

# Executive Summary of the Evaluation of UNIFEM's Programming in Gender and HIV/AIDS

Universalis is pleased to submit to UNIFEM the final evaluation report on gender and HIV/AIDS programming, which focuses on the experience of two initiatives: the *Enhancing Human Security through Gender Equality in the Context of HIV/AIDS Programme* (HSP) and the *Africa Regional Programme of Action on HIV/AIDS, Gender and Human Rights* (ARP).

The HSP was a cross-regional programme implemented in 10 countries across three regions – Africa (Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Zimbabwe), Asia (Cambodia, Thailand, India), and Latin America (Brazil and Honduras). The total budget for this programme was US\$3 million in cost-sharing funds from the UN Trust Fund for Human Security with a duration of three years for Africa and Asia and 18 months for Latin America. All sub-programmes of the HSP officially ended in December 2005. The ARP covered approximately 21 countries in five sub-regions of Africa (West Africa – Francophone, West Africa – Anglophone, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and Eastern Africa) and was funded by UNIFEM core resources in the amount of US\$1.9 million for a duration of three years ending in late 2005.

The main purpose of the evaluation process has been to generate knowledge to support UNIFEM in the development of a strategy for gender and HIV/AIDS programming for the next three years. More specifically, the key objectives of the present evaluation report are to: (i) Assess the performance of recent HIV/AIDS programming, including the extent to which outputs were achieved and progress was made in relation to expected outcomes; (ii) Analyze lessons learned on what worked and did not; and analyze and recommend strategic directions for UNIFEM's future programming on gender and HIV/AIDS, with a view to clearly defining UNIFEM's comparative advantage in work on HIV/AIDS as part of the UN system.

The data collection for the evaluation took place in March and April 2006 and drew on a mix of qualitative methods including document review and in-person and phone interviews with key informants in the global and national contexts for these programmes. Field visits were conducted in Honduras, India, and Zimbabwe. Additional phone interviews were conducted with programme stakeholders in Cambodia, Thailand, and Mali.

The key findings and recommendations from the study are highlighted below.

## Effectiveness

Overall, the evaluation finds that the HSP and ARP have been effective programming initiatives. The HSP and ARP had closely related results frameworks and similar types of programming activities, although the ARP introduced regional activities that set it apart (such as capacity building for regional bodies, multi-country trend analysis, etc.).

In the countries sampled for the evaluation, HSP and ARP have contributed to the integration of gender and human rights into key policies, plans, and activities that address HIV/AIDS at the national level. In order to facilitate change in policy frameworks, UNIFEM worked with strategic partners in civil society, the UN system, and government. Enabling conditions in the environment determined the extent of the change at policy level during the programming period. The approaches used by UNIFEM for advocacy appear to have supported awareness raising among a variety of stakeholder groups, and specifically key “change agents” such as policymakers.

UNIFEM's training and technical assistance activities on gender and human rights in HIV/AIDS and gender mainstreaming are noted as important components of the process and are considered to be particularly useful by stakeholders. It is also clear that the links between certain activities (such as research and media campaigns) and these change processes could be strengthened in future programming.

UNIFEM's initiatives to empower Positive Women's networks have helped to strengthen their ability to organize and to become more vocal advocates in national and global forums and have also had positive effects on the lives of individual women. All stakeholders interviewed recognize UNIFEM's key role in this area. During this phase, UNIFEM's approach has been to focus on building organizational capacities through the establishment of associations, the development of common goals and vision, the integration of planning skills, as well as the development of advocacy strategies. UNIFEM has also helped to empower the individual members of these associations through reflections on gender, human rights, relationships, sexuality, and violence, and the development of concrete skills such as public speaking.

Through the Gender Equality Zones, UNIFEM's programming has demonstrated how focused, integrated, community approaches can improve gender equality, empower women economically and socially, and reduce effects of HIV/AIDS on women and their communities. The GEZ in the Vijarayawada Division of the Indian Railways and in the Motoko district in Zimbabwe implemented similar programming activities, through very different institutional and partnership strategies. The GEZ starting point in both cases was a participatory needs assessments. Both of the GEZ, over the course of three years, have been able to contribute to remarkable changes in attitudes of men and women towards gender and HIV/AIDS. Through income generating initiatives, the GEZ has also helped women gain greater access and control of resources. The two GEZ under review have drawn the attention of local and national stakeholders, and have engaged UN partner agencies.

## Sustainability

The evaluation also explored the sustainability of effects of HSP programming. In this context, sustainability is defined primarily in terms of *ownership* and level of commitment required to sustain the results in this area, as well as the mechanisms or tools that communities, organizations, or other target groups generate to continue efforts beyond the specific UNIFEM programme. Funding is only one of the tools that helps to maintain this continuity. The evaluation identified a number of ways in which communities, government agencies, civil society partners, UN Agencies, or other partners were demonstrating ownership of concepts and practices, as well as commitment to carry the momentum forward. In this respect, UNIFEM's programming helped to catalyze the efforts of others. The indications of sustainability stem from reports of institutionalizing mechanisms or programme approaches, incorporating an HIV/AIDS or gender/human rights perspective into organizational mandates, seeking funding to continue the work, or, in the case of UN partners, increasing work in this area and/or providing funding to programme partners for related projects. In some cases, stakeholders perceive that this catalytic role is not over and that there is not yet enough capacity to carry on the work without UNIFEM. Thus, some community members, UN partners, and government partners expressed the need for further "accompaniment" from UNIFEM in order to consolidate programming achievements. Although a strong foundation has been built in the GEZ communities in Zimbabwe and India, additional emphasis on the mechanisms for continuity in funding is required in order for these projects to contribute to the higher level changes envisioned. In particular, given the pilot nature of these initiatives, it is crucial that UNIFEM be able to illustrate the adoption of the initiatives by other funding sources, and the replication and scale up of the GEZ in other contexts.

## Relevance

The evidence suggests that UNIFEM's programming is relevant to stakeholders in terms of its timing, content, and approach, although in some cases the Fund's level of resources, or lack of country presence is seen to limit its contribution. The emphasis on change at the level of plans and policies was appropriate in most of the countries participating in the initiatives. Community members, government partners, civil society groups and UN partners also consider GEZ to be relevant to local and national needs. Within the five countries where interviews with UN partners in the UNAIDS Theme Group were carried out, the majority of respondents recognized UNIFEM's strategic support in mainstreaming gender and human rights to the work of the Theme Group, individual UN agencies, and government agencies. Another view, expressed both at country and global levels, indicates that UNIFEM requires a clearer focus and a more strategic approach to its programming in HIV/AIDS. UN system respondents at the country level referred to two key factors that limit UNIFEM's efforts to mainstream gender in support of the national response to HIV/AIDS: namely its lack of resources and limited presence or capacity in country. Although, in the programming experience reviewed, UNIFEM has been generally successful in advocating for gender mainstreaming within the UN team/UNAIDS Theme Group at the country level, there are legitimate concerns in UNIFEM about the potential structural limitations for future programming.

## Programme Management

The evaluation identified several programme management areas where UNIFEM has learned lessons and can make improvements in future programming. These include the need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities for managing the programme in country and the need for greater field office input in the design of the programme. The use of the LFA, monitoring, and reporting were identified as areas for improvement in the management of HIV/AIDS programming. In particular, global or regional programmes require a simple and manageable set of indicators and results. Cross-regional learning is another area for future improvement. UNIFEM's ability to identify strategic implementing partners is a clear strength for implementing both HSP and ARP. Another success factor for implementation was the ability to count on a dedicated programme manager/specialist based in country.

## Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The evaluation illustrates that UNIFEM has had successes in its gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS programming during the three years of the HSP and ARP and it confirms that the general programming direction that UNIFEM has taken is appropriate.

UNIFEM has a niche in this programming area. The following dimensions of UNIFEM's value added to HIV/AIDS programming were identified through this study in terms of what it proposes conceptually and how it works: a) grounding HIV/AIDS programming in a gender *and* human rights framework; b) facilitating a critical analysis of HIV and gender that links violence, poverty, and AIDS, thus providing a holistic approach to women's vulnerability and HIV/AIDS; c) building the conceptual relationship between HIV and violence against women; d) the ability to partner with and draw in women's organizations, positive women, and other advocacy groups to forums and debates on HIV/AIDS; e) its role as a UN agency combined with a track record in campaigning and advocacy at global, regional, and national levels, f) and an effective use of participatory processes that is valued by all programme partners. Two additional features appear to make UNIFEM programming unique among UN agencies. The first is that UNIFEM strives to put the issues and needs of women who are infected *and* affected by HIV/AIDS on the agenda of

decision makers. Secondly, UNIFEM addresses women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS during the entire life cycle, and not only during their reproductive age.

Given the experience with HSP and ARP, the evolution of the HIV/AIDS programming context, and the continuing demand for a UNIFEM role in this area, it is essential that more resources be allocated to UNIFEM's HIV/AIDS, gender, and human rights programming. In this respect, UNIFEM faces institutional challenges *vis-à-vis* its status, authority, and resource level for engaging in HIV/AIDS programming in the long term. Until a significant influx of funding is secured, it is a time for UNIFEM to reflect on how it can increase the strategic nature of its work in HIV/AIDS.

Some of the lessons learned from programming to date (but by no means an exhaustive list), include:

- *Interventions at the policy level require continuous advocacy, follow-up with on-going capacity building, and ownership by national AIDS councils and partner ministries.*
- *Mobilizing coalitions, building political will, and institutionalizing mechanisms for dialogue/collaboration on gender and HIV/AIDS issues take time to develop and are vital for sustainability.*
- *The most critical leverage in transforming the agenda has been facilitating the voices of positive women, investing in leadership development, and ensuring GIPA.*
- *UNIFEM's work with other UN Agencies is a key factor for success in leveraging visibility, resources and opportunities for its work in gender equality and HIV/AIDS.*
- *UNIFEM's pilot GEZ experience illustrates that a multi-pronged approach focusing on women's empowerment in the community can make a difference at the micro level.*
- *Addressing asymmetrical gender relations and their link to HIV/AIDS and VAW, UNIFEM has been a key success factor in UNIFEM's programming.*
- *UNIFEM programme managers' ability to read the environment, seize opportunities, and negotiate sustained partnerships is a key factor for success of advocacy/policy change programming.*
- *Given the dynamic nature of HIV/AIDS policy and programming at the country level, a UNIFEM staff person based in the country, with clear terms of reference, and dedicated to gender and HIV/AIDS increases the possibilities for success.*

## Overview of Recommendations

The report provides a few suggestions of areas for UNIFEM to consider in a next phase of programming in order to build on programming strengths, make any identified improvements, and respond to the national and global context for HIV/AIDS.

- UNIFEM should continue to support engendering of the national response to HIV/AIDS in different ways, recognizing that countries are at different stages in the process:
  - For example, in countries where a first phase has focused on engendering the policy framework provided by a national strategy, UNIFEM's programming should help to ensure that these plans are carried out through operational plans that are adequately resourced. It can and should draw on its experience in gender budgeting.

- In addition, as countries move forward with the principles of the Three Ones, UNIFEM should play a role, together with its other UN and in-country partners, in promoting and advising on the engendering of the Three Ones.
- UNIFEM should also pursue the idea of being a “watchdog” that is monitoring how national responses to HIV/AIDS, and the UN system’s contribution to that response, are mainstreaming gender equality.
- UNIFEM should continue the work in building advocacy and leadership capacities among Positive Women’s groups. This work should continue to support groups in making claims on the rights that they are entitled to. In some countries, a second phase could go further in addressing power dynamics within the women’s networks, between the women’s network and the broader positive people’s networks. In other countries, there still is a need for strengthening the relationship between the women’s movement and positive women’s groups.
- UNIFEM should also consolidate and facilitate the transition to identified partners of the two GEZ established through the HSP. This transition is crucial for “closing the loop”, which in this case would ensure that the successful pilot initiatives catalyzed by UNIFEM are then picked up by others. There is also a need to share the lessons with others and develop a strategy for replication.
- UNIFEM should define a strategy that carefully identifies and differentiates the kinds of studies, or “research”, that it becomes engaged in. On its major advocacy issues, UNIFEM should play a greater role advocating for others to do the substantive, long-term research that is required as an evidence base. UNIFEM could, for example, consider affiliating with a cutting-edge research organization that can generate longitudinal data that is often needed as evidence on policy matters.
- UNIFEM should develop a concerted effort to mobilize resources for programming in this area, through greater marketing and identification of partnerships and forums for participation that enhance its resource leverage capacity. (For example, UNIFEM could develop short “marketing” snapshots that tell the stories of the Gender Equality Zones in India and Zimbabwe.) More systematic documentation and sharing of programmatic experience would also be beneficial for engaging its partners, at the country level and within the UN system.
- Finally, as part of its efforts in continuous improvement in programme management, UNIFEM should pay attention to: the participatory nature of the planning and design of global programmes; the development of useful and simple tools for measuring, monitoring and reporting on results; ensuring the adequate management and staffing of such programmatic initiatives; and strengthening cross-regional learning opportunities during programme implementation.

The report also identifies and discusses three strategic questions for continued reflection in shaping the UNIFEM approach to future programming.

- Is there a need to focus clearly on 2-3 issues that cut across all countries/regions? What would these issues areas be? This question addresses the issue of comparative advantage for UNIFEM and whether or not it should focus on a limited number of areas where it has a strong track record (such as Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS) and, if so, what the implications could be for addressing emerging issues in this area.

- Is there a need to clarify comparative advantage of depth vs. breadth of countries in terms of UNIFEM's effectiveness? Similarly, another choice that UNIFEM will need to continue to reflect on is level of resources invested and the programming strategies in each country. Does it go deeper in a small number of countries?
- How best could UNIFEM position its programming in gender and HIV/AIDS programming within the UN system? The discussion here notes the issues related to the broader institutional framework for HIV/AIDS and options that UNIFEM has in this context.