



The GEAR Campaign: Building a United Nations that Really Works for all women

Background

In 2006, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan convened a High-Level Panel to explore how the UN system could be strengthened in terms of coherence and coordination in the areas of development, humanitarian affairs and the environment. After women from around the world pressured the UN to better address gender equality in the reform process, Kofi Annan asked the Panel to include gender equality as its mandate. The Panel's report included recommendations on strengthening the gender equality architecture (GEA), and was endorsed by the current Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon in March 2007.

Currently, there are four separate women's entities¹ within the UN system that are overlapping and compete for resources, impeding their ability to effectively address women's needs worldwide. Other larger agencies sometimes do important work on gender equality, but it is a small part of their mandate, and often receives low priority.

GEAR Campaign

In March 2007, the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), together with the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) convened a meeting of 50 women activists from around the world, to develop a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy for global, regional and national action to gain UN General Assembly's approval of a stronger and single, fully-resourced women's entity at the UN.

As a result of that meeting and the continued need for women's collaborative advocacy on this issue, WEDO along with hundreds of activists spanning all regions, launched the **Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign** in February 2008, to mobilize women's groups and allies to push for the adoption of the new UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment. WEDO was asked by to serve as a co-facilitator of the Campaign.

A giant step toward achieving the goals of the GEAR Campaign was taken when the 62nd General Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus requesting the UN Deputy Secretary-general to elaborate on a new women's entity based on the model advocated by the GEAR campaign.

Impact on Public Policy

The GEAR Campaign has contributed to the UN reform process in many ways, engaging in in-depth research of the UN system and its work on gender, meeting with UN officials and member states,

¹ The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI); the United Nations Development Fund for Woman (UNIFEM); and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)

and providing substantive inputs to non-papers prepared by the UN Secretariat. WEDO has contributed to the momentum, helping to move the process forward. Many governments acknowledge the crucial role played by the GEAR Campaign to influence outcomes of the reform process.

Long term Impact on the Lives of Women

For the past three decades, the United Nations has been a galvanizing force in efforts to define a comprehensive global agenda for peace and security, human rights, poverty eradication and sustainable development. As a result, there have been significant commitments made for the advancement of women towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, the UN still lacks a strong driver at the leadership level both at Headquarters and at the country level, as well as a systematic and effective mechanism to deliver on many of the essential commitments made. The creation a strong, effective women's entity at the UN will deliver better results for women on the ground.

Incorporating Diverse Communities and Voices

WEDO has been playing a catalytic role in garnering and sustaining the active collaboration of coalition partners in every region of the world. As a result, in only two short years, the GEAR Campaign has grown very rapidly to include over 275 organizations in more than 50 countries.