

ROUNDTABLE ON FINANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Summary, October 14th, 2014

The Financing Gender Equality Roundtable held on September 19th co-hosted by Vital Voices, the OECD and UN Women brought together a diverse group of actors including representatives of national governments, multi- and bilateral institutions, women's organizations and international NGOs, academia, corporations, private investment firms and the media and technology industries. Attached are the agenda, final list of participants and resources from the meeting.

The primary objective of the Roundtable was the gathering itself. The aim was to assemble a unique mix of key players whose differing experiences and perspectives, concerning the issue of financing gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), were given a safe space and equal weight to air challenges, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses associated with the issue; and also to encourage people to create new relationships and exchange information and ideas.

The Context

The momentum behind the post-2015 development agenda presents a clear opportunity to act together to link financing for gender equality imperatives to the wider global discussion on financing for sustainable development.

The program ran the course of a full day, with discussions centered on four key areas:

1. Emerging trends and actors in financing for gender equality and women's rights;
2. Strategic partnerships - between national governments and the donor community; public-private partnerships; and the role of civil society within these;
3. Innovative financing mechanisms; and
4. Funding for women's organizations and networks.

Throughout the day, several key messages emerged:

- The pressing need for more and better gender data to guide financing decisions.
- The centrality of transparency and accountability.
- Addressing structural issues in order to achieve sustainable change.
- The need for more and higher quality investment in gender equality and women's empowerment.
- The need to earmark funding for the proposed post-2015 stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- The necessity of multi-stakeholder partnerships and the need to find a 'common language' that enables partners to share information and learn from one another.
- The need to engage new actors: media, technology and other innovative financing instruments to engage new audiences and funders.

Data Are Critical

Participants discussed the need for gender data (particularly sex- and age-disaggregated data) to enable national governments to plan and budget effectively; to hold funders from all sectors accountable; and to enable women's organizations to make a compelling case when approaching funders. Inherent also in the need for data is the need to measure impact so that the actors implementing programs may track progress and identify effective interventions.

It is important to work together to insert gender equality into the current 'data revolution' discussions. There is a particular focus on the data revolution in the post-2015 debates and several participants mentioned the *UN Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* as an entity with which the group should consider connecting. Everyone is talking about *Big Data* and a question that needs to be answered is how it can support gender equality.

Several participants expressed interest in the potential of partnering to share existing data to maximize impact. Such partnership could draw upon the respective strengths of different partners and help to address the potential cost-related challenges in data collection and analysis.

Centrality of Transparency and Accountability

Throughout the day, the importance of transparency and accountability was raised several times. Participants said that transparency was crucial for strengthening accountability of all actors to deliver on their commitments to GEWE. The issue of transparency was closely connected to quality of available data and the critical role of independent media in strengthening it.

The point was made that we need to ask for what we want in terms of information (example of Finance Minister that had information on amount spent on GEWE, but had never been asked the question). Several participants raised the importance of using technology to strengthen the government-citizen relationship and promote accountability.

Participants also raised the point that civil society, including women's organizations, need to be supported to play the critical role of demanding government and donor accountability for commitments to GEWE.

Addressing Structural Constraints to Gender Equality

The point was raised by several participants that a solely individual-focused approach to financing gender equality is not sufficient. It is necessary to consider and address structural issues that constrain progress. This point connects to the proposed post-2015 stand-alone sustainable development goal on gender equality that includes strong targets on structural issues, such as ending violence against women and girls, recognition of women's unpaid care work and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health.

The 2014 publication "The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach" was referenced by several participants as a useful resource that addresses how to implement an integrated approach that addresses underlying structural barriers to women's economic empowerment.

Financing Gender Equality is an Investment not an Expenditure

Financing gender equality should be seen as an investment in the future. Viewing gender equality as an investment requires not only funding, but also political will from governments and civil society. The space between policy and implementation is often vast, and experience has shown that aid alone will never be enough.

Time to Close Gaps in Donor Financing

Aid will remain a central component of the financing strategy that will underpin implementation of the post-2015 agenda. It is therefore critical to keep a sharp focus on stepping up and delivering on ODA commitments to finance GEWE. This must include intensifying donor efforts to close persistent financing gaps in priority areas such as women's economic rights, family planning and ending violence against women and girls.

