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INITIAL FOLLOW-UP TO THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN:
RESPONSE TO KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

I. MAJOR CHALLENGE

1. The major challenge for UNIFEM that has emerged from the external evaluation (see document DP/1996/34 for executive summary) is to determine how UNIFEM can become a more strategic, influential and accountable organization that focuses on results and outcomes, while maintaining an emphasis on empowering processes, interactive decision-making, and the responsiveness that it has acquired on the ground. This means balancing the need to be proactive and to act quickly, with the need to maintain focus. The evaluation report provides an overview of the strengths and the weaknesses of the organization. To become a more strategic and focused organization managing for results and empowerment, UNIFEM must build on its strengths and address its weaknesses.

2. Task forces have been set up in UNIFEM to respond to the key recommendations of the evaluation report, in terms of programme design, strategy and performance; information and management systems and office technology; and enhancing collaboration between UNDP and UNIFEM. UNIFEM proposals based on the initial findings of the task forces are presented below, for the consideration of the Executive Board.

II. PROGRAMME DESIGN, STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

3. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNIFEM was given a strengthened mandate to work on the economic and political empowerment of women. Accordingly, it restructured its programmes under two major themes - economic empowerment and political empowerment - so as to better address these key issues. Within each theme, attention was focused on selected sub-themes: globalization and economic restructuring; sustainable livelihoods; governance; human rights; and peace-building and conflict resolution.

4. In light of the evaluation report, which recommends that UNIFEM further sharpen its focus within these themes, an initial assessment of the activities that UNIFEM will carry out as well as an assessment of the strategies to be used in implementing its work has been undertaken. On the basis of this assessment, UNIFEM proposes to focus on the following five strategies:

- (a) Strengthening women's organizations and networks;
- (b) Undertaking advocacy and mainstreaming activities;
- (c) Facilitating relations to establish effective linkages between non-governmental organizations, Governments, United Nations and other international agencies, and the private sector, and to leverage political and financial support for women;
- (d) Undertaking pilot and demonstration projects;
- (e) Documenting and disseminating information.

5. UNIFEM believes that this particular mix of strategies will enable it to respond to many of the recommendations made in the evaluation. Overall, UNIFEM will support projects that are more strategic than in the past, in that the projects will have the specific aim of developing or demonstrating new methods of supporting women and of assisting with advocacy, mainstreaming, brokering and capacity-building. Because project selection will be more strategic, more time and resources will be available to ensure the adequate design, monitoring, evaluation and documentation of project experiences. In addition, because all projects will be linked thematically, it will be easier to learn lessons and build on individual activities at both the community and national levels.

6. The increased focus on advocacy, mainstreaming, brokering and documentation will also allow UNIFEM to respond to large numbers of women through information-sharing, while its more systematic design of pilot and demonstration projects will allow it to be proactive and innovative within its chosen themes. Focusing the use of UNIFEM core resources in this way will enable the maximum advantage to be taken of UNIFEM Regional Programme Advisers (RPAs) and the considerable skills they possess, especially in advocacy, mainstreaming, brokering and support to women's organizations and networks. With fewer, more strategic projects, they will be better able to focus their time and attention and make more efficient use of the resources available to them.

7. The evaluation pointed out the crucial importance of RPAs in terms of the UNIFEM programme. However, it also pointed out the mismatch between the demands on RPAs and the amount of time and financial resources available. While the above measures will ease some of the pressure, UNIFEM also sees the need to increase the number of RPAs, so that eventually, each one will be able to concentrate on a smaller number of countries and allocate resources in such a way that synergies may be built among UNIFEM activities.

8. An expansion of the UNIFEM RPA network is, therefore, the organization's first priority for the use of its core resources, in keeping with the recommendations of the evaluation team. With a doubling of its core programme resources to \$26 million, it would be possible to double the UNIFEM impact in its programme countries, with an increase of the RPA network to 20 persons. Functions carried out at headquarters would continue to consist of overall management and direction; backstopping the work of RPAs; and carrying out global programmes, both through RPAs and directly, according to the substance of the

programme. A re-establishment of present staffing levels through the administrative and technical budgets would be sufficient to allow for the proposed field expansion.

9. While core resources to expand UNIFEM outreach to developing countries is the preferable option for a resource increase, additional resources will also be sought on an earmarked basis, to undertake specific types of projects and programmes in key areas of importance to women. For example, UNIFEM has already experienced considerable success in raising earmarked funds for projects in the areas of the elimination of violence against women and in peace-building. UNIFEM would also mobilize earmarked funds for other activities, including for its proposed flagship publication on the status of women's economic and political empowerment, as well as for documenting the women's movement as a force for social change.

III. INFORMATION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY

10. In support of its work on refining strategies, UNIFEM is also aiming to respond urgently to the recommendations of the evaluation relating to project design, monitoring, evaluation and documentation. The entire project cycle will be reviewed, with project objectives being made more realistic, project monitoring and reporting being made more systematic and project evaluation being made more rigorous. In addition, UNIFEM will draw on the lessons learned from the evaluation in its future work. A management-for-results framework will be established to provide greater intentionality in UNIFEM work. A management information system (MIS) to support both programme implementation and impact assessment will be undertaken.

11. Discussions with the Division for Administrative and Information Services (DAIS) have led to the conclusion that an MIS to fulfil UNIFEM needs can be based upon existing systems within UNDP, which can be modified for the specific purposes of UNIFEM. Components of the system are envisaged to be the following: resource mobilization, resource allocation, programme development and implementation (substantive and financial information), and impact assessment. The MIS would be developed in phases, with the programme development and implementation component being developed first, by mid-1997.

12. UNIFEM recognizes that it is necessary to upgrade its office technology in order to install an MIS for the efficient implementation and management of the UNIFEM programmes. UNIFEM will need to raise funds for the financial and human resources needed to carry out MIS development and technology-upgrading.

IV. ENHANCING UNIFEM/UNDP COLLABORATION

13. A consultative process has been initiated between UNDP and UNIFEM to strengthen support and commitments to gender-mainstreaming at the global, regional and national levels, and to consolidate initiatives promoting the advancement of women, especially with regard to follow-up to world conferences. This dialogue has taken place in the context of the recently completed evaluation of UNIFEM.

14. As a result of the first round of consultations between the Gender-in-Development Programme (GDIP) of the Bureau for Programme Policy and Support (BPPS), UNIFEM and the regional bureaux, commitments to the advancement of women have been increased, roles have been clarified and collaboration has been strengthened. Outcomes of the consultation are presented below.

A. Execution and implementation arrangements

15. Consistent with the UNIFEM evaluation recommendations to leverage UNDP financial resources, it was confirmed that UNDP may utilize UNIFEM expertise in its areas of competence through three existing mechanisms. The Administrator has asked the resident representatives and resident coordinators to work with UNDP executing partners to involve UNIFEM under the following modalities:

(a) As implementing or cooperating agency for specific agency or nationally executed projects;

(b) Where there are under utilized technical support services (TSS)-1 resources and a need to focus on combating poverty, the eligible executing partners for this modality could be urged to consider using UNIFEM expertise to introduce the relevant gender dimensions and address the issue of the feminization of poverty;

(c) As partners in TSS-2 - funded activities (shortly to be renamed services for technical support (STS) activities).

16. The Administrator will request that resident coordinators contact UNIFEM RPAs to discuss areas in which UNIFEM might implement projects under these arrangements.

17. In addition to the above, UNDP is taking the necessary steps to make UNIFEM an executing agency for UNDP resources. UNDP is also discussing the following two options to provide the means for more direct relations with UNIFEM during the new programme cycle:

(a) The inclusion of UNIFEM among those agencies that may access funds from support to policy and programme development (SPPD) facility which will replace the TSS-1 facility in January 1997;

(b) The modality of UNDP direct execution.

B. UNIFEM and UNDP joint programming

18. UNIFEM and UNDP will collaborate directly in the area of pilot projects at the global, regional and national levels. GIDP will assist in transmitting knowledge on successful approaches tested by UNIFEM, and the incorporation of new approaches and lessons learned into UNDP programming processes.

19. Ongoing GIDP/UNIFEM/regional bureaux consultations will identify specific areas of collaboration for global and regional programme flagship programmes, especially with regard to national follow-up to Beijing commitments.

C. Strengthening capacities

20. Through the global programme referred to in paragraph 18 above, UNDP will support UNIFEM in a pilot programme to strengthen national follow-up to Beijing commitments in approximately 10 countries.

21. The information contained herein is provided to the Executive Board for its use in its deliberations at the present session. A more detailed and comprehensive response to the evaluation of UNIFEM will be prepared in consultation with key partners and will be submitted to the Board when UNIFEM is next on the agenda.
