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Thematic Strategic Note on Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (TACRO) of UNICEF

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1. Trends in TACRO regional analysis of gender equality 1998-2004

Latin American and the Caribbean region has made great strides in addressing gender disparities, although areas of concern remain. Secondary enrolment rates of both sexes, but especially of girls, have risen significantly, and in most countries, girls have higher enrolment rates than boys and more than 80% coverage, but discrimination against girls persists among some indigenous and rural populations. The greatest disparities are evident in the labor market, where girls are channeled into lower-paying female-dominated occupations. New laws and programmes against domestic violence help protect women of all ages, but actual behavior lags behind legal progress. Gender inequities and norms related to sexuality compound health problems for adolescent girls in particular. Adolescent pregnancy, the effects of risky sexual behaviors, and physical and sexual abuse disproportionately affect girls. School drop out, crime and violence, and alcohol abuse affect boys disproportionately more than girls.

TACRO regional analysis of gender from 1998-2003 show **progress on legislative reform** and development of comprehensive policy frameworks to follow-up the **Beijing commitments, particularly related to violence against women and abuse of children and adolescents**. Many UNICEF programmes mention but few analyze **adolescent pregnancies** from a broader perspective, such as the linkage to **maternal mortality rates** and/or **responsible fatherhood** and the social conditions often related to adolescent pregnancies. **Domestic child labour,** a problem in itself, is another factor which increases the risk of sexual abuse and early pregnancies and keep young mothers in a state of poverty. Several of these issues require further analysis and better programming within the region.

During the five-year period 1998-2003, some improvements were also made in **integrating the concerns of the girl child into country programmes**. Tools for mainstreaming and better gender analysis are, however, required to facilitate better programme design. In many countries, the gender perspective is still isolated and considered the domain of the gender focal point and therefore not fully integrated in a cross-cutting manner into overall programming within all sectoral projects. Another challenge has been determining UNICEF's role in respecting and fulfilling the commitments of the CRC and the CEDAW. Recent guidance and training from HQ advocated

the importance of addressing both Conventions given the inextricable links between the rights of the (girl) child and the rights of women in the construction of gender equality. It was further clarified that countries must ensure that this important link does not reduce the importance of the individual rights of either the child or women. **CEDAW reporting** has been slow, especially from the Caribbean countries, while most countries in Latin America have reported in a timely fashion. ECLAC, CARICOM, UNIFEM and UNICEF are all involved in supporting the countries in the reporting processes.

During the period 1998-2003 there was training on gender mainstreaming, but since there is a **high turnover of the gender focal points,** there is need to build the capacity of the present group of focal points and other programme officers in order to ensure gender mainstreaming within programmes. Annex 1 contains further details by country.

2. Priorities of COs and TACRO in 2003-2004

Revision of the legislation related to gender based violence, in particular domestic and intra-family violence, was carried out in many countries.

TACRO participated in **the Preparatory Sub-Regional Meetings for México and Central America, the Caribbean and the South American countries** on the Ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC and the governments of Honduras, St. Vincent and Grenadines and Brazil, February-April, 2004. Among the themes discussed by the participating countries were: a) Poverty, economy and gender equity. b) Empowerment, institutional development and gender equity. c) The preparation of the Ninth Regional Conference of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Mexico 10-12 June, 2004[1].

The 9th Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, México City, México 10-12 June, 2004, organized by ECLAC and the Mexican Institute for Women: The final resolution from the 9th Conference is the document called "The Mexico Consensus", the two main themes discussed at the 9th Conference were 1) poverty, economic autonomy and gender equity and 2) empowerment, political participation and institutional development. This document is the region's contribution to the next UN Special Session on Gender in 2005. Progress reports on follow up to gender-related activities indicate that throughout the region there is little or no reference to the situation of the girl child within the discussions on women. Some mention is made to the advancement of women of all ages, including girls, recognition of domestic work and its relation to child care, payment of alimony for children and adolescents, and to introduce human rights education with emphasis on gender perspectives, race and ethnicity. The needs of the girl child can be linked generally to discussion on legislation on sexual and reproductive rights and access without discrimination to health services, the importance of prevention of HIV/AIDS. However, no direct emphasis on the needs and rights of the girl child exists within the reports of other agencies. Additional areas of relevance to the work of UNICEF and the girl child include the need to take integrated action in order to eliminate all forms of violence and its expressions, as well as to reduce and eliminate trafficking and sexual exploitation. Work still needs to be done as well on promoting access of women to information technology and steps need to be taken to ensure that the drafting of national legislation, the harmonization of human rights and the non-discrimination of women, boys, girls. UNICEF CO must still do more to ensure that the rights and inequalities facing the girl child are known and that action is taken to address the situation.

3. Strategies for Gender mainstreaming in all UNICEF LAC Programming in 2005

Institutionalization

The integration of gender mainstreaming is necessary in all UNICEF Programme planning and also part of the UNICEF mandate and reinforced by the ***ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2:***

> *"In order to ensure effective implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations systems should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective… Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanisms and processes in all part of the United Nations system".*

Some examples of ways in which UNICEF can gender mainstream would be:

- Using sex-disaggregated data in statistical analysis to reveal how situations/policies impact differently on girls and boys (using sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data)
- Providing tools and training in gender awareness, gender analysis and gender planning to staff, managers and national decision-makers;
- Integrating a gender perspective in all phases of country programme planning cycles, including situation analysis, programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation policies, programmes and projects.