Prioritising Gender Equality in How Domestic Resources are Mobilised and Allocated

While important, aid will not be enough. What will really make the difference are national gender priorities and strengthening of public financial management systems to ensure that public expenditure contributes to advancing gender equality and women's rights. Strategies such as gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) can be powerful in shifting how countries mobilise and allocate resources. The experience of Nepal provided an illustrative example of how the implementation of GRB since 2007 has helped to strengthen the link between political commitments (as articulated in legislation and policies) to GEWE and allocations to implement these commitments. The level of gender responsive allocation has doubled since introducing GRB (from 11 to 22 percent) and the results can be seen in improvements in areas of education and health, including a significant reduction in maternal mortality. Building the capacity of civil society organisations to understand budget-making processes and intervene effectively in the budget cycle is also important.

Partnerships Are Key

The theme of partnership carried the conversation for much of the day. Participants agreed that there is a great need to harness the power of partnerships with actors across many different sectors to maximize the synergies across the whole range of potential sources of finance.

But actors on many sides also expressed that it is often difficult to build such partnerships due to differences in perspective. For example, with some focusing primarily on empowering individual women as drivers of change, others focus on structural barriers to gender equality grounded in a human rights perspective.

Many participants emphasized that the strong synergy between the business and the human rights case for gender equality and women's empowerment should facilitate finding a common language to support partnership and progress. Connected to the need to 'speak the same language' was the idea of forming partnerships to develop effective communication messages that support the case for financing gender equality and women's rights.

Participants agreed that the moment to form strategic alliances is now, and that forums such as the Roundtable were ideal opportunities for this. Identifying “bridge-builders” and drawing on agreed standards such as the [Women’s Empowerment Principles](#) developed by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, could help to foster common values and language as the basis for new partnerships.

Make Long-Term Investments and Be Open to Failure

Throughout the day, participants expressed the critical need for long-term investments. Actors working to change entrenched power structures simply do not see results after one to three years - they need investments to support their work over five to ten years.

Participants also noted the tremendous pressure to demonstrate success, making the case for long-term investments to enable experimentation, learning and innovation. Openness to failure was seen as key. It is important, however, to strike a balance between investing in experimentation and learning, and implementing what we *already* know.

Increase the Accessibility of Innovative Funding Streams to Women’s Rights Organisations

Effective funding for women’s organisations requires core in addition to project funding; sizeable grants; and flexible resources that allow organisations to adapt their activities in response to shifting opportunities and threats. Devolving funding through women’s funds provides one mechanism for reaching women’s organisations. Other innovative funding models presented by participants include the Dutch MDG 3 and FLOW Funds which have had extraordinary impact in supporting the work of women’s organisations; and Catapult – a crowdfunding platform which channels funds from people and corporations to women and women’s organisations at the grassroots. Participants also discussed how to access finance through innovative funding structures such as impact investment funds, pay-for-performance bonds and hybrid structures.

Bringing Different Perspectives and Allies to the Discussion

How to use new media platforms and tools to communicate about these issues was also a critical part of the discussion. Without being able to shine a spotlight on the work and engage media and thought leaders, NGOs and service providers, in thoughtful, articulate debate, the issue does not get the kind of attention that it requires to shift thinking and invite more funding.

Participants also acknowledged that it was only with such core funding that conversations such as the Roundtable could happen, and that such discussions were critical to finding new and creative solutions. All too often, conversations such as the roundtable occur behind closed-doors among like-minded individuals. The need to open the conversation up to a diverse array of partners is necessary to broaden the scope and potential reach of this work.

Conclusion and Proposed Next Steps

Consultations on the financing strategy that will underpin the post-2015 framework are already well-underway ahead of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) that will take place in Addis Ababa in July 2015. Participants agreed that it will be critical to take forward the good

ideas from the workshop to influence the lead-up to this conference in order to help shape a financing strategy that is able to deliver on commitments to gender equality and women’s rights.

The day ended with a question about how to keep this unique group of players engaged to lead, connect and engage in the future. In response, UN Women proposed to form a working group to collaborate over the course of the next year and craft a set of concrete suggestions for inclusion in the agenda of the next upcoming FfD Conference. It is envisioned that such a group could focus on a set of ‘work streams’ that align with the critical issues that emerged from the discussion.



L-R: Zohra Khan (UN Women), Patti O’Neill (OECD), Alyse Nelson (Vital Voices), John Hendra (UN Women), Ambassador Caroline Millar (Australia), Susan Davis (Vital Voices), Ambassador Susanne Shine (Denmark), Mayra Buvinic (UN Foundation).



Participants introduce themselves before the day's proceedings.



L-R: Colleen Zakrewsky (Women for Women International), Nicky McIntyre (Mama Cash), Monique Villa (Thomson Reuters Foundation), and Sarah Thorn (Walmart) in discussion during a coffee break.

