



Sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)

‘Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective’

Expert Group Meeting

Observer Paper Prepared by:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

When gender mainstreaming is not enough: The power of public institutional reforms to move towards gender-equal economies

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*“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence.
It is to act with yesterday’s logic.”*

Peter Drucker

Despite global collective efforts by governments and development partners over the last thirty years, gender inequalities in economies persist. This paper argues that, to achieve gender equal economies, **comprehensive institutional reforms need to underpin any policy and regulatory structural change.** Key target institutions include Ministries of Finance, Ministries of Economy, Trade and Social Protection, as well as Central Banks, Tax Authorities and alike. While there are numerous initiatives that target institutional reforms for gender equality, including on capacity development, gender parity measures and policies, regulations like gender responsive budgeting, and awareness raising of public officials, these measures tend to be fragmented and rarely part of a comprehensive institutional intervention. Often, they miss critical pieces that implemented together can lead to durable organizational change. This paper proposes **concrete elements of organizational reform, based on UNDP experiences working with Ministries of Finance and the [UNDP Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions](#)** model, that are recommended to accompany any policy or regulatory efforts to create sustained advancements towards gender equal economies.

Has gender mainstreaming failed?

Despite efforts, gender inequalities persist globally, and new types of inequalities are born. While slow progress is documented on closing the gender gap in basic capabilities - those associated with the absence of extreme deprivations-, a new generation of inequalities is emerging and widening in enhanced capabilities, such as access to technology, ability to cope with environmental shocks, or access to high quality healthcare and education, that allow a person to exert agency, and change in their lives¹. None of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 targets on gender equality are likely to be achieved by 2030, leaving serious questions about the lack of progress on areas related to preventing violence, women’s participation and leadership, women’s economic rights and access to income opportunities, or use of and control over technology. among others.

One of the most widespread strategies to advance towards equality is gender mainstreaming,² which is reaching 30 years in 2025 since its birth in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It was in the 1980s and 1990s when feminist economics started to gain some inroads into academic departments and influence the development arena. Gender-responsive budgeting was implemented for the first time in Australia in 1984³, the International Association on Feminist Economics was founded in 1992, and Kimberle Crenshaw disseminated the concept of intersectionality in 1989.

¹ UNDP (2019) *Human Development Report 2019. Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st Century*. Available at: <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr2019pdf.pdf>

² Gender mainstreaming implies: 1) Ensuring that gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality are central to all activities, 2) Integrating gender equality in national public and private organizations, in central or local policies, and in services and sectoral programs, 3) Assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels, and 4) Ensuring that gender issues are taken into consideration in planning the overall research agenda as well as in formulating specific projects. Source: Un Women (2020) *Gender mainstreaming: A global strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/brochure-gender-mainstreaming-strategy-for-achieving-gender-equality-and-empowerment-of-women-girls>

³ Stotsky, J. (2016) *Gender budgeting: Fiscal context and current outcomes*. IMF working papers. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16149.pdf>

Since then, gender mainstreaming has been institutionalized in nearly all development and multilateral agencies. Gender equality machineries have been established in States around the world, funding towards gender equality has slowly expanded, and more than 80 countries conduct some type of gender-responsive budgeting. However, implementation has been uneven, and the impact is not always clear. The successes and pitfalls of gender mainstreaming have been extensively documented,⁴ and its main criticisms are related to how gender mainstreaming was separated from its political feminist roots and focus on unequal power distribution; the consistently low status and lack of funding and leadership that gender equality initiatives and staff were accorded in development agencies; the organizational culture component which often sabotages intentions to re-distribute power; and the difficulty to connect internal organizational changes and gender equality results. In fact, during the last three decades, it was not rare to find gender focal points with no expertise in gender equality, or unfunded gender action plans in marginalized gender equality departments.⁵ It has also been argued that its original ambitious conceptualization has been reduced to “*gender placed everywhere by everyone*”, which often led to a “*responsibility of everyone becoming no one’s*.”⁶

In this context and during the past decade, the concept of ‘transformation’ emerged in part to recognize “*that the technocratic and often reductivist approaches of the past are inadequate to enable us to deal with a complex and inter-connected world*”.⁷ More complex and lasting approaches are clearly called for.

The next sections explore what new approaches and opportunities can help to promote investments in organizational reforms for gender equality, so Ministries of Finance and other relevant institutions can sustainably conduct the policy and regulatory structural reforms that lead to gender equal economies.

