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INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

The evolving status and role of national mechanisms for gender equality

Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women: A Global Synthesis Study*

Submitted by

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

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1. Introduction

- ❖ Since FWCW in 1995, many new mechanisms, in addition to national machineries, have been established to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
- ❖ Little documented research on the roles, relationships, achievements and challenges of these multiple and diversified mechanisms.
- ❖ In preparation of the fifteen year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the PFA, DAW undertook a global study of the national mechanisms based on experiences in all five regions of the United Nations: ESCAP, ESCWA, ECLAC, ECA and ECE.
- ❖ Study conceptualized and conducted through a consultative process between DAW and the regional commissions
 - ❖ Two Expert Meetings
 - ❖ Regional studies
 - ❖ Peer review of the global synthesis

2. The contexts and trends in the evolution of national mechanisms

A. Political, Economic, Social and Institutional contexts

- ❖ Political, social, economic and institutional contexts influenced the work of national mechanisms.
- ❖ Contextual factors facilitating an enabling environment for the work of national mechanisms:
 - ✓ The visibility of the gender equality agenda.
 - ✓ Democratization processes.
 - ✓ The policy framework of human rights and human development.
- ❖ Contextual factors creating challenges for the national mechanisms:
 - ✓ Conflict.
 - ✓ Globalization and migration.
 - ✓ Economic liberalization.
 - ✓ The rise of social conservatism.

B. Trends in the evolution of national mechanisms

- ✓ Multiplication and diversification of mechanisms horizontally and vertically.
- ✓ Expansion of mandates and roles.
- ✓ Adoption of a variety of strategies and instruments.
- ✓ Institutionalization of gender mainstreaming.
- ✓ Enlargement of stakeholders.

3. Status of national mechanisms

- ❖ Four indicators used to classify and compare national mechanisms:
 - ✓ type of structure and location;
 - ✓ mandate;
 - ✓ role/function; and,
 - ✓ resource.
- ❖ Type of structure and location
 - ✓ One major differentiation is between national machineries and other mechanisms, the former being officially mandated by the government to be the lead agency.
 - ✓ Another way of differentiation is by location.
 - ✓ Yet another way of differentiation is by their status: whether autonomous or under government control.

3. Status of national mechanisms

- ❖ Types of structure and location
 - ❑ **National Machinery:**
 - ✓ Stand-alone ministry or part of a ministry.
 - ✓ Department/division/services under a ministry.
 - ✓ Unit in the office of the head of government.
 - ✓ Autonomous body.
 - ❑ **Other types of national mechanisms:**
 - ✓ Focal points/working groups in sectoral/line ministries.
 - ✓ Inter-departmental/ministerial/multi sectoral bodies.
 - ✓ Decentralized mechanisms in state, municipal and local governments.
 - ✓ Committees/commissions/caucuses in parliament.
 - ✓ Committees/working groups within judiciary.
 - ✓ Accountability institutions.
 - ✓ Advisory/consultative councils.

3. Status of national mechanisms

- ❖ Mandate
 - ❑ **Gender mainstreaming: The major trend**
 - ✓ Traditional areas of family, children and other social welfare types of activities (in some countries).
 - ✓ Mandates amended encompassing all forms of discrimination and all equalities in countries where mechanisms are integrated within general equality or general anti-discrimination bodies.
- ❖ Role/function
 - ✓ Promotion of legislation.
 - ✓ Policy and strategy development.
 - ✓ Formulation and implementation of national action plans.
 - ✓ Gender mainstreaming.
 - ✓ Research, statistics, and data collection.
 - ✓ Capacity development (training, and development of tools).
 - ✓ Monitoring and accountability including implementation of CEDAW and PFA and reporting of national efforts to comply with international commitments on gender equality.
 - ✓ Coordination and collaboration.
 - ✓ Social mobilization and provision of direct services to people.

3. Status of national mechanisms

- ❖ Resource
 - ❑ **Resource conceptualized in a multi-dimensional way. It includes**
 - ✓ Financial and human resources.
 - ✓ Leadership quality of national mechanisms.
 - ✓ Political support from the top leadership as well as powerful constituencies and mass base.
 - ❑ **All studies indicate:**
 - ✓ Resource constraints.
 - ✓ Some note heavy donor dependence which creates sustainability risks for the mechanisms.
 - ✓ Some highlight positive developments in political support and the quality of leadership of the national mechanisms.

4. Main areas of work

- ❖ Strategies: The four most important strategies are:
 - ✓ Gender mainstreaming.
 - ✓ Temporary special measures.
 - ✓ Promotion of legislation.
 - ✓ Consultation.
- ❖ Roles turned into effective instruments:
 - ✓ Preparation of national and sector plans;
 - ✓ Gender training;
 - ✓ Gender disaggregated data and statistics;
 - ✓ Research;
 - ✓ Monitoring and evaluation.

5. Coordination and collaboration

- ❖ Coordination and collaboration an important but challenging task.
- ❖ Weakness in coordination and collaboration frustrates the building of a critical mass of resources and institutional support which need to be invested in the task of addressing gender equality and promoting women's empowerment.
- ❖ Some regions report positive trends, others highlight weakness.