AGENDA

8:30-9:00 AM: Registration and light breakfast

9:00-9:30 AM: Welcome and introduction

Why this conversation and why now? A look at a multi-stakeholder approach to financing gender equality from the private sector, public sector, civil society, academia, media and finance organizations. How does it all relate to the wider global discussion on financing for sustainable development?

Speakers:

Alyse Nelson, President and CEO of Vital Voices
Patti O'Neill, Acting Head of Division, Global Partnerships and Policies Division, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD
John Hendra, Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme of UN Women

Remarks:

Ambassador Melanne Verveer, Founding Partner, Seneca Point Global, Executive Director of Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

9:30-10:30 AM: Taking stock of the financing landscape

Q and A:

What do we know about trends in financing for women's rights?

How can we use this information strategically?

- Caren Grown, Senior Director, Gender, the World Bank
- Cindy Clark, Director of Programs, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
- Emily Esplen, Policy Analyst, Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Global Policies and Partnerships Division, OECD
- Zohra Khan, Policy Advisor, Governance and National Planning, UN Women

10:30-10:45 AM: Coffee

10:45- 12:45 PM: Leveraging strategic partnerships for funding gender equality

How can those present – the public sector, private sector, and civil society – work together to better resource efforts to achieve gender equality? Examples of innovative and successful partnerships.

a. working with national governments (1 hour)

What steps are national governments taking to ensure that public expenditure targets both women and men and advances gender equality? What role can donors play in supporting these efforts?

- Baikuntha Aryal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal: tracking gender equality investments in the public financial management system in Nepal
- Zohra Kahn, Policy Advisor, Governance and National Planning, UN Women: Donor government response – The World Bank and UN Women-supported Community of Practice for Finance Ministers

b. public-private partnerships (1 hour)

Who are the emerging stakeholders in the financing for gender equality landscape? How are private sector actors and donor governments partnering to increase their impact in tackling gender inequality, and what are the best practices? How can we ensure that accountability for gender equality results is strengthened in these partnerships?

- Maria Bobenreith, Executive Director, Women Win: Leadership for Change Program funded by DFID
- Sarah Thorn, Senior Director, Federal Government Relations, Walmart: Women's Empowerment Initiative
- Carolina Wennerholm, Senior Policy Specialist on Gender Equality, SIDA: Public-Private Development Partnerships.
- Angela Hariche, Director of International Data Relations, The Foundation Center
- Gema Sacristan Postigo, Chief of Financial Markets Division, Inter-American Development Bank

12:45-1:45 PM: Luncheon

1:50-2:00 PM: Bridging and Financing the Digital Divide

- Neelie Kroes, Vice President, Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, European Commission

2:00-3:45 PM: Innovative funding for gender equality

How can we better tap the potential of new media and technologies to resource women's rights work?

How can donors and investors more systematically ensure that emerging and established funding streams are accessible to and meet the needs of civil society groups including women's organizations?

a. harnessing the power of new media and technologies: crowd-funding, innovative media platforms and big data (45 minutes)

- Marina Ponti, COO, and Maz Kessler, Founder, Catapult.org
- Jen Klein, Senior Advisor and Consultant, Office of Hillary Rodham Clinton
- Monique Villa, CEO, Thomson Reuters Foundation: Trust Women

b. financing women's organizations, networks, and movements (1 hour)

- Stacy Donohue, Investment Partner, Omidyar Network
- Grant Collins, Principal, Charlotte Square Consulting
- Dutch Foreign Ministry: lessons from the MDG3 Fund and from the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women Fund (FLOW)
- Nicky McIntyre, Executive Director, Mama Cash
- Jennifer Smith, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Vital Voices

3:45-4:00 PM: Coffee

4:00-5:00 PM: Future directions in financing for gender equality: potential partnerships

Building on what we know to jointly deliver on post-2015 commitments to financing gender equality and women's rights.

- Three Roundtable co-hosts will jointly summarise ideas and initiatives with any follow ups.

PARTICIPANTS

Astrid Aafjes, *Founder, Women Win*

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Amanda Ellis, *Ambassador to the UN, New Zealand Mission to the UN*

Emily Esplen, *Policy Analyst, Gender Equality and Women's Rights, OECD*

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Gwen Hines, *Executive Director for the United Kingdom, The World Bank*

Maz Kessler, *Founder, Catapult*

Lilian Kessy, *Business Owner, Tanzania*

Zohra Khan, *Policy Advisor, Governance and National Planning, UN Women*

Jen Klein, *Senior Advisor and Consultant, Office of Hillary Rodham Clinton*

Neelie Kroes, *Vice President, Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, European Commission*

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