

## Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment: What have we achieved in Addis Ababa?

Lakshmi Puri and Zohra Khan, UN Women

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD), and its outcome, the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) (AAAA), is the first in a series of ground-breaking agreements to set and resource a transformative, universal agenda for sustainable development and international development cooperation to 2030. Together with the just agreed package of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) it aspires to deliver, as never before, for poverty eradication and prosperity, the realization of human rights for all and sustainability of the planet.

The AAAA is imbued with a strong commitment to making gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) a reality. It does so in the course of mapping out the financial policy dimensions of international and national development for the next fifteen years that would support the realization of sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda, which recognizes the AAAA as an "integral part of the Agenda 2030" and that the AAAA "supports, complements and helps contextualize the Agenda's means of implementation targets."

Many development experts and civil society organizations have assessed the AAAA as falling short of the level and depth of commitment and ambition required on key aspects of the global framework for financing sustainable development to 2030, particularly in regard to new and additional sources of financing, official development assistance (ODA) and international public finance and also in terms of the transformation and reform of the international financial and economic architecture. There is also a critiquing of 'multi-stakeholderism' - of too much being left to multilateral financial institutions and the private sector to resource and not enough emphasis on the State's role as duty bearer. Women's organizations contend that the AAAA fails to address systemic issues and create the conditions to respect, protect and fulfill women's human rights.

However, despite this, from the perspective of setting a "global framework for financing sustainable development to 2030", the AAAA is a crucial benchmarking global compact that unequivocally prioritizes GEWE and women's human rights both for its intrinsic value and for its vital role in sustainable development. The AAAA includes several references to GEWE with some dedicated paragraphs, especially paragraph 6, which serve as lynchpins for actioning gender equality commitments in all areas. It further recognizes that achieving GEWE and the realization of women's human rights are essential for inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development and therefore the importance prioritizing investment in this area. It constitutes overarching commitments for GEWE, including:

- **Gender mainstreaming**, through targeted actions and investments and in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies. This ensures crucial inter-linkages and cohesiveness in the policies and practices developed to implement and advance GEWE across different development sectors but also that both gender mainstreaming and targeted actions and investments are reflected in all financial policies.

- **Commitment to promote GEWE**, through sound policies, enforceable legislation and transformative actions at all levels i.e. global, regional, national and local. This interconnection in relation to financing and reference to transformative actions is a critical value added for normative work at these levels
- **Recommitment to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy**, which is a vital achievement in this outcome document as the financial sector has been particularly gender unbalanced and has at time been a vehicle of perpetuating gender based discrimination. In addition, within governments, finance ministries have traditionally under prioritized investment in GEWE. It also constitutes a strong endorsement to finance the women's economic empowerment agenda which, despite political support, remains an under-funded area.
- **Commitment to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination**, which implies a commitment to prioritize the financing and resourcing of efforts to prevent VAW, and provide multi-sectoral services to victims and survivors of violence and to dedicate resources for the implementation of related legislation

The AAAA speaks to the need for creating an equitable global economic system that leaves no country and person behind and recognizes that women, constituting half the world's population, are still left out of participation and leadership in the economy. Throughout the FfD process, UN-Women has advocated to build and promote **Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**. This concept is based on the premise that the progress on achieving GEWE has been held back by chronic and significant underinvestment in programmes to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and foster greater gender equality. So a transformative approach to financing GEWE commitments is imperative, especially in the context of commitments to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, as well as hopefully an engendered Climate Change Treaty, expected to be adopted in December 2015. Equally a transformative financing approach is crucial to maintain the progress and gains made so far toward achieving GEWE, and to make those gains irreversible. The acceleration and urgency that these commitments have now been framed against, with the 2030 deadline, also calls for unprecedented resourcing efforts.

Transformative financing therefore implies significantly increased, prioritized and sustained investment in GEWE commitments in scale, scope and quality, from all sources at all levels, and both gender mainstreamed and targeted in key sectors. At the normative level, investment is required to craft and implement laws, policies, measures and programs that create the enabling environment, infrastructure and institutions while also setting the foundation for the transformation of social norms for gender equality.

The specific areas requiring Transformative Financing are Sustainable Development Goal 5 and other gender sensitive SDG targets, in conjunction with the existing GEWE commitments (the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or CEDAW) and priority areas such as economic empowerment (equal pay for work of equal value, unpaid care work), peace and security and

humanitarian action, ending violence against women and other harmful practices, equal leadership and participation in decision-making and governance and national planning and budgeting processes. Scaled up investment will be crucial in these areas as well as in national data and accountability mechanisms, such as statistical bureaus, and the monitoring of targeted actions to track progress on commitments towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This can only be achieved by harnessing all sources of finance - domestic public finance, international finance including ODA, trade, domestic and international private finance and innovative sources of financing, as well as financing equal access to science and technology, all essential to closing the gender financing gap, and all within the context of national, subnational and local needs and actions.

The concept of Transformative Financing also supports commitments contained in the [Political Declaration of CSW 59](#) where Member States pledged to “significantly increase investment to close the gender gap including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources, including domestic resource mobilization and allocation of increased priority to gender equality and the empowerment of women in official development assistance.” This is further reinforced by the clear commitment in 2030 Agenda which calls for a “significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels.”

The call for Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, gathered strong support climaxing in Addis Ababa during the launch of the [“Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”](#) which calls on all actors to implement transformative policy and financing actions to accelerate implementation of existing commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and to meet new commitments in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The Action Plan is framed around five key areas of commitments including domestic policy actions and resources; international policy actions and resources; creating an enabling environment for women’s economic empowerment; deepening multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender equality at national, regional and international levels and; supporting data, monitoring and follow. With a focus on progressive taxation; costing and resourcing gender action plans; investing in social infrastructure and basic services; promoting and enacting legal reforms to support women’s rights and access to economic opportunity; resourcing women’s organizations and building national statistical capacity, the Action Plan is key to fully realizing the vision set out in the AAAA that states “we will ensure gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment”.

Member States have committed to fully engage nationally, regionally and internationally to follow-up on the FfD outcomes and all the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. UN Women will support Member State efforts to ensure that this ambitious vision is buttressed with transformative financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

**Lakshmi Puri is the Assistant-Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women.**

**Zohra Khan is Governance and National Planning Policy Advisor, UN Women.**