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**“Capacity-building for mainstreaming a gender perspective
in the development, implementation and evaluation of national economic
policies and programmes and budgets”**

Written statement*

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Capacity building for incorporating a gender perspective into budgetary processes

Today, more than ten years after the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action, significant advances can be seen in the areas of women's empowerment, gender equality and women's reproductive rights and health. Progress towards gender equality, especially in the realm of health and education policies and legislation, has been made even though more efforts need to be made to accelerate progress. National development policies increasingly place gender equality at the forefront of poverty reduction efforts. The international community has also recognized the imperative of investing in women and girls.

Promoting gender equality can expand opportunities for human development and remove costly obstacles to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender discrimination restricts the personal development of both men and women and holds back progress towards poverty reduction and development. When these hindrances on individuals are removed, families, communities and entire countries benefit. Yet despite this recognition and subsequent commitments on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women by all relevant actors in the development arena - limited progress has been made in translating these commitments into action. The reality remains, as the Secretary General's report states, that gender equality and gender mainstreaming make good economic sense, yet there are still insufficient resources allocated towards policies and programmes that promote the advancement of women.

To unleash the equality dividend for development, stronger partnerships and the resolve of governments, civil society, the private sector, donors and the United Nations system are required. A significant part of this success, will also come from strengthening the capacity of various players, particularly national actors to be able to realize gender mainstreaming in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes as well as in budgetary processes.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is committed to the principles of the Paris Declaration, adhering to tenets of national ownership, mutual accountability and partnerships between donors and partner countries, and the involvement of civil society and communities. At the same time, the organization reinforces the principles of managing for results and achieving the aims of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals, while responding to the demand for new policies, tools and partnerships. These needs and demands require the attention of UNFPA particularly within the context of the new aid environment, as UN agencies take on a stronger supportive role and one of providing technical assistance. UNFPA sees this brokerage position as one that can contribute significantly to making resources 'work' for women's empowerment and gender equality.

UNFPA has been working to develop capacity at various levels - global, regional and mostly national - to help build an enabling environment in which education, reproductive health and economic opportunity for women and girls are improved. The elimination of violence against women, increased women's political participation and greater accountability for gender equality are all issues which demand proper investment and attention.

The centrality of reproductive health to poverty reduction, gender equality and development, including for achieving the MDGs, has been widely recognized at the highest levels of government. With the promotion of gender equality as one of the three main pillars of UNFPA's mandate and recently approved 2008-2011 Strategic Plan, resources within the organization are allocated to meet the needs of women and girls, within the context of reproductive health. Programming in this area has included: work on prevention and response to gender-based violence; programming on harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage; support to ministries of women's empowerment and women's rights organizations; gender-responsive budgeting and support for national policies on gender equality; programming on women's rights and legislative reform; support for engendering census and collection of sex-disaggregated data; female condoms and programming; obstetric fistula programming; reduction of maternal mortality; and programming with men and boys. For its new programming cycle, UNFPA pledges to allocate 25 per cent of its resources to specific women's empowerment and gender equality interventions.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting helps to track the way that budgets respond to women's priorities and the way that governments use funds to reduce poverty, promote gender equality, reverse the spread of HIV and lower the rates of maternal and child mortality. It helps ensure government accountability to the commitments made to women in the Cairo Programme of Action on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for action for gender equality and women's empowerment and to achieving the MDGs. A budget is the most comprehensive statement of a government's social and economic plans and priorities. Tracking this resource flow allows one to see who benefits from public resources and how.

In recognizing the value of gender-responsive budgeting as a means to more equitable and responsive planning, UNFPA, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), has been undertaking capacity development for its staff in the area of gender-responsive budgeting through the development of knowledge products and training workshops at the global and regional levels. In addition, UNFPA will foster partnerships with regional centres of excellence on gender-responsive budgeting for sustained capacity development. This is a strategic and timely line of work in the context of new aid modalities and the MDGs. Ultimately this will enable UNFPA to support governments in ensuring that commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment are followed through with gender-responsive policies, programmes and adequate financing. Under the Strategic Partnership with UNIFEM, regional trainings for staff from both organizations are planned to take place throughout 2008.

At the national level, UNFPA has been providing capacity building support on gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that budgetary provisions are made for gender issues. In Azerbaijan, UNFPA supported the State Committee on Family, Women and Children to initiate the establishment of groups on gender budgeting and gender-related legislative expertise. Support was provided for the training of national experts, government officials and parliamentarians to incorporate gender budgeting concepts into development policies and strategies.

