

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) / UN Women

Summary	
Organisation: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) / UN Women	Date: February 2011
Description of Organisation	
<p>UNIFEM was the UN's development fund for women. Established in 1976, it was dedicated to advancing the rights of women and achieving gender equality. It focussed its activities on the overarching goal of supporting the implementation at the national level of International commitments to advance gender equality. In support of this goal, UNIFEM worked in the following thematic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening women's economic security and rights;• Ending violence against women;• Reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS amongst women and girls;• Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war. <p>DFID provided UNIFEM with an annual core voluntary contribution of £3m. DFID also provided £3.6m over 3 years to a central project supporting women's role in peacebuilding and preventing sexual violence in conflict. In 2009 the UK was the fourth largest contributor to UNIFEM (£9.55m). 100% of its budget was classed as Overseas Development Assistance.</p> <p>UNIFEM was significantly hindered in its effectiveness by virtue of its status as a subsidiary body of UNDP, its size, and the fact that it did not have an effective governance mechanism. The governing body of UNIFEM was a segment of the UNDP Board, and this did not represent a forum for Member States to discuss matters of operational effectiveness or policy in any detail. In addition, UNIFEM's governance was structurally separate from wider policy forums that monitor norms and standards around gender, limiting its policy coherence and authority.</p> <p>In June 2010 the UN General Assembly agreed to merge UNIFEM with the 3 other agencies working on gender equality and women's empowerment (DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW) to form UN Women. Ex-President of Chile Michelle Bachelet was appointed as the Executive Director of UN Women at Under-Secretary General level. UN Women became operational on January 1st 2011. It will be formally launched on 24th February 2011.</p> <p>UNIFEM forms the basis of the analysis from Sections 1 to 9 inclusive. The section addressing 'Likelihood of Change' which takes a forward-looking approach, is entirely focused on UN Women. Wherever possible through the UNIFEM analysis we have tried to highlight areas where UN Women is expected to address weaknesses.</p>	

Contribution to UK Development Objectives	Score (1-4)
<p>1a. Critical Role in Meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM's role on gender was an important contributor to gender equality and therefore to the achievement of development objectives. - UNIFEM's scale and lack of authority mean it was not able to play as critical a role as it should have. = UNIFEM had a critical role, but its limited resources, low standing and lack of influence within the crowded UN system means it often left a gap in the development architecture. 	Weak (2)
<p>1b. Critical Role in Meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM's mandate was critical to DFID's priorities and important to the objectives of other UK Government departments. - Despite some good progress, especially in the area of governance and security, its institutional weaknesses hindered its ability to be a critical partner. = Despite UNIFEM's institutional weaknesses its contribution to governance and security and broader HMG objectives was significant. 	Satisfactory (3)
<p>2. Attention to Cross-cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM had a good record of working on women and peacebuilding and preventing sexual violence in conflict. - UNIFEM had not put in place guidelines or policy frameworks for staff working in fragile states. = UNIFEM's track record of working on conflict and peacebuilding was generally positive, but there is no evidence of a robust approach in fragile states more widely. <p>2b. Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM's mandate was entirely focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. + UNIFEM used partnerships and analysis to good effect in advancing policies and programmes that impacted on gender equality. It did this both at national level and international levels. - UNIFEM struggled to track and report on gender equality results. = This was UNIFEM's core business. <p>2c. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM made significant efforts to reduce its own carbon footprint as an organisation. Wider safeguards 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weak (2)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Strong (4)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory (3)</p>

<p>are not as relevant since most of its work was upstream, and involved little or no procurement or construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is potential for UN Women to do more in the area of climate change and gender impact. This is an area where UN Women's leadership could make a significant difference over past efforts. = This section has limited relevance on UNIFEM's policy and operational work but UNIFEM made efforts to lessen its carbon footprint. 	
<p>3. Focus on Poor Countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Assessed centrally by comparing the multilaterals' country by country spend with an index that scores developing countries based on their poverty need and effectiveness (the strength of the country's institutions). UNIFEM spent almost 50% of its resources in the countries that are in the top quartile of the index – this includes high amounts to big countries with high absolute poverty such as India, Nigeria and Pakistan. - However it also had a significant in middle income countries (including upper middle income countries). - The balance of UNIFEM's spending was in middle income countries 	Weak (2)
<p>4. Contribution to Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM undertook some good innovative work at country level. - UNIFEM's impact was limited by weak self-analysis of its impact. - UNIFEM struggled to demonstrate delivery, partly due to weaknesses in its country capacity and partly due to a weak results culture. This, combined with poorly-defined objectives made it difficult for management to drive better results in the organisation. = UNIFEM consistently struggled to demonstrate results. 	Unsatisfactory (1)
Organisational Strengths	
<p>5. Strategic and Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM had a clear Evaluation Policy and published all evaluations on its website. - UNIFEM had a weak results culture and weak accountability mechanisms on gender. - An effective evaluation function is not matched by evidence that the organisation routinely acted upon the recommendations of evaluations. UN Women will need a step change in strategic and performance management if it is to represent a credible 'new force' within the UN system. = UNIFEM suffered from a poor results culture that undermined an effective system of evaluation and means 	Score (1-4) Weak (2)

<p>it is hard to measure the impact of good UNIFEM work and programming.</p>	
<p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM had a clear system to allocate aid. - UNIFEM's weak administration and planning mechanisms mean that allocations were not predictable. - There is insufficient evidence that it applied lessons and evaluations to reallocate aid or manage risks at a corporate level. = The weaknesses in UNIFEM's administration undermined a clear system of aid allocation. 	Weak (2)
<p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM largely followed UNDP's procurement and financial control systems. - There is little evidence that UNIFEM paid much management attention to VfM or cost control, apart from a recent review of cost recovery rates. UN Women's approach to VfM will need to be the subject of early focus by financing stakeholders. = UNIFEM showed some evidence of challenging/supporting partners and there was progress on cost control, but the extent of senior management commitment was uncertain. 	Weak (2)
<p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM's approach to partnerships was one of its key strengths. It had a good reputation with national women's machineries, gender partners at global and regional level and civil society (including at local level). + UNIFEM was particularly adept at capitalising on the links between partnerships at local and national level and using these to inform and enrich its global advocacy work. - There was room for some improvement in how it worked with civil society and no evidence was found for how UNIFEM used partnerships to improve results on the ground. = This is an area where UNIFEM is judged as strong. It fostered and utilised partnerships well to maximise its impact. 	Strong (4)
<p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNIFEM had an information disclosure policy covering access to information, procurement, and internal audit. This includes country programmes and project documentation. + Partners were well-represented on UNIFEM's Board. - Project information was not readily available. 	Weak (2)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNIFEM's Board and Consultative Committee did not provide robust mechanisms for redress or consultation with partners. = Despite having a disclosure policy UNIFEM had limited transparency on its projects and a weak board. 	
Likelihood of Positive Change	
<p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change <i>This section focuses entirely on the newly agreed UN Women agency.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UN Women's mandate is strong enough to mean that a reinvigorated higher impact UN response on gender is a real possibility. + The receptiveness to bold change among the transition team so far is good. There are innovative elements to the Executive Board design that should help it be an effective forum for continued reforms. + The UK has a strong group of allies and has considerable influence. - There are some concerns that the Executive Board may become politicised. This will call for nimble and bold management from the senior team in UN Women. = Overall the trajectory and potential of reform is very strong. 	Score (1-4) Very likely (4)