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TO: UNFPA Representatives
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SUBJECT: Guidelines for UNFPA Support for Gender, Population and Development Activities

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..... Please find attached the new Guidelines for UNFPA Support for Gender, Population and Development Activities. This document replaces the 1988 Updated Guidelines for UNFPA Policies and Support to Special Programmes in the Field of Women, Population and Development (circular UNFPA/CM/80/51 Rev.1, dated 17 May 1988).

The present Guidelines are part of the efforts of UNFPA to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). In line with the principles and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action, the Guidelines reflect the broadening of UNFPA policy from a focus on women-specific activities towards increased emphasis on gender issues and concerns. Thus, areas of support are grouped under empowerment and status of women; equality for the girl child; and male responsibilities and participation.

We hope you will find these Guidelines useful and will ensure their proper application in UNFPA-funded programme activities.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

GUIDELINES FOR UNFPA SUPPORT FOR GENDER, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

I. PURPOSE

1. The present Guidelines are part of the efforts of UNFPA to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). They are based on principle 4 and chapter IV of the Programme of Action and relevant sections of chapter IV of the Beijing Platform for Action¹. They supersede the 1988 "Updated Guidelines for UNFPA Policies and Support to Special Programmes in the Field of Women, Population and Development". In line with the principles and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action, the present Guidelines adopt a broader approach than that embodied in the 1988 Guidelines in that they focus on overall gender issues and concerns, rather than on women-specific activities only.

2. The 1988 Guidelines enabled UNFPA to fund programme activities aimed at expediting the integration of women into the mainstream of population and development. These activities were mainly innovative, pilot and demonstration undertakings designed to promote education and training for women, health and child care, income-generating activities for women, to strengthen awareness of women's issues and their relationship to broad population and development goals, to strengthen women's institutions and organizations at the national and local levels, and to undertake research on the situation of women.

3. Under the present Guidelines, UNFPA will continue to build on its achievements and further advance its commitment to addressing concerns regarding the status of women by focusing on gender, population and development issues, such as the elimination of inequalities between men and women in education, skill development, reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, equality for the girl child and the involvement of men in achieving gender equality and in sharing responsibilities in family life.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

4. The concern of all UNFPA activities is to reinforce gender equality and equity. The ICPD Programme of Action firmly establishes the centrality of women in development and affirms that the emancipation and empowerment of women to a level equal to that of men are not only important to the achievement of population goals but also to the achievement of sustainable development and, therefore, the improvement of the quality of life for everyone.

¹ The Platform reinforces and advances some of the core issues discussed at the ICPD, particularly with regard to the human rights of women which include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence; the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls; the removal of all obstacles to gender equality and women's empowerment; the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls; and the participation of women in all aspects of decision-making and power structures.

Both men and women should participate in partnership in all aspects of population and development, and men have an important role to play in achieving the empowerment of women. UNFPA will continue to pursue a two-pronged approach to addressing gender issues giving highest priority to mainstreaming gender issues in all activities with the objective of fully integrating women and men into population and development programmes, both as beneficiaries and participants. However, UNFPA recognizes that women are often disadvantaged in terms of education, health and legal status and, therefore, the Fund will also support activities aimed specifically at improving the status of women and promoting their empowerment.

5. UNFPA's policy is based on the principles of gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women in the ICPD Programme of Action and previous international agreements and declarations, such as the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the World Population Plan of Action, the Rio Declaration and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. UNFPA continues to address gender, population and development as cross-sectoral issues. Therefore, the present Guidelines should be read in conjunction with other substantive UNFPA guidelines which address gender concerns, such as the guidelines in the areas of reproductive health; information, education and communication (IEC); and population and development strategies, among others.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

7. Effective action in the area of gender, population and development requires collaboration with other United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in view of the shared commitment to women's empowerment, equity and equality. UNFPA recognizes that these goals can be achieved only through the concerted and coordinated efforts of all organizations and agencies concerned. Thus, UNFPA assistance to gender, population and development activities outlined in the present Guidelines should be provided in close collaboration with bilateral donors, United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and with international NGOs, such as the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), the Commonwealth Medical Association, Family Care International, and The Population Council; and with regional, national and community-based NGOs.

8. The areas of support identified below have been grouped under two thematic areas: (a) reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health; and (b) population and development strategies. A distinction has been made between advocacy and action programmes. The ICPD Programme of Action gives UNFPA considerable scope as to the type of gender, population and development activities it can fund with regard to advocacy and action programmes. In some cases, support may be extended to both advocacy and action programmes, e.g., in the area of health where the Fund may support advocacy efforts for a holistic approach to women's health over their life-span as well as for selected interventions.

In other cases, assistance may be limited to advocacy efforts, such as support to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

9. The present Guidelines provide flexibility in developing local initiatives based on the conditions in each country. However, this should be done in consultation with the relevant Geographical Division and the Gender, Population and Development Branch.

A. Empowerment and status of women

10. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is an important end in itself. In addition, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both women and men are required in both their productive and reproductive lives. Yet, in most parts of the world, women still face threats to their health and well-being because of their lack of power, influence and education. Adolescent girls are a particularly high risk group who easily fall prey to sexual abuse, early and unplanned pregnancy and unsafe abortion. They therefore constitute a priority group for special attention. Achieving change in women's and adolescent girls status and empowerment requires policy and programme actions that will improve their access to education, remove legal impediments to their participation in all aspects of public life and enhance their decision-making capacity, especially in the area of sexuality and reproduction. Therefore, to achieve equality and equity based on a harmonious partnership between men and women and enable women and adolescent girls to realize their full potential, UNFPA may fund activities in the following areas:

Reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health

11. Advocacy activities:

- advocacy for a holistic approach to women's health over their life span, including selected interventions (e.g., nutrition information and a range of quality reproductive health and family planning services, as indicated in the relevant guidelines);
- IEC efforts to eradicate practices that are harmful to the health of women and girls, such as female genital mutilation, discriminatory nutrition practices based on sex, pre-natal sex selection and child marriage;
- advocacy for the enforcement of existing laws, such as those relating to the minimum age at marriage for girls, pre-natal sex selection, the sexual exploitation of girls and women and female genital mutilation;
- promotion of women's legal literacy, i.e., promotion of knowledge about local laws, policies and regulations that deal with their rights and responsibilities in family life and reproductive health;
- IEC activities to create awareness about the extent of, and legal remedies for, violence against women.
- advocacy for the provision of reproductive health information and services for both girls and boys

12. Action programmes:

- provision of quality reproductive health programmes that are sensitive to the socio-

- economic situation of women and adolescent girls as well as to the needs of men for reproductive health counselling and services;
- training of health providers to recognize the symptoms of violence and to provide counselling;
- assistance to women in emergency situations (i.e., refugees, the internally displaced and returnees), where women are at greater risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, focusing on the provision of reproductive health counselling and services within the health-care mechanisms available during relief operations;
- educational programmes to prevent teenage pregnancy and the provision of counselling services specifically targeted to pregnant adolescents that help them pursue their education and to receive child support and child care through the encouragement and assistance to ministries of education in changing their regulations to allow pregnant students to attend school on a flexible schedule and to resume their education after delivery;
- support for female literacy programmes that focus on reproductive health, family life education and other population-related issues.

Population and development strategies

13. Advocacy activities:

- advocacy for the signature, ratification and implementation by Governments of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- advocacy activities in the area of women's employment and in the workplace, including advocating measures that would enable women to combine child-rearing, breast-feeding and employment by encouraging flexible working hours, job sharing, and crèche services and that would improve occupational health and safety, especially in areas relevant to reproductive health;
- advocating activities that address the concerns of men in the workplace in order to facilitate equal sharing of family responsibilities;
- advocating measures to deal with the special needs of migrant women who suffer from low status and poor access to facilities;
- advocacy for ratification and implementation by Governments, employers and workers of International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards promoting equality of opportunity for women workers, providing maternity protection and protecting the rights of all workers with family responsibilities;
- promotion of women's knowledge of policies and regulations dealing with their economic and political rights;
- advocacy to encourage participation of women in the political process, e.g., in national and sub-national political formations, and for representation in local political organizations and in population and development programmes at all levels.

14. Action programmes:

- training in improving women's skills as environmental managers (e.g., water and sanitation at the household and community levels);
- support for poverty-alleviation activities designed to improve the economic status of women, such as through job creation and skill training schemes, especially training in

- managerial, supervisory and high-level positions and income-generating activities²;
 - the introduction of reproductive health, including IEC, and other population components into existing income-generating activities;
 - support for NGOs dealing with women and development issues, such as funding management and leadership training for members, recognizing that NGO participation is often the first step in bringing women into the political process.
15. Data collection:
- support at all levels for building and updating databases on women, in cooperation with other donors as necessary;
 - working with national statistical offices and other appropriate entities to ensure that all data are collected and analysed on a gender-specific basis; to ensure that censuses and surveys are designed to elicit correct responses regarding female heads of household and female participation in the labour force; and to ascertain that national accounts are designed to permit the identification of the contribution of women to the gross domestic product;
 - to collect and analyse data in order to ascertain the impact of domestic and occupational roles on maternity, including role conflicts and stress involved and their implications for economic and demographic outcomes;
 - support to activities aimed at collecting baseline information prior to launching gender, population and development activities in order to facilitate subsequent measurement of progress.
16. Research:
- socio-cultural research on how to deal with customs and traditions that perpetuate gender inequality and inequity, and impede the empowerment of women especially in relation to their reproductive and sexual health and rights;
 - operational research as part of larger action programmes being implemented to empower women;
 - research on the specific linkages between fertility, mortality, effects of migratory trends and socio-economic development policies (e.g., the effects of structural adjustment programmes);
 - research to improve guidelines for carrying out multisectoral macro and micro gender analyses that integrate economic, social and demographic issues;
 - research on women, population and the environment;
 - research on male involvement in reproductive and sexual health and family and household responsibilities.

² On 28 June 1995, the UNFPA Programme Committee discussed the evaluation of UNFPA-supported income-generating activities for women. The Committee noted the evaluation conclusion that while data from UNFPA-supported integrated income generation and micro-enterprise projects was not available to affirm a direct link between increases in income and increased control of women over their own fertility, experience suggests that projects which integrate income generation and family planning components can contribute to changes in reproductive behaviour and promote greater use of family planning services, if such projects are well designed, effectively implemented by agencies with a proven track record, and targeted to the appropriate groups.

17. Institution building:

- provision of technical support on gender issues to Governments and NGOs, including women's organizations at national, grass-roots and regional levels;
- assistance for development of national policies on the integration of gender in population and development programmes and for the creation of new structures, as well as support to strengthen, where appropriate, existing national machineries, such as women's bureaux;
- support to sensitization or training in gender, population and development issues, including for policy- and decision-makers, parliamentarians, planners, and community leaders.

B. Equality for the girl child

18. Since discrimination on the basis of sex starts from the earliest stages of life, greater equality for the girl child is a necessary first step in enabling women to achieve equal status with men and for women's empowerment. In many countries, the practice of prenatal sex selection and higher rates of mortality among very young girls, and lower rates of school enrolment for girls as compared to boys, suggest that preference for sons is curtailing the access of girl children to food, education and health care. Furthermore, the harmful practice of female genital mutilation has serious health effects on the girl child. In order to enhance the value of the girl child, UNFPA may support:

Reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health

19. Advocacy activities:

- support to NGOs, community-based organizations and religious institutions for IEC activities to create awareness specifically targeted to a variety of audiences, including parents, religious leaders, community leaders, and traditional birth attendants, emphasizing that the practice of female genital mutilation discriminates against girls, is injurious to their health and should not be perpetuated;
- advocacy with Governments to enact and enforce legislation prohibiting female genital mutilation.
- Advocacy to promote better nutrition for the infant and the girl child in view of the effects of nutritional deficiencies on physical development especially the pelvis leading to obstetrical complications and also during the reproductive years on maternal morbidity and mortality.

20. Action programmes:

- counselling and appropriate health services for girls suffering from the consequences of female genital mutilation.

Population and Development Strategies

21. Advocacy activities

- IEC activities to create awareness and underscore the "value" of the girl child and the need to eliminate all discriminatory practices (e.g., differential access to the resources of the household, etc.);
- advocacy activities to draw attention to the potentially harmful effect of girl child

- labour for women's development and status;
 - active advocacy for the education of girls and the achievement of female education goals as specified in the ICPD Programme of Action, with particular attention to primary and secondary education of girls, including advocacy for those interventions known to promote female enrolment and retention of girls in school, such as quality education, female teachers, flexible schedules, incentive programmes for girls' education, and female extension workers, among others.
22. Action programmes:
- limited support to innovative programmes that facilitate girls' access to education, such as training of more female teachers and the education of parents as part of population and family life education programmes;
 - the revision of school curricula and teaching materials as part of education reform and the provision of population and family life education in schools, eliminating gender stereotypes and featuring a "positive" message regarding equality and equity between the sexes as well as male responsibility in family life and the household.

C. Male responsibilities and participation

23. In most societies, men exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life, ranging from personal decisions regarding the size of families to the policy and programme decisions taken at all levels of government. The ICPD Programme of Action therefore emphasizes that men have a key role in bringing about gender equality. Changes in both men's and women's attitudes, knowledge and behaviour are necessary conditions for the achievement of gender equality. Hence, in order to promote shared responsibility between women and men and greater participation of men in bringing about gender equality and equity, UNFPA may support:

Reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health

24. Advocacy activities:

- IEC activities to create awareness among women and men of the importance of pre- and post-natal care for women, of reproductive tract infections (RTIs), and of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS.

25. Action programmes:

- preventive counselling services for RTIs and STDs, including HIV/AIDS, and condom distribution, within the context of reproductive health services;
- special programmes directed at adolescent boys and girls regarding responsible sexual behaviour;
- design of reproductive health and family planning services so that men are actively involved;
- support for research on methods of male contraception.

Population and development strategies

26. Advocacy activities

- advocacy for the equal sharing of domestic and parental tasks and responsibilities between women and men in accordance with international labour standards on workers with family responsibilities;
- advocacy activities underscoring the importance of men's commitment and cooperation in achieving women's empowerment.