Organizational reforms of public institutions to build gender-equal economies.

A good starting point will be to ask, what does a gender-equal economy look like? We can define a gender equal economy as a set of well-designed economic structures, policies, regulations, and institutions that place gender equality and human and environmental well-being at the center of economies, instead of markets or growth. For example, we can draw on the work of the UK Women’s Budget Group, who explains: “*we see the economy as encompassing everything that human beings need to survive and flourish. This includes unpaid care work as well as labor market activities. At the heart of a new economic system would be the principle that the economy works for people, instead of vice versa. This means that the focus of the economy, and the measure of its success, should be wellbeing, rather than simply measuring GDP*.”⁸ There are examples of governments that have prioritized reforms for gender equality in economic recovery such as Canada, Barbados or Hawaii,⁹ while other conceptual approaches with similar elements are being developed, such as the wellbeing economy framework (advanced by Iceland, New Zealand and Scotland)

⁴ Gender mainstreaming critiques: signposts or dead ends? Milward, Mukhopadhyay and Wong (2015).

⁵ Dagnew Kelkay, A. (2021) *Gender mainstreaming. Challenges and opportunities in government agencies in selected government offices in Fogera District, Ethiopia*. Eveline, J. (2010) *Gender mainstreaming: The answer to the gender pay gap?* In: Mainstreaming politics: Gendering practices and feminist theory. Available at:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.20851/j.ctt1t30564.15>. Tiessen, R. (2007) *Everywhere, nowhere: Gender mainstreaming in development agencies*. Mehra, R.; Rao Gupta, G. (2006) *Gender mainstreaming: Making it happen*. International Research Center on Women. Available at: <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Gender-Mainstreaming-Making-It-Happen.pdf>

⁶ See for instance: African Development Bank. Operations Evaluations Department (2011) *Mainstreaming gender equality. Emerging evaluation lessons*. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/derec/afdb/50313658.pdf>

⁷ Charting a transformative Path to Gender Equality, OECD March 2021. Background document.

⁸ WBG (2019) *Reshaping the economy to work for all: New Commission on a Gender Equal Economy*. Available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/blog/reshaping-the-economy-to-work-for-all-new-commission-on-a-gender-equal-economy/>

⁹ See for instance: <https://oig.cepal.org/en/documents/towards-construction-comprehensive-care-systems-latin-america-and-caribbean-elements-their> as well as the examples of Hawaii and Canada at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/4.13.20-Final-Cover-D2-Feminist-Economic-Recovery-D1.pdf> and <https://www.feministrecovery.ca/>

and zero growth.¹⁰ UN agencies too, including UNDP and UN Women, have embraced similar concepts and actively work to advance this type of inclusive and wellbeing economy.¹¹

However, **gender equal economies must be built on solid foundations and cannot be achieved through cosmetic adjustments.** They involve changes in National Accounting Systems and building fiscal policies that work for gender equality, including through the expansion of gender responsive budgeting, impact evaluations, and expanding existing emerging work to reform tax policies and tax systems. Early evidence suggests that such reforms can reduce the gender poverty gap while also facilitating behavioral gender social norms change.¹²

In order to make these changes, Member States need that the ecosystem of public institutions rise to the challenge. The Ministries of Finance and adjacent institutions are at the center of these reforms. They play a pivotal role from the drafting of policies, programs, laws, and regulations to the consolidation of annual budgets, and their implementation. Other key ministries part of this ecosystem include Ministries of Social Protection and Labor, in their capacities to contribute to women's economic security and conduct labor market reforms; Ministries of Economy and Trade, which can advance women's economic empowerment and eliminate inequalities in markets and regulations, Ministries of Technology with a key role to eliminate the gender digital divide,¹³ as well as other bodies like parliaments, specialized agencies, and local governments.

Change in public institutions can be particularly challenging. They are often large organizations with complex hierarchies and systems in place. Bureaucracies have clear – and sometimes rigid- rules and regulations to facilitate the implementation of objectives established by policy makers. In different parts of the world, they have different histories and backgrounds. Depending on their history and influences from different schools of thought, administrations can be on a spectrum of being inflexible or more experimental, more legalistic, and top-down or more grounded and pragmatic¹⁴, and with varying emphasis on tradition, hierarchy and expertise¹⁵. Many bureaucracies across the world continue to grapple with colonial legacies. Some must additionally contend with contexts of ongoing insecurity and instability. These contexts and histories will always have to be considered when attempting any institutional reform.

