**Concept Note**

**UNDP**

**and**

**Vice President for Women and Family Affairs IRI**

**Establishment of a National Foundation and Fund**

**for Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) in Iran**

***draft proposal***

An early assessment of the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) has shown various degrees of achievement by countries. The United Nations is organizing a Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, which is expected to usher in a broader, more intensive and transformative Sustainable Development Agenda for the period 2016- 2030. This agenda will *pave the road to dignity* as well as deepen women empowerment by addressing socio-economic inequalities, improve capacities and harness financial resources to accelerate sustainable development, among others.

**Need to Strengthen WEE Mechanisms in Iran**

Many countries have various projects on women’s economic empowerment, equality and sustainable development which are enshrined in their respective constitutions, national development goals, and policy statements. In Iran, as in other countries, the focus on women economic empowerment through inclusive growth and sustainable development has also been highlighted in parts of the country’s national development agenda and various institutions’ plans of action – including the Presidencies Family and Women’s Affairs Department and the newly established Centre of Excellence at Bank Keshavarzi.

For more concerted action, however, WEE initiatives need better national-level coordination, more meaningful capacity building, documented consolidation of lessons learned and appropriate funding mechanisms. The need for an institution that can act as a national foundation and fund holder is now paramount. The Presidency provides one such conduit. Further, Iran can also play a role as originator and founder of an international-level network for knowledge exchange and attraction of larger international funding.

**Objectives**

The development of national mechanism that would create a mass of empowered women through inclusion, access and ownership as well as women entrepreneurship and sustainable development is the objective of this new initiative. UNDP has already taken steps in this regard over the last few years (through CSP; Green Banking project; WEE workshops financed by RBAP; etc). Significant work remains, as follows:

1. To create a national-level platform – at the Presidential level in Iran – that would enhance policies and action in women’s economic empowerment (WEE) – as a national foundation and fund;
2. To ensure *center of excellence* type functions for this entity;
3. To strengthen capacities of WEE service-providing institutions generally – in areas of management, operations, assessment and impact evaluation – throughout the country;
4. To coordinate WEE programmes and projects in the country;
5. To develop and implement knowledge generation processes and reporting mechanisms for WEE;
6. To establish international funding linkages with international development partners for the WEE national funding mechanism;
7. To design multi-media platforms for women entrepreneurs, women empowering enterprises and service-providing institutions;
8. To spearhead the formation of an international-level network of national WEE projects that would provide broader international support to these projects through strengthening management capacities, providing avenues for international knowledge exchange, creating annual international WEE events/prizes/seminars, creating a global funding mechanism, consolidating assessment and conducting impact evaluation.

**The Foundation**

The national level mechanism will function as a foundation. The possible WEE Foundation shall be established possibly as an adjunct to the Office of the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs. A Board of Trustees shall be composed of the Vice-President, two heads of WEE implementing government agencies, two representatives from the private sector, one liaison officer from the office of the President of Iran, and one representative from the major international development partner (UNDP). The Foundation Executive Director shall be as an ex officio officer. The Board may appoint a Board Secretary, Legal Officer and a Compliance and Governance Officer.

The day-to-day management of the WEE Foundation shall be handled by an Executive Director, to be assisted by a Secretariat. The Foundation may appoint Advisers as necessary. The Foundation may create offices or WEE centers as are necessary in order to realize its objectives. Such offices or WEE centers may include those that focus on funding, knowledge management and WEE project development and implementation, among others.

The WEE Foundation in Iran may also spearhead the establishment of an international network of various national WEE programmes or projects (or similar Foundations, and associations, depending on the legal structure prevailing in other countries). The national convenors may be founding members. Such a network can identify its major supporters (UNDP; EU; etc) in the global funding mechanism and work with them. This will be on SSC guidelines and approaches. The first chief executive of such a network can be from Iran, being the prime founding member.

**Next Steps and Activities**

1. Approve the WEE Foundation concept, and develop a project document between UNDP and VP Women and Family Affairs.
2. Discuss funding and technical support by UNDP plus others – through a participatory and technical process.
3. Sign project document.
4. Implement center of excellence and Foundaiton.
5. Identify other countries and national convenors: gradually invite them, through SSC, to follow designing their respective WEE network and projects,.
6. Design and develop the framework for of an international WEE network.
7. Organise an international event/convention, together with an international women’s day, showcasing women products, technical fairs, etc.
8. …….