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**Civil Society Advisory Group
for UN Women in Tajikistan**

**Translated from Russian by A. George**

**Background**

One of the main roles and functions of UN Women is to establish and maintain effective partnerships with civil society. To this end, UN Women in Tajikistan intends to establish a Civil Society Advisory Group, which will provide strategic advice on the various programme areas of UN Women in Tajikistan, in accordance with its mandate and the UN Women Global Strategic Plan 2011-2013, approved by the UN Women Executive Board in June 2011.The Civil Society Advisory Group must ensure that the planning and implementation of UN Women programmes are associated with the real needs and concerns of women and girls in Tajikistan.

On the one hand, the creation of a Civil Society Advisory Group is necessary, based on the UN Women Global Strategic Plan, which provides in paragraph 57, outcome 1.2 that: "An effective strategic partnership between UN Women and civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations and coalitions, will remain a key and effective partnership. UN Women will make provisions for more systemic consultations with civil society at all levels, including establishing a Civil Society Advisory Group at the global level and, if necessary, at the national and regional levels. In collaboration with United Nations partners, UN Women will develop joint initiatives, undertake advocacy work with women's organizations and civil society partners, including women from legal networks, religious and traditional leaders, men and boys, youth groups, and non-governmental organizations."

On the other hand, the idea of ​​formalizing a dialogue between civil society and UN Women was put forward at an enlarged meeting of the Coalition of NGOs "From *de jure* Equality - to *de facto* Equality," held in Dushanbe on 24 February 2011.

In recent years, UN Women (ex UNIFEM) worked closely with the NGO Coalition “From *de jure* Equality – to *de facto* Equality" and other civil society organizations. With the support of UN Women, social monitoring and evaluation was conducted on the implementation of the government programme, entitled "Basic Trends in State Policies to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in Tajikistan 2001-2010," a draft National Action Plan for the Implementation of a Gender Policy in Tajikistan was prepared, and much more.

**The Role and Place of the Advisory Group**

The Civil Society Advisory Group[[1]](#footnote-1) for UN Women in Tajikistan was created as a consultative and advisory forum on policy issues and for the participation of civil society in planning and implementation of programmes in Tajikistan. It is a formal mechanism for dialogue between civil society and UN Women, and serves as a strategic advisory group to UN Women on key policy issues and programmes.

The above-mentioned body will provide assistance in the following spheres:

1. Consultations on matters of general policy relating to UN Women’s mandate, objectives and programmes.
2. Providing services as a resource base for UN Women staff: this will involve supplying information, establishing contacts and networks, as well as developing proposals to promote gender equality and women's rights.

The Advisory Group will seek to strengthen and support the capacity of UN Women in understanding and analyzing the role and contribution of civil society in the development of the country, taking into account principles and standards pertaining to human rights and gender equality. The group will serve as a key tool for strengthening relations between NGOs, and for tailoring these relations to the needs and priorities of gender equality and women's rights.

The overall objective of the Advisory Group is also to promote interrelated activities:

* Assisting UN Women in elaborating strategic, political and fundamental principles of leadership in the management of strategic and programmatic planning to improve the gender sensitivity of development programmes and their relevance to the needs and priorities of women in the country;
* Assisting the UN Women Advisory Group in engaging in dialogue with the government, its participation and influence in decision-making, and its empowerment for championing the interests, needs and demands of women and men.

The group will undertake the following functions:

* Provide strategic direction to the work of UN Women at the country level;
* Contribute to and monitor the development of the UN Women country strategy, the progress made in its implementation, by monitoring and evaluation to ensure the inclusive participation of civil society on the basis of advisory functions, policy dialogue, research, analysis and programming;
* Strengthen the partnership and cooperation with civil society at the country level;
* Support and monitor the policy, information and advisory efforts of partners;
* Together with UN Women, have a dialogue with development partners on priority issues that should be on the national socio-economic and political development agenda.

It is anticipated that the group will be associated with UN initiatives and that it will contribute to these initiatives, including:

* A gender-sensitive review based on participating in evaluating progress towards the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and fulfilling the country’s commitments in key human rights treaties (CEDAW, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, etc.);
* A review and monitoring of the implementation of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the relevant joint programmes of UN agencies and other development-related tasks;
* Consultations on UN reform.

**Criteria for Selecting Members of the Advisory Group in Tajikistan:**

* Affiliation with different types of civil society organizations, including such organizations as:
 - Women's NGOs and human rights NGOs

- Civil society organizations representing the most vulnerable groups (people living with HIV, people with disabilities, etc.), various associations and movements;

* Participation in the preparation of alternative reports on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the drafting of national action plans for the implementation of gender policy, and other gender-related documents and instruments;
* Experience of gender expertise in various fields;
* Maintaining a balance between regional representation, representation of both genders and representation of different age groups;
* Preference to be given to representation of gender coalitions and networks, in order to better reach the beneficiaries;
* The number of members should comprise no more than 11 people.

The group will be established for a period of two years. The group itself will select the chairman who will have a one-year mandate.

**The Process of Selecting Members of the Civil Society Advisory Group**

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| No. |  Basic steps |  Timelines |
| 1. | Discussion of the idea of creating an Advisory Group of civil society representatives | Feb 11- Dec 12 |
| 2. | Approval of the conceptual framework and terms of reference of the NGOs and UN Women | Feb - Mar 12 |
| 3. | Consultations with the coalition of NGOs "From *de jure* Equality – to *de facto* Equality" and other civil society organizations to nominate candidates to the Advisory Group | Feb -Mar 12 |
| 4. | Discussion of candidates for membership in the Civil Society Advisory Group (e-mailing, round tables, etc.) | Until 31 Mar 12 |
| 5. | Creation of an Advisory Group at the country level | Until 5 Ap 12 |

**The Role and Place of UN Women**: The UN Women Adviser on Gender and Governance and the UN country team will give every possible assistance and support in the formation and activities of the Civil Society Advisory Group. This assistance and support includes, but is not limited to, logistical support to the Advisory Group, in particular, help in conducting meetings, training and provision of information materials, policy papers, policy briefs, etc. in order to develop the vision and position of the Advisory Group.

Expected Results from the Advisory Group’s Activities

* Support to UN Women in the elaboration of an effective strategy to ensure the coordination of UN Women and civil society activities, based on advisory functions, policy dialogue, research, analysis and programming;
* The development of mechanisms for joint monitoring of the status of women and the promotion of gender equality, on realized and existing thematic programmes of UN Women;
* Creation of a space and a mechanism for dialogue and the participation of civil society with UN Women;
* The continued participation of civil society in preparing the UN Women country strategy and the general development policy;
* The structured and active cooperation of UN Women and civil society in all priority/thematic areas to promote *de facto* equality between women and men;
* Increasing the contribution and participation of civil society in the process of developing strategies, such as the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), UN reform and the MDGs and Country Development Strategy/ Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The frequency of meetings and their venue:

The Advisory Body will hold joint meetings at least twice in a calendar year in the city of Dushanbe. Minutes of meetings will be prepared. In addition, during the year, e-mails will be sent out and e-mail discussions of current issues will take place.

Priority issues for 2012:- Preparation of a new Poverty Reduction Strategy

Work Plan for 2012:
- Meetings ..............................................
- Results ..........................................
- How to communicate (who is sending out information, how to distribute it…)

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1. Informal advisory groups with representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) were established by different bodies and UN agencies as a mechanism to strengthen dialogue and communication with civil society. The UN policy, in collaboration with CSOs, stressed the importance of collaborative relationships with the latter, since the UN believes that civil society organizations are not only key partners in cooperation, but also indispensable advocates and lawyers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)