



In moving from agreements to action, the work of transforming institutions to become accountable to gender equality commitments is central to achieving the internationally agreed goals and targets, including the MDGs and the vision set out in the Millennium Declaration. While formal rules may specify non-discrimination, institutions often operate according to unwritten values and rules that continue to marginalize the persons, interests, needs and concerns of certain groups, such as the poor, women, the displaced. Until the institutions that influence women's ability to secure their rights – institutions of justice, of governance, of economic policy-setting, of humanitarian relief, of peace-building and the multi-lateral system itself – align their policies and practices with agreed commitments, the advances in the normative environment will fail to be implemented.

Bold new thinking on transformation in institutions, including in conflict and post-conflict settings, to deliver on gender equality is needed. This new thinking must form the basis for new terms of engagement between the key stakeholders in this process: women and men in poor and displaced communities, civil society organizations, local and national governance institutions, policy makers, donors and others. It must also infuse the institutional architecture to support action on gender equality – national machineries for the advancement of women, women's civil society networks and organizations, gender equality networks and units, and equal opportunity offices – to ensure that they have the recognition, resources and position to be able to take part as well as provide technical support and influence stronger action going forward.

This panel will explore how institutions are responding – or failing to respond – to forward agreed commitments in the context of the MDGs and the upcoming Millennium Summit +5. It will present views on the 'deep structures' of institutions that perpetuate gender discrimination and provide examples of how, based on emerging literature and successful examples on the ground, changes are beginning to emerge.<sup>2</sup> The panel will describe how multi-stakeholder partnerships, broad-based participation, and support for gender equality goals within the broader public can contribute to sustained transformation toward gender equality, identifying promising practices as well as institutional blockages. The panel will also examine how we can make sure these institutions include and work with marginalized and excluded groups. Specific examples from institutions responsible for peace and security, access to justice, economic policy-making, and multi-lateral development cooperation will form the basis of the discussion.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Deep structures' refers to the informal values, cultu