# RESOURCE GUIDE FOR GENDER THEME GROUPS











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ISBN: 1-932827-19-6

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United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) 304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor New York, NY 10017 USA Tel: +1/212/906-6400

Fax: +1/212/906-6705 Website: www.unifem.org

## **FOREWORD**

Gender equality and women's empowerment are Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in their own right and central to all other development efforts. This resource guide for Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) has been developed to strengthen coordinated action in the UN system to support countries to achieve these goals.

When United Nations (UN) theme groups of any type - and Gender Theme Groups in particular - are at their most effective, they are facilitating:

Coherence within the UN Country Team (UNCT). GTGs can play a key role in ensuring that each UN organization brings it comparative advantage in gender equality and women's human rights to joint efforts and to coordinated UNCT action on gender equality. This should result in both greater effectiveness and efficiency, with lower transaction costs for national partners.

Alignment with national development goals. As work intensifies on MDGs, Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), and other coordination initiatives, GTGs have a key role to play in ensuring that commitments already made to gender equality - national plans of action, gender equality laws, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) commitments - form part of mainstream policy frameworks.

A better information base upon which to base public policy formulation. In many countries, sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators exist but are not used. In others there is a need for greater investment in building capacities of users and producers of statistics. GTGs can play a key role in marshalling UNCT efforts to improve the national statistical base and capacity in support of gender equality.

The information that follows highlights many examples where GTGs are providing this type of effective and creative support to UNCTs. UNIFEM has prioritized mainstreaming gender in coordination mechanisms and has seen, on the ground, that where GTGs have strong leadership and consistent support from the UNCT, they can make a valuable contribution.

Noeleen Heyzer

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Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Chair of the IANWGE Task Force on Gender Mainstreaming in the CCA/UNDAF

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#### MESSAGE FROM THE TASK FORCE

The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) brings together representatives of gender units, gender specialists and gender specialist organizations of the multilateral system. Network members promote gender equality throughout the United Nations system and in follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing +5) in 2000. The Network monitors the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the normative and operational work of the UN system. It works through ad hoc task forces with designated task managers and through informal inter-sessional meetings.

The Task Force on Gender Mainstreaming in the Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) of the IANWGE is coordinated by UNIFEM and composed of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). It aims to develop a common and coherent UN agency approach to gender mainstreaming in the CCA/UNDAF process.

The Task Force developed this *Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups* in response to significant opportunities to strengthen a collective UN response at the country level to supporting gender equality in coordination processes, such as the MDGs, CCAs, and UNDAFs. The Resource Guide responds to an assessment revealing that the effectiveness of Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) as mechanisms for promoting gender mainstreaming in the CCA/UNDAF process was often undermined by intermittent activity levels, frequent change in membership and the members' low ranking in the overall organizational hierarchy<sup>1</sup>.

The Task Force and the IANWGE members hope that UN staff members in the field will use the Resource Guide as a tool to strengthen coordination on programming to support gender equality at the country level.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>UNDP & UNIFEM. Scan of Gender Expertise in the UN System. UNIFEM, New York, 2003.

# THE PROJECT TEAM

The *Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups* is the work of many people. Patricia Keays and Sarah Murison of the Capacity Development Group undertook the initial research and writing. Guidance, rewriting and editorial support for readers and reviewers was provided by Joanne Sandler and Ingrid Arnò of UNIFEM. Task Force Members Zazie Schäfer and Aster Zaoude (UNDP), Kristina Goncalves and Noreen Khan (UNICEF), Ayesha Imam and Sahir Abdul-Hadi (UNFPA) and Sylvie Cohen (DAW) offered ongoing comments and guidance. Project technical support and the website were managed by Geoffrey Mathers. Processing of survey inputs was assisted by Maylene Jacob. The guide was designed by Jeehan Abdul Ghaffar of UNIFEM.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Recognition and appreciation to readers, respondents and contributors.

The project extends sincere thanks to the contributors and respondents from the following UN inter-agency and coordinating theme groups on gender equality:

- Africa: Benin, Cameroon, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan and Zimbabwe.
- Asia Pacific: Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Philippines and Viet Nam.
- Arab States: Jordan and Morocco.
- State CEE/CIS: Albania, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- Latin America & Caribbean: Cuba, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

Special thanks go to the many readers and reviewers of the draft Resource Guide from a number of agencies around the world.

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