

**2008 ECOSOC Substantive Session
Coordination Segment**

Panel Discussion on “*Rural Development and the challenge of social welfare: a country level perspective*”

**8 July 2008, 10:00 am- 12:00 pm
UN Headquarters, New York**

Chair: H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima, Vice President of ECOSOC

Panelists: Mr. Bunmi Makinwa, Director of the Africa Division of the UNFPA
Mr. Allan Jury, Director of the Division of External Relations of WFP

Key Points:

- Economic development does not automatically lead to social development. Translating economic development into social development requires conscious efforts. Macro-economic considerations must be reconciled with pressing social issues. Mozambique has worked towards achieving social welfare by focusing development efforts on rural areas.
- Agricultural and rural sectors have long suffered from underinvestment and declining support from development partners. There is an urgent need to promote infrastructural development and investment in order to augment agricultural productivity.
- Increasing agricultural productivity requires a comprehensive package of activities, encompassing from health to education, which determine the capacity of agriculture to reduce poverty and hunger.
- Major challenge before reform and development in agriculture, particularly in developing countries, is to ensure that investments in agriculture increase the economic and social prospects of the poor.
- Women are central to the process of development. Deliberate efforts by governments and civil society to empower women are required. In this regard, governments must pursue initiatives to improve the socio-economic standing of women. On the other hand, the empowerment of women requires their own active involvement.
- International collaboration, along with the active efforts of the UN framework, is necessary to enhance coherence and coordination, as well as to assist governments in implementing nationally owned development strategies.

H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima, Vice President of ECOSOC, emphasized the need for social and economic development to proceed in tandem. He stated that although the world is witnessing a renewed attention to agriculture and rural development as a trigger for economic growth, poverty reduction and development, agricultural and rural sectors have suffered from underinvestment and declining support from development partners. Mr. Lima therefore reiterated the importance of promoting both infrastructural development and investment in order to augment agricultural productivity. He stated, however, that agricultural concerns are not limited to agricultural productivity levels. They are also about social and environmental factors, both of which determine the capacity of agriculture to reduce poverty and hunger. Mr. Lima pointed out that the reform and development of the agricultural sector in developing countries faces major challenges in this regard. One of the major challenges is to ensure that investments in agriculture increase the economic and social prospects of the poor. The Vice-President explained that the aim of the panel discussion was to present a country-level perspective on the link

between social development and agriculture, focusing on agriculture. He believed this would enable nations to draw lessons from specific experiences and utilize them in their respective country's national development strategies.

Mr. Bunmi Makinwa, Director of the Africa Division of UNFPA, highlighted the social progress made in Mozambique, in order to illustrate the link between the social, economic and agricultural dimensions of development. Mozambique experienced high rates of economic growth in recent years, yet this trend alone cannot serve as an indicator for social development. Mr. Makinwa elaborated on the efforts made by the UN system, and UNFPA in particular, to help the translation of economic growth into social development in the areas where it is most needed. Considering that 65 per cent of Mozambique's population lives in rural areas, agricultural development and the empowerment of women bear great potential for the eradication of poverty and hunger in Mozambique. Mozambique is a pilot country of the "One UN" initiative. Through greater coherence and coordination under this initiative, UN agencies in the country have been particularly successful in assisting the government in implementing a nationally owned development strategy.

UNFPA contributes to these efforts by concentrating on three core areas. First, UNFPA supports the Government's programme for youth and adolescents, which focuses on providing sexual and reproductive health services, ensuring the creation of medical infrastructure and improving access to drugs and preventive measures. Mr. Makinwa claimed this programme was one of the best in Africa. Second, UNFPA also focuses on the empowerment of women in collaboration with the Government of Mozambique. Third, UNFPA is involved in census surveys in Mozambique. Since population related data provides a basis that informs both economic and social development, UNFPA aims at ensuring the accuracy of population related figures. Recently, UNFPA has also become active in the humanitarian area.

Mr. Makinwa concluded by underscoring the need to address the question of how economic development can be translated into social development, or how fancy offices and roads in the cities can be translated into better health, nutrition and education standards in the countryside. Macro-economic considerations needed to be reconciled with socially pressing issues. He stated that Mozambique is an apt example of nation that has worked towards achieving social welfare by focusing development efforts on rural areas.

Mr. Allan Jury, Director of the Division of External Relations of WFP, stated that Mozambique is a good example to evaluate the connection between rural development and the challenges of social welfare, given that agriculture is the mainstay of the national economy. Furthermore, he emphasized that Mozambique, as a pilot country of the "One UN" initiative, presents a good example of how the UN framework and bilateral development cooperation can work meaningfully to support and guide 'nationally owned strategies'. In this regard, Mr. Jury stated that a focus on programme assistance enables more comprehensive coordination, thereby yielding more benefits. Mozambique's development trajectory has successfully implemented this facet by focusing on specific areas and operations.

WFP supports four specific areas of development within the Mozambican context. With regard to the social sphere, WFP runs employment generation schemes, public expenditure programmes and social protection measures that safeguard vulnerable sections of the population. WFP has also instituted programmes dealing with sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention, other communicable and non-communicable diseases and malnutrition. Educational programmes under WFP are focused on capacity building for increased agricultural productivity. Lastly, Mr. Jury stated that disaster preparedness is of vital importance as it seeks to prevent disasters from undoing hard-won progress in development. WFP works in the field of disaster preparedness through climate change adaptation and humanitarian assistance.

WFP's tasks in Mozambique are twofold. The challenge of increasing agricultural productivity requires a comprehensive package of activities, encompassing the fields of health, education, human development etc. Mr. Jury stressed that basic development needs must be addressed in their totality. WFP's second field of operational activities is centred on providing care for particularly marginalized groups. In this regard, Mr. Jury emphasized that helping the extreme poor to move beyond their preoccupation with basic nutritional needs is a precondition for further opportunities for social and economic development.

The Purchase for Progress programme, WFP's newest programme, aims at providing small holder farmers, especially women, improved access to financing as well as commodity value chains and market linkages. The programme provides pre- and post-harvest assistance, including credit facilities and grain storage, so as to increase agricultural productivity and provide greater sales opportunities. It enables the purchase of market products and involves a comprehensive assistance package comprising training and tools necessary to increase agricultural productivity. High food prices had a particularly severe impact on Mozambique. A plan for immediate responses by WFP is already in place. This entails assistance to orphans, vulnerable populations and people grappling with diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Jury concluded by reiterating the need to build national capacities to adopt an integrated approach to agricultural, rural, and social development as well as disaster preparedness based on a nationally led development strategy.

Question and Answer Session

The **US** asked if the causal link between social, rural and agricultural development always holds in this direction. The US further asked about the extent to which, if at all, regional and national factors such as trade, inflation or economic developments in neighbouring countries affect the projects instituted.

The **Republic of Korea** stated that based on Korea's experience and from the conventional perspective on development, economic growth occurs first for sustainable development. He therefore asked why the presentations focused on social development. Korea further asked if Mozambique's female president has particular impacts on the status of women in Mozambique.

Bolivia asked about the impact of grass-root level action on rural development, considering that the participation of the communities in rural area is crucial in rural development efforts.

On the issue of social development and its impact on rural areas, **Mr. Makinwa** replied that the vast majority of the population in many developing countries lives in rural areas and women naturally constitute half the population. If women cannot be active in society this constitutes a vast untapped resource for social progress, comparable to a "bird flying with one wing". This potential cannot be unleashed, however, as long as women have limited access to resources and services available to society such as information, health care, and birth delivery. Furthermore, considering that food is the most basic human need, it needs to be met before focus can be shifted on any other area. The current food crisis requires development efforts to refocus on ensuring that basic nutritional needs are met. This all demonstrated that social development cannot take place unless necessary actions are brought about.

On the general linkages between economic and social development, Mr. Makinwa stated that economic development constitutes a sine qua non. Nevertheless, social development does not come about on its own but requires conscious, deliberate efforts such as policies and programmes. Mr. Makinwa further argued that appointment of a female prime minister in Mozambique is part of deliberate government policies aimed at empowering women. The latter still remains a challenge, however. On the impact of activities on the grass-roots level Mr. Makinwa asserted that it is an important way for the rural poor to have a voice and achieve a greater impact in the long-term even if it does not always have immediate impacts.

Mr. Jury replied to the question on the extent to which social investments help rural development by asserting on the outset that agricultural productivity largely depends on the quality of its labour. This improves with human development. Therefore, investments in women, health and education are often seen as the best investment in poverty reduction. On the question of the impact of broader, macro-economic and regional factors, Mr. Jury stressed that such impacts occur at a later stage of development. As most marginalized people in Mozambique are very detached from market forces, poverty reduction is more influenced by micro-factors. In the next step, however, regional linkages such as infrastructure become increasingly important. With regards to the question posed by Korea on economic and social linkages, Mr. Jury conceded that social development certainly has a growth component. Yet it would be a false paradigm to think of economic development and social development as opposing rather than complementary factors. The two must go hand in hand and equity is an issue in development. Regarding the question of the importance of grass-roots level participation, Mr. Jury stated that the WFP for instance engages in numerous partnerships with local civil society organisations. Especially in the area of HIV/AIDS, community movements are crucial. WFP searches for such organisations and supports them by adding a food component to their work and leveraging their position with respect to the food crisis.

Tanzania reiterated the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to development, arguing that this matters nowhere more than in rural development where one component of a development approach cannot function without the other. Tanzania then asked if there are models or good practices of a comprehensive development approach that could be replicated, citing Millennium Villages as an example. Addressing the issue of financing and budget allocation in developing countries, Tanzania argued that one has to be realistic about what a developing country can allocate in a particular sector since “when you are poor, everything is a priority”. He further commented on the role of the private sector in supporting rural development, highlighting that the sector can play a vital role in providing finance and extension services as well as improving seeds. Models of outsourcing these services to the private sector have worked well in Tanzania. Lastly, he inquired if Mozambique being a “One UN” pilot country already had an impact at the rural level and on ODA flows.

The **Philippines** asked what the high growth rates experienced by Mozambique over the last ten years can be attributed to. To what extent have the activities of the UN system, under the “One UN” initiative, and other development partners as well as ODA flows affected ground realities?

Algeria reiterated the importance of an integrated approach to fighting poverty and hunger. Current challenges entail not only economic but also humanitarian dimensions. It is therefore necessary for the UN framework to coordinate with other agencies in order to develop an integrated approach to fighting poverty and hunger, encompassing all relevant areas of development. Algeria inquired about how WFP coordinates its activities with other UN agencies.

Mr. Makinwa commented that high rate of economic growth can be attributed to many factors, including factors beyond government influence. However, he noted that, similar to Tanzania, Mozambique attained a reputation for good governance in recent years and this is partly why the country attracted an increasing number of partnerships and tripling of official grants in the past ten years. ODA flows have been growing consistently and debt has been further reduced. Although it is still too early to say much on the “One UN”, but this clearly indicates benefits of being labelled as a “One UN” pilot country.

Mr. Jury stated that the adoption of the “Millennium Village” model in Mozambique faced some technical challenges but all approaches that look at communities as a whole and take a comprehensive approach towards satisfying their needs are very promising and should definitely be further pursued despite initial technical issues of sustainability. Mr. Jury elaborated on this thought by arguing that there is a need to redress a unbalanced development philosophy, which needs the right mix between attention

given to the productive sector, infrastructure, policies, social development etc. Mr. Jury reiterated that the UN's "Delivery as One" approach has delivered very well to its pilot countries and has brought about an "explosion of joint programmes" and planning and programming are better coordinated. Although it is hard to evaluate its precise impact as they are just at the stage of being implemented, the signs are promising. Mr. Jury further conceded that Mozambique is fortunate to have linkages to a strong South African economy and underwent one of the most successful post-conflict processes in Africa. However, an integration of these factors through good policies and governance was important to its development. With regards to the need for better transportation, Mr. Jury argued that these are needed in Mozambique but it is also necessary to look beyond national sufficiency models. Trade linkages with neighbouring countries should be maintained and enhanced.

Lastly, **Mozambique** commented on the various issues raised. On the issue of the female Prime Minister Mozambique argued that it is not a coincidence but in fact its development approach sees gender as a government priority topic. Besides the prime ministers several cabinet posts are held by women. In addition, the government does not only see an increase in the number of women participating in government as a priority issue but focuses on the question of how women can make a difference more broadly. In this regard, the government sees education as particularly important. On the role of grass-roots civil society organisations, Mozambique highlighted the critical role played by a consultative group among civil society organisations, whose name can be translated as the "Development Observatory Group". It carries out observations of needs at the local level on to the district, provincial and national government levels in order to shape policy responses. Mozambique argued that as a result of being a pilot country of the "One UN" initiative the support of its development partners has become more visible and they now work more as a team rather than as competing segments.

Ambassador Lima closed the panel discussion with a passionate statement in favour of the empowerment of women. He argued that women are cutting edge in all sectors and represent the interests of society as a whole. They do not only deserve to be at the centre of development but also should be at the centre since they are a hub for developing successfully. Equality of opportunity is vital in this regard. Traditions favouring men therefore must not be perpetuated. Empowering women requires political resolve to allow women to become educated and change their image in men's eyes. In this regard, any government is only worthy of its title when it actually institutes measures to deal with pressing issues. On the other hand, the empowerment of women requires their active involvement. Women should avail of their rights and ask for them.