



## 2010 UNDP/UNDESA E-discussion on Women and Poverty

### Responses in Full by Contributors: Part I

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**Dated: 13 January 2010**

**Anita Kelles-Viitanen, Finland**

Dear All,

Congratulations for establishing the discussion group. There is much to be done!

We will not get innovative views if we start with old questions. The world changed from 1995 onwards when the WTO was formed and trade liberalisation started with a bang. Old development models were also replaced (mostly) by a new neoliberal financial economy model with increasing role for privatization and competition etc. The countries opened their borders and multinational and other private companies with their products and businesses streamed in. Local economies (people and small businesses) - in spite of their great disadvantages such as small scale of operation - were made to compete with much larger and influential players.

Tax havens were established in various forms, too. This model is now in crisis and therefore this is now also an opportunity to push for changes. The above described development has had major impact on the poor countries and the poor people, including women. Poverty is no more just a technical issue, it is a systemic and structural issue with structures of exploitation, disempowerment and dispossession.

We need to address vicious cycles that liberalisation, financialisation and global industrialization are bringing about. Resources that are required for the livelihoods of poor are now captured by global businesses and other interest groups: lands are grabbed, water sources are sold, mountains that capture water are mined, biodiversity is reduced, environment is polluted and people are robbed of their livelihoods at sea and on land.

Mainstreaming of gender served its purpose at the time but it is no more sufficient: It is no solution to mainstream women into an economic set-up where they are robbed of their essential resources and conditions for their sustainable livelihoods. Sustainability of livelihoods and rights to diversity of livelihoods need to be addressed as majority of the poor women are working women.

At the same time, world population is aging everywhere but the attention to the marginalisation and social exclusion of the elderly with the ensuing poverty and lack of social safety nets has barely started. I do not see sufficient discussion on the elderly women in development programs, in spite of the fact that their number is increasing.

The development environment has become very complex and therefore old systems of monitoring developed for earlier government-led era do not work anymore. We need to develop impact "compasses" that are able to track changes over time. We also need to institutionalize participatory systems, where the government, service providers, women and their organizations are made accountable to each other.

Anita Kelles-Viitanen

former Manager Social Development (ADB), ILO Gender Advisor  
and IFAD Innovation Mainstreaming Policy Co-ordinator  
and at present Vice-Chair of Green Seniors

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### **Salamatu Yahaya-Musa**

Feminization of poverty is a challenge which has been championed by our male counter-parts, men would not allow us to own or control resources. Because when a woman owns and have control over her resources it becomes a threat to the man's ego as she would be able to take bold decisions on her own.

Let my personal experience here, my husband a well established clearing and forwarding agent, allowed me to take employment outside we he resides would not allow me to own a piece of land, his reason is simple, he believes that when a woman owns property she would grow wings and get of the husband's control.

One thing men fail to understand is that nothing last forever, he be filthy or super rich today and tomorrow everything can go with the wind. So with proper planning and agreements both parties can have savings to support the home front.

Government all over the world must make policies that are women-friendly to allow women make their meaningful contributions to the growth and developments of their countries. There is urgent need for sensitization of men on the need for them to support women to make their contributions in the development of their countries.

Governments all over must provide soft loans for women, and to also provide enabling environment for women to engage in economic activities.

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### **Ameena al Rasheed Nayel, Sudan**

Dear all

Thank you for launching such an important dialogue and I would like to begin addressing these questions from a Sudanese perspective, women were for long located on a poverty zones in the country, the influence of war, and conflict might aggravated the situation for women in general, however let us take some holistic approach in addressing poverty and women issues.

Globally:

1. International politics has never changed; profit repatriation institutions are still working on full capacity and selling illusion to poor nations, failing particularly women. With great appreciation to the role played by the UN, international NGOs, and women advocacy groups etc. They still seem paralyzed by the power of international politics ( what they give by the right hand is taken by the left hand). The new human faces of the international financial institutions, WB, IMF and all those multi nationals, and what they cleverly call social responsibility, wouldn't blind anyone from grasping the facts of the continuous repatriation of resources from poor nations.

2. Peace gender blind deals: the international community no matter how women would struggle is continuing to failing women in peace deals, women issues are still at the bottom, never mind the hundreds of papers, reports and rules issued by everyone everywhere ( CPA in Sudan and Abuja Agreement etc). All failed women in Sudan and it seems that the international community scrutinizes with close eyes, Sudanese women subjected to ridiculous Islamic regime's rules. ( the

journalist case Loubna Hussain, is just a reflection that politics work on class level, hundreds of poor women were lashed and imprisoned by the Islamic regime and thousands were victims of rape in Darfur- remember Darfur.

3. Post- conflict Sudan is a rich one, with oil revenue that reaches far entities around the world starting from oil companies, international investors, mostly western countries, and as well Asian giants are on the road to repatriate what they are able to.

Now if this is the fact about a country like Sudan- which is in my opinion resembles many other countries- what is left for women?

Corrupt politics, globally and locally, repressive rules, and while the governors of the country are busy accumulating profits and stealing resources they were never busy targeting women, and hunting them on the streets, flogging, imprisoning, depriving them from their rights to work , and violating all their rights, that was established under International conventions .

How poverty looks like? Ask the women and you will get the full picture.

Without a collaborative and holistic attitude towards challenging women's poverty, our efforts will be in vain and 20 years from now we will be saying the same.

What changes in Sudan since 1995 is that more women now are aware and ready to challenge and to struggle form better positions in the society, more organizations and local group are struggling to address women's issues in the absence of rules or laws that protect women, and I believe the international community is more aware of the grave situation in Sudan than before, still more needs to be done. Hunger, poverty and employments are not disaggregated by sex yet, studies and researches are done on the surface, and however the picture is more than clear.

I stop here to take a breath and will be back again, Thank you all for allowing such great opportunity to address poverty issues and women. Regards,

Ameena Alrasheed Nayel  
Assistant Professor  
Gender and peace Education  
University For Peace, Mandated United Nations University  
Costa Rica, San Jose, Ciudad Colon.

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### **Tala Khrais, Jordan**

One of the current initiatives of the Jordanian government is to alleviate poverty. This will reflect in a better quality of life for Jordanian citizens; in terms of their health, education and wealth status.

The empowerment of Jordanian women in the economical, political and social sector will play an important role in the poverty reduction. In order to overcome the various cultural and social limitations, women have found the "Micro-businesses" as one of the solutions to supplement their household income. 'Micro Finance Initiative (MFI)' in Jordan is funded by several international donors, including the 'Micro-fund' for Women (MFW). It has two type of lending programs: group lending and individual lending. This type of fund was created in the aim of women empowerment as income earners and decision makers in their homes and their communities and to provide the poor, female entrepreneurs with access to credit on a sustainable basis. Still, women's' type of businesses require further technical assistance and training to better access the local and international markets and survive the global competition.

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**Radha Paudel, Nepal**

Dear Mohammad and E Discussion Team,

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks towards your such efforts.

Secondly, I bit confused about the process. No matter, I use this way for communication (hope you will suggest me if you have next, I also saw space for new message while registering).

Here, just try to attach about the women's status and importance of women's and right in Nepal.

I have few cases from field, try to share with you before closing (because now I am busy in preparation of my assignment, currently I am student of Asian Institute of Management in master's degree of development management).

In regards to Beijing 1995, few policies are improvised and under process because the deadline for finalization of new constitution is April 2010. However, if we see about the women's and poverty, the situations is getting worse as well as this the time not able to say women get their rights as ratified in national and international laws and human right instruments. As mentioned in attached document, land right is only an ends to ensure women's empowerment.

Especially, 1995 Community Self Reliance center (CSRC), people's organizations (National Land Right Forum) and few INGOs such as CARE International, Action Aid Nepal etc are working around to the land rights in Nepal as a result few changes as well as opportunities can be observed:

- Interim constitution is under finalization process, space for ensure women's land rights more specifically
- Ratification of human right related instruments ; CEDAW, Beijing 1995
- Inclusive Land Reform Commission is also under execution
- Common understanding among people organizations, stakeholders, political parties
- Rising awareness, confidence, organization landless peoples/civil societies but still we have few challenges like;
  - Political environment is more skewed and coalition government is fragile;
  - High expectation of right holders;
  - Due to having multifaceted vulnerability of right holders, possibility to manipulate, frustration, backlash
  - Women are more vulnerable due to ongoing neo-liberalization and globalization
  - Customary laws –helps in making ineffective of statutory laws

Finally, the most irony is neither stakeholders nor right holders are serious towards the women's land right. It is neither focused during planning, budgeting, advocacy and networking nor have specific strategies around it.

An incidence, intensity and severity of risks and vulnerabilities of Nepali women are increasing day by day in multiple forms such as climate change, neo-liberalizations, globalizations which are additional layers to them. Therefore, we should focus on strategies and implementation on women's land right by linking CEDAW, Beijing, MDG and national laws to overcome the poverty.

That's all now,

will see later.

Regards,

Radha Paudel (Nepal)

Currently Manila, Philipinnes

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**Dated: 15 January 2010**

**Nidia Hidalgo, UNDP El Salvador**

Dear all,

I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on this matter.

Since the nineties, conditionals cash transfer programs, most of them directed to women have been one of the main strategies to reduce poverty in Latin America. As a result of these programs, in El Salvador women's poverty has decreased, especially extreme poverty. Female headed households have reduced their levels of poverty slightly faster than male headed household.

Nonetheless, those initiatives haven't integrated a gender perspective and have been targeted mainly in rural zones. This means that poor women in the cities haven left unattended and that gender inequities haven't been removed, jeopardizing the sustainability of this process of poverty reduction. The economic crisis has shown that the results of conditionals cash transfer programs are fragile. During the crisis, In El Salvador female headed households have increased their levels of poverty slightly faster than male household. Conditional Cash transfer programs haven't succeed in generating the conditions to enhance women's economic opportunities and to minimize their vulnerability to economic shocks. I can identify the following reasons for that: most of these actions are based on the reproductive role of women. They don't transform gender relations and they don't promote the economic autonomy of women.

In El Salvador, we can have access to poverty data disaggregated by sex. This data is built on an income-based poverty line methodology, but this methodology fails to capture gender differences in poverty and other dimensions of it such as the productive and reproductive workload. Another methodology must be used in order to make visible the real gender differences in poverty.

Best regards,

Nidia Hidalgo  
Gender officer  
UNDP El Salvador

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**John Chiwuzulum Odozi, Nigeria**

Dear all,

What a wonderful way of discussing the issue of gender! May I start by saying that all through ages the world has been patterned along gender lines in favor of men and in very insignificant cases in favor of women. If this sounds right, the critical question becomes: has governance brought about a better gender pattern or a pattern in favor of women or worsen the situation? Evidences will be showcased using formal and informal labor settings in Nigeria.

The formal setting comprises women and men who work or aspire to work in private paid organizations like financial institutions, oil companies, telecommunication and government agencies and parliaments. In this setting, to some extent women participation is rising and balancing up with men. Probable issues in this setting include maternity leave, harsh conditions of pregnant women, nursing mothers, as well as other reproductive health insensitivity. The issue of poverty is remote in this setting except for those who are unemployed because they are aspiring to work in these organizations. Aspiration to work in these

organizations is borne by the fact they offer pensions, health insurance and other allowances. Although it is highly competitive, preference is now being given to women. For example in Nigeria universities (government agency), there is a male- female staff ratio that was not followed before now, but in recent times this gap has been filled. However, the proportion of women that fall into this setting is very small relative to the proportion of women in the informal setting.

The informal setting comprises farmers, petty traders, construction workers, drivers, and old women without pension, aged farmers, those in paid informal jobs without contract, pension and health insurance plan. The poverty level in this setting remains manifold. Jobs are not stable. More women work in this setting to support their husbands who have no jobs or not well paid. There is discrimination against women who are pregnant or nursing their babies. Health insurance plan is far from these women while health care expenses are out-of-pocket further diminishing household resources.

Though in recent times, there has been concern about this setting. The government of Nigeria started tracking the poverty situation of this setting by conducting household living standard survey between 2003 and 2004. Also in 2006 conducted another survey and 2008 another survey. The data set is cross sectional, not panel but is disaggregated along gender lines and very much assessable to researchers for analysis. Although research on gender issues is growing and enormous, the convergence appears to be that women do not have control over resources which are necessary to liberate them from poverty.

In conclusion targeting of women in the informal setting for sustainable poverty reduction remains an unfinished business in Nigeria. First statistics should be taken for aged women, disabled women, women living with HIV, and petty traders for targeted action that includes health insurance plan, soft loans, old age allowance and cooperative groups for cottage and export.

John Chiwuzulum Odozi

Doctoral student, Department of Agricultural Economics University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

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### **Dr. Fidelis Babugura**

The term poverty has been labeled as several scenarios. The World Bank Organization describes poverty in this way: "Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and n knowledge. Poverty is not having a job and fear for the future. Poverty is living one day at a time. Poverty is about not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter. However, poverty is much more than just not having enough money. Poverty has a woman's face.

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### **Manal Saleh, Egypt**

Over the past decade and a half there was visible progress in the Egyptian women's development. This progress is especially seen in the fields of education and maternal health. Statistics are disaggregated by sex (thank God!), but at the end they are only statistics. Progress in quantity is astonishing, yet in quality is disgraceful as educational and health services are deteriorating excessively in the country as a whole. Egypt is no different than other developing countries implementing Structural Adjustment Policies that necessitates cut backs in government expenditures on the expense of the poor. Women are mainly the most vulnerable of course, because their health and wellbeing within the household comes last on the household priority list. Poverty levels have escalated among women, female heads of households are now



the poorest of the poor, no wonder did the term feminization of poverty emerge, followed by the feminization of labor, and feminization of slavery and so on and so forth.

In 1995, the National Council for Women (NCW) was established to monitor, coordinate, and direct national policy towards the advancement of women. The Council became the umbrella for Egyptian feminist organizations and civil society organizations working in the field of women's development; providing them with support and taking credit for their work. I have witnessed NCW representatives bragging about how they issued thousands of National Identity Cards issued for unregistered women. Those same ID cards were issued by feminist NGOs in the country upon direct orders from the NCW, in the NCW's name, and of course without any funding or facilitation of procedures. But who would dare upset the NCW and disobey their commands!!

Since their establishment in 1995, female political representation has not improved at all. Although they did a lot of output-oriented projects and programs aiming at advancing the political participation of women; no actual results are tangible in terms of increased access of women to decision making positions or the political arena. Recently, there were legislative amendments that grant women a quota of 12% in parliament; however, this is limited to the amendment itself. On the ground, no programs were/are implemented to empower women for real or raise their leadership or decision making abilities. Female political leaders remain to be the same for the past 15 or 20 years, and those female leaders are the state's allies as they were originally appointed by the state.

Yes the NCW helped identify women as heads of households. Yes there were a few legislative changes in favor of women (like the National Law for example). But this is not enough in 15 years compared to the amount of resources and technical assistance pooled into this organization. The NCW along with women's organizations in Egypt still suffer from the lack of technical expertise and impact-oriented interventions that brings forward the status of women, changes gendered ideologies, and alleviates women's poverty

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### **Beatriz Vallejo, Colombia**

My name is Beatriz Vallejo; I have deaf-blindness since 1992. I deafness appeared when I was a teenager and my blindness appear eighteen years ago. I am from Colombia South America, and I founded the Colombian Association for deaf and blind, SURCOE on 1994, with the idea to give attention especially to young adults and adults, because the attention was giving only for children. I worked as a General Representative of Latin America of the WFDB, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) giving presentations in many places in Colombia and around the world.

I have a project that could be good to share to everybody about the reduction of poverty in women with disability.

Sometimes there is a possibility that countries had the support of NGO and other organizations or private entities, but this support cannot be forever. So, it is important to make people fight towards their necessities becoming sustainability.

This project consists in the development of an investigation program to identify the potential and the abilities of women with disabilities and their families that form a group on a community.

Also talks about a development program of training for these woman, permitting the establishment of cooperatives, micro-enterprises, family enterprises, another forms of occupation in accordance with the abilities of each person.



