

## **Aide Memoire**

### **UN Heads of Agencies meeting with the Planning Commission on “Progress and next steps on the Government of India-UN Development Assistance Framework”**

The meeting began with a note of welcome from Mr.K.C Pant, the Honourable Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission, and an expression of appreciation of the close interaction between the UN System with the Planning Commission on the UN Development Assistance Framework- India (UNDAF). Mr. Pant drew attention to the opportune timing of the meeting – as the Tenth Plan was due to be finalised by October 2002. He assured the Group that the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan would reflect the priorities on gender as articulated in the Approach Paper.

The UN Resident Coordinator introduced the areas of interaction for the meeting. The purpose of the interaction was to get feedback and ideas from the Planning Commission to move forward jointly on the UNDAF agenda of promoting gender equality and strengthening decentralisation across all UN programme initiatives of support to the Government of India.

The UN Resident Coordinator mentioned that each UN organisation was working through its own programmes with line Ministries, while UN organisations through particularly the UN Inter Agency Working Groups on Gender and Decentralisation were continuously interacting to maximise synergies, exchange lessons learned on the UNDAF priorities and other cross-sectoral issues. The meeting would be very valuable from the point of view of seeking ideas from the Planning Commission on enhancing the impact of the initiatives of these Groups. Joint activities in areas of support could be identified to make the themes more visible. For example on gender, could the “Women in India: How Free? How Equal?” Report be used for joint advocacy, as well as thinking on ways to extend the gender budget initiative to all Ministries.

On HIV-AIDS, it was mentioned that the UN Heads of Agencies were excited by the development that HIV-AIDS was an agenda item in the States consultation with the Planning Commission. Could this approach be used for advocating on gender as well? The Janshala programme would be briefly presented, as it has been presented at the ECOSOC as a global best practice of an Inter Ministerial Government of India-UN System partnership on primary education.

The representative of UNIFEM on behalf of the Co-Chair of the UN Inter Agency Working on Gender and Development presented a brief outline of activities underway. Operationalising the UNDAF priority of promoting gender equality is viewed by the Group through the framework of empowerment of women and enhancing their capabilities. The Group is composed of seventeen organisations and programmes, and acts as a resource group for the UN system to actualise gender concerns in programming and operations. An important initiative of the Group has been the support to make the contribution of women’s work more visible, and to make the definition of work more gender sensitive. Supporting the Registrar General’s Office on engendering the Census of India, by three UN organisations is joint initiative in this cumulative process. Support to the Department of Women and Child Welfare on gender budgets, gender budget analysis and engendering the national Economic Survey were also important joint initiatives of the Group. The Group had facilitated suggestions of grassroots women on thematic areas in the Tenth Plan process, and is looking forward to facilitating regional networks of these groups to support gender sensitive implementation of the Tenth Plan.

The representative of UNFPA and Co-Chair of the Inter Agency Working Group on Decentralisation said that the group was set up reflecting the Government's constitutional commitment to decentralisation. Many member agencies were supporting decentralised programming, and this is shared within the Group, which acts as a technical resource group. The Group has had a varying nature of success and needs to expand and exchange experiences with NGOs working in the field. The Group has been interested in sharing experiences and discussing ways in which UN agencies could better support efforts to develop capacities at local level, help make local bodies more representative, and on supporting equity of actions by PRIs. So far the Group had supported a workshop on Community Driven Management in partnership with the Planning Commission, the launch of the national Good Governance campaign as well as other learning and information events. A mapping exercise of UN supported initiatives was underway which would feed into the new Country Programmes of UN organisations.

The Senior Advisor-Programmes, UNDP and Co-chair of the Decentralisation Group emphasised the support to capacity building, and the need for joint efforts to promote dialogue between local bodies, to see the best kind of linkages that can be forged. Support to providing scope to PRIs to participate in Planning and Management at the sub-district levels could be considered and perhaps a site for field based interaction could be selected for a joint visit of UN organisations and Planning Commission Advisors to explore practical issues of concerns to PRIs. The UN System organisations might consider how to realign support through existing programmes and new programmes to respond to this. Discussions with the Planning Commission on these areas would help sharpen the focus of the IAWG on these activities.

The UNAIDS Country Programme Advisor, spoke of the work of the UN Theme Group on HIV-AIDS supporting the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the National AIDS Control Organisation. The Joint UN CHARCA project (Coordinated HIV-AIDS/STD Response through Capacity Building and Awareness) was presented. The project objective is to reduce vulnerabilities of young women and marginalised groups to HIV-AIDS in six high risk districts in the country by providing information and skill building. The strategic pillars of the project are community ownership; bottom up planning and developing community based communication strategies. The design phase was already underway, and the project would be implemented from January 2003. The project objective was also to expand the response to HIV-AIDS from a health perspective to a multi-sectoral approach, and the support of the Planning Commission could be very valuable in this regard.

The UNICEF Representative briefed the Group on the GoI-Joint UN Janshala programme, supported by ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF. This programme had been presented to the ECOSOC in July 2002 in the Operational Activities Segment as a best practice, which is a recognition of the Government of India's pathbreaking work through this programme. The joint UN System support had enabled UN organisations to converge strategies and generate synergies through pooling of specialised expertise on the project. The programme used local strategies and local tools, focussed on community involvement in improving quality of education and retention of students in schools. Empowerment of teachers, upgrading skills, and identifying gender gaps were some strategies deployed for improved teaching. Successful methods emerging from the Janshala experience have been incorporated into the District Primary Education Programme. An independent evaluation of the programme would be undertaken soon and shared with the Planning Commission.

### **Remarks from the Planning Commission:**

**On Education**, the Member, Planning Commission, Mr. Venkatsubramaniam was appreciative that the Janshala programme focussed on the girl child, particularly as education is an essential strategy for empowering women and girls. Empowering teachers was an area highlighted by him for further focus. The significance of adopting child-centered strategies and ensuring that children are at the heart of all initiatives needs to be reinforced. He remarked on the need to have an international effort on “making teachers smile”.

**On Gender**, the Member, Planning Commission, Mr. Kamaluddin Ahmed, expressed the need for Parliamentarians and legislators to allow more women’s participation in decision-making, particularly as representation of women was not uniform across States. Numbers of women were growing in local level institutions and women were increasingly aware of their duties and rights in these structures.

The Advisor, Social Welfare, Planning Commission appreciated the work of UN organisations and the efforts to capture women’s work. It would be interesting at this juncture to select a State where women’s work could be captured and reflected in national economic accounting. It was important also to see if efforts like the one on the population census can be used to capture women’s work in the informal sector for the economic census. She also requested to be briefed on the outcome and follow-up to the Inter Country Movement for Violence against Women to see how the efforts can be carried forward in the country. The concern over the juvenile sex ratio was raised and the need for the UN System to provide support in this area was underlined.

She pointed out that gender sensitisation efforts of the UN organisations need to be coordinated to ensure that Parliamentarians, legislators, administrators and other officials are brought within the ambit systematically. Information about women was available but there is a great need for information on women’s empowerment, on what is required to actualise this to reach all target groups, to translate policy into action.

The Member Secretary, National Commission on Population, Planning Commission, pointed to the fact that women are the cornerstone of the demographic transition and population stabilisation. It is important to focus on education and nutrition for more empowered and healthy women, and a reduced burden on the health system.

**On HIV-AIDS**, the Advisor, Health, Planning Commission, pointed to the growing visibility of health and population concerns in the Deputy Chairperson’s communications and speeches. Looking at HIV-AIDS as a health challenge was not a sustainable approach, and it had been agreed in the Government that the other areas that need intervention to reduce the impact of HIV-AIDS should be handled by other Ministries. The health dimensions alone could be handled by the Ministry of Health. She pointed out to a disturbing trend wherein STDs were given less emphasis than HIV-AIDS. Population stabilisation, strategies needed to be gender sensitive – for example a recent study found that among couples which have two boys, the percentage of sterilisation was 60%, whereas the figure was 30% when the children were girls.

The Advisor, Rural Development, Planning Commission summed up potential areas of support for UN System contribution. The cross cutting themes of promoting gender equality and strengthening decentralisation have helped in concretising the UNDAF, and **action research, training and capacity building** are areas where the UN System can focus its joint support.

The efforts for generating sex-disaggregated data at State and district level need to be continued, although there are many challenges in finding primary level data in many areas.

Best practices, processes that have been used elsewhere, pilot projects that can be replicated, and good experiments, which can provide innovations, are another tangible area of support.

At the district level, efforts could be focussed on which institutions need to be strengthened; studying which agencies are best suited for different tasks and how implementation can be made more effective.

The UNIDO Representative summed up the UN System presentations by saying that the UNDAF priorities have been reflected in ongoing initiatives, although the operational dimensions need more focus. On gender, more data is required, as well as more sensitisation and awareness and building of womens' capacities. The focus on the girl child, buy in of communities, ownership by communities for sustainability, capacity building for all initiatives, bringing in of best practices, and action research were other areas of potential partnership and support. In terms of HIV-AIDS the alliance has to be catalytic.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission reiterated to the Group that the issues on gender reflected in the Approach Paper of the Tenth Plan would be reflected in the Plan document.

The Deputy Chairperson, Planning Commission presented his conclusions. He thanked the UN System for providing a birds eye view of UN System initiatives under UNDAF, and underscored the need for instituting cost benefit analyses of development interventions, although the impact of interventions can often be challenging to measure. The need for international best practices to be made available could be facilitated by the UN System. Empowering women by skill building for employment and production and supporting them to reach international markets could be another important area of support which would also link UN concerns in the social sector with support to economic issues. Best practices on management in urban areas are another area where sharing of experiences from other countries could be very useful, particularly against the back-drop of increasing urbanisation and migration of rural populations. He closed the meeting with a note of thanks to the UN Heads of Agencies.

### **Participants from Planning Commission**

Mr. K.C Pant, Deputy Chairman  
Dr. K. Venkatsubramaniam, Member  
Mr. Kamaluddin Ahmed, Member  
Mr. Lakshmi Ratan, Secretary  
Ms. Krishna Bhatnagar, Principal Advisor  
Ms. Krishna Singh, Member Secretary, National Commission on Population  
Dr. Rohini Nayyar, Advisor, Rural Development  
Dr. Prema Ramachandran, Advisor, Health  
Ms. T.K Sarojini, Advisor, Social Development & Womens Programmes  
Dr. Nagesh Singh, Director  
Mr. B.N Nanda, Director  
Mr. S.M Meena, Senior Research Officer  
Mr. Sunil Saran, Senior Research Officer

### **Participants from UN Team**

Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative  
Ms. Bianca Rita Tonneti, WID Specialist, UN APCTT  
Mr. Abdul Jalil, FAO Representative a.i  
Mr. Maurizio Bussi, Deputy Director, ILO  
Dr. David Miller, Country Programme Advisor, UNAIDS  
Mr. Krishno Dey, Senior Advisor Programmes, UNDP  
Prof. Mohsen Tawfik, Director and Representative, UNESCO  
Mr. Diego Palacios, Deputy Representative, UNFPA  
Ms. Maria Calivis, Representative, UNICEF  
Dr. George Assaf, Representative and Regional Director, UNIDO  
Ms. Suneeta Dhar, National Programme Officer, UNIFEM  
Mr. Gerald Daly, Programme Advisor, WFP  
Dr. Tej Walia, Deputy Resident Representative, WHO (India)

Ms. Surekha Subarwal, Chief UN Inter Agency Support Unit  
Mr. Bharat Vyas, Senior Executive Officer, Office of the UN Resident Coordinator  
Ms. Rohini Kohli, UNDAF Specialist, UN Inter Agency Support Unit