmes. It is also important to note that throughout the consultation the linkages between CEDAW, MDGs, BPFA, as well as the harmonization of the processes for promoting gender equality issues within national socio-economic strategies (PRS) were used as the main entry points and as a basis for maximizing effects of national strategies.

A number of opportunities as well as challenges were identified during discussions and consultations related to using the global commitments for promoting gender equality as well as engendering the PRS at the country level. All these issues were used as a basis for preparation of country specific priority action plans for engendering PRS in the participating countries of two sub-regions.

The changes in the global arena related to the new aid architecture, which has become the foundation for increasing the importance of PRS and the importance of aligning the country specific efforts of international organizations to national priorities were mentioned by country

teams as one of the opportunities for promoting gender equality at the country level. Some of the challenges mentioned by participants, especially from Central Asian and Southern Caucasus countries were related to the lack of political will, lack of in-depth monitoring of the fulfilment of international obligation by the government, especially lack of capacity of the Women's National Machineries to promote gender equality in national strategies and plans. These are the most urgent issues to be address through partnership efforts. Also, the majority of participants mentioned that there is a lack of national ownership of MDGs and lack of accountability of governments towards implementation of national and international commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment coupled with the lack of awareness of the role of gender equality in country's socio-economic development. The ineffectiveness of Women's National Machineries to coordinate the national efforts in promoting gender equality was mentioned as one of the reflections of the latter problem.

At present 7 out of 12 countries of CIS are implementing PRS. All CIS 7 countries are at the stage of reviewing their initial PRS and therefore it is seen as a great opportunity and entry point for engendering the subsequent strategy. The participants reiterated a need for capacity building of national partners committing UN Agencies, specifically UNIFEM to pro-actively continue the technical assistance on engendering the MDG-ised PRS to the core partners like Women's National Machineries, and state bodies responsible for PRS. All these findings and conclusions were fed into the country priority action plans for engendering the PRS developed by each country team participating in the Regional consultation as summarised below:

- Improving the capacity of national machineries for engendering the MDG-ised PRS (including undertaking gender analysis, priority area identification, lobbying for budget allocation to back up to the actions identified for improving gender equality, cooperation with other stakeholders, deriving lessons from PRS 1, etc);
- Engendering the sector groups, which are developing PRS through training, provision of technical advice as well as seconding the gender expert to the sector groups;
- Developing gender monitoring indicators and the monitoring mechanism. Harmonizing indicators with MDGs, CEDAW, BPFA and other relevant international obligations. Encouragement of the civil society organizations to undertake an alternative monitoring;
- Assisting in increasing and broadening the participation of the civil society and other stakeholders in the process of engendering the PRS. Increasing the awareness of the public on gender aspects of PRS via media and civil society organizations. Establishing regional networks of partners on engendering the PRSs.

The country teams requested supports from UNIFEM and other UN agencies in the form of expertise, funds for gender analysis as well as experiences and information from other countries' success cases as a necessary input to the fulfilment of these priority actions.

The Regional Consultations concluded with the following main lessons from the experiences of countries in the CIS and CEE sub-regions in engendering of PRSs:

- Strategy should be build on strong analysis and be closely integrated with the long term development agenda (MDGs) and with the medium term public finance strategy. Sex disaggregated statistics and gender sensitive survey results should be increasingly used. The key dimensions of poverty (security, capability, opportunity and empowerment) need to be addressed. Correspondence between the analytical part of the document and action plan (matrix) has to be ensured.
- PRS development processes should be well thought out and organized, with relevant institutions put in place. Participation processes should be structured and well managed with the participation of WNM and other relevant gender advocates. The participation process should be in place from the very initial stage of strategy development, as this contributes

significantly to quality of strategy, especially to engendering of the priorities and actions. Partners' capacity to undertake the participatory process of developing the strategy need to be assessed (including their gender sensitivity) and necessary inputs need to be made. It is important to put in place a mechanism for people's participation at all stages of the strategy, ensuring the equal participation of both men and women, especially poor women in the whole process of the strategy. Ensure the ownership of the central as well as the local government over the strategy. Open access to interim reports and their regular discussion with partners and stakeholders need to be ensured taking into account the equal participation of both female and male representatives in the process, which should provide an opportunity for improving the monitoring and implementation of the strategy.

- The implementation mechanisms of the overall strategy need to be developed and communicated to all stakeholders at the stage of strategy development, taking into account the specifics of involving women in the implementation. This mechanism should take into consideration the linkages of the PRS with the existing and planned sector programs, which directly affects the gender mainstreaming efforts.
- Monitoring and evaluation system needs to be incorporated into the strategy at the initial stage (not at the very end, as it is being practiced). Indicators for measurement of success of the strategy must be harmonized with the existing international and national commitments and indicators in related fields, including gender equality and women's empowerment (CEDAW, BPFA, SCR 1325). The strategy's analytical part must be integrated with the budgeted action plans and monitoring systems.

To summarise, the Regional Consultations were appreciated very much by the participating country representatives as a timely response to the changes in the global arena related to the new aid architecture, which has in turn become the foundation for increasing the importance of Poverty Reduction Strategies of the governments and the importance of aligning the country specific efforts of international organizations to the national priorities and strategies the country is pursuing within their development agenda.

This Consultation has reinforced the policy initiatives being undertaken by UNIFEM Regional office for CIS, which has been supporting a number of initiatives in the spheres of policy analysis and strategy planning at the national level using the MDG-ised PRS processes to promote gender equality in line with the changes taking place in the global context.

The full report and supporting materials will be posted at the UNIFEM CIS web-site [www.unifemcis.org](http://www.unifemcis.org) . For more information, please, contact Damira Sartbaeva at [damira.sartbaeva@undp.org](mailto:damira.sartbaeva@undp.org) and Sagipa Jusaeva at [sagipa.jusaeva@undp.org](mailto:sagipa.jusaeva@undp.org) .