In India, UNFPA provided technical and advocacy support to the Governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat in undertaking gender-responsive budgeting. The process has been institutionalized through formation of state-level committees, establishment of sectoral focal points and involvement of other departments in the process. One state has already approved the Gender Equity Policy.

In Tanzania, UNFPA supports the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) in implementing a programme on gender budgeting that aims to support the government in engendering both the national and sector budgets, so as to ensure that the budgets are responsive to the needs of both women and men.

In Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), UNFPA, in collaboration with UNIFEM, UNDP, GTZ, the National Institute for Women (*Inamujer*) and the Women's Development Bank (*Banmujer*), have initiated gender-responsive budgeting that is demonstrating interesting results and making an impact at national, sectoral and municipal levels.

Support for National Development Frameworks

The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2008-2011 sets forth corporate priorities that are anchored to the principles of the Paris Declaration and the new aid environment. UNFPA recognizes that efforts to strengthen government capacity to engage in national development frameworks can have a far greater and more sustainable impact than supporting governments through a series of stand-alone projects. Donors and countries value UNFPA's technical advice in the area of reproductive health and as well as the organization's contribution in the areas of gender, AIDS and adolescent health.

UNFPA places high priority on policy-oriented advocacy and technical assistance at country levels related to the formulation and follow up of leading policy and budgetary frameworks. This includes highlighting the importance of gender concerns throughout MDG follow-up plans, Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), Sector Wide Approaches (SWAp) in the health and education sectors, and National AIDS Plans. This experience provides a critical opportunity to leverage additional policy attention and resources for gender equality issues of direct relevance to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and MDG implementation, in collaboration with other donor partners and the UN, including UNIFEM.

As such, UNFPA Country Offices are already at the negotiating table on key policy and funding frameworks. In Burkina Faso, UNFPA is an active member of the Gender Consultative Group a collaborative platform that was key in promoting gender equality in the PRS.

In Equatorial Guinea, UNFPA is playing the leading role within the UN System in supporting the incorporation of gender equality issues into the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the national development plan.

In Ghana, UNFPA is a key partner of the Gender Equality Sector Group (GEST) with the Ghana Ministry of Women and Children, as well as other bilateral and multilateral partners. The group

has assisted in engendering the Growth and PRS 2006-2009, that squarely addresses gender-based vulnerability in HIV/STI transmission; gender-based violence; the enforcement of existing laws that protect women's rights and the introduction of new legislation to redress inequalities; the introduction of gender budgeting and statistics on the care economy; and the mainstreaming of gender, population, family life education and health concepts in school curricula.

In India, UNFPA has strongly supported the positioning of gender in the health SWAp, beginning in 2004 with a detailed study on gender mainstreaming for the second phase of the National Reproductive and Child Health Programme. In the subsequent launch of the government's National Rural Health Mission, UNFPA has been approached to assist in piloting innovative approaches to address reproductive health and gender equality through community involvement.

In Nicaragua, in the context of new aid modalities, UNFPA and the Governments of Finland and The Netherlands established the Joint Fund for Gender Equity and Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Later joined by other donors, the Joint Fund aims to support and strengthen civil society in promoting gender equity and reproductive rights as national priorities, while focusing on raising awareness on human rights among duty bearers and rights holders. Specific attention has been given to the relationship between productive and reproductive roles of women, microcredit, economic participation and fertility, from which successful poverty-reducing local level pilot projects have been conducted, increasing women's options vis-à-vis their productive and reproductive roles.

In Syria, UNFPA was the lead agency that supported the integration of gender issues, including gender-based violence, in the 10th five-year national development plan.

In Tanzania, UNFPA was the first contributor to the health sector basket fund, providing support to the government and other donors on the use of sex-disaggregated data and maintains an active role in bringing gender issues to the fore within the health SWAp. UNFPA also established a multisectoral team of national experts to provide technical assistance on request to the government that resulted in strengthening gender dimensions in the Zanzibar PRS. An independent Joint Strategic Review of the UN System's contribution to poverty reduction recommended that the UN strengthen its joint efforts in promoting gender equality under UNFPA's leadership.

In Tajikistan, UNFPA was actively involved in the sectoral work of the National Development Strategy and PRS, resulting in integration of gender, population and reproductive health issues in both policy frameworks.

In Yemen, UNFPA, in collaboration with OXFAM provided technical assistance to conduct a gender audit of the PRS and the national budget, in addition to supporting the design of a Plan of Action for mainstreaming gender in national policies and programmes.

Capacity building within the organization is also taking place at the global, regional and local levels, to better equip Country Offices with the knowledge and skills to effectively engage in SWAps and PRS. At the same time, UNFPA plans to continue to strengthen capacity

development of regional and sub-regional institutions as a basis for greater South-South cooperation for national capacity building - building on the already existing capacity. At the global level, UNFPA works towards forging partnerships with institutions to leverage technical, financial and political support for ICPD and other internationally agreed-upon goals.

Investing in women's leadership

To foster capacity development, while harnessing political will and commitment, UNFPA works with women parliamentarians, strengthening women's machineries around the globe. In Africa, UNFPA has been a long-time supporter of the Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians, building capacity on various policy issues. In Asia, UNFPA has been a major donor and source of technical assistance to the Asian Forum on Population and Development and the Women Parliamentarians, which holds trainings and conferences, including on advocacy for legislation, implementation of laws and resource allocation. In Algeria, Djibouti, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen, UNFPA has provided technical assistance to institutionalize national gender-related and mainstreaming capacities, working with gender machineries, gender focal points and units, as well as at the regional level. In most every country of Central and South America, UNFPA has played an important role in the development of National Equal Opportunity Plans, with a leading role in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Paraguay.

Thematic Fund for Maternal Health

Part of UNFPA's efforts to build the capacity of its partners, has been to create special Funds and Campaigns which ultimately aim to address the immense needs of health-systems strengthening.

For two decades, the international community has campaigned to improve maternal health, yet the annual number of maternal deaths has remained virtually unchanged over the years. In many countries, progress in improving maternal health is lagging and in some, the situation has actually deteriorated. In many cases, the answer is insufficient political will and inadequate resources. Experience from a number of countries, however, shows that maternal mortality can be halved within a decade, given adequate political and financial support along with effective approaches.

To that end, UNFPA has developed the Thematic Fund for Maternal Health to boost global efforts for the reduction of the number of women dying in pregnancy and childbirth. The fund will, build upon and strengthen the political and financial commitments needed to achieve MDG5, while advocating for maternal health within the context of national development frameworks and national health-sector planning and reform processes. This will require leveraging resources within the government and donor budgetary processes and investing in the inclusion of reproductive health in existing innovative and equitable health-financing arrangements. Developed countries and private sponsors will be encouraged to contribute more to saving women's lives, while partnerships with governments, UN organizations and other international partners will help countries increase their access and use of quality maternal health services that would reduce maternal deaths and disabilities. A critical complement to these measures will be to increase the capacity of health systems to provide a continuum of quality

maternal health care, strengthen mechanisms to reduce health inequities and empower women to exercise their right to maternal health care. The Thematic Fund will focus on supporting 75 countries with the greatest need.

Global Campaign to End Obstetric Fistula

Obstetric fistula is an injury of childbearing that has been relatively neglected, despite the devastating impact it has on the lives of girls and women. In 2003, UNFPA and partners launched a global Campaign to End Fistula with the goal of making obstetric fistula as rare in developing countries as it is in the industrialized world. The target date for fistula elimination is 2015, in line with MDG targets to improve maternal health, by supporting at the national level, to strengthen health systems to be able to increase access to skilled attendance at birth and emergency obstetric care.

Like maternal mortality, fistula is almost entirely preventable, yet at least 2 million women in Africa, Asia and the Arab region are living with the condition, and some 50,000 to 100,000 new cases develop each year. Through the Campaign, UNFPA and its partners also work with community and religious leaders, traditional birth attendants, radio stations, influential public figures and policy makers to increase awareness of the needs of pregnant women and to mobilize support for them. UNFPA supports training of doctors, nurses and other health workers in life-saving obstetric care in 76 countries.

UNFPA has been collaborating with national partners to develop strategies and programmes to secure political commitment and ensure that resources are dedicated to safe delivery and effective ante- and post-natal care. In Afghanistan, for example, fistula has been integrated into the national Reproductive Health Strategy (2006-2009) with plans to conduct a situation analysis, which will inform the development of a fistula elimination programme.

In Cameroon, the National Reproductive Health Programme includes benchmarks focused on safe motherhood and emergency obstetric care.

In Côte d'Ivoire, UNFPA, WHO and the Ministry of Health drafted a Roadmap for MDGs 4 and 5, drawing specific attention to fistula treatment and prevention through interventions.

In Kenya, strategies to prevent fistula were integrated into the current safe motherhood initiative in nine UNFPA-supported Ministry of Health districts and three Nairobi City Council health facilities.

In Malawi and Congo, the prevention and treatment of fistula was integrated into the National Roadmap for Accelerating the Reduction of Maternal and Neonatal Mortality and Morbidity.

In Mali, fistula was integrated into the National Strategic Plan for Reproductive Health for 2008–2012.

The Campaign has brought fistula to the attention of a wide audience, including the general public, policymakers, health officials and affected communities in just a few years. Yet despite

the Campaign's remarkable progress with relatively modest funding, the needs are great as ending fistula worldwide will demand political will, additional resources, and strengthened collaboration and capacity level of governments, community groups, NGOs and health professionals.

UNFPA and UNICEF Trust Fund to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation affects between 100 and 140 million women and girls worldwide, while three million girls are at risk of being cut annually. Progress towards abandonment of female genital mutilation will contribute to the MDGs related to the empowerment of women (MDG 3); improvement of maternal health (MDG 5) and reduction in child mortality (MDG 4). The Secretary General's (2005) report *Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nation's Millennium Declaration*, reiterated the negative consequences of female genital mutilation, in which it stated that the practice transcends cultural, racial, socio-economic and age factors and undermine individuals, families, and societies worldwide.

UNFPA, in collaboration with its sister agency UNICEF, recently launched the Trust Fund to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation. With some funding from various donors, implementation is already underway. UNFPA and UNICEF will work jointly towards actively contributing to the accelerated abandonment of, in specific areas of implementation within 17 countries, by 2012..

Capacity building activities are at the core of the Trust Fund, with a focus on law reforms and implementation. These partnerships will serve to disseminate acquired knowledge and foster an enabling environment for collective social change towards a female genital mutilation social convention shift. A prominent feature of implementation will be fostering partnerships with government counterparts both at decentralised and national levels, religious authorities and local religious leaders, the media, civil society organisations and the education and reproductive health sectors.

Way Forward

In promoting the effective use of aid, UNFPA will continue to provide technical assistance at global, regional and country levels within the organization, as reiterated in the UNFPA's Strategic Framework on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment 2008-2011, by including a strong gender perspective in policy-oriented materials – including in the development of costing and cost-benefit analysis tools - training workshops, knowledge-sharing and South-South cooperation initiatives. These gender equitable standards will also be promoted throughout the documentation and dissemination of good practices.

Future efforts will continue to build the capacity of UNFPA staff at regional and national levels, to be able to support gender-responsive budgeting activities on the ground. This work would include strengthening the capacities of civil society for establishing accountability of public policies and budgets, including as they relate to gender based violence.

UNFPA will also work towards strengthening the gender equality perspective in UNFPA-supported SWAp efforts, by expanding gender-specific components in guidance notes, knowledge sharing assets and training workshops, as well as in building the capacities of Ministries of Women's Affairs and women's groups in SWAp exercises. In addition to engagement in health sector SWAps, increased involvement in education and agricultural sector SWAps may be pursued as strategic entry points for gender discussion, especially in the context of rural poverty.

As one critical step towards realizing the organization's gender mainstreaming goals, a gender assessment at the Headquarters level was undertaken by an external evaluator to provide a baseline for implementation of the Strategic Framework, and regional assessments are also planned for 2008. In addition, ensure that a gender perspective is fully implemented across the organization's operations, as well as institutional culture requires additional investments in terms of human and financial resources. UNFPA will strengthen capacities among existing staff to secure a larger pool of staff with the relevant skills, including on gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming.

As part of its accountability to gender equality, UNFPA will aim to increase both core and extra-budgetary resources for this programming area. This can result from a combination of possibilities, including a shift in existing budget allocations, renewed mobilization efforts and the establishment of a 'challenge fund' or other creative mechanisms to harness additional monies for gender equality programming. To address the challenge of tracking resources that are allocated for gender equality and women's empowerment, UNFPA plans to improve its resource-gauging by making modifications to its reporting and finance tracking mechanisms.