When you fight to reach a positive goal, you get greater self esteem, than when you attain that goal without any effort.

“It is better to teach how to fish, not give the fish”

The core of this project is CBR (Community based Rehabilitation), but the principal objective is to create mechanisms to improve the conditions of the disabled woman that are in poverty, through training and generation of labor opportunities.

The result of the training in women with disabilities and their families, improve the economical and social welfare, permits health access and as a consequence, the education in children is a good possibility.

It is important that States give support to these persons, not only with national resources but international, giving enough training to acquire adequate living conditions

The project has three phases:

**Phase 1** Study of population (Statistics) made by professionals and implemented in the whole city of Bogotá to determinate the most need areas.

**Phase 2** Training by a group of expert professionals. This training consists in the habilitation of women with disabilities, to develop any occupation or labor in accordance of their possibilities.

**Phase 3** Conformation of Co-operatives or other micro enterprises, family enterprises, and other small enterprises in accordance to the abilities of each group.

To make possible the development of this project it is necessary the support of many organizations to reach all the resources and the budget required, even a few months after completion of the project until those women and their families could be sustainable, and they not need the workers help but only to follow how is the work done.

It is a good work to be developed in many places in Colombia, and could be a model for other countries in Latin America.

There is a very good possibility that is in Crepes & Waffles that started in Bogotá – Colombia, and now it is all around the country and other countries like Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Panamá and Spain.

The purpose of this company is to give the opportunity of employment to women head of family who lives in poverty and have to take care of the behavior and the progress of their families. Crepes & Waffles not only give work to women but gives support on housing, health programs, planning, social orientation, recreation, education and training.

This is a model for other companies and organizations to take into account for all women in poverty conditions, even women with disabilities, so they could fully enjoy their rights

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**Basanta K Sahu, India**

Dear All,

It is a commendable effort to bring people and their view of gender and poverty together. The issue is not new but some of its dimensions are.

To start with gender and poverty in many developing countries including India we are not poor in policy formulation and debates and discussion. Certainly, we lack implementation, monitoring & evaluation and bottom up approach of such policies. We fail to walk the talk including the Beijing Declaration 1995. However, some progress is visible in some pockets of this sub-continent. But the pace is very slow. I would like to reiterate some issues to focus on regarding women poverty.

1. Hardly any progress is improving women ownership of economic assets, particularly land (social and institutional issues)
2. Lack of effort to account and value activity performed by women but covered under Non-SNA (these are grossly unaccounted)
3. Re-consider the current nature & status of reservation for women
4. To realize the fact that returns of money earned & spent by women is better than their male counterpart.

Expecting to hear more

Regards,  
Basanta K Sahu  
Asst Professor of Economics, IIFT, New Delhi, India  
& Researcher, NABARD

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**Sarah Ogalleh, Kenya**

Have you ever asked yourself why World Bank reports and other related reports on poverty demonstrate an increasing gap between the rich and the poor?

In my opinion, this is because; the women have been predisposed to many issues that hinder them from being the usual providers of their families. Unfortunately, when women are not able to provide for their families, there is no one to take up this fundamental societal function.....the result is families becoming more impoverished. For example, a lot of literature shows that women are the major subsistent farmers of the world, and yet, when technological innovations are developed, most of them favor men rather than women. For example, irrigation systems for improved livelihoods was targeted at improving families wellbeing, but when it was implemented, men took up the practice and do farming for commercial purposes, living women with a harder task to reconcile her domestic water needs and agricultural needs....such a situation automatically curtails women's efforts. And so our challenge lies in us developing systems that can benefit women directly and this will partially feed back to empowerment.

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## Radha Paudel, Nepal

Hi Everyone,

Thanks to all for contributing your precious time and ideas!

If we go back to our history of women's right movement; we have done well, though a long way ....At the mean time, we have many questions, schools of thoughts, confusions, dilemmas... on reaching at a door of poor and marginalized women and working with them etc.

My 14 years working experiences of most remote areas also told that we are really not reached to the poor and marginalized women as we commit. It was also noticed in rural areas of Burundi, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia in my observation. Meaning we have very good structure up to that level but we focused around those women who are elites. None women were consulted in a 10 years history of implementation of same and very reputed INGO in Nepal.

A Bhapsi, a village of Mahottari district of Nepal, only five kilometer far from the market, black topped road but these women neither used any public services, they lived in between forest and bank of seasonal river, total 156 HH, 99% indigenous and 1 % dalit (so called untouchable), they do not have political leaders, none of children studied more than primary school, no electricity, no membership of any formal and informal groups, all are landless, depend on daily wages and firewood collection, stone broken etc. It was identified through comprehensive participatory exercises with these communities, other stakeholders by using mapping, history/timeline, class analysis, caste analysis, gender analysis, income/expenditure analysis. This power mapping is carried out in December, 2007. Because of intensive engagement of impact groups (poor and marginalized women) throughout the process since beginning, women break their silence during findings sharing interaction programs where media, political parties leaders, human right activists were also invited. Illiterate, dalit, landless women spoke in front of their and rising questions about their commitments as written at their manifestation as well as promises during election at their homes. The spontaneous scene was very challenging, exciting where political leaders, elites tried to escaped, reluctant in the beginning and also cautioned more due to media mobilized. Finally they agreed and committed to do many things at immediate, short term and long term. They also get few changes within 15 days such as installation of drinking water, provision of books and medicines in respective institutions and so on. But the story is not over now. These women were started to get threat through phone calls, gangs of bad guys, try to convince for not joining these group with treats, and politicize the issues and so on. But the women are gradually organized from one group to another, goes round by round in neighboring villages. They identified their facilitator (both paid and volunteers) from their community/caste and reflect their rights, challenges. By the facilitation of them, they reflect –act-reflect (Popular education or REFLECT Methodology) their daily issues from their life, family to community. They resolved many gender violence's cases, reached up to lawyer, police, challenged government authorities, organized series of advocacy activities, breaking cultural practices e.g. plough field, remarriage by widow etc. Now, this is complete third year, 50 % poor and marginalized women participated in local, district level committees, groups, networks. We have hundreds of successes at various levels. They able to back misused fund in forestry users groups, school management committees, they also established local reporter, disseminated their success through wall news board and local radios. It also proven the signs of sustainability to enhance local leaders, fund for advocacy/movements. The whole process is also facilitated by the same INGO who never been there for 10 years its history.

It is easy to tell in two paragraphs and some of you might said it is not difference from PRA, RRA, or so on? But the process is entirely different, an entire process is empowering, organizing and always moving

forward but it is challenging, difficult to get champion leader for the project and flexibility in fund mobilization. Regarding champion, the mindset is very important and for flexibility means women have multifaceted problems therefore flexibility should be given to facilitate their growing needs including leadership skills, education, trainings, exposures, livelihood skills where the roles and scope is going to scale up and up gradually.

**The few chronological highlights of this process are;**

Step 1: Orientation with Stakeholders at local levels in order to get information on power centers: economic, social, political and gender related information, explanation on approach, how, why we will reach Poorest of the Poor, impact development to poorest over the time period and right based approach and Power relations/dynamics

Step 2: Determine geographic unit of analysis Villages /ward, cluster... (For power mapping)

Step 3: Conduct participatory analysis focus on priorities areas of inquiry

Step 4: Sharing and validation with larger stakeholders including village, political parties, and other development agencies and

- Dialogue generated between people of power centers and poverty pockets
- Analyzed scenario/reflection of past activities, commitments
- Internalization of underlying causes of poverty and emergent of commitment shifting resources, create social actions

Step 5: Linking key findings with Popular Education Centers for follow up commitments, social action.

Step7: Monitoring, review & reflection at community and organizational level

**Challenges:**

1. Powerful actors may lose power this has been great concerns of power holders. Political parties are threatened and finding these exercise challenging as this organization reached up to POOREST and organizing people to questions state policies and programs
2. Project mode has limitation to address all the issue brought by the analysis
3. Deeper and systematic analysis of the exercise sometime might be challenging due to lack of adequate human resources and timeframe
4. Develop common understanding on this process among external partners/stakeholders in order to ensure poor and marginalized centered planning and budgeting process

This practice is selected and endorsed to citizen engagement guidelines of Ministry of Local development, selected from areas and sector among INGOs/NGOs of Nepal in April 2009. Now other INGOs/NGOs are going to replicate this process. It is widely practiced by CARE International in Nepal, other organizations e.g. SD as well as other CARE countries e.g. Uganda, Burundi, Bangladesh etc.

In this connection, can we approached this process for empowering poor and marginalized women in coming days in order to order to claim and exercised their rights at home, community, national and global level. Finally, I also put question to all of us: **Are we ready to give space as we blame to men?**

*If you are interested towards this process, I commit to connect with this organizations, experts who analyst before, during and after, organizations who are going to replicate now and also commit for forward document which is recommend by local development ministry.*

Please find here a project document: [Women's Land Right in Nepal](#).

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**Cheikhdiaw Diaw, Senegal**

Bonjour,

Je me réjouis qu'un groupe de discussion sur une thématique très importante à savoir le genre et la pauvreté. Permettez moi de vous proposer mon point de vu.

## **FEMMES ET PAUVRETE : POLITIQUES NEOLIBERALES**

**Les impacts directs et indirects sur les femmes africaines, les impacts différenciés sur les femmes et les hommes et les relations de genre concerné.**

Les inégalités entre les hommes et les femmes d'accès aux services sociaux de base, aux opportunités d'emploi s'aggravent. Le processus graduel de mondialisation néolibérale semble contribuer fortement aux vecteurs de transmissions : la baisse de croissance et de l'investissement, les PAS, et l'impact différencié selon le genre des crises financières.

En Afrique, les femmes contribuent à hauteur de 80% et représentent les 2 / 3 de la force de travail agricole, elles constituent la majorité de celles que la mondialisation laisse en rade bien que subissant ses méfaits. Bien au contraire, les vagues successives de libéralisation qui constituent l'essentiel de la réalité de la mondialisation en Afrique pose pour les femmes un énorme défi..

L'autosuffisance économique est la première des conditions indispensables dans l'autonomie des femmes. Pour obtenir cette indépendance économique, il est impératif que les femmes aient accès aux ressources, avantages et possibilités économiques et qu'elles puissent les contrôler afin que d'en tirer un bénéfice à long terme et de manière durable (UNIFEM, 1996)

### **Impacts différenciés du genre sur l'éducation**

La capacitation des femmes pour lever les difficultés liées à la formation (technique, technologique, de la gestion, de l'entrepreneuriat féminin) afin de mieux s'adonner aux AGR, encourage les femmes à participer aux cours d'alphabétisation. Cependant faute de formation et d'information, les femmes rurales n'ont pas les connaissances pour tirer profit de leurs transactions commerciales faute de n'avoir pas la technologie qu'il faut pour transformer leurs produits.

En travaillant, les femmes commencent à acquérir une certaine autonomie et des pouvoirs de négociation, l'activisme des femmes s'en trouve stimulé, peu ou mal payées, subissant des conditions de travail très difficile, les femmes sont amenées à engager des luttes pour dénoncer les effets néfastes du néo-libéralisme.

Elles engagent des stratégies de résistance, découvrent leur capacité de mobilisation et d'organisation solidaire, entreprennent des capacités innovatrices de survie et apprennent à résister pour satisfaire aux méfaits des politiques et aux réactions des hommes perturbés par les changements de rôles qui s'opèrent.

La formation et l'encadrement des femmes visent à renverser la tendance, à faire des femmes non pas des bénéficiaires passives des croissances économiques des politiques néo-libérales mais des actrices de la transformation de leurs propres réalités politiques et économiques.

La formation tend à renforcer la capacité des femmes pour l'acquisition des principes fondamentaux pour une généralisation de l'analyse selon le genre à savoir l'autonomisation, la responsabilité et l'intégration.

Les effets de la mondialisation et la globalisation doivent influencer le contenu des programmes d'alphabétisation, les femmes doivent y trouver les exploitations, l'injustice dont elles sont victimes et la nécessité de leur organisation et de leur mobilisation pour lutter contre cet état de fait. Les contenus des programmes d'alphabétisation doivent prendre en compte les compétences nécessaires dans la vie courante qui comprennent des compétences génériques telles que la résolution des conflits, des problèmes, la négociation et des compétences contextuelles liées aux moyens d'existence de la santé et de l'environnement.

Les contenus des programmes d'alphabétisation doivent aussi inciter à trouver des solutions pour certains problèmes liés à la diminution de la sécurité de l'emploi, de la déréglementation des conditions de travail et la médiocrité et l'absence de protection social et juridique.

Dans certaines régions à cause des politiques néolibérales l'éducation des filles souffre de la réduction des dépenses publiques et de l'affaiblissement de la capacité des ménages de contribuer aux dépenses de la scolarité et de l'accroissement de la dépendance vis à vis de la contribution des filles. Malgré ses tendances une plus grande participation de femmes à la population active peut à l'évidence susciter le changement en influant graduellement sur les normes sociales et les perceptions des aptitudes, des rôles des femmes.

### **Impacts différenciés du genre sur la santé**

En Afrique sub-saharienne la mortalité et la morbidité maternelle compromettent gravement la survie et le bien-être des femmes à l'âge auxquelles elles sont le plus productives et exercent le maximum de responsabilité familiale.

Les conséquences négatives des politiques néo-libérales sur la santé publique font que les femmes payent un lourd tribut compte tenu de leur vulnérabilité, à cause de leur faible revenu, de leur malnutrition, de leur inaccessibilité aux soins de santé de la reproduction.

Les femmes rurales, en plus de ces problèmes sont exposées à l'inexistence de structures de santé de proximité, du manque de spécialistes gynécologiques et obstétriques, elles souffrent d'absences de consultations prénatales et postnatales, d'infections graves et d'hémorragies.

Les politiques néo-libérales poussent les femmes à entrer massivement dans le marché du travail en les exposant à toutes formes d'exploitation, d'abus et d'injustice sans aucune protection sociale, ce qui a des effets néfastes sur leur capital sanitaire.

Cette situation offre des opportunités de transformation des rapports de genre, compte tenu des nouvelles possibilités de contacts, de mobilisations et d'organisations qui se dégagent, elles prennent conscience des discriminations subies en tant que travailleuses..

Elles sont amenées à côté de leurs collègues hommes dans l'espace syndical, à formuler des revendications dans des domaines de protections spécifiques aux femmes notamment dans la prise en charge de la mortalité maternelle et de la morbidité par la prévention des complications, des soins courants et le soutien pour des cas à haut risques et d'urgences.

Le souci d'amélioration des productions agricoles expose les femmes rurales à des problèmes de santé liés à l'utilisation des pesticides et des engrais chimiques, le non accès à l'information et à la formation technique et technologique posent à la fois des problèmes de santé et justice sociale.

### **Impacts différenciés du genre sur l'environnement**

La gestion de l'environnement doit faire l'objet d'une approche multidisciplinaire dont les femmes doivent y jouer un rôle essentiel. Le développement durable ne peut être appréhendé sans la gestion rationnelle des ressources de l'environnement qui sont épuisables et dégradables.

L'approche multidisciplinaire de la gestion de l'environnement doit être soutenue par des programmes qui déroulent leurs actions en s'appuyant sur la triptyque : (environnement / population / développement). Ces programmes doivent avoir pour objectifs : d'informer, de former, de sensibiliser, de mobiliser et d'organiser tous les acteurs notamment les femmes sur l'intérêt d'une approche intégrée des problèmes environnementaux, démographiques, de développement.

Il s'agit aussi, de voir l'interaction que ces problèmes ont avec les relations de genre mais encore d'assurer une participation effective des femmes aux prises de décision, d'intégrer leurs besoins, préoccupations et opinions concernant la gestion de l'environnement.

Les femmes aspirent désormais à être mieux informées et formées pour une meilleure exploitation des ressources naturelles pour l'équilibre de l'écosystème surtout l'utilisation des pesticides et des engrais chimiques, la coupe abusive du bois de chauffage et la sur exploitation des ressources halieutiques.

Les femmes réclament des renforcements de leurs capacités pour trouver des passerelles et une meilleure articulation de leurs savoirs faire et aptitudes traditionnelles avec les nouvelles technologies pour gestion rationnelle de l'environnement.

CHEIK DIAW  
**Responsable Suivi/Evaluation**  
**ONG Enfance et Paix**  
**Sédhiou/Sénégal**  
**BP: 191 Sédhiou**

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**Caroline, Kenya**

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, poverty and vulnerability of women has shown some tremendous improvement despite the challenges that Kenyan women still face amidst the struggle for gender equity.

One of the factors that have spearheaded this change is the gender equity campaigns that have been conducted by various women's rights and gender equity based organizations and associations within the country. As from 1995, quite a number of such organizations have been seen hosting seminars, workshops and trainings trying to create awareness on women's rights and how women could handle issues such as poverty reduction and vulnerability during such hard economic times. But the cream of all these are the documents and policies that were put in place immediately after the Beijing platform in 1995 to guide the Kenyan Government on how to address gender equity issues.

Other factors that have really contributed to this change include empowerment through enterprise, campaigns such as girl child education and even those fighting for women's rights like against early marriages, domestic violence and female genital cut among others.

Even with the change, over 60% of Kenyan women still remain vulnerable with the recent economic crisis due to the following factors.

The awareness creation that has been done is still not enough, 60% of Kenyan women, mostly those in the rural part of the country still don't know their rights.

Traditions and cultural beliefs also play a major part being that in most parts of the country, a man is still seen as the head of the house and this is extended even to the entire community leaving the



women with only one option; to obey the man even on issues determining how vulnerable the Kenyan woman is.

Uneven and unequal distribution of the available resource such as sufficient capital, technical know-how skills and exposure leaves the majority of Kenyan woman with no much choice but to play the submissive part as the man dominate the family being the soul provider. Submissiveness increases a woman's vulnerability.

Uneven distribution of human rights activists and civil society also create imbalance when it comes to gender equity campaigns. Regions and tribes with many of such activists are well advanced and far much ahead than other regions within the country.

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

In Kenya, poverty, hunger and employment data is not disaggregated by sex. Again it is not widely available to those who need it and is only availed during such times of crisis like during the recent economic times. Kenya still lack adequate resource centers where such kind of data can be easily availed hence make it very expensive for those who must source such data. Part of this data is quite outdated and no longer applies to the current state. Again, this data is never accurate having been tailored to meet certain individual's political or self interests.

For this data to be improved, first of all it must be accurate and collected by independent bodies with no personal interests on the same. Another thing is that it needs to be updated frequently rather than waiting for as long as 10 years like in the case of census. Finally, these kinds of data should always be readily available to those who need it.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?**

Yes, the civil society use it to advocate for or monitor public policies and to plan for their activities e.g. it is this data that determines how the government distributes various resources such as youth funds, constituency development funds, public colleges and universities admissions criteria among others. This data also determines the chances to give women and men during planning.

This data should be segregated by gender and the ratios determining the analysis clearly defined within the policies to ensure that everybody is treated equally.

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**Dated: 18 January 2010**

**Ros Va, UNDP Cambodia**

Dear All,

Thank you very much for e-discussion on Women and Poverty. Regarding the three parts of the questions, please see my response as following:

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Poverty and vulnerability has positively changed substantially since 1995. Most people of Cambodia are aware of their rights, education, safety net and domestic violence and so on with the efforts of civil society and government efforts .

In Cambodia, there have hierarchal series as following::

- Cambodian Millennium Development Goal 3 : Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment
- Two Strategies of four rectangular strategies of Cambodia:
  1. Capacity Building and Human Resource Management
    - Fostering Gender Equity
    - Enhancing Quality of Education
    - Improving health
    - Implementing Population Policy
  2. Private Sector Development and Employment Generation
    - Strengthening Private Sector and attracting investment
    - Promoting SME
    - Creating Jobs and ensuring improved work conditions
    - Ensuring Social safety nets

For the Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs, it has strategic areas:

1. Economic Empowerment of Women
2. Education of Women and Girls, Attitudes and Behavior Change
3. Legal Protection of Women and Girls
4. Health and Nutrition of Women and Girls, and HIV/AIDS
5. Women in Public Decision-making and Politics

Gender Mainstreaming Program:

- Gender Mainstreaming in national policies
- Gender Mainstreaming in government reform programs
- Gender Mainstreaming in priority sectors
- CEDAW Implementation

For the implementation of these policies and programmes are civil society and governmental institution. Both government institutions and agencies are taking efforts to implement in aligning with government rectangular strategies. They all have very good documentation on policy and paper and their results but need to record and distribute widely for the whole country. Recently, economic crisis has seriously affected the women, especially manufacturing factory workers and the poor in the rural area.

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

No, there is no formal record about the employment, hunger and poverty and only small part of the data analyzed and widely available. It should focus on comprehensive survey and data recorded. Both government and Civil society should have take efforts to do it in achieving millennium development goal and effective implementation to meet the real need of the poor and vulnerable. They have only the data of each NGOs or specific government agencies. For example: ADB-project: On Women's Development Center: They are supporting Ministry of Women's Affairs in implementing in 2 provinces by focusing on:

- Life Skills and Advocacy Support (Gender and Enterprise training, Home Safety, Women's Worker Rights, Nutrition Training, Post-harvested training and other training)
- Economic Empowerment (Community handicraft such as sedge mat weaving, bamboo weaving)

They have only the data of the provinces targeted and for the whole country, it is very difficult to find as it in exact figure as it is not widely recorded or survey. The same other NGOs, they have specific data for their target area or the provinces.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?**

Limitation of data to public policies and civil society to advocate with the government to ensure the achievement of the policies. For example: Gender and Development Cambodia organization, is NGOs works with the government to strengthen gender by advocating in policy formulation in line ministry strategic planning. Comprehensive survey needs to be done across the province and all are clearly recorded and widely available to find and access. It is very important to improve data at provincial and national levels which are widely available government itself, NGOs and private sector for using this data for development.

Thanks and all the best.

Ros Va

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Project Officer, Cambodia

UNDP/PGE/MoWA

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**Susan Fried and Deena Patel, UNDP New York**

Dear all,

Thank you to the Gender Team for initiating such an important e-discussion.

A number of contributors have already highlighted the need for enhanced land/property rights to alleviate poverty for women. Focusing on these issues is important because they address multiple MDGs, including MDGs 1, 3 and 6. From an HIV perspective, women dealing with these issues face additional discrimination and increased vulnerability when they are also living with HIV. For women living with HIV, the loss of shelter and livelihood, and the dislocation from their communities and social safety nets can make the difference between access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support or the lack of such access. Stigma and discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, can further jeopardize HIV-positive women's access to prevention, treatment, care and support. Denying women equal rights to property and inheritance hampers their social and economic security and increases the likelihood of human rights violations. Yet the promotion and protection of their rights is essential to reducing their

vulnerability and to strengthening their capacity to cope with the impact of the epidemic on themselves, their families and communities.

Although these issues have been prominent in policy for a considering women's empowerment, there is now a growing body of evidence on the relationships between women's land/property rights and HIV. Recent research from South Asia has documented the link between women's property ownership and a substantially lower risk of marital violence. In fact, asset control gives women greater bargaining power within households and helps protect against domestic violence, a key risk factor for HIV. Research in Kerala, India, for example, found that 49% of women with no property reported physical violence as compared to only 7% of women who did own property (ICRW, UNDP, GCWA, "Women's Property Rights as an AIDS Response Emerging Efforts in South Asia," 2007). Land/property rights can provide women with a secure place to live, a site for economic activity and means of livelihood. Property and inheritance rights also reduce economic dependence on men and extended families, and provide collateral for credit. They can help women and girls to avoid being drawn into livelihoods that place them at greater risk of infection.

The UNDP HIV/AIDS Practice (HQ) is planning a panel during the upcoming CSW to address women's inheritance and property rights in the context of HIV. For more information, please contact [Deena.patel@undp.org](mailto:Deena.patel@undp.org).

Warm regards,  
Susana Fried, Gender Advisor, UNDP HIV/AIDS Practice  
Deena Patel, Gender Policy Analyst, UNDP HIV/AIDS Practice

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**Rania Antonopoulos, Levy Institute, USA**

Dear all,

Let me begin by extending my gratitude to the Gender Team for initiating this discussion and my thanks to all the contributors for a rich discussion. I would like to continue the conversation and share my thoughts on two points India Hidalgo made in the previous message.

First, on "Conditional Cash transfer programs haven't succeed in generating the conditions to enhance women's economic opportunities and to minimize their vulnerability to economic shocks. I can identify the following reasons for that: most of these actions are based on the reproductive role of women. They don't transform gender relations and they don't promote the economic autonomy of women".

Indeed, conditional cash transfers have proven important in supporting the wellbeing of children, But in and of themselves, they serve a rather limited purpose for transforming gender relations. Not only in Mexico and Brazil (two very well known programs) but also in many other countries, such programs are unfortunately conflated with "social protection" for women. If governments are to INVEST in poverty eradication and if funds are to be allocated to that effect, what sorts of alternative initiatives might we suggest? My own work in this field points me in the direction of public service job creation-or employment guarantee programs in areas that provide work opportunities in types of projects that reduce part of the unpaid work burdens for women. These jobs, much like cash transfers, are funded through the public purse, much like "*oportunidades* and *bolsa familia*" etc. But they can be designed (chosen) according to what women themselves decide is important for their own communities; they can have components that provide training and in some cases full accreditation to the participating beneficiaries. And while women (and some men and the youth) work and receive income, at the same time physical and social infrastructure gets created locally. If well designed, from a developmental point of view, these

programs (permanent-not one off) can and should be linked to other initiatives that are a part of the social development agenda of a country. Examples: rural irrigation (reduces time to collect water, results in lakes for fisheries-on the basis of which women's cooperatives are built) , building of ecological latrines (less time for sanitation work), early childhood development for very young children, home based care services that help families with members suffering from protracted illness environmental small but critical projects etc. The list goes on. We have evidence on how these programs work from India and South Africa including in the spheres of early childhood development (includes nutrition and health inputs) and in home based care for households that have members living with HIV/AIDS virus, or other disabling conditions, and if there is interest we would be happy to share the information. We are now working with INMUJERES in Mexico, where the government will be introducing a pilot program in two regions.

Second, "....but this methodology fails to capture gender differences in poverty and other dimensions of it such as the productive and reproductive workload. Another methodology must be used in order to make visible the real gender differences in poverty".

The comments I made above do not suggest that cash transfers to households and women who are mothers should be eliminated. To the contrary, in some cases these are very much needed. But in which cases? We do need a methodology that captures the different dimensions between men and women and also one that differentiates among women themselves. What is crucial here, is the difference as Nidia Hildago mentioned, women's unpaid reproduction work. Poor women suffer from (a) lack of adequate income-this does not need much explanation (b) lack of services , whereby, not only they do not receive these services, but also fill in these gaps as best as they can for their households and communities and (c) disproportionate unpaid work (including unpaid care work-but not only). There is a meaningful way to capture all this, if there is time use data available. There is indeed a way to measure this. A consortium of researchers from 10 countries are in the process of developing the work plan in the next few months and we hope that we will be able to demonstrate why a geographic mapping across the three domains (income, public spending and time) must become the main tool, if we are to make transparent what has remained invisible in poverty counts.

Rania Antonopoulos  
Director  
Gender and the Economy Program,  
Levy Economics Institute

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### **Ernest Okyere, Ghana**

There is no doubt that women have been given a centre stage in the poverty alleviation process even though this can be questioned on a number of grounds. This increasing attention is demonstrated in the enormous emphasis on women when it comes to enterprise development, micro-financing activities and other poverty alleviation interventions. However, these interventions have mostly been women-centered rather than gender centered; this phenomenon has compelled many feminists to view women as being used as instruments of poverty alleviation strategies. Unfortunately many of those who argue in this direction do not provide alternative strategies through which women can champion the course of poverty reduction without being seen as a means to an end. One backlash of this women-centered approach to reducing poverty has been the increasing violence of all forms against women. Thus, whilst assessing how poverty alleviation strategies have impacted on the lives of women, there is also the need to remodel such strategies (at least to involve men) so as to avoid such and other backlashes.

In Ghana, the changes in the political landscape have also brought in its wake increasing participation of women in local politics most especially at the grass root level. This is demonstrated in the rising number of women as representatives of local assembly at the district level even though this has not translated into significant changes in the number of legislations (both at bye-laws and national laws) that continue to perpetuate the differential level of poverty among men and women. The rising number of girls getting education is also translating into increasing number of women being employed into the formal sector (mostly to the benefits of the elites). This development is as a result of the emphasis on the girl child education by both the government and NGOs. The establishment of the national health insurance and the free maternal health for pregnant women, the passage of the Intestate Law (even before the Beijing conference) as well as the passage of the controversial 1 Domestic Violence Law which serves as a shield against violence on women have been some of the developments since the ratification of Beijing Action. Unarguably, there is more to be done in reducing poverty among women in the country.

In spite of these institutional developments, most women in Ghana are not able to take advantage of these institutional frameworks (mostly the legal aspect) which are meant to protect them against various forms of discrimination. This is partly as a result of the culture of silence and the fear of being branded a 'misfit' even by other women. This could also be the result of mistrust in the judiciary system. Even though some cultural practices which perpetuate poverty among women have been outlawed, there are some (e.g. witch camps) which continue to be practiced, mostly with the support of women themselves.

With regards to the measurement of poverty, the parameters for measuring poverty are increasingly taking into consideration the different gender groups even though the scale is quite minute. Like most poverty studies, most of the sources of data for the Ghana Living Standard Survey are from household level and this masks the differential poverty level among the household members. Income parameters, access to social services and other indicators are measured at the household level and this makes it difficult to know the well-being of individual members of the household. It is worth noting however that poverty level among female-headed households is lower than male-headed households even though this might not be a reflection of the situation among women as individuals.

In a nutshell, at least some efforts are being made but there is the need to accelerate the speed of intervention and also the need to increase education to mitigate discrimination against women taking into consideration, the culture and the values of the people.

Ernest Okyere  
MSc Development Studies (London)  
BA Economics and Geography (Kumasi)

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**Loreen Meda, Zimbabwe**

Dear All

I would like to thank you for creating such a forum for general discussions and recommendations.

The issue of gender and equality has been talked about and in my opinion will continue to be talked about for the next millennium if we do not also bring man into the discussion.

Child rape in Zimbabwe has increased by more than 42% since 1995, domestic violence contributes to 60% of domestic violence and mostly perpetrated by man against women and incest is also on the rise most cases being father and daughter or uncle. This brings me to the second most important question to me are we doing enough and are we even doing the right thing? It would seem that the cases might have

increased because of increased awareness which would mean that we are on the right track. Now that we have done the diagnostics we also need to find the solution.

Zimbabwe passed a Domestic Violence Act in 2006 after a lot of lobbying from human rights groups, with the political situation in the country this was a positive move. The problem is that three years down the line most of the population is not aware of the bill and do not even know what it means. The thing is that after the Beijing Conference there has been a lot of academic solutions to the problems, most of which have been highly impractical to rural uneducated folk. You have a police force that is not trained or even equipped to handle human rights issues, they are continually violating these rights everyday.

From personal experience I took a friend to one of our police stations to report a case of physical abuse after the husband bit her for asking him why he was cheating on her. During the fight the husband had started to biting the child as well (2yrs) that is when this friend of mine ran to my house. At the police station we were told to go back and get the husband, I raised my complaint about the matter and I heard them talk amongst themselves that I was one of those women who did not know her place. My friend was too shaken and she was disappointed in me because the protection I had promised her from the police was not forth coming so she decided to go back home and act like nothing had happened. Women and girls children are the worst affected during war time and election time in Africa, they are used as pones by man and the world has watched helplessly. It is good to have a global initiative, however there is also need to evaluate the means to achieve the objective on a country by country basis, using system already in place i.e. awareness groups, activists hospitals and Village elders, headsman, and chiefs.

In South Africa rape and murder mostly of women and children is on the rise. This is a country unlike Zimbabwe has the resources and infrastructure to fight a good fight. This clearly shows that the law enforcement agencies are ill equipped to meet this daunting task. The increase in teenage pregnancy is alarming to say the least and most African countries see South Africa as a beacon of hope, the government needs to be made more accountable, saying the statistics is not good enough.

One is tempted to think that a harsh jail term would be the remedy, but what about the victim? We have cases of infants being raped for juju purposes. Witchdoctors should be involved in this matters as they are directly involved in cases of child rape for muti (to gain wealth) as wrong as it might be Witch doctors still have a lot of influence in Africa at large. If you ask people they will not admit it but most people visit them for one reason or another. There needs to be put in place support mechanisms that once the masses have been educated we need to follow through on that and help the authorities to enforce the law, not only that but also provide support to a mother who has just had her husband arrested for abusing their child. This is the time when most women are vulnerable and the reason most cases are withdrawn or never reported and there is no support after the report has been made.

In most African countries women are accorded their rights according to customary law, this has been the biggest enemy to development and empowerment of women as all the educated women eventually follow the customs of their land (man is the head of the family, he has the final word, he is always right, the wife is to support her husband at all times) an African marriage without this is challenged, there are few African man who appreciate that their wife has rights other than those he will give to her. The issue of lobola has been put on the table as the major cause abuse of women by man (it is difficult to move away from tradition). Zimbabwe has adopted like most countries in Africa the CEDAW, SADC Declaration on gender and Development the Beijing Declaration of 1995, the Dakar Platform for Action and the Millennium Goal all these have been ratified or signed but the situation on the ground has left a lot to be desired. We now need to involve the rural folk, especially the village heads and elders to encamp African customs in finding the solution and an effective solution. The campaign could be costly but might prove to be most effective,



Land ownership remains a sore issue with relation to gender issues, the right for women to own land needs to be ratified and women folk need to be educated on these matters. The African tradition says when a man marries a woman he owns her, however everything a woman owns belongs to her relatives. In African culture man pay lobola they feel that they should also own everything a woman makes or any property she might own during their marriage as he would have paid for her. This has not made life easy for successful women throughout the world as they feel challenged. World over lobola or not men evaluating themselves by the size of their ego, it is the same in America, Mexico, Australia, China, Zimbabwe, Britain and Nigeria man believe that their success is measured by how much money they have and how they control their families. This has to be tackled right from the family structure, the concept that if you educate a woman you educate a nation proves a point. As we try to correct our mistakes, we should understand that a child grows up to uphold the names and values they are taught when they become grown ups. This also might take time to yield results but might be less expensive to introduce a class on social etiquette at an early age, or create a family structure within a school or seniors mentoring the juniors.

In most African countries we remain behind in terms of technology most rape offenders are set free because of inadequate evidence against them. Our pathology departments are not equipped with modern technology, often the case is based on the victim's statement.

Humanitarian Aid Agencies should take up the responsibility of educating masses of their rights, to provide support mechanism that will work within the communities they work in. They have to be seen to be pro-active. Institutionalization is a very big possibility and can yield results in an environment that allows for easy tracking or follow up to enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of the system after sometime with greater possibility of close to accurate results.

We need to devise a way that ordinary people like me can make an impact no matter how small, ownership is needed by both men and women.

Loreen Meda

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**Godwin Abu, Nigeria**

Dear All,

May I please stand on existing protocol to thank the forum organizers for an opportunity like this. Let me open my contribution by saying that poverty differs from location to location and is equally caused and sustained by different factors. The effects also vary from male to female. In Africa alone, one single factor can not be held singularly as the explanatory variable for poverty incidence amongst women folk. My country Nigeria and many more African countries in Sub-Sahara are not tacking good for any of the MDG goals especially in the eradication of extreme hunger. This shows expression in women and children suffering. These countries connived with international donor agencies to design poverty reduction programmes. Despite several years of implementation of such programmes, the outcome is that poverty amongst women have just been multiplying. what went wrong? A lot of these strategies assumed a uniform cause, hence, a uniform strategy. The first step in my submission will be a study to show the causes of poverty and such studies should also be location specific. Direct line of credit may not work as in the case of el Salvador in Africa because there is no capacity to utilize such credit lines.

Dr. Godwin Abu  
Dept. Of Agric. Economics, Univ. of Agric.  
makurdi, Nigeria

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**Otina Kennedy Odhiambo Otina, Kenya**

Calculated Poverty - Kenya

It is interesting to participate in this thread. I am sure that most efforts for economic empowerment of women are facing a myriad of challenges in Africa. It is important to note that the world is patriarchal in nature but the situations differ from one to the other. Africa is one of the continents that poverty among women is a calculated and is reinforced through archaic cultural beliefs, warped religious doctrines and violence.

Having worked with men as agents of change towards new masculinity for the last six years at FEMNET ([www.femnet.or.ke](http://www.femnet.or.ke)), I can confidently attest that economic empowerment of women has to be undertaken alongside many other programmes of empowerment. It is imperative that we take to remember that the unequal economic status between men and women is to the advantage of men. Women are forced to stay in abusive relationship because they are made to believe that they cannot sustain themselves without the men. In other contexts, women are offered more incentives if they accept to have sex without condoms. The results of the two are now very clear. Any effort to empower women must be ready to resolve the conflicts that may occur as it is likely to disturb the status quo.

Our communities have not accounted for the women's contribution in many economies most of the women who are not in the wage economy are rarely rewarded for their contribution. In one of the matrimonial property case filed at the high court in Kenya, a husband could not understand why his former wife was awarded a 50/50 share of the property. He retorted "*The world has become too unfair to men these days, my former wife had never been employed anywhere and has not made any contribution to wealth I have. Awarding her any of the property is not fair*". His sentiment was shared by many people of different walks of life.

As women rights organizations work to change the systemic cycle of poverty among women, it is also important to enlist the support of progressive men to influence other men to appreciate the real value of women. Many women who borrow loans in the micro credit schemes default on their re-payment because their husbands cheated them and took all the money. One woman was heard explaining: "*I didn't have a bank account so I kept the money in the house but when my husband came he took all the money and bought beer. Now I am unable to start the business or pay the loan.*" FEMNET has established a Men to Men Regional Programme that works to mobilize a critical mass of men to end violence against women in Africa covering seven countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi and Mali.

Come and work with us.

Otina Kennedy Odhiambo Otina  
Regional Programme Associate Men to Men  
African Women's Development and Communication Network – FEMNET  
[mentomen@femnet.or.ke](mailto:mentomen@femnet.or.ke)

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## **Lucie Odhoch, Kenya**

Greetings to all,

We must admit that we are all victims of patriarchy societies, women rights and gender equality irrespective of the wide campaigns is still viewed with a lot of skepticism!

Secondly, most of the elite women who take front lead in these campaigns do not involve the grassroots women in the policy formulation and implementation.

I advocate for a bottom-up and not Top-down approach to dealing with these issues of women right, gender equality and poverty. I do believe this approach will yield much results. Thanks.

Lucie Odhoch  
Psychological Counselor  
Nairobi

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## **Yobo Fidèle, Cameroon**

I want to appreciate the initiative of this e-discussion that will enable people and organizations from far and near to express views, exchange ideas and experience, in order to improve on the global action against women poverty.

The Beijing Act has been undoubtedly very instrumental to enhance the empowerment of women around the globe. To an extent, and within the African context especially, more particularly in Cameroon, there is reason to think that a lot is still to be done to create awareness for both men and women on its contents.

Because every coalition behind the women cause creates resistance, there is wide ignorance of the contents of this Act. This ignorance is not only of men, but more even of policy makers and women themselves. Everybody talks about Beijing Conference without a concrete meaning.

That is why in my opinion, the major cause of poverty of the woman today, 15 years after Beijing Act, is the poor access to information. Digging into the matter, we have observed that in our context, until we reach a situation where an average or poor woman is able to spare some time of her day to get involved in other productive activities than those reproductive ones of the household, it will be difficult to have a significant change in relation to her accessing the sufficient information she needs.

In the case of women who are able to have this time, little information is made available in a format (language, support, etc.) that will suit their interests, expectations and absorption capacity. Additionally, these women do not often know where to go to get the needed information, especially in poor rural settings where government technical services have virtually no offices, and civil society organizations intervene sporadically depending on available funding.

Data in the numerous studies and surveys are sometimes disaggregated by sex. However, this is not a systematic practice especially in topics of economic concerns. We can also notice that sex disaggregation is done more for the sake of differentiating, and less for analyzing and developing specific strategies and positive actions towards women empowerment.

Policies are designed with a stronger inclination to equity than equality. While I appreciate the fact that equity is very important in the promotion of improved governance, it is limiting to address women empowerment from an equitable perspective, because in such cases, we indirectly continue to maintain women in a lower and follower's position.

To this situation, more awareness raising and capacity development or strengthening on gender and gender sensitive policy development, monitoring and evaluation is needed for our policy makers and leaders at various levels.

Surveys have limited scope and are sometimes based on data collected in urban and suburban areas, without reaching out to the deep rural areas where women in their majority are unable to express themselves in official languages.

Civil society organizations in Cameroon attempting to address gender issues are often well informed both about policies, international conventions, treaties and the Beijing Act, as well as women needs in their particular areas of intervention. But the coordination of their efforts is still very weak, and while there is abundance of interventions on certain issues like agriculture or health, there are few of them operating in issues such as business advisory or development service for women, information dissemination in local languages, broken home restoration, or even parenting for men and women among others. Equally, while many interventions are located in and around main towns and cities, fewer can be seen in enclave villages or regions.

More and more, we have also witnessed that many civil society organizations are created on the assumption that funding will be mobilized more than on the conviction and passionate intervention to change the women situation; that is why many organizations or dynamics either disappear after some years of functioning under external funding or regularly change the focus of their interventions to adapt to the current funding requirements or tendencies. This instability and non-sustainability derails these organizations from intervening on the root causes of problems faced by poor women.

In addition to this, policy and decision makers in Cameroon for example hardly offer room for monitoring of the implementation of these policies or their actions, either by Civil society organizations or general public. For example, many debates and TV programmes are organized and broadcasted to improve on the situation of women, but, there has hardly ever been a Member of Parliament or Minister willing to answer or enlighten the public.

Because this e-discussion gives rooms for more exchange, I will surely have more elements to share with all debaters subsequently.

I wish that many more people and organizations contribute effectively.

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### **Elena Sutormina, Russia**

The situation of women in Russia over the past 15 years has improved markedly. Such concept as “maternity capital” has appeared in our life. It has recently been increased from approximately \$ 8300 to \$ 11400. Child benefits are also growing, though may be not enough. More and more women are invited to the public authorities. Regarding private companies, women are mostly hired on low positions. More attention is paid to the protection of women's labor. Situation of housewives is widely discussed now. Upon reaching retirement age and assigning pensions to them, it turns out that they have no employment records; therefore pension compensation is quite small.

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## Natalie Raaber & Anne Schoenstein, New Zealand

We very much welcome this important discussion and want to contribute by responding to the question on the vulnerability of women in relation to the current crises.

As highlighted by other participants in this e-discussion, the economic and financial crises should not be seen in isolation from the food, energy, water, environment/climate, human rights and care crises. These interlocking crises are part and parcel of a failed neoliberal growth and development model; a model which is gender blind and indifferent to human rights, including women's rights. What we are facing is a structural, systemic crisis.

Women's unequal enjoyment of human rights increases women's vulnerability to the impact of crises. Moreover, as one's experience of the food, energy, water, and climate crises is gendered, women and men are impacted by these crises differently. Women are disadvantaged in specific and disproportionate ways within these crises, subsequently increasing their vulnerability to economic and financial crises.

Gender inequalities – within, inter alia, the labor market, migration, care work, access to credit, food/water procurement and the aid and financing for development agenda as well as in the experience of violence – further exacerbate women's vulnerability to crises. Women are also underrepresented in the political realm as well as in conflict resolution, peace and security matters, which increases the likelihood that the needs of women are overlooked, making women even more vulnerable to crises.

While women are the majority of workers in industries that are severely affected by the economic crisis they are losing jobs at greater rates than men in some cases. They are also often contracted in low-paid, low-skilled and temporary employment, making them particularly vulnerable in times of crises and downturns. Furthermore, women are more likely to rely on remittances and migration and carry an already heavy burden of non-remunerated work, including care work, which increases the negative impact of crises on women.

Women disproportionately perform care/reproductive work – both within and outside the home. Unpaid care work tends to be invisible in macroeconomic analysis and policies, including fiscal stimulus packages. As a result, the gender-differentiated impact of the crisis and the additional burden many women must take on to sustain livelihoods is obscured, increasing levels of vulnerability to the crisis.

Also, women are more likely than men to experience violence and numerous studies have also shown that in times of crisis women and girls are exposed to greater risks of violence, which, in turn increases women's vulnerability to poverty.

For countries that rely heavily on aid, remittances or exports, the short-term shock and the heavy financial burden of higher interest rates and devaluing currencies could lead to less spending on social assistance programs, pension schemes, schools and credit transfers. Due to their gendered positions in society, when social assistance programs are pulled back, women take on the extra burden.

In 2009, New Zealand's aid program to the Pacific shifted its focus from poverty elimination to economic sustainability. As a result, there is concern from NGOs about the potential negative impact of this move on progress made in poverty elimination and gender equality initiatives in the Pacific. This could increase women's vulnerability in general and particularly to crises.

Stimulus packages and other responses to the crisis – including economic and financial structures and global governance mechanisms – must be gender sensitive and promote women's rights. While devastating, the crisis provides an opportunity – as noted previously by another e-discussion participant – to promote an economic model that is grounded in human rights and is inclusive, accountable and sustainable.

For more information on the impact of the crisis on women please see our latest brief series that presents different sub-regional perspectives on the impacts of the crisis on women's rights. You can access them at

[www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org). Our web portal “The Global Crisis: Feminist Analysis and Information” is another source around the topic that may hopefully be useful for you all.

Natalie Raaber & Anne Schoenstein, New Zealand  
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

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### **Evelyne Ofwona, Kenya**

In Kenya, the government has introduced decentralization of funds such as the women enterprise and development fund to enhance women's empowerment and reduce their poverty. This has also enhanced their governance and decision making skills/roles. There is a new land policy that enables women to inherit land. Also the present draft constitution is very gender friendly. It allows women more spaces in decision making roles - a third. However, on the ground things are very different. Women still do not have a voice and thoroughly marginalized. Gender Based Violence is on the increase. In politics the ground is not level. More girls are dropping out of school etc.

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### **Anita Mathew, India**

I have read the messages posted for the e-discussion. Since working on women's issues this past decade in India it is imperative to work on rights to remove the root of poverty which more often than not has a woman's face. The reason is the patriarchal system and even when women are educated they are not decision makers till they reach maybe 60! hopefully- most of their productive years are lost in trying to balance household work ,men and children and economic recession within those parameters-a herculean task done by countless 'poor' Indian women with grit and smile. I have worked in slums that keep the floor of each cardboard shanty squeaky clean and serve delicious tea and its all women! the boys start early to dropout and earn as it is defined as male to be the earner and women remain in the background nurturing all! we have to get women to be the decision makers if poverty should not have a woman's face and we have to work with boys and men to remove gender discrimination.

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### **Habiba Ali, Nigeria**

Thank you for the welcome note, and taking it from the introduction or points to consider, I will tell you from the northern part of Nigeria where I live and work, gender issues are still not very well considered and there are currently no known policies in place, there is not yet specific laws that are widely spread and known easily by women so they can stand for their rights. The woman is still grappling to let her voice be heard and utilized properly.

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**Dated: 19 January 2010**

### **Elaine Ryan, Switzerland**

Dear All,

I assist the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, Magdalena Sepulveda, at OHCHR. On her behalf, I would like to follow-up on the issue of cash transfers that was raised by Nidia Hidlago of UNDP El Salvador by sending the independent expert's report to the 2009 Human Rights Council. The [Report Of The Independent Expert On The Question Of Human Rights And Extreme](#)

[Poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona \(http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/trafficking/docs/HRC-10-16.pdf\)](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/trafficking/docs/HRC-10-16.pdf) ) entitled Promotion and Protection Of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social And Cultural Rights, Including The Right To Development examines cash transfer programmes from a human rights perspective. Text referencing to gender are found on page 17 onwards.

With best regards,

Elaine Ryan  
Mandate of the United Nations Independent Expert  
on the Question of Human Rights and Extreme Poverty  
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CH-1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

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### **Loreen Meda**

I would say a lot has been done to educate women world over, but a lot has not been done to educate men and equip women with the right tools to make lobbying a success. Special emphasis has been put on widows, orphans and elderly, however history has shown that these continue to be at a disadvantage even in the targeting process as they are either illiterate or undermined by society as a whole.

This has posed a great problem as we have more and more child-headed households or those that are being headed by an elderly person with no proper means to earn a living and/or even the strength to do so. These have been constantly sideline because of their inability to equally contribute in terms of labor. There has been political power struggles in Africa which have influenced the society's decision directly or indirectly. Sustainable development seems to be the way to go, Relief Aid is good and imperative in most cases however there is a need to make sure that the dependency syndrome does not take place. There are those who will not plough because they are waiting on handouts year in and year out. The inflation did not make things easy and we have children getting into prostitution and the children get younger and younger.

Looking at the Political arena more women need to take interest as that is the only way to effectuate change. What change do we hope to take place when you have a government made up of 367 ministerial positions and 4 of them are women? Looking at the ration; the cause is defeated before it has even began. Giving governments quarters to fulfill though it helps them to know that what is expected is not useful as this is never fulfilled.

Loreen Meda

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### **Amoo Bandele Alabi Ganiyu, Nigeria**

Good Morning,  
Let me thank all participants in this forum for sharing the facts in their countries. I want to share the Nigerian experiences from my own perspective as an Economist and Researcher.



There are various dimensions to gender equality in Nigeria. Generally speaking, although the tempo of propaganda is low currently, the Nigerian stakeholders are making efforts to improve lots of women and children in conformity with Beijing Platform for Action resolutions.

Legal and social institutions have continued to shorten the disparity between Nigerian men and women but the success of this endeavor is still constrained by availability of qualified women.

Women's access to the labor force has improved over the last three decades but this is still very low compared to men. With the fertility rate low family planning usage (15 per cent) and relatively poor access to healthcare, Nigeria has maternal mortality ratio of 800 deaths per 100,000 live births. The estimated annual maternal deaths figure of 37,000 means that Nigeria bears the second highest maternal burden in the world. Women's active engagement in agriculture is weighed down by male restrictions as well as culture and capital inhibitions. The effort at political empowerment of women is still very feeble with about 8 of parliamentarians being women, no representation at all in fourteen states and 11 percent of ministerial positions held by women. Within the sub-national governments, we have 12 female state assembly members out of 990, 13 female House of Representatives members out of 360 and 3 female senators out of 109. Despite the improvement in female political participation, these figures are not equitable.

There is prospect of improvement, particularly as the governments make efforts to address the fundamental foundation sectors such as improve the girl-child access to basic education, improve energy and power sector and improve rural area development. So many programmes have evolved in the last five years, ranging from microfinance, health, small and medium enterprise for women schemes, agriculture-based schemes, irrigation programmes and many other community based programmes too numerous to mention.

B.A.G AMOO,  
Deputy Director,  
Real Sector Division,  
Research Department,  
Central Bank Of Nigeria

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**Monika Scheffler, Zimbabwe**

Good day to all of you!

We are Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) We very much welcome this discussion and want to contribute by responding to the question on availability and use of gender-disaggregated data on poverty and what needs to be done to improve the situation.

DIWA is representing women of the Pan-African Disability Movement. As you might know disabled women in Africa are one of the most impoverished groups. It is often forgotten that this group make about 10% of the female population. These women are suffering from exclusion. They are very often denied to participate in economic, social, and cultural activities at all. Especially the situation of disabled women in rural Africa is alarming.

As we all work on women's human rights issues, trying to smash the vicious circle of poverty, dependency, and abuse, it is key that we also highlight that women are not a monolithic group and that an understanding of intersection of discrimination against disabled women is integrated into the analysis.

It is essential in our mutual approach to integrate a more nuanced understanding of women's situation, including diverse impacts it can have on groups experiencing multiple discriminations, such as women with disabilities, but also women of color, older women, etc.

As an organization which is lobbying for the improvement of disabled women's lives in Africa, we urgently need not only gender disaggregated data, we need data of disabled women who are suffering of poverty much above average.

We are really lacking reliable data on the situation of disabled women because most data on women does not explicitly mention the situation of disabled women; and likewise most research on the Disabled does not provide data on disabled women. If we had more differentiated data it would be easier for us to lobby governments, international development organizations, and not at last donors.

For illustration; there is a small study on **Living Conditions among People with Activity Limitations in Malawi, performed** in September 2004 by SINTEF. This study is an exception because it provides us with significant data, e.g. not only that the mean monthly salary of disabled persons is only 2413 MWK in comparison to 3305 MWK for the non-disabled, but that disabled women's mean salary was only 1905 MWK in comparison to 2267 MWK of the non-disabled women whereas the mean salary of a non-disabled men was 3992 MWK.

We need more of such disaggregated data to feed us with arguments for our lobby and advocacy work. So we would appreciate it if this e-discussion will lead to more differentiated data within countries poverty evaluations.

Thank you!

Monika Scheffler  
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web: [www.diwa.ws](http://www.diwa.ws)

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**Abimbola Williams, Nigeria**

Dear All,

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Gender team and contributors for the wonderful and engaging sessions. A number of contributors have highlighted several issues targeting women and poverty. Nigeria has experienced a high incidence of poverty in the last two decades which has been attributed to macroeconomic feat of the economy. Several studies in Nigeria have not been given priority until recently with the Federal Office of Statistics conducting household surveys on poverty. These studies have focused majorly on the poverty profile of the country and not determining poverty among various households.

Another concern for decision making is the need to have accurate and available data. Data has been defective and virtually incomplete to make meaningful estimates that could inform policy makers on strategies that could target women and poverty. Thus, it will be necessary to adopt a comprehensive national survey while we strengthen efforts on national data that captures demographic characteristics, women and poverty. Perhaps, we could try to adopt the use of indirect demographic techniques on defective data to make meaningful estimates that could inform decision makers. Also, it is imperative that

the information on data at district, state and national level be available and as accurate as possible. Surveys on poverty have been limited in scope and thematic areas due to funding in carrying out a research. Sometimes these surveys focus more on urban areas without reaching women and men in rural areas that do not have access to poverty alleviation strategies. Persons in the rural areas are faced with deep rooted poverty that increases their vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, sex work and other public health concerns. A lot of surveys need to diversify their resources on identifying possible strategies and recommendations in alleviating poverty among women especially. Surveys have limited scope and are sometimes based on data collected in urban and suburban areas, without reaching out to the deep rural areas where women in their majority are unable to express themselves in official languages.

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### **Shagufta Shah, Pakistan**

Hi All,

Thanks for creating a forum to discuss the link between women, poverty and equality issues across the regions.

In this regard, I found this information presenting: [A Gender Quiz: “60 minutes to Convince” session on Gender Equality](#) very useful to share and is also addressing the questions asked during this e-discussion forum.

Warm Regards

Shagufta Shah  
Project Coordinator  
Concern Worldwide – Pakistan  
11-A, Agha Khan Road, F-6/3 Islamabad

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### **Louise Gonsalvez, Canada**

How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?

The bottom line is income disparity still sees women, and especially single mothers, struggling. They are more vulnerable to illness, violence and homelessness. Even in a developed nation we have 1/7 women living in poverty and 1/4 children living in poverty. Their children too are more vulnerable socially, economically and in school. There are multiple NGOs taking up the slack, but the federal government continues to give with one hand and take with the other. The international market trumps all decisions.

- In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?
- Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies?

Ours is disaggregated. Despite analysis little change has taken place. It is only by the will and pressure of civil society that change takes place. Policies are established, programs established and then taken away. We have lobbied for a national daycare program for forty years and we still don't have one. The myth that one is where they are primarily because of their personal choices (failures/successes) is perpetuated; systemic causes of poverty among women are not being addressed, (i.e. Lack of childcare, minimum wages and maximum rentals and costs of food, and tenuous access to services.

Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?

Please click [\[http://www.casw-acts.ca/advocacy/womenpoverty\\_e.pdf\]](http://www.casw-acts.ca/advocacy/womenpoverty_e.pdf) to view an attachment on Women's Income and Poverty in Canada Revisited; produced by Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2004.

Louise

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**Deborah Ajulu, Uganda**

Dear All,

The situation of Development for Women to break out of the poverty trap is not new just because it has been made one of the MDGs. Furthermore, both research and writing on Women and Development issues over the years have produced a plethora of material that can inform any curious mind inquisitive about cause and effect and possible solutions in this area.

For example, one could think of a doctor treating a patient, he examines & does all the investigations (research) to establish the cause of the illness of the patient and then diagnoses or comes up with the prognosis having ascertained everything, goes ahead to prescribe appropriate treatment. In most normal cases (unless in cases of e.g. cancers that are presented too late) the treatment brings positive change in the condition that leads to the patient getting well.

So what could be the real problem in the way 'Women and Poverty' as a problem has continued to persist with all that is being done?

Some few suggestions:

**i) Male Oriented Technological Transfer:** A lot has been talked about male oriented new technologies but what attempts if any are being made to respond to this?

**ii) Need for Holistic rather than Targeted Approaches in Development:** This is where in Community Development, a number of approaches will be directed to "Women" per se. Knowledge has it that in many situations, communities tend to be patri-lineal where men play leading roles not just in families but also in community matters. Targeting women without involving men in active participation more often than not turns out counter development. Experience testifies to the fact that the negative input by men aroused which is not addressed naturally renders the whole effort regressive. Holistic approaches are more likely to detect the areas of countervailing forces e.g. men's responses & attitudes; other areas of women's roles like care for children, the sick & the elderly, other normal chores, etc. These should be addressed to enhance the positive impact of the effort made.

Deborah Ajulu  
Uganda

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## Annie Matundu-Mbambi, DRC

Dear All,

My name is Annie Matundu – Mbambi. I am an Independent Consultant in Gender and Development; I am a member of Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and the Gender in Action Association. I network and work closely with many organizations of women in DRC. At the moment, I am the representative of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in the DRC.

<b>En Francais,</b>	<b>In English</b>
<p>Un Slogan dit : » La pauvreté a un visage des femmes »</p> <p>La pauvreté a plusieurs facettes et la principale cause de la pauvreté des femmes tient à la fois aux dures conditions du marché de travail et au triple rôle de la femme étant que. Épouse, Mère et Educatrice</p> <p>L'inégalité des sexes est un obstacle majeur qui s'oppose à l'éradication de la pauvreté et à la réalisation des OMD.</p> <p>Malgré ses immenses ressources naturelles, la RDC est parmi les pays les plus pauvres du monde avec des inégalités très marquées. Les inégalités de genre sont très perçues car les femmes n'ont pas accès aux facteurs de production (terres, capital, travail) ni à l'éducation.</p> <p>Le conflit a eu aussi des effets dévastateurs sur les capacités productives de l'économie, sur l'environnement et sur la pauvreté et la majorité des femmes sont dans le secteur informel. Les difficultés des femmes quant à l'accès aux facteurs de production sont renforcées par le dispositif juridique et institutionnel qui consacre l'incapacité de la femme mariée en exigeant l'autorisation préalable de mari. Elles partent donc défavorisées sur le marché de travail.</p> <p>La RDC a élaboré son Document sur les Stratégies de la Réduction de la Pauvreté (DSRP) en 2002, dans les conditions de sortie d'un conflit dévastateur et d'une plus longue transition d'Afrique .L'implication des organisations de la société civile dans le processus et dans l'organisation des consultations participatives auprès des communautés de base fut significative. Malheureusement, a RDC souffre actuellement de l'absence des statistiques fiables, Il n'y a pas</p>	<p>A Slogan says: "Poverty has a female face"</p> <p>Poverty is multi-faceted. The principal culprit women's poverty can be attributed to the harsh conditions of working environment and the triple burden that women carry that includes being a wife, a mother and an educator.</p> <p>Gender inequality is a major obstacle that hinders poverty eradication and the achievement of MDG goals.</p> <p>Despite the immense natural resources, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is among the poorest countries in the world with highly marked gender inequalities. Gender inequality is deeply felt because women do not have access to factors of production (including land, capital and work) nor to education.</p> <p>The conflict has also had devastating effects on the productive capacity of the economy, on the environment and on poverty levels. The vast majority of women are in the informal sector.</p> <p>The difficulties women face in accessing factors of production are further reinforced by the legal and institutional frameworks that place married women under the authority of their husbands. They are therefore, disadvantaged/ marginalized in the labor market.</p> <p>In 2002, DRC prepared a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in the context of a country emerging from a devastating conflict and from a longer transition period in Africa. There was significant involvement of civil society organizations in the process and in the organization of community-based participatory consultations.</p>

<p>d'indicateurs à jour sur l'ampleur réelle de la pauvreté dans le pays.</p> <p>Normalement, l'analyse des budgets nationaux pour déterminer l'impact de la pauvreté sur les femmes et les hommes devrait favoriser l'instauration de l'équité dans tous les secteurs du développement en faisant apparaître les allocations attribuées dans les divers domaines, notamment l'éducation, la santé et l'emploi, qui sont d'une importance primordiale pour réduire la pauvreté.</p> <p>Un moyen efficace d'y remédier consiste à aider les gouvernements à établir des budgets qui tiennent compte des données désagrégées des besoins et des intérêts spécifiques des femmes</p> <p>Ms. Annie Matundu-Mbambi WILPF- DRC Group Chair Lady</p>	<p>Unfortunately, DRC currently has a lack of reliable statistics. There are no up-to-date indicators on the real extent of poverty in the country.</p> <p>The analysis of national budgets to determine the impact of poverty on women and men should foster equity in all development sectors by highlighting allocations to the various sectors, especially in education, health and employment, which are of paramount importance for reducing poverty.</p> <p>An effective means to address this is by assisting governments to establish budgets that take into account disaggregated data on the specific needs and interests of women.</p> <p>Ms. Annie Matundu-Mbambi WILPF- DRC Group Chair Lady</p>
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### Shubha Chacko, India

Dear friends,

Greetings! I have been enjoying the posts on this list and learning a fair amount.

Most of us seem to be using the word gender and women interchangeably and may be some clarifications are in order there.

I work with working class sexual minorities in Bangalore, Karnataka. And it is this seemingly basic and immutable identity of gender that transgenders challenge. Part of being what is seen to be a 'proper man' or 'proper woman' is to stick to the stereotypes (no gender ambiguity). Transgenders are those who fall outside the traditional definition of gender and think it is an important aspect of their lives and hence choose to define themselves as transgender. It is an umbrella term used to denote people who are "differently gendered" or, literally, "cross-gendered". A transgender identity may encompass any level of gender variance, from cross-dressing to living life completely in a gender that does not align with the sex that an individual may have been assigned at birth. Transgendered people have existed (and exist) in all societies. They most often face discrimination and oppression because we operate with simple binary notions that the male and the female (and consequently men and women) are "opposites". And this should determine how a person should look and behave; and express desires for or have relations only with people of the 'opposite' sex.

The issues related to transgenders have not merited much attention whether in scholarship or in development practice. Transgender issues are among the least understood issues among those that the LGBT community faces. While the epidemic of HIV has brought attention to the sexual minority community in a general sense – it is largely focused on what is termed as the MSM population, with the TG population being an add on – tagged on to the existing programme with some modifications. Even when transgenders as a group have been also found place in the debate it is still largely limited to their sexual behaviour and issues related to the prevention of the spread of HIV. This reducing of sexuality to

merely sexual behaviour is dislocates it from its context. More importantly the discourse is often devoid of the voice of transgendered people

Some of the issues flagged at a recent workshop included

- The fact that they do not adhere to gender normative behavior means that there are very few job openings for them
- This does not get recognized as discrimination and often the demand is that they need to "adjust" and "to do whatever it takes to get and keep jobs". Not understanding how basic the issue of gender identity is.
- If they do get jobs by concealing their gender and sexual identity they are always in fear of being "found out".
- Even when they are given jobs the hostile environment makes it difficult or impossible for them to stay with these jobs
- Since they come from poorer backgrounds the livelihood options are already limited
- Many also do not have much formal qualification (often the harassment meted out at school forcing them to leave). Some are forced to migrate to cities in other parts of the country and then are at disadvantage as they cannot speak the language and they no social support network.
- There is no possibility of them finding government jobs
- Many of them are involved in sex work and begging both of which are criminalized and hence they face a great number of problems.
- Even in HIV/AIDS funded programmes there is discrimination due of gender identity. Many of them are not paid minimum wages and the fact that they do not have many employment options is used to exploit them and make them docile

They are just some basic issues that I am flagging.

In solidarity  
Shubha

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**Dated: 20 January 2010**

**Amitava Mukherjee, UN-ESCAP**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for inviting me to this very important debate.

My working experience in many countries in Asia and a few in Africa, has taught me that women face "multiple poverty" even 15 years after Beijing. To be precise, following on Sen's work relating to gender inequality (*The Argumentative Indian*, Penguin, 2005), eight kinds of poverty are seen amongst women: (1) Mortality based poverty, (2) Natality based poverty, (3) Basic facility poverty, (4) Special facilities inequality based poverty, (5) Professional poverty, (6) Ownership based poverty, (7) Intra-Household distribution of power based poverty and (8) Seasonality based poverty.

And sadly enough the progress has been tardy with flashes of achievements here and there. Based on these, women face, amongst other disadvantages, multiple food insecurities. Please click [\[here\]](#) to view the document on **Eight food insecurities faced by women and girl children: four steps that could make a difference, with special reference to South Asia.**



Thanks and regards

Amitava

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### **Nwakego Molokwu, Nigeria**

The issues relating to rural poverty among Female-Headed Households in Nigeria is largely under researched. A recent study of female-headed households revealed women's struggles against marginalization and poverty. Generally, women have continued to be accorded lower social status than men. De facto female heads in many cases do not receive adequate support from their husbands who migrated to urban areas in search of greener pasture. Such women suffer abandonment and the burden of caring for their children. The percentage of female-headed households is significantly higher than male-headed households in some communities as shown by Federal office of Statistics yet these women are relegated to the background. Due to the typical patriarchal attitude, the term "Bread winner" or "head of household" would normally refer to men only. Thus numerous women are by passed and their efforts and burdens go unrecognized. Widowhood and lack of education are the most important variables in the cause of poverty among women. Widowhood is like a curse in Igbo land. Despite the efforts of NGOs and churches, obnoxious that leave widows in abject poverty persist. Widows with good education cope much better than those with little or no education. Inheritance rights and land ownership system have continued to pin women down.

The consequences and cost of lack of education is enormous and usually cumulate in eternal poverty for women and their children among whom the cycle of poverty is easily perpetuated. Nigeria is yet to achieve parity in school enrolment for boys and girls especially in the North where culture and Islam still keep women in Purdah. Figures for child marriages have continued to drop showing that the campaign against early marriage is yielding good results, but some girls are still not benefiting from education. Women have excelled in areas like nursing, teaching, civil service and middle manpower employment in the private sector. Women are not making significant progress in politics big business ventures - the glass ceiling effect is in force in these areas because women usually do not have enough resources to compete with men.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Empirical research should be conducted in all areas pertaining to women and girls to generate valid data that can be used to formulate policy on women empowerment.
2. Research findings should be publicized widely both in print and media, seminars and other grassroots fora should be used on continuous basis to enlighten the people.
3. Education is a right, not a privilege, therefore, every child should benefit from a sound education. Governments should mount free and compulsory education up to senior secondary level. Parents should be penalized for keeping children out of school.
4. Educate women on the dangers of subjective visibility. Some women enjoy perpetuating the culture that oppresses women in the name of culture and tradition.
5. Soft loans should be made available to women for agriculture, business and political participation.
6. Women should have more access to farm lands. Land ownership and inheritance rights should be reviewed to benefit women.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Nwakego Molokwu

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**Daniel Kostzer**

Dear All,

It is great to participate in this debate.

I will provide one quick comment which is mainly relevant for middle income countries. One of the main reasons for poverty among women and especially single headed households is the lack or insufficient income, even if they work. The concept of “poor workers” involves millions of women over the world and the “conventional wisdom” attributes this condition to human capital reasons, what is a colossal mistake. They are not “poor workers”. They are working in low paid jobs, or working in indecent conditions, to use the ILO concept. Let’s reverse the causality, furthermore, the responsibility. These women have a precarious attachment to the labor market, in low paid, low productivity informal activities due to the impossibility to access to a formal job. On the one hand, if the rate of unemployment is high, the employers become more selective. But even if the economy is growing, these women cannot choose a formal job (e.g. eight hours of work, plus commuting time), due to the fact that their “opportunity cost” (sorry for being so neo-classical with the concept) to go to the labor market in the same way as a man, is much higher. They need to sort out what to do with the kids, the cooking, clothing, etc. etc. These factors are highly cultural, mainly due to the burden on women with the non monetary support of the household (in the case there is a male spouse), but also depend on the provision of services by the state.

At this point is a must that child care of good quality, free and universal should be provided in aiming to two objectives: On the one hand to relieve some of the pressures women have to face when they look for a formal job. On the other hand, improve the process of education, not only to the kids, moreover to the mothers of those kids, to open the system even before the kids go to primary school and provide other basic services in that framework.

If women have what to do with little kids, they are free to look for a better job, and not only for precarious ones, around the house, providing services to somebody that is just a little bit less poor, but due to other reasons can pay for it, but never as a formal job. If there is a child care system, does not tie older sisters with household work when the mother is out, many times inducing school desertion. The advantages are obvious.

A state run system can also employ some of these women to work on the child care center and improve their training, at the same time that reduces pressure on more informal local labor markets. Probably the ones that would suffer this are the more educated middle class women that rely on the services from the poor in order to go to work but always they will have the public system to send their kids. Perhaps in some other time we can talk on the advantages at economic, social and political level of pursuing a strategy of full employment, where the child care has a crucial role. This is not a “silver bullet”, but for sure will help to improve the well being of the poor.

Daniel Kostzer

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## Prof. K M Shyamprasad

Women and Poverty from the Indian perspective is complex. The practices in different parts of the country vary but all of them achieve the objective of keeping the woman at a disadvantaged position. Dowry extortion in India, a despicable practice, and widely prevalent in all classes of the society epitomizes the patriarchal dominance.

I work with women with HIV and their plight reflects the women and poverty issue. Most often they acquire the disease by marrying someone who has HIV and had not disclosed it her. Women enter sex trade because of poverty and have no choice in the use of condom..

Many women discover their HIV status after their husbands die, often with children who are also positive. The husband's family blames them for the death of their son and throws them out of homes depriving them of right to the property.

Education, livelihood skills, awareness and prevention of reproductive health disorders, economic empowerment are some of the ways to break this bondage.

Micro-credit initiatives centered around women have been successful. However a lot more needs to be done.

Prof. K M Shyamprasad  
Martin Luther Christian University,  
Shillong India

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## Kabon Kandie, Kenya

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Please, I salute all the sponsors and participants in this very important forum.

Allow me to make a few general comments on Kenya based on documented information and from personal life experiences.

Looking at the big picture, it can be argued that: little progress has been achieved in alleviating poverty and vulnerability of women in Kenya since 1995. This status will continue unabated unless the current institutional and legal frameworks is overhauled to enable women more representation in decision making and in effect power to control their destiny. This will require strong political will and deliberate efforts which are currently in acute shortage.

Kenya is a patriarchal society, where power is vested on men and women often have little influence or no influence in decisions affecting their lives. This extends to all aspects of living including property ownership and sexual relations where women are frequently unable to refuse to have sex with their husbands. Gender-based violence is rife and this not only exposes women to sexually transmitted diseases, but risks of acquiring HIV/AIDS. Violence, dependency and economic hardships pervade the lives of many Kenya women.

The propagation of gender inequality continues unabated as evidenced in the current deliberations on the proposed constitution. The draft constitution sought to guarantee women and men equal rights at the

onset, during and at the dissolution of a marriage however, on Tuesday, (19 January 2010). Members of the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) after debating the chapter for more than five hours, voted to delete sub-clause 42(4) which sought to guarantee women and men equal rights at the onset, during and at the dissolution of a marriage. The decision was reached in spite of protests from women members of the PSC. The committee comprises 5 women members and 21 men.

On 7 August 2007, Kenyan Women Parliamentarians Association, KEWOPA, launched a campaign to push for a women MP quota in the Kenya National Assembly by marching through the streets of the capital, Nairobi, and its surrounding areas. The bill was discussed on 14 August 2007, and rejected in its entirety the same day to the dismay of over 2,000 women from across Kenya who had camped in the surroundings of Parliament to lobby legislators to vote in support of the bill, which would have guaranteed at least 17% women representation. Only 8% percent of parliamentary posts in Kenya are occupied by women.

Kenya has a Poor Record of Female Representation in most sectors where they can potentially influence decisions. A glaring example is the female Parliamentary representation. In 2002, for example, there were 10 women out of 220 men which was very low compared to other East African countries: Uganda (75 women out of 304 members) and Tanzania, (61 women out of 274 members of Parliament). In the same year, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, an international union of parliamentarians that monitors the participation of women in government, ranked Kenya 109th out of 122 countries for percentage of women parliamentarians. In Africa, only Nigeria, Swaziland, Egypt, Niger and Djibouti have a smaller percentage of women in their parliaments.

Kenyan women of all status particularly rural and poor women have been emasculated, by traditions and laws favouring the male counterparts. Kenyan women truly have no voice! But again, we have the power to make the change.

Thank you. Over to my Kenyan counterparts for in-depth comments and also to all the participants!

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**Dated: 21 January 2010**

**Anne-Colette Ngo Mbock, UNDP Cameroon**

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

· In the first PRSP and the second Growth and Employment Strategy Paper aligned to the MDGs, the government has committed itself to pursue the sensitization towards parents and the community, mainly in rural areas where traditional behaviors still impacting in lives to facilitate young girls benefit the same access to education. The improvement of women living conditions and the promotion of gender equality and equity are clearly mentioned in these documents. In the same vein, the state and the entire community should see that equitable representation of girls is done in all sectors as professional training, high education or access to employment are concerned. The government of Cameroon, like most other governments has expressed its official commitment to gender equality and women empowerment in a number of national policies and actions.

- Emphasis has been made to improve favorable environment for the full blooming of women to enable them better contribute to the socio economic development and benefitted from a good management by creating and rehabilitating Centers for the promotion of women and family within the 10 regions.

- The government machinery created to design and implement policies and programmes aimed at advancing women and promoting gender equality under the name of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family. The ministry has structures in all 10 regions of the country and Appropriate Technology Centers to reduce the painfulness of women work and to disseminate appropriate technologies; The government efforts are relayed by women organization at the grassroots level and by SMEs put in place under the leadership of women themselves. There exists a National Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development adopted by the government in 1999, as a follow-up instrument for the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action. This document contains 7 critical areas for action, namely, the promotion of women's rights, promotion of women's participation in decision making at all levels, supporting women fight poverty and gender-based violence. This national plan of action inspired the sector-based strategies for the advancement of women which focuses on improving the legal and social status of women, improving women's standard of living, and promoting gender equality in every aspect of national life, amongst others. Within big programmes initiated from the HIPC funds, credits are granted to women to enable develop income generating activities leading to the fight against poverty. These laudable policies and programmes to reduce poverty and ensure sustainable development by promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women cannot be effectively realized without the provision of sufficient and timely resources. As a step forward, partners are accompanying the country on gender budgeting to bridge the gap between its policies on gender equality.

- The rural women constitute the agricultural workforce representing from 50% to 70% (differing from one region to another). Constant attention is paid to rural women by the Government as well as development partners working in agricultural field. Rural women's activities are more focus on food crops, breeding, and fisheries and in forestry non ligneous products playing de facto the determined role in self-sufficiency and food security. Most rural women remained tribute to subsistence revenues due to economic, social, cultural and infrastructural obstacles. In general economic activities of rural women are characterized by weak economic capacity, difficult access to vulgarization technology services, difficult access to productive resources, low collective organization in the production and marketing, HIV/AIDs high vulnerability, etc....

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

- The National Institute of Statistics is the state body in charge of producing data. Progressively disaggregated data by sex are produced during household surveys and used for example during MDGs national progress reporting, poverty profile analysis, etc.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?**

- Yes, data and analysis are used to inform public policies. But there is need to enhance capacity of the National Institute of Statistics to systematically produce disaggregated data by sex. I think this support is essential.

Thanks  
AC

## Moqamuddin Siraj, UNDP Afghanistan

Dear Colleagues,

Thanks for the useful contributions. Let me share brief information about women in Afghanistan.

In the rural areas of Afghanistan, women comprise over half of the country's largely population. Women suffer from an acute lack of access to basic needs such as water and power and inadequate facilities such as roads and transportation. These in turn, impede any maintenance or improvement in basic livelihoods. Health services are also inadequate, substandard and inaccessible resulting to one of the world's highest infant and maternal mortality rates. In the area of education, although much progress has been made in female-child education, the percentage of pupils starting grade 1 who were expected to reach grade 5 was 30% for girls and 56% for boys. Thus lack of awareness, illiteracy, cultural barriers, gender biases, patriarchy and gender blind policies are the most important factors that add to women's vulnerability in Afghanistan.

Circumstances in the country are such that rural women are discouraged from traveling from village to district/province centers. Deteriorated security condition means further reduction in women's participation in programmed activities decision-making processes such as formulation of District Development Assemblies (DDAs) and development of District Development Plans (DDP) consultations and workshops.

UNDP together with Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development has stressed the importance of women's participation decision making, planning sessions and capacity-building of women to the district level and encouraged male community to bring their wives or other female members of their family to the workshops. Companion (Macramé) has been considered as part of programmed cost to allow women to travel. Alternative mechanisms (either mixed DDA or Advisory Committee of Women) were developed and rolled into the communities' activities to ensure women participation in decision-making processes.

In coordination with MRRD, UNDP through National Area Based Development Programmed (NABDP) is supporting rural communities to enhance the DDA as a governance platform for women's participation and promotion of gender concerns, by, among others:

1. Providing technical guidance and training policies and tools for development to capacitate and monitor women's participation in the District Development Assemblies (at district level) and community development council (at village level )
2. Facilitating a high-level multi-stakeholder commitment at the provincial and/or district level with government officials, tribal and religious leaders, relevant ministries such as the Mow and the Islamic Affairs, DDA Chair and Vice Chair Persons, among others on gender and women's participation; and
3. Developing partnership with National flagship programmes such as National Solidarity Programmed etc and other ministries and CSOs to build on and integrate efforts on women's issues and concerns at the community level.
4. As gender is cross cutting issue, all ministries should commit to mainstream gender into their strategies. Specific national programs should be designed to bring changes in specific fields such as health, education and economy of women.

5. In order to improve the availability of data, the censuses office should use gender sensitive strategies, to reach people in rural areas and Mow has to have a database which provides clear information about women and their status.

I hope this will be helpful,

Regards,

Sera

**Moqamuddin Sera**

National Programme Officer

United Nations Development Programme

Kabul, Afghanistan

URL: <http://www.undp.org.af>

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**Sifisosami Dube, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Zimbabwe**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion. Here is my contribution on poverty:

**On Poverty:**

Many say rural poverty has a face of a woman. In my home country Zimbabwe I have seen both rural and urban women suffer in the hands of poverty. The political crisis in Zimbabwe worsened the status of women. They became more vulnerable to human rights violations as they scrambled for survival. The economic meltdown forced Zimbabweans to leave their country in search of a better means of living in countries like South Africa. An ordinary household would see the husband leaving first then when he settles in another country the wife joins. However, many households were affected as the situation in foreign land was not as expected.

Xenophobia, rape and labor abuse on immigrants has left many women dehumanized in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although most countries in the region have ratified the SADC Gender protocol, the situation on the ground does not match the agreement on paper. The Zimbabwean Global Political Agreement does not put the rights of women at the helm of political reconciliation. The land audit that is on the lips of many should address the gender balance on land issues.

It is obvious that the majority of the poor in Sub Saharan Africa are women. Women empowerment programs in the region should address re-defining the dignity of women. For me dignity and empowerment are having access to health any time, access to education, access to political platforms and ability to freely voice one's opinion. The question is why is rape used as a war weapon in political crisis countries? Why do women suffer more during wars whilst the men hold guns? The answer is simple - no political reconciliation can hold water if it does not equally include women's opinions and only have a single gender group making decisions.

Although the regional policy makers work on legislature to empower women - the situation on the ground will take long to improve simply because men also need education on how to empower women to participate equally.

Poverty is a reality in Sub-Saharan Africa and poverty shines brighter on the face of women.



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## Charity Oduk, Kenya

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Despite efforts to equalize opportunities between men and women in Kenya, the most persistent disparities have been in the area of gender. Although women constitute a majority (53%) of the labor force in Kenya, they bear a disproportionately large share of the burden of poverty. They are the majority of the poor and their poverty is more intense than that of their male counterparts.

Gender differences within the household, in the communities and in the market in terms of access to opportunities and services and in decision making continue to impend women's advancement, thus although women constitute slightly over half of Kenya's population they occupy only 4.9% of managerial and administrative jobs and hold only 3% of parliamentary seats.

The government of Kenya has made efforts to eradicate poverty since independence but with little success. Poverty has continued to increase and this is clearly manifested in the low levels of incomes, lower life expectancy, and poor access to essential services such as health, education and water.

Past efforts to eradicate poverty tended to ignore the contributions of the poor themselves either in their preparations or implementation. It has however now, been acknowledged that the poor have a role in poverty reduction and development in general.

In Kenya, most of the working poor are in the informal economy, and they are overwhelmingly women. Therefore, although women worldwide are growing presence in labor markets, many women are in the precarious work of the informal sector and unless efforts are made to address women's economic security poverty will not be eliminated nor gender equality achieved. Alleviating poverty requires the creation of policies and legal frameworks that enable representation, visibility and support especially for the working poor. This means that the poor who work in the informal sector needs to be positioned to access opportunities, assets, and skills and market that enables participation.

In Kenya it has been demonstrated that in the formal sectors of employment women have made significant gains with regard to their increased participation and remuneration laws that protect them. On the other hand, women's work in the informal sector remains unaccounted for in the national economy, and there remains inadequate or many cases no laws that would eliminate all forms of discrimination against women's economic advancement such as unhindered rights to resources and land.

The majority of Kenyan women have become the primary producers of subsistence for families. Many women are working to produce food in farm activities, craft production and engage in informal trade with regard to this productive activities. Furthermore, the productive and reproductive work burden on women has increased tenfold with the new demand for care work arising with the HIV/ AIDS epidemic.

In general, tremendous challenges remain especially for poor women. Women organizations continue to bring attention to economic justice for women to end poverty and enable sustained livelihoods. In Kenya, it is women and the women's organizations that have been at the forefront of setting up institutions to advance credit finance for women.

The government of Kenya however, has put up some other measures in place to eradicate poverty amongst women. For example, the introduction of the Women Enterprise Fund which was introduced in the year 2006 to take care of poor women who may not afford finances to carry out their business. Another step by the Government was the introduction of the Youth Enterprise Fund.

More contributions later

Thanks

Charity Oduk  
National Commission On Gender And Development  
Nssf Building, 24th Floor

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### **Anita Mathew, India**

Dear All,

Women and Poverty needs to highlight the aspect that women in many developing nations wherein 70% of population live below poverty line see women as objects to be used to add to the economic strength of a household-a man is made to take on the realization that he is worth little if he does not bring home the bacon and even if he does not he is the decision maker to marry and then use the woman to fend for the family. Her idea of identity does not exist and more frequently it does not apply to even educated women in India and this question has to be addressed seriously when we give statistics for women empowerment. The real meaning of human dignity and self esteem when it comes to women and the way men are conditioned to see their identity even if they may not feel it is the right way just as women are conditioned not to question any decision taken by the man or his family once she is sent off in marriage which remains her sole future however progressive the nation thinks it's getting to be.

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### **Nyiel Kuol, Sudan**

Dear All,

Let me share with you the factors contributing to the women poverty in Southern Sudan: it really begins with the fact that girls are considered as commodities which can be exchange for wealth. This factor undermines the girls education or learning of other skills which would help them becomes economically self-reliant had they been given an opportunity.

The education of girls is a major challenge in Southern and Sudan where roughly 1% complete primary school. The reasons why girls' education has been widely discouraged are complex however. The dowry system is an underlying factor because girls who have reached puberty are obliged to get married in exchange for cows (which generate or add to the wealth of the girls' families).

Girls are encouraged or forced to get married and become mothers in their early teens. They engage in giving births and by the age of twenty a young girl might be a parent to five children. As women, they become properties of those who paid for them. With polygamy in practice, a husband gives little or no attention to every wife or her children.

Having no skills, no jobs, bad health, emotional and psychological issues, the women's own self-care and the care for their children take a back seat.

Our Charity Duccum is helping women in Southern Sudan to engage in income generating activities, such as vegetation, poultry, sewing, craftwork etc.

We also lobby the Government of South Sudan to make tough rules against early-force marriage which is currently acceptable for men to abduct, beat, rape a young girl in order to become his wife.. Although the

government is trying its best to engage women in some public jobs; laws are not implemented to protect girls from being subjected to such an abuse. The force marriage which involves RAPE and Physical abuse of women should be considered as a big crime and those who commit it should be jailed for at least five years. However, the government needs to do more in terms of providing help to create community awareness programmes; make training available for women and men who missed out on their education; lay emphases on the vocational training and create jobs for parents to work instead of relying on the daughters' dowry. For information please go to [www.ducuum.org](http://www.ducuum.org)

Best wishes,  
Nyiel Kuol

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### **Bijayalaxmi Rautaray, India**

Good morning to all.

It's quite pleasing for me to participate in the discussion. I am from India a country of diversity in its every sphere. One way if you see rich, affluent, middle class of high income group, on the way one can see the poverty stricken poor people rural, remote and slum areas of small, middle or metros. We see the more literate population of Kerala, but the women there also denied equal footings with men. Dowry, mental and physical torture of husbands and their families a common scenario. Last time I have attended a workshop on Human Rights and Law at Tiruanantpuram, surprisingly enough, nobody even the advocates uttered a word against dowry. In their deliberation they repeatedly spoke about the wealth a married woman brought from her family at the time of her marriage. What we see here the dowry problem is increasing day by day with the educated and affluent people. Here I am working in Kandhamal and Koraput. Where there is no such tradition of dowry but those people are entered in the so-called civilized world they now give and take dowry, and it does not need much time till the dowry will be a common trend for them.

Here, Government or other organizations adopted so many measures for poverty eradication but is anybody ever properly assessed what actually the beneficiaries need. No! We have to fulfill our target by any means. May be the end user is not the person actually we want. In tribal belt usually the women are controlled by the economy, but everything based on either agriculture, or small business or NTFP. After riot in Kandhamal there is no such skill as upgrade centers run by government. The AWW centers ran by are lacking basic facilities. They told me in a year they get one or two soap.; this reflects the condition of sanitation. Poor women go out from early morning to late evening for livelihood who will be take care of the children. Is there any answer? A person suffered with Malaria bought medicine with a cost of Rs.900 without a prescription/receipt and they don't know whether the medication is fake or original.

Villages like Tudukibadi of Daringibadi block are afraid of finance organization because of their ignorance they suffered a lot by the authorized persons. One person of that village earns a daily wage of Rs.60 and he told me that he does not want to save in any financial institution rather he will keep in a tin basket

Government t declared Rs.90 as minimum wage. In coastal areas agricultural laborers get Rs.150 to 180 for 8 hours a day. But poor Kandhamal women in mansion building work get only Rs.50 in 10 hours work. They even not get a mid day meal from the employer. NREGS is a total failure there. The agricultural laborer mostly women get only Rs. 40/ per day. Lot more to say.

Thanks with good will

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**Dated: 22 January 2010**

**Nurjemal Jalilova, UNDP Turkmenistan**

Dear Colleagues,

**1. How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Turkmenistan ratified CEDAW in 1996 and adopted a National Plan of Action (NPA) in 1999 to follow-up on the Beijing Platform. The NPA covers 7 priority areas such as:

- Creating a mechanism for coordination actions both at national and international level;
- Women's participation in governance bodies and decision making;
- Educational and professional training of women;
- Women and Health;
- Women and Economy;
- Women's Rights; and
- Women in Mass Media.

NPA doesn't include a detailed implementation plan with clear time-bound output indicators and responsible parties. The Women's Union of Turkmenistan is a responsible body for NPA implementation, monitoring and reporting. However, it doesn't have sufficient human and financial resources to bear these responsibilities. The role of local Women's Union's representatives in implementation of the NPA is still not clear. All these make difficult to measure the NPA progress and evaluate the changes in women's lives.

In general, men's and women's rights are guaranteed through the special law adopted in December 2007. However, the question of gender equality has not been approached as an issue of efficiency for better planning and not properly mainstreamed into national development programmes.

UNDP in Turkmenistan within the project on "Gender mainstreaming in Policy Making Process and Economic Empowerment of Rural Women" provided support to Women's Union through advocating for CEDAW and NPA implementation as well as piloting small projects in 3 regions to demonstrate approaches on engagement of unemployed rural women into business. Analysis made within the project shows that most women in Turkmenistan are employed in informal sector, leaving them without any social security benefits during old age, disability and maternity, accessible to formal workers. Lack of labor opportunities for women, especially in industrial cities, force them to work abroad sometimes making them victims of human trafficking.

**2. In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

Access to statistical data, especially disaggregated by sex, regions and income, is a challenge in Turkmenistan. In this regard, UNDP continues advocacy at high government level and its support to capacity building in statistics that may lead to positive change in the near future.

Best regards,

Nurjemal Jalilova  
UNDP Turkmenistan

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### **Amarakoon Bandara, Tanzania**

Dear all

I am glad to join the others in this important discussion.

We conducted a study on gender inequality while in UN-ESCAP for the Asia-Pacific region in 2007. Let me share with you some of our findings which could be of interest to you.

The Asia-Pacific region has made good progress in reducing gender discrimination in recent years but unfortunately appalling disparities still remain. Gender discrimination in the Asia-Pacific region is most visible in the access to basic services by women and girls, in particular education and health services. Access to economic opportunities and political participation is also much to be desired. Despite robust economies in the region and the progress made in the social front, female primary school enrolment can be as much as 26% lower than that of males. Such disparities are also reflected in access to health services. A 30-40% gap in male-female labor force participation rates is common in the Asia-Pacific region's developing countries. The largest shortfall in economic participation of women is seen in the South and South west Asia sub-region. Econometric estimates indicated that the cost of restrictions on labor force participation in developing Asia-Pacific countries could be as high as \$42-47 billion annually. (This of course assumes that all who enter the labor force will get a job). If the increase in labor force participation is absorbed to generate productive employment, per capita GDP will rise even if wages and productivity remain the same (sustainability of the increase depends on productivity improvements). Potential gains from educating women are huge-an estimated \$16-30 billion a year. These estimates, although based on strong assumptions, highlight the opportunity cost of gender discrimination.

The greatest effects would be felt, as expected, in countries where female labor force participation is currently lowest: in India, Malaysia and Indonesia. If India's female participation rate reached parity with that of the United States, its GDP would increase by 4.2% a year and its growth rate by over 1 percentage point-an annual gain of \$19 billion.

There is a high correlation between illiteracy and female employment in agriculture with low income generation capacity. The more education women receive the more infant and maternal mortality falls. Empirical evidence also shows a positive relationship between women's education and economic growth, and a negative relationship between total fertility rate (TFR) and per capita income, with higher income leading to lower TFR. The TFR is also a good indicator of women's control over their reproductive rights and health, of progress in gender relations and of education.

These evidences show that improving access to health and education by women and girls are two critical areas that could bring hefty dividends in terms of gender balance and in improving the overall social welfare of women.

The region's top ranked country in terms gender balance, Philippines, provides lessons on how others could achieve similar results. The success of the Philippines in gender balance reflects past history and current policy. In the past two decades, government policies raised women's status, making gender issues part of development long before it became an international norm. After constitutionally affirming

women's equality in 1987, the Government introduced the 1987-1992 Medium Term Philippines Development Plan, followed by similar plans in the years that followed. These policies empowered women by increasing their participation in decision-making and improving their access to education health and employment. To promote shared parenthood and non-stereotyped gender roles, gender concepts have been included in public school curricular. Women's access to technology-based education and training has been improved, while literacy classes and livelihood training have been conducted for rural women. Services are provided in safe motherhood, adolescent and youth health and treatment of breast and reproductive cancers.

Gender responsive legislation and affirmative action have improved women's employment conditions, income opportunities and access to microcredit and employment assistance. While many countries in the region also have similar policies, they have failed to deliver. The success of the Philippines reflects the need for commitment at the highest level of Government.

Thanks

Amarakoon Bandara,  
Economics Advisor,  
UNDP-Tanzania

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**Rita Luthra, WHEC**

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Dear All,

Thanks for inviting us to participate in this discussion.

Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC of the United Nations since 2008. Our focus is on health and education of women worldwide and its educational program title: [www.WomensHealthSection.com](http://www.WomensHealthSection.com) is serving in 216 countries and territories. We are looking forward to working with you.

**Health and Education both are important to reduce poverty in rich and poor countries alike.** Significant racial and ethnic disparities still exist in women's health in USA. Health disparities can be defined as "difference in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups". These health disparities largely result from differences in socioeconomic status and insurance status in USA and this is true for many countries. Although many disparities diminish after taking these factors into account, some remain because of health care system-level, patient-level, and provider-level factors. WHEC strongly supports the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in the health care of women.

The current U.S. healthcare financing paradigm inadvertently may contribute to disparities in health outcomes. The United States is the only developed country that does not extend health care as a right of citizenship. Access to health insurance coverage and care and utilization of care is significantly different for minority women. The following examples illustrate this point:

- Hispanic and African-American women are more likely to be uninsured than white women. In 2004, 16% of white women, 20% of African-American women, and 37% of Hispanic women 18-64 years of age were uninsured.
- Asian-American and Hispanic women are most likely to have not received preventive care in the past year. In 2004, 29% of Asian-American women and 21% of Hispanic women received no preventive services in the previous year compared with 16% of white women and 7% of African-American women.
- The proportion of Asian-American women obtaining Pap tests (screening for cervical cancer) was considerably lower than that for white women. Only approximately one half (49%) of Asian-American women reported receiving a Pap test in the previous year compared with 64% of white women.
- Non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, and American-Indian women are more than twice as likely as non-Hispanic white women to begin prenatal care in the third trimester (late in pregnancy) or not at all.

#### Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) Recommendations

We encourage health professionals and policy makers to engage in activities to help achieve these goals:

1. Advocate for universal access to basic affordable health care;
2. Improve cultural competency in the physician-patient relationship and engage in cross-cultural educational activities to improve communication and language skills;
3. Provide high quality, compassionate, and ethically sound health services to all;
4. Advocate for increased public awareness of the benefits of preventive health care and early screening and intervention;
5. Encourage and become active in recruiting minorities to the health professions;
6. Advocate for improved access to programs that develop fluency in English among non-English speaking populations;
7. Increase training of health care providers about racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in health and health care.
8. Advocate for the continued collection of race-based data which is important in understanding disparities. Advocate for increased funding for research.

Rita Luthra, MD

President

Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC)

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Editor-in-Chief of e-learning publication

<http://www.WomensHealthSection.com>

#### **Mohamed Benkassmi, Morocco**

Dear All,

First, I would like to thank all of the organisers for creating this forum to discuss achievements in women's poverty reduction and efforts in the equality issues in the region.

In Morocco, according to the recent National Report on MDGs, substantial progress has been made in education at all levels.

The net enrolment rate in primary education stands at 93.5% in 2006-07, against 87% in 2003-04 and 79.1% in 1999-2000.



This increasing change reflects the effort made in regards to enrolment during this period, mainly in the benefit of girls. Indeed, in urban areas the enrolment rate of girls almost caught up with that of boys. The same is true in the rural areas where the enrolment gap between both sexes has been reduced, with a rate of 87.7% for girls against 94.6% for boys.

These remarkable results are due to a combination of different measures: school canteens, free school stationery and textbooks, school transport, integration of slightly disabled persons in normal classes ...etc. The support of civil society and international cooperation has proved very valuable.

Despite the progress made in the education sector, as confirmed by statistics, the fact remains that it still faces several obstacles that hamper its full development :

- Socio-economic conditions of rural households ;
- Shortages in schools and supporting structures despite the achievements, particularly because of the isolation of the hardest hit regions. For example, only 51% pupils benefit from school canteens ;
- Lack of scholarships awarded to pupils of preparatory schools in rural areas, especially to girls ;
- Insufficient funds necessary for rehabilitation of school infrastructure ;
- Delay in the implementation of investment projects because of cumbersome administrative procedures ;
- Lack of administrative and educational training ;
- Low participation of the private sector in the cities and its virtual absence in the rural areas (except for some classes run by NGOs).

While the illiteracy rate in December 2007 amounts to 41.2% for the population aged 10 years and older with 29.4% among men, it reaches 52.6% among women. In addition, the illiteracy rate by area is 29% in urban areas, including 38.5% for women against 19% for men. In rural areas, this rate is more alarming. It is 58.1%, or 72.2% for women against 43.5% for men.

Given that the domestic activities of women remain invisible because they fall under the non-profit sector and therefore it is not taken into account, the rate of paid activities of women compared to that of men remains modest: 27.9% in 2000, 28.3% in 2004 and 27.1% in 2007.

The rate of working women in Morocco is one of the five lowest rates in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), accounting for half the world average (57.8%) and less than half of the average of the middle-income countries, that is less than (65.2%).

41% of women employees earn the minimum wage, against 31% of men. The public sector offers equal wages. Women hold less senior positions. The average wages of women, though on the increase, are still much lower than those of men.

What place is for women in the governing bodies of the legislative, executive and judicial powers, and in decision-making bodies? Four women had access to the executive power in 1993. In 2007, the number rose to 7, or 20.59% of all ministers. Women are also present in Parliament, where they account for 10.5% of the total number. Such a breakthrough is important and heralds a new era, because women in Morocco, despite their strong presence in the university, hold very few management and decision-making positions at the level of state bodies. They are, however, present now in authority-related jobs, which are limited up to now to men 100%. They gain access also positions of responsibilities in the religious field. Such a breakthrough is very meaningful insofar as it is a strong message against the traditional representations and the dominant cultural practices.

The legislative reforms, brought about since 1990, have addressed the Commercial Code (art.35), the Dahir (royal decree) of Obligations and Contracts (art.729), the Code of Civil Procedure, the Labor Code, the Penal Code (Art 418) (adultery), the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Civil Status (2002). They aim to remove the discriminatory provisions and reflect the will to combat violence against women. The Family Code of 2004 and the Code of Nationality of 2006 fall within the same scope.

The entry into force of all these reforms has induced, 2005-2007, a change to the principles of equity and equality and an improvement of the attaching indicators, in particular age of marriage, divorce rate, the division of property.

Mohamed Benkassmi  
Association Al Hidn, Morocco

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### **Ashok Nanda, India**

Good afternoon!

Women in decision making, seems very good. But what happens in reality is a fact. For years after years, the Women Reservation Bill has been coming to the parliament for discussion. Even a women headed party like Congress anybody can compare the number of seats for women. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi after 20yrs regain the popularity of Congress and Mrs. Sheela Dixit proved herself as accepted popular leader of Delhi. But if we see grassroots level, out of 33% reservation how many of PRI members excelled as triumphant leaders. They are just shadow leaders for one term they come to power because of quota. In village even the Women Sarpanch's home is not identified as Sarpanch home like male counterpart. Ask anyone, they must said " whatever you say, they are women they can't rule us". But this person accept Mrs. Sonia Gandhi as unprecedented leader of Indira Congress. Why? The women representatives even not aware of their responsibilities. they just signed or give thumb impression where is need according to Panchayat officer. But some women like Chadrakala Sunani one of PRI member of Koraput because of her confidence and open up to different workshop can raised her voice against societal evils. Here also without any power or lobbying women fight for fellow people like Bishnupriya Kanhar in Kandhamal and many more. So care should be taken. Women need more education, awareness in about their role and responsibilities. Otherwise they will be treated as second class citizens time to come.

Platform should be created for enlightening social responsibility, people participation and other grassroots forums should be used on continuous basis to enlighten the people.

Educate the common women on evil and dangerous practices.

Common marriage law must be ensured

Women inheritance and property right ensured

For common cause both men and women must be enlightened.

More pro-people attitude by government, bureaucrats and civil society is the need of the hour

Ethics must be taught in all level of curriculum.

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### **Bijayalaxmi Routray, Vikash Organization, India**

Dear Noura,

Good morning!

Fifty percent of our population are women of different age groups. But if we reevaluate their role in politics and administration the percentage worldwide less than 15%. Three things are commonly responsible for that lack of information, knowledge and awareness. But shockingly enough even the literate one has not enough information about own surroundings. Even a some of our Engineering graduate students unable to speak who is their Member of Parliament, then how could they help others.

The rich affluent group run behind glamour & money. They have lack of time to think for other, means the society, because its' the society make them. Education seems to be no more producing man but create money. We don't know where we stand?

Those people have some sense or awareness about some things they want to grab the opportunity. It's may be a worldwide trend. it's happen in India also. Number of women in education grow year after year, but these educated, high packed women never resist dowry system. Education makes man escapist. Why?

Here is a slum name called as Banaphual slum (wildflower slum), with the bad name pollution, insanitation, illiteracy, ignorance the oldest slum of Bhubaneswar the capital of Orissa. After reaching the age of 10 each student dropped out of school.

Definitely IMR & MMR reducing day by day. But female feticide growing also. Who is responsible for that? We women should stand for our right. Empowerment is not alms. Someone give and you take. Initiation is necessary but after that we have to think for all. But surprisingly we lost our morality. We are happy with using ourselves as sex symbol.

Where ever you go?

We need support but energy we should possess.

Thanking you  
Bijayalaxmi

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### **Judith Alpuerto, Phillippines**

My name is Judith Alpuerto. I am from Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines.

I work with women in the Barangays. Most women are already married within the age group of 15-25 and have three or more children already. These women do not have enough education or learned skills that would earn them enough for their sustenance. Education is very important for women and young girls to empower themselves and rise from poverty without ever going out the country and experience more violence, discrimination and worse death.

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**Dated: 26 January 2010**

### **Sam Olowe, Nigeria**

Dear Colleagues,

I quite appreciate the opportunity given to make inputs into this on- going gender discussion.

My country, Nigeria though has made some improvements to alleviate the suffering of women and integrate them, the journey still seems to be very far. Most of the programmes purported to have been designed for the women do not have the inputs of the women who are the beneficiaries at the planning stage. In addition, lack of adequate and correct data has made planning difficult as no meaningful work can be done without data. Politicizing of every issue has also made things worse. Should poverty be a thing to politicize? Government reads out what they have done without any concrete proof from the people affected. Poverty is not a matter of text books or theory but rather the conditions of existence of the people, their access to drinkable water, level of education, employment, eradication of violence in whatever forms, elimination of discriminatory laws. As at now, the CEDAW document is yet to be domesticated in the country. Some states are yet to pass the child rights bill into law, many customary laws are still working against the advancement of women.

Thank you.  
Sam Olowe  
Nigeria

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**Doyin Oluwole, USA**

Dear All,

**Regional Policy and Program Implemented in the African Region on Women Vulnerability: Maternal Mortality**

Consistently high maternal and newborn mortality is a shameful baggage on the shoulders of the international community in the 21st century! It demonstrates the highest level of inequity in the world: the risk of a woman dying due to pregnancy-related cause in Africa is 1:16 compared with 1 in 3500 in developed countries. Between 1995 and now, several policies and programs have been put in place and implemented in Africa by the African Union, and the World Health Organization and their partners. The one that I would like to emphasize is the *Road Map for Accelerating the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals related to Maternal and Newborn Health in Africa (WHO/AFRO 2007)*. Developed in 2004 by WHO Regional Office for Africa and 14 key partners (UNFPA, UNICEF WCARO and ESARO, World Bank, USAID, West African Health Organization, East, Central and Southern African Health Community, University of Watersrand, Academy for Educational Development, Family Care International, JHPIEGO, Population Council, Saving Newborn Lives and Engenderhealth), the "Road Map" is aimed at accelerating the reduction of maternal and newborn mortality and the attainment of the MDGs in Africa. The Ministers of Health of 46 countries adopted this strategy in 2004 and committed to increasing investment to maternal and newborn health and scaling up interventions to reducing maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality through a strengthened health systems. Built on the principles of evidence, health systems approach, equity and accessibility, complementarity, partnerships, transparency and countability and appropriateness and relevance, the "Road Map" has become the guiding strategy for 33 of 46 sub-Saharan African countries in the path to address one of the most pressing health and development issues of the 21st century i.e. maternal mortality. Countries are focused on providing skilled care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period at all levels of health care delivery system; and, strengthening individual, family and community capacity to improve maternal and newborn health. With the USG Global Health Initiative and the attention to women-centered programming, African countries are hopeful of the resources to move this agenda forward as it relates to MDGs 3, 4 and 5. The voiceless women are waiting on the international and national communities to stop needless deaths of mothers and children.

Doyin Oluwole  
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Academy for Educational Development  
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website: <http://africahealth2010.aed.org>

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## Pauline lambou Ngouanfouo, Cameroon

Dear all

Thank you UNDP for this unique opportunity for women. I'm glad to join the others in this important discussion .Happy new year to all the women around the world specially for women and girls with special needs.

Women in Cameroon are indispensable partners in development strategies and constitute more than 51%of the population of Cameroon. Cameroonian women contribute a lot to the fight against poverty by doing agriculture for basic needs and selling, by the production and selling of non- timber forest products such as fruits, nuts, leaves, and medical plants. Efforts are needed to train women in forestry and natural resources activities in order to enhance their participation at all levels from grassroots to international policy.

- stakeholders have to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes across priorities and objectives to ensure that men and women fully participate in benefits from forest research outcome.
- they have to invest in specific interventions that empower women ,reduce their vulnerability, build their leadership, provide them with access to resources, and protect their human rights.
- the national policy should encourage women to be more productive by giving them a chance to loan, to reach strategic positions. We believe that women can efficiently reduce poverty particularly in rural community.

But in Cameroon as in others country we are facing climate changes which will take us back many years. My next contribution will be on climate change and poverty in Cameroon.

Pauline lambou Ngouanfouo  
special education teacher /women rights activist  
GBHS ladies Bamenda - Cameroon

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## Gilles Kotto Epee, Cameroon

### **Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights**

People and communities give a wide variety of meanings to reproductive health and reproductive rights, and understandings may vary even among individuals within a community. Cultural sensitivity is about realizing and understanding these varied meanings and being prepared for some unexpected realities; for example, some men may work for gender equality against their apparent self-interest, and some women may support practices that apparently harm them. Culturally sensitive approaches seek to understand and work with a community's views about what men and women contribute to procreation; for example, what it signifies when a woman or a couple does not reproduce, the effect of contraception on a woman's ability to conceive or on a man's view of what makes up his "manhood". Such understanding is essential for effective cooperation.

Cultural sensitivity helps to mitigate and overcome resistance to couples and individuals voluntarily planning the timing, spacing and size of their families. It prepares the way for empowering women, in particular with control over their own fertility. Culturally sensitive approaches are essential tools for development organizations concerned with promoting sexual and reproductive health. Culturally sensitive approaches are also critical in mobilizing communities and building partnerships to work against certain harmful traditional practices, notably female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). Most national

governments, local communities and the international community at large firmly stand against FGM/C as a violation of human rights and a danger to physical and mental health. It is, however, a widespread and deeply-rooted tradition among some communities, sometimes backed by a totally spurious interpretation of religious teaching. It may be considered essential for full entry into adulthood and membership in the community; women without it may be considered ugly and unclean. Ending the practice involves taking all the different cultural meanings into account and finding meaningful alternatives, in close cooperation and discussion with the community.

In recognizing and supporting local efforts, it is important to make alliances with opinion-makers and leaders as well as with those whose work in the field gives them significant outreach and influence. Some of the most dramatic changes occur when the guardians of cultural norms and practices, the "gatekeepers", are advocates for women's rights. In Cambodia, Buddhist nuns and monks are prominent in the struggle to combat HIV; in Zimbabwe, local leaders have taken up the challenge. Successful alliances seek broad partnerships in areas of human rights and gender equality, and set standards to apply in specific areas such as HIV prevention and AIDS treatment and care. Cultural sensitivity also necessitates taking into account the many other local efforts for change by organizations such as women's, youth and workers' groups and the ways they work with and reinforce each other.

Religion is central to many people's lives, and an important dimension of culture which influences the most intimate decisions and actions. Appeals to religion can be used to justify cultural practices such as killings in the name of "honour" or "crimes of passion", which are blatant human rights violations. Cultural sensitivity entails support for the many women – and some men – within the society who contest the practice. Culturally sensitive approaches are essential for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, which includes a target, under Goal 5, to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75 per cent. The numbers of women dying as a consequence of pregnancy and childbirth are essentially unchanged since the 1980s, at about 536,000. Many times that number, between 10 and 15 million, suffer injury or illness. Lower maternal mortality, and avoiding injuries such as obstetric fistula, depends on better care in pregnancy and childbirth, emergency services in cases of complications and access to family planning. Cultural sensitivity is essential for success in these critical initiatives.

Engaging men in the design, implementation and delivery of programmes, for instance, is a means as well as the result of culturally sensitive approaches, and is a requirement of any development process intended to change behaviours and attitudes. Gender inequality and negative male attitudes are generally seen as a challenge to reproductive health and rights. Closer attention to men's experiences of gender and its inequalities is one of the building blocks of culturally sensitive approaches.

Cultural constructions of masculinity and sexuality can increase risk-taking and reduce the likelihood of men seeking help. Men tend to engage in sex at a younger age and have more partners than women; this may be connected with society's expectations of what makes a "real" man, and encourages risky sexual behaviour. Some men may be less concerned about their health than their masculinity.

Cultural constructions increase stress and pressure on some men to prove themselves by exerting "male" authority, to the extent of forcing themselves on unwilling women. Their behaviour damages not only women's health but their social personalities – raped women have been forced to marry their rapists, or even accused of adultery.

Men may view seeking help or even information as a sign of weakness. They are much less likely than women to submit to voluntary counselling and testing for HIV. Male ignorance and anxiety puts both women and men at risk, but men may not see their behaviour as risky. Social and economic factors are also important: In communities where poverty, drugs and guns are common, HIV and AIDS take their place alongside other risks. Culturally sensitive approaches go beyond standard explanations of male behaviour to investigate the relationship among social, political and legal contexts and resulting cultural

norms, and the conditions under which men and women resist them. Building on this knowledge with local initiatives enables targeted and measured development support.

### **Rights and reproductive health**

To have a broad focus and better planned objectives to be achieved, I propose that governