



Interoffice Memorandum

To: Alfredo Missair
UN Resident Coordinator
Nicaragua

Date: 18 January 2008

From:
Assistant Administrator and Director, Partnerships Bureau
UNDP New York

Extension: 6005

Subject: MDGF-1725: "From rhetoric to reality: towards gender equality and empowerment of women through participation and gender practices in public budgets"

File: MDGF 1725

I. Approval Status

On behalf of the MDG-F Steering Committee I am pleased to inform you that your Joint Programme "From rhetoric to reality: towards gender equality and empowerment of women through participation and gender practices in public budgets" is hereby approved with an allocation of **USD\$8,000,000** for three years. This figure includes 7% for indirect costs incurred by UN Participating Organizations. Please note the 1% AA fee will be reimbursed directly to the MDTF Office and need not be included in your allocation.

II. JP design comments

No substantive changes are required to the design of your Joint Programme. We do have a small number compliance requirements identified under Section 'III' below, however, which will need to be addressed before finalization of the document. Once these have been addressed, you may proceed with signature of the Joint Programme document. In addition to the Government, the UN Resident Coordinator and each Participating UN Organizations should sign the Joint Programme document. We would encourage you to ensure some visibility for this event and for the launch of implementation.

The programme appears to be highly strategic, responding to Nicaragua's national priorities. We note that the programme's workplan is strategically timed with the municipal elections of 2008, such that the programme's gender sensitization, planning and gender budgeting activities will come on-line at the same time as the new authorities will be taking up their new terms in office. We also find the way in which this programme links women's productive and reproductive roles at policy and practical levels (a neglected area of the gender equality agenda globally) and the creation of 15 "men's groups" for the prevention of gender based violence highly innovative.

While we consider the design of the overall programme very sound, the documentation departs from UNDG guidelines in a number of instances which has made the Secretariat's review task more difficult than it perhaps needed to be. Overall, the document does comply with UNDG standards (with one important exception noted below) and the Secretariat has been able to reconstruct the necessary elements from the different sections of this document. We recognize that there is no lack of information provided, rather it is somewhat dispersed. We note the environment Joint Programme document follows a slightly different format again (much closer in that case to the UNDG guidelines). Given Nicaragua's success in a number of thematic windows we believe we should discuss this further with your team so that future review processes are not affected.



As far as UNDG guidelines are concerned, the current results framework is missing 'SMART' outputs. Table 1 provides overall JP outcomes and overall JP outputs with multiple agencies identified against each, and Annex 5 ('budget by activity') identifies activities by agency. These are fine. However the intermediary level – SMART outputs with a specific agency (or 'lead agency') identified for each – is missing. Table 1 should be broken down further, therefore in order to close this gap. Given the amount of additional, detailed information at the activity level, by agency, provided in the documentation, and the elaborate consultation process that clearly went into its formulation there seems little if any risk that Participating Organizations may not have a clear and shared understanding of who is responsible for what. We would nevertheless request that at minimum, a 'lead agency' is identified at the output level as we could foresee scenarios in the future where this may prove important.

As far as Fund guidelines are concerned, the programme's governance arrangements also require revision. From the figure provided on page 12, and the associated narrative, our understanding of the set up proposed is of a National Steering Committee, with a direct oversight of the technical and coordination unit for the Joint Programme, with the Country Team and an expanded Gender Theme Group in an off-line advisory capacity. The intermediary mechanism required by the Fund guidelines – the Programme Management Committee (PMC) – is missing in this scenario. We would recommend merging the relevant members of Country Team and the expanded Gender Theme Group (presumably involving national as well as international partners) to formally convene as the PMC. More importantly, this PMC should be a part of the governance of the programme. Given the same National Steering Committee will be providing oversight of at least four separate Joint Programmes, this intermediate governance mechanism is especially important. The Secretariat is available if you would like to discuss these issues in greater detail – we recognize there may be country-specific issues we are unaware of that may make it difficult to comply with Fund standards for some reason.

Finally, please note that the Fund Secretariat may revert to you with comments on your Monitoring Framework in the first part of 2008. While the proposed Monitoring framework is very thorough, it focuses primarily on output-related indicators and does not include indicators touching on broader development outcomes nor indicators relating to UN reform or the Paris Declaration. This has been a common feature across many submissions, and the Secretariat has been tasked with investigating what is feasible within a three-year programme and developing Fund-wide M&E standards.

III. JP re-design requirements and/or recommendations

The following changes are required to the Joint Programme document before finalization:

- Table 1 (Results Framework) should be revised to include an additional level of 'SMART' Output – A single agency (or 'Lead Agency' if you prefer) should be identified for each;
- The oversight arrangements should be revised to include a Programme Management Committee as per Fund standard policy
- Please include a definition of "territorial", "municipal" and "nacional y sectorial" in the text. In particular "territorial" in order to avoid confusion
- The cover page of the Joint Programme document should indicate 'United Nations' (not 'UNFPA')
- The signature blocks on the cover page on the UN side, should include the Resident Coordinator and each Participating UN Organization



IV. Management arrangements and delegation of authority

On receipt of a copy of the signed document, the Fund Secretariat will transfer the full three-year allocation to the custody of the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) Office pending further instructions from you.

Please note the MDTF Office will pass-through funds to Participating Organizations on instruction from you as Resident Coordinator and Co-Chair of the National MDG-F Steering Committee.

As reflected in the Fund's Framework Document (Section 9 'Formulation Process & Release of Funds) and the global MoU with Participating Organizations (Article I, 2-c) the MDTF Office will release resources on an annual, advance basis. For the first advance, these funds will be transferred on the basis of receipt of the first year Annual Workplan and the signed Joint Programme document. Subsequent annual advances will be released on instructions from you and on the basis of a) receipt of the next annual work-plan approved by the National Steering Committee; b) evidence that a formal review of the programme's progress has been undertaken not more than three months earlier, either in the form of an annual progress report (if the timing coincides) or through the minutes of a National Steering Committee where this has been discussed; and c) only when combined commitments against the existing advance have exceeded 70%. Please review the initial year budget requests carefully with participating organizations in order to ensure realistic delivery targets in this regard. The annual agency apportionment projected in the final budget attached to the signed Joint Programme document should also be reviewed and can be revised up to the time of your first funds-advance request. This is important for the reasons outlined below.

In order to allow the implementation team some flexibility to adapt the strategy to unexpected challenges and opportunities, and to empower Resident Coordinators in their oversight responsibilities, this memorandum also provides you with the authority over the three year duration of the programme and with the agreement of your National Steering Committee to (a) transfer up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the project budget – whichever is lowest – *between Participating Organizations* identified in the original Joint Programme budget and (b) re-phase up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the project budget – whichever is lowest - *between years*. The base-line against which these ceilings will be measured is the annual budget projection (by year and by participating organization) confirmed at the time of your first funds-advance request. The MDTF Office must be informed of any revisions of this kind, decided locally and is responsible for tracking these delegation ceilings for each programme. Any changes that fall outside these parameters will have to be referred back to the (Global) MDG-F Steering Committee for approval.

The success of the MDG-F activities will depend on your ongoing leadership and engagement. We count on you to exercise this leadership and to ensure this Joint Programme remains an ongoing, integrated effort by the UN system in support of national priorities. Please also use the National Steering Committee mechanism to help ensure national ownership by the Government in particular and involve it in important financial and programmatic oversight decisions.



The Executive Coordinator of the MDTF Office, Bisrat Aklilu, will be in contact with any specific documentation requirements to ensure the programme meets compliance requirements for UNDG pass-through arrangements.

With best wishes.

cc.

Mr. Bisrat Aklilu, Executive Coordinator, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office

Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Assistant Administrator and Director Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP New York

H.E. Mr. D. Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

H.E. Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations

Ms. Milagros Hernando, Director-General for Planning & Evaluation, MFA Madrid

Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles, Director, Development Group Office

MDG-F Secretariat