Regardless the type of organization, research suggests that some of the common challenges faced by bureaucracies to achieve durable change are:¹⁶

- Overspecialization of roles, which limits staff awareness of the wider objectives.
- Rigid rules that create a no-change organizational culture.
- Lack of incentives for staff to achieve desired outcomes, with limited or symbolic participation of staff in decision-making.
- High turnover in leadership of government.

¹⁰ See for instance: Hawkins, J. (2014) *The four approaches to measuring wellbeing*. In: Measuring and promoting wellbeing. How important is economic growth? Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wp80q.11>

¹¹ See: <https://hdr.undp.org/> as well as <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice-en.pdf> and <https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/events-details/un54sc-27022023-A-statistical-measures-beyond-gdp>

¹² While this area of work is not as well-developed as for example gender-responsive budgeting, research and field work are being currently being done by UNDP, the World Bank, the IMF, OECD, ICTD or ATAF, among others.

¹³ UN (2016) *Leave no one behind. A call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment*. Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. Available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WBG-Report-v8-ES-1.pdf>

¹⁴ Pratt, D. (2006) *New public management, globalization, and public administration reform*. In: Fairness, globalization, and public institutions. East Asia and Beyond. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv3zp081.14>

¹⁵ Lunenburg, F. (2013) *Organizational Structure and Design*. Journal of educational leadership and policy studies. Volume 1, Issue 1. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1226963.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid

- Rigid processes and communication protocols that disincentivize collaboration among departments.
- Middle management that serves as gatekeepers.

Ministries of Finance (MoFs) as a key driving force behind building gender-equal economies.

Among all public institutions that shape national economies, MoFs are key actors in critical debates, including on the financing of the sustainable finance goals, or the extent to which a welfare state can be built. As managers of the national treasury, and together with Central Banks, MoFs have access to privileged information and decision-making that impact the rest of the government. Networks of Ministries of Finance are also influential globally in shaping the financial architecture, and the future of development. To add, MoFs regulatory role does not only include overseeing state-owned companies and regulating financial markets, but also setting the financial framework for other ministries' spending. They play a critical coordination role as potential drivers of wider institutional progress towards gender equality as they can impact in the ecosystem of public institutions.

This power is not always leveraged. A challenge within Ministries of Finance to drive needed changes for gender equality is often a reluctance to abandon economic orthodoxy that primarily focusses on economic growth and markets which perpetuate structural discrimination. Despite political commitments in areas that go beyond economic growth, such as climate or inequality, MOFs are often found not to engage substantially on these topics.¹⁷ This is sometimes related to the low capacity of some MoFs to analyze and understand sectoral budgets, limiting their bandwidth to engage in thematic discussions and in ensuring for instance the implementation of gender responsive budgeting.¹⁸

MoFs are also least likely to have gender equality specialists available in house, compared to other Ministries, and tend to have the lowest presence of women overall. For MoFs, the average share of public administration employees that are women is 41 percent (an increase from 31 percent in 2011) which however hides great disparities: with the lowest at 4 percent and highest at 73 percent.¹⁹ Women are particularly underrepresented at senior levels, with only 2 percent of cabinet ministers being women (compared to other Ministries like Social Affairs with an average of 8 percent)²⁰.

In sum, MoFs offer have great potential to help building gender equal economies. While they do not always leverage this capacity and power, systemic institutional reforms can help MoFs to be equipped and ready to lead this change that will benefit the entire society.

A “systems change” vision towards organizational reforms

As discussed, to achieve durable change in the economy it is not only necessary to conduct policy and legislative reforms, but also systemic organizational reforms that equip institutions to maintain change and drive progress towards desired outcomes. Organizational reforms of MoFs and related institutions are essential for building gender equal economies.

UNDP's experience with MoFs builds on its extensive work on public finance with its [Sustainable Finance Hub](#)²¹, supporting governments:

¹⁷ Orozco, D; Jaramillo, D. (2021) *The centrality of Ministers of Finance in a changing climate: finance functions of a government*. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep40212>

¹⁸ As it is documented the following book that conducts a comparative analysis of Germany, UK, Mexico, Chile, South Africa, Uganda, Nepal and Sierra Leone: Krause, P. et al. (2016) *The capabilities of finance ministries*.

