

2nd Committee Panel Discussion on
Financing for gender equality within the context of follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus

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I was asked to provide a brief overview of financing for gender equality and then to focus on the Monterrey Consensus, its follow-up process and some of the key issues identified by the Expert Group Meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”, held in Oslo, Norway this September.

Overview

There have been a number of international commitments on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women. The most comprehensive set of initiatives, contained in The Beijing Platform for Action, emphasized that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors. Sufficient resources, it was agreed, need to be allocated to national machineries for the advancement of women and all institutions that contribute to the implementation and monitoring of commitments to gender equality. Adequate financial resources for the implementation of the Platform for Action in developing countries were also called for, and countries involved in development cooperation were requested to conduct analysis of their assistance programmes from a gender perspective to enable improvements in the quality and effectiveness of aid.

In Beijing, governments also committed to systematically reviewing how and if women benefit from public sector expenditures, and to adjust budgets to ensure women’s equal access and achieving the gender-related commitments made in United Nations summits and conferences. They also committed to creating a supportive environment for the mobilization of resources by non-governmental organizations, particularly women’s organizations and networks, feminist groups, the private sector and other actors of civil society, to enable them to work towards the full implementation of the Platform for Action.

It’s clear from statistics that there remains a crucial need for resources in order to improve women’s lives and eliminate gender gaps in quality of life and life chances. For example, a majority of the world’s absolute poor are female and women on average earn slightly more than 50 % of what men are earning. Violence against women remains a major cause of death and disability for women 16-44 years of age, as does maternal mortality.

Gender Aspects of the Monterrey Consensus

As Joseph Stiglitz has pointed out, the Monterrey Consensus represents an important recognition that financing for development has implications not just for financial markets but for all people in a society. The Consensus invites the participation of a broad spectrum of interests in discussions about financing for development and as such offers the potential for

integrating initiatives for financing for gender equality as part of these broader processes of sustainable development.

Several references are made to women's empowerment and gender in the Consensus. These refer to a holistic and interconnected approach to financing for development that is gender sensitive (para. 8); good governance, sound economic policies and the importance of gender equality for realizing such goals (para. 11); empowering women in the context of appropriate national policy and regulatory frameworks (para. 12); investments in basic social and economic infrastructure that is gender-sensitive (para. 16); microfinance, particularly for women (para. 18); capacity building that includes gender budget policies (para. 19); business frameworks that are sensitive to the gender implications of their undertakings (para. 23); and, calls for governments to "Mainstream the gender perspective into development policies at all levels and in all sectors" (para. 64).

The references to gender equality and women's empowerment in the Consensus recognize the cross-cutting nature of these issues. However, the references to gender and women were not directly integrated throughout the leading action areas – there is only a call to be gender sensitive in applying policies and programmes without a clear time frame or a set of

Development, participants emphasized that domestic resource mobilization policies should incorporate the international commitment to gender equality and recommended using gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that the relevant commitments are resourced, to upgrade the employment of women in the value chain and to increase women's access to assets and property rights. Similarly, the annual Special High-level Meetings of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization have paid limited attention to gender perspectives.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness acknowledges that harmonization efforts are needed on crosscutting issues, such as gender equality and other thematic issues including those financed by dedicated funds. Some have identified the Declaration as a potential further opportunity to embed gender equality and women's empowerment into the reform of aid delivery and effectiveness if the design of reforms and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Declaration incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment as cornerstones.

It is clear that integrating a gender perspective into the follow up process to financing for development commitments is crucial to the effectiveness of the entire process. In addition, the development of effective tracking, monitoring and evaluation tools to establish what is being done and its impact on gender equality goals, are key mechanisms for discussion and elaboration at the preparatory processes leading up to the 2008 review in Doha.

Here the Expert Group Meeting on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" held in Oslo in early September identified both issues of process and content. I will only highlight some of the creative ideas and follow up issues that were identified by the range of participants at the meeting. Member States are invited to review the substantial set of ideas presented in the Background Papers prepared for the EGM, available on the DAW website.

