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PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY: AN EQUITY-FOCUSED APPROACH TO PROGRAMMING

UNICEF's 2010 Gender Policy mandates that all UNICEF-assisted programming, including in emergencies, contribute to gender equality in clearly defined, measurable ways. This means that **promoting gender equality is the job of all UNICEF staff**. This brief provides tips on how to do this in practice. For a more detailed treatment of why promoting gender equality is crucial to the fulfilment of UNICEF's core mandate and how it can be done across the Medium-Term Strategic Plan Focus Areas, see *Promoting Gender Equality: An Equity-Focused Approach to Programming (Operational Guidance Overview)* and the five accompanying focus area texts.

Key concepts

Gender refers to the social roles of men and women, and boys and girls, as well as the relationships between and among them, in a given society at a specific time and place. Gender is a key determinant of who does what, who has what, who decides and who has power. Social norms about women and men, and girls and boys – in combination with other social categories such as class, ethnicity and sexual orientation – enhance or constrain an individual's real freedoms and the realization of his or her human rights. They also shape routine aspects of daily living.

Gender equality means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike. In fact, gender equality cannot be achieved, for the most part, by providing everyone the same services, opportunities and protections, delivered in the same ways. Levelling the

playing field requires working directly with girls and women to address historical and present inequalities (**affirmative action**), as well as efforts to ensure that girls and women, and boys and men, define and benefit from mainstream development efforts (**gender mainstreaming**).

Key programming principles

In addition to the concrete opportunities for promoting gender equality throughout the UNICEF programme cycle (*see page 2*), UNICEF staff can promote equality through their work when they:

- Bring to bear UNICEF's **powerful advocacy voice, honest-broker reputation and convening power** in support of gender-equality objectives.
- **Frame gender equality as a core development objective** – not an add-on – central to UNICEF's ability to operationalize its commitments to the protection, survival and development of children

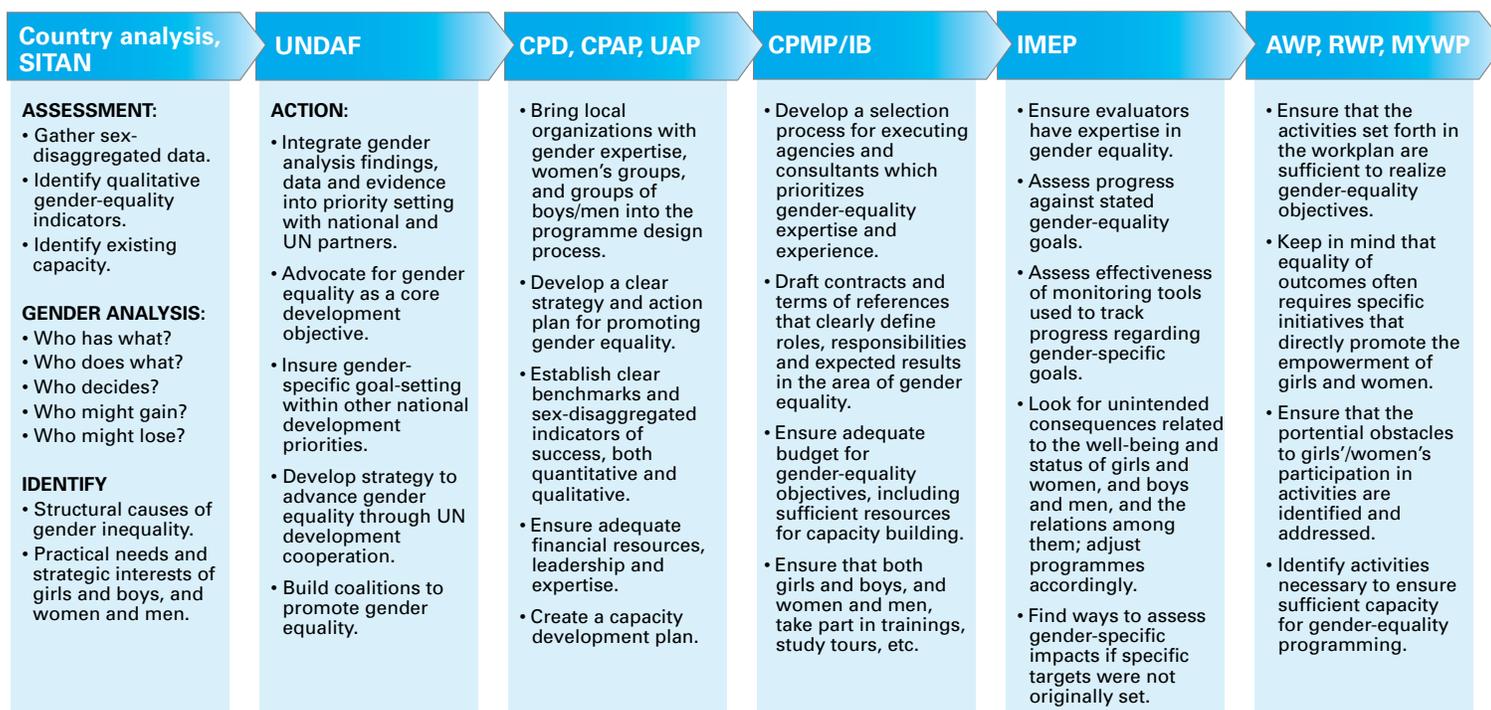
and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with equity.

- **Make the human rights case.** Bring the international human rights framework, particularly the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to bear on discussions with government partners regarding equality between girls and boys. Nearly all countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and about three fourths have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- **Make the scientific, evidence-based case.** Know the facts, and marshal sex-disaggregated statistics and empirical

evidence to ground advocacy and policy dialogue in real, demonstrable equality gaps in the sector or place in question.

- **Make the case at home.** Look around the room when the topic is gender equality: Is it filled with women? Make sure that men are part of efforts to promote girls' empowerment and equality. Both women and men must enjoy meaningful (rather than cosmetic) participation in the process, especially in priority-setting and decision-making.
- **Allocate sufficient time and resources to promoting gender equality.** Promoting gender equality – as is true with all UNICEF objectives – requires core staff time, budgetary resources and accountability mechanisms to keep gender from 'evaporating' during implementation.

Promoting Gender Equality throughout the UNICEF Programme Cycle: Key Opportunities



USE REVIEWS (E.G., MID-TERM REVIEW, UNDAF REVIEW) TO CORRECT COURSE AND COMBAT 'GENDER EVAPORATION'.