¹⁹ UNDP and Pittsburgh University (2021) *Global report on gender equality in public administrations*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-report-gender-equality-public-administration>

²⁰ *Gender Parity in the Civil Service (Gen-PaCS) Dataset* is the key part of GEPA initiative. It is the database UNDP has funded over last 5/6 yrs for tracking publicly available gender-disaggregated data on employment in public administration (across 158 countries and territories from 1951-2020.) See here the data set: <https://www.girl.pitt.edu/gen-pacs-data>

²¹ See: <https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sustainable-finance-service-offers>

- Raising domestic revenues aligned with the achievement of the SDGs: such as with the initiative on [Integrated National Financing Frameworks](#) present in more than 80 countries.
- Aligning fiscal planning and expenditure management to SDGs: through the [Tax4SDGs](#) initiative, [SDG budgeting](#), or [Pro-PALOP EU Funded program](#) on public financial management and gender-responsive budgeting, and through EQUANOMICS: Fiscal policies work for gender equality.
- Raising public finances like the help of SDG aligned bond issuances, the [SDG Impact Standards](#), and the provision of sovereign risk financing instruments to protect public assets and enable investments.

UNDP also has decades of experience on governance and public administration reform, and over more than 10 years promoting organizational change with its Gender Equality Seal, implemented in its own country offices,²² the private sector, and in public institutions.

The [Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions](#)²³ is currently being implemented in more than 100 Institutions in more than 30 countries. The Gender Equality Seal promotes systemic organizational changes in public institutions using internationally recognized standards to address and incorporate – in all aspects of their work – gender equality.

Within this initiative, a specialized program has been opened for Ministries of Finance and Tax Authorities in Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, and Rwanda, as part of UNDP’s flagship *EQUANOMICS: Fiscal policies work for gender equality*.

Based on lessons on what works and does not work to achieve durable change, the following are **five proposed areas of performance that are needed to underpin and sustain any gender equality policy reform for MoFs**. While none of the identified areas offer quick fixes, UNDP, through the Gender Equality Seal, connects all the areas and offers a collaborative process that takes on average around 2 years to complete. The Seal accompanies MoFs “hand on hand” and includes concrete tools and guidance to help institutions transition in a way that is systemic and sustainable and with full ownership of the institution’s employees and leadership.

1. Planning and management for gender equality.

To achieve impact, a clear goal and objectives need to be defined. This does not only include the development of political objectives but also the meaningful development of policies and action plans that make them operational. Elements that institutions need to have in place include access to sex-disaggregated data, mechanisms for conducting gender analyses in the development and administration of public policies, specific gender equality objectives and associated indicators, as well as an appropriate budget allocation and gender-responsive public procurement. In the case of MoFs, this involves the development of gender-responsive budgeting, the incorporation of gender analysis in the assessments of taxes and regulations, and the implementation of tax reforms and reforms of regulations.

These gender equality objectives also need to be socialized among staff and tied to key performance indicators and other accountability mechanisms. Having clear common goals, and a clear definition of how each department and person will contribute to them will avoid having aimless tick-the-box “*gender everywhere*” interventions. This also implies coordinating with other relevant actors through the budgeting cycle (preparation, legislative consideration, execution, and audit & evaluation).²⁴

²² Currently being implemented in more than 80 country offices, and periodically renewed.

²³ The Gender Equality Seal includes a set of highly demanding standards and benchmarks for public organizations in the 5 interconnected areas of performance. The process for a public institution to achieve a bronze, silver or gold seal award is of an average of two years of coordinated work. Once obtained, the award needs to be renewed to ensure the continuity of good performance. For more information, see: <https://www.gendersealpublicinstitutions.org/>

²⁴ Rubin, M; Bartle, J. (2025)

2. Gender equality architecture and capacities.

The establishment of gender equality units or teams can be helpful to ensure that MoFs are equipped to advance gender equality.²⁵ However, to challenge existing power structures and ensure that gender equality influences the development of budgets and policies, these units need to meet some requisites, most importantly: being directly linked to management and having direct access to decision making. To avoid the isolation of such units and teams, the creation of cross-department multidisciplinary gender focal teams is advised, adapted to the realities and characteristics of each MoF.

At the same time, it is essential to develop capacities of all personnel, so they are ready to identify when an opportunity to advance gender equality is before them, including on gender-responsive budgeting and tagging, reforms of tax systems, reforms of regulations or changes in the public financial management mechanisms among others.²⁶ The development of capacities will also help to build a sense of shared objectives and identify potential resistance and changes needed in organizational culture. Gender-responsive internal communications also play a critical role in helping to build this internal culture.

Staff trust in senior leadership is widely documented to be correlated with organizational performance.²⁷ Considering the tendency inside MoFs to retain senior staff over the long-term, and given their influence, working with senior management becomes even more important in MoFs, as well as aligned agencies, such as Tax Authorities, to achieve a wider impact within and beyond these institutions. For example, a study in Ukraine shows that staff training to implement change was only successful when managers were willing to achieve such reforms and if managers believed that the training was necessary to achieve them.²⁸ In a generally male-dominated environment such is finance, working with men senior officials can be key to affect change and fight skepticism about women's leadership skills and the value of change towards gender equality.²⁹

3. Work environment to enable gender equality.

Organizational culture consists of a set of organizational norms and values against which staff interpret results, experience, performance, learning or reforms.³⁰ There are many factors that influence organizational culture, and they need to be included as part of the design of an intervention. Past experiences, collective memories and daily routines directly influence the readiness of staff to learn and to adapt new practices and approaches.³¹ In the case of MoFs, it is of particular relevance to also understand its level of independence from the Prime Minister, what the most influential economic approaches are, and how aligned they are to international goals and objectives, such as the implementation of International Financing Frameworks to fund the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

When designing any intervention that targets organizational culture change, potential reform fatigue or gender equality fatigue³² need to be factored in and addressed if existent.³³ Aiming to change perceptions around gender equality in the economy has an additional layer of complication, as interventions will also

²⁵ UN Women (2020)

²⁶ Dagnew Kelkay, A. (2021)

²⁷ Tech, V. (2010) *Leadership and organizational culture: Sustaining dialogue between practitioners and scholars*. Public administration review. Vol. 70, No. 6. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40927102>

²⁸ Witesman, E; Wise, C. (2012) *The reformer's spirit: How public administrators fuel training in the skills of good governance*. Public Administration Review, vol. 72, No. 5. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41687986>

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Mahler, J. (1997) *Influences of organizational culture on learning in public agencies*. Journal of public administration research and theory. Vol 7, no. 4. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1181658>

³¹ Levitt, B. and March, J. (1988) *Organizational learning*. Annual review of sociology, 14. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083321>

³² Kelan, E. (2020) *Why aren't we making more progress towards gender equality?* Harvard Business review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2020/12/why-arent-we-making-more-progress-towards-gender-equity>

³³ Guy Peters, B. (2001) *The future of governing*. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence. Available at: <https://kansaspress.ku.edu/9780700611300/>

need to address existing social biases against women, assumptions about the economy tied only to markets and growth, and current mainstream economic discourses that perpetuate gender inequalities.

To facilitate transformation, potential change makers can be identified and engaged at different levels of the organization. They can be considered changemakers if they offer: 1) True willingness to lead the change, 2) Awareness and knowledge on gender equality, and 3) Sufficient authority to disrupt and challenge organizational routines and practices.³⁴

HR policies are a critical element of an enabling work environment for institutional transformation. Research shows that institutionalized discrimination often occurs within HR policies and practices, as they reflect organizational climate and culture, as well as managerial biases.³⁵ Besides individual will or management engagement, rules and procedures need to be in place for institutionalization of gender equality work.³⁶

Gender-responsive institutions are those that treat staff with fairness regarding remuneration, work benefits and their possibilities to progress within the organization. In fact, evidence suggests that public servants are more ready to support institutional reforms when they can perform job tasks and activities that motivate them.³⁷ Listening to staff about their concerns and preferences and addressing them can help facilitate the incorporation of gender equality.

Work-life balance should be actively promoted, including fostering co-responsibility between men and women for unpaid domestic and care work. The workplace must have zero tolerance for sexual and other forms of harassment, ensured through adequate policies and protocols and systematic awareness-raising. Measures that advance gender parity (that is, 40% minimum participation of women or men) need to be in place. While on average women are 41% of staff at MoFs, their participation lowers as rank increases. Thus, MoFs need to pursue this parity particularly at higher levels.³⁸ Reforms that show win-win scenarios for women and men instead of a zero-sum game are proven to be the most successful.³⁹

Observing existing gender parity at different levels of responsibility is a good thermometer of gender equality, as they reflect underlying biases, gender social norms and structural inequalities. If we look an example from the private sector, it is documented that 40% of women leave tech companies in the USA after 10 years compared to 17% of men, partly because of workplace conditions or undermining behavior from managers.⁴⁰

4. Participation, partnerships, and accountability.

³⁴ Dahmen-Adkins, J; Peterson, H. (2021) *Micro-change agents for gender equality: Transforming European research performing organizations*. *Frontier sociology*, vol. 6. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2021.741886/full>

³⁵ Starnski, C; Son Hing, L. (2015) *Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organizational structures, processes, practices and decision makers' sexism*. *Frontiers Psychology*, Vol. 6. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400/full>

³⁶ See for instance: Wynn, A. (2019) *Individual change won't create gender equality in organizations*. The gender policy report. University of Minnesota. Available at: <https://genderpolicyreport.umn.edu/individual-change-wont-create-gender-equality-in-organizations/>

³⁷ Gains, F; John, P. (2010) *What bureaucrats like doing? Bureaucratic preferences in response to institutional reform*. *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 70, no. 3. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40606403>

³⁸ UNDP and Pittsburgh University (2021) *Global report on gender equality in public administrations*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-report-gender-equality-public-administration>

³⁹ Benschop, Y; Brinck, M. (2018) *The Holy Grail of organizational change: Toward gender equality at work*. In: *Gender reckonings*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332118406_The_Holy_Grail_of_Organizational_Change_Toward_Gender_Equality_at_Work

⁴⁰ Criado-Perez, C. (2019) *Invisible women: Exploring data bias in a world designed for men*. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Invisible-Women-Data-World-Designed/dp/1419729071>

As briefly referred to earlier, MoFs coordinate with other Ministries more than any other public institution given its role to consolidate and monitor the national budget. With adequate capacities, this coordination can be more substantive to pursue common goals towards gender equality. A great way to increase accountability and meaningfully advance gender equality would be for MoFs to establish strong dialogues and other accountability systems with women's and feminist groups and movements. Mandatory consultative processes, mandatory sectoral cross-ministerial collaboration, and key performance indicators can institutionalize such processes.

5. Results and impact of public policies.

Based on the country and institutional contexts, MoFs must be able to show evidence of their positive contributions to gender equality in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. This can be done through external assessments, institutional contribution to human rights and gender equality international reports such as CEDAW, EPA, SDGs or others. MoFs can also commission impact evaluations of gender-responsive budgeting, gender-responsive fiscal incidence, and assessments of impacts on gender equality of current taxes. UNDP has examples and tools available to support these.

To achieve the desired impact, it is important to not just evaluate the functioning of the formal architecture and procedures, but also the informal networks. These informal networks, also known as grapevines, create informal power structures that influence the organization's outcomes. Engaging men from leadership is critical to engage these male informal networks.⁴¹

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has argued that comprehensive organizational reforms, especially of Ministries of Finance and adjacent Ministries, are an essential step to underpin policy and regulatory structural reforms that can lead to building gender equal economies. Gender mainstreaming - a globally widespread strategy to advance towards gender equality - has lost much of its original aim to change power structures, calling for new strategies that meet the demand of the current moment with complexity and sustained impact.

In such a context, this paper argued that, often, interventions that aim to help build gender equal economies focus solely on policy reform, without sufficient emphasis on organizational culture, structures, processes, or capacities to ensure that organizations are equipped and ready to plan or deliver on the desired goals. When the institution is factored in, often interventions are partial or insufficient, focused on capacity development, but missing other important aspects of institutional change. When there is no integrated intervention, progress is more likely to be lost and the implementation of policies and strategies may well fall short.

Ministries of Finance are a central piece to building gender-equal economies. Based on UNDP's years of experience with the UNDP Gender Equality Seal for public institutions, the paper proposes a systemic organizational-change intervention that targets five interconnected key areas of performance and is adapted to the characteristics and needs of Ministries of Finance. UNDP continues to stand ready to support Ministries and other public institutions with concrete processes and tools that put the five areas into action through the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions.

⁴¹ Benschop, Y; Brinck, M. (2018) *The Holy Grail of organizational change: Toward gender equality at work*. In: Gender reckonings.

Resources

- Abrahamsson, L. (2014) *Gender and the modern organization, ten years after*. Nordic journal of working life studies. Vol. 4, no. 4. Available at: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:980518/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
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