A. Coordination

- ❖ Formal institutional arrangements or informal and ad hoc arrangements.
- ❖ In formalized institutional arrangements mechanisms enjoy greater authority.
- ❖ Coordination difficult due to weak status and budgetary constraints of national machinery vis-à-vis other line ministries.
- ❖ No real coordination between different departments due to unclear mandates.

B. Collaboration

- ❖ Increasing collaboration in all regions with other stakeholders including civil society, NGOs and women's movements.

4. Main areas of work

❖ Priority issues

A. Issues prioritized in all regions:

- ✓ Violence against women, mainly domestic violence but also other forms of physical and sexual violence or sexual harassment.
- ✓ Human trafficking.
- ✓ Representation of women in politics and administration.
- ✓ Women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health.
- ✓ Poverty and economic development.

B. Issues prioritized in some regions:

- ✓ Education and training for gender equality
- ✓ Globalization and migration
- ✓ Reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities
- ✓ Women and natural disaster management
- ✓ Partnership with NGOs and civil society
- ✓ Conflict and post conflict
- ✓ Climate change
- ✓ HIV/AIDS
- ✓ Girl child

6. Achievements



Achievements

- ✓ Legal reforms;
 - ✓ Awareness raising and political visibility;
 - ✓ Increase in women's political representation;
 - ✓ Gender mainstreaming;
 - ✓ Capacity-building.
-
- ❖ Factors contributing to achievements:
 - ✓ Growth and maturation of mechanisms;
 - ✓ Strong leadership;
 - ✓ Synergy among multiple mechanisms;
 - ✓ Strengthened civil society voice;
 - ✓ Regional level cooperation and exchanges supporting the work of the national mechanisms

7. Constraints and challenges ahead

✚ Constraints

A. Internal constraints

- ✓ Resource limitations particularly of staff and budget
- ✓ Donor-dependence for funding support
- ✓ Institutional marginalization and instability
- ✓ Poor coordination, monitoring and accountability
- ✓ Limited collaboration with other stakeholders

B. External constraints

- ✓ Lack of political will
- ✓ Resistance and negative attitude of powerful constituencies, including social conservatives
- ✓ Role of "First Ladies".
- ✓ Lack of harmony between gender equality policies and other macro policies.



✚ Challenges Ahead

- ❖ Sustaining political will

8. Key findings of the study

- ❖ The multiplication and diversity of structures has, on the whole, been a positive development facilitating gender mainstreaming and keeping the gender equality agenda alive in multiple institutions and levels, as well as in the public domain.
- ❖ Coordination and collaboration between mechanisms is weak which has constrained them from achieving synergy and optimal results.
- ❖ The resources available to national mechanisms do not match their expanded mandates and roles. Donor dependence for funds creates risks for sustainability.
- ❖ Gender mainstreaming strategy is gaining visibility and acceptance but there is still no common understanding about the concept and there are gaps in capacity development.
- ❖ The strategy of temporary special measures, particularly quota laws, has contributed towards enhancing women's political representation. Special measures have also been effective in addressing emerging specific issues.

8. Key findings of the study

- ❖ Legal reforms have been the most widely used and effective strategy.
- ❖ Data, statistics and analysis are improving in all regions but there are still gaps; particularly lacking are indicators for monitoring and evaluation.
- ❖ Accountability is weak despite the establishment of accountability institutions.
- ❖ Collaboration with multiple stakeholders, particularly with civil society and women's movements strengthens national mechanisms. Women's movements provide the key support but in many countries the movement is weakening or is in conflict with national mechanisms which can erode the latter's constituency base and imperils their survival.
- ❖ Regional and international processes and institutions lend legitimacy, help in exchange of knowledge and experience, and thereby strengthen capacity of national mechanisms.
- ❖ Difficult to attribute achievements to one single factor or actor; multiple factors and actors influence outcome.

9. Recommendations

- ❖ Institutional arrangements for coordination need to be formalized and their application needs to be monitored to improve coordination.
- ❖ Collaboration with civil society, women's organizations and other social partners, particularly alliances with new stakeholders such as youth needs to be built.
- ❖ Staff capacity, especially its gender expertise, needs to be improved. Budgetary allocation from national sources needs to be increased.
- ❖ Work in the area of law reforms should be expanded to combat discrimination against women in all sectors as well as to promote gender equality legislations.
- ❖ Additional efforts are needed to clarify concepts, strengthen policies and design tools for gender mainstreaming.

9. Recommendations

- ❖ Special measures will have to be designed to address emerging issues which do not fit into established policy framework.
- ❖ Gender disaggregated data, statistics and research will need continuing promotion and support as they are essential for development of policy instruments and monitoring of actions.
- ❖ Monitoring indicators need to be developed to better assess performance of diverse mechanisms.
- ❖ Collaboration and exchange with regional and international institutions and processes need to be encouraged as they have been proven to be effective in strengthening national mechanisms.

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