UNICEF strategies at country level should as a minimum include plans for achieving gender mainstreaming in all areas, a register of what is actually done in comparison to what was planned, and the results these activities produce. Monitoring and evaluation tools will be provided for this activity.

Regional Strategy Development and Fundraising

Recent training session with staff identified the framework for the development of a regional **strategy** that will be developed in 2005. The framework takes into consideration conceptual, technical and managerial issues. **The draft document entitled "It takes two hands to clap"** represents where UNICEF TACRO should place emphasis over the next 2 years in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming is more than just a discussion, that it becomes a reality in programming.

Clarification of Accountabilities

There must be **accountability** for, and assessment of, the strategies and actions taken by UNICEF as a contribution towards the achievement of the goals of the Platform for Action. Accountability is of three types:

- Accountability of intentions: based on plans for achieving the goals under various areas
- Accountability of action: what is actually being done
- Accountability of impact: the results, or outcome of actions "on the ground"

UNICEF accountability falls at different levels of the organization: at Headquarters and Regional level it is related to the overall policies on gender mainstreaming that are distributed to field offices, it may also relate to UNICEF staff capacity-building and whether the resources for achieving the intended outcome are sufficient or made available. Country offices would be responsible for the plans, actions and results taken to mainstream gender within the country programme.

The Representatives and the SPOs need to discuss and define the CO level approach to gender mainstreaming in each office. Steps need to be taken to overcome constraints. An accountability systems need to be established for gender mainstreaming and more training is required nationally **for staff, decision makers and other relevant counterparts**.

Increased Capacity-building

In order to implement the new accountabilities, strict vertical divisions have to be changed and gender mainstreaming needs to become **"everybody's business"** and not just that of the gender focal point. This entails giving priority to staff capacity building which should be done as an integral part of **PPP training**. In short there is a need for:

- Awareness building with Representatives
- Capacity building of Programme Officers
- Change attitudes within the organization regarding gender issues
- Work with counterparts on gender norms and attitudes changes
- Important to improve UNICEF evaluations and to include gender analysis, measures and indicators

Clarification of Technical issues:

Some areas of the MTSP need further clarification and guidance from HQ and TACRO including the area of **emergencies and gender** and this must be considered in all programming, once clarified. In TACRO the current situation analysis indicates that more attention needs to be given to boys, **adolescent males** and young men as part of the gender mainstreaming effort.

Improved Reporting

UNICEF's role in the CEDAW reporting processes will be strengthened in the Region. Advantage will be taken of the **Beijing + 10** processes to create attention around women's and girls' rights and gender equality within UNICEF. Through i**nteragency collaboration at country level through the** CCA and UNDAF processes a greater effort will be made to strengthening gender mainstreaming. COs should also continue to participate in the UN Thematic groups on Gender as this offers another space to strengthen gender mainstreaming. By the end of 2004, HQ will publish an **Interagency manual on Gender** to provide guidance to national level action.

Strengthening Coordination through Gender focal point network

The UNICEF TACRO Gender Focal Point network has been strengthened during the Staff Gender Training Workshop held August 25-27, 2004. The Gender focal point network will be a key actor in coordination with the Regional Office and Headquarters in the effort to put the gender mainstreaming strategy in practice into all programming at country level. For the gender focal points to be able to be catalysts, a major effort in empowerment of focal points and gender training is necessary at national and regional levels for all program staff. Information and new knowledge including best practices should be monitored by the network and shared through the regional office to guide programming.

ECOSOC Resolution E/2004/L.14 refers to the empowerment of gender focal points:

"Requests all entities of the United Nations system to ***enhance the effectiveness of gender specialist resources***, ***gender focal points and gender theme groups***, by establishing ***clear mandates***; by ensuring ***adequate training***, access to information and to adequate and stable ***resources***; and by increasing the ***support and participation of senior staff*** "

> **"Requests** the Secretary-General to ensure that all United Nations entities ***develop action plans*** with time lines for implementing the agreed conclusions 1997/2, which address the ***gap between policy and practice*** identified in the Secretary-General's report, with a view to ***strengthening commitment and accountability at the highest levels*** within the United Nations system as well as to establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability, ***systematic monitoring and reporting*** on progress in implementation"

Support to major events on Gender

The next **Special Session on Women** is to be held in the **General Assembly in March 2005**, to **Follow-up on Beijing +10**, preparatory meetings have been held in Latin America and the Caribbean during the first half of 2004. UNICEF TACRO is to support the Global Girls' Education Report: Analysis of the situation of girls at national levels as part of a desk study to be carried out. Another **capacity-building workshop** to apply a series of tools for better causality analysis, self-assessment of gender mainstreaming and results-based programming for gender will be done in 2005. This training and capacity building should be a joint effort between Headquarters, the Regional Office and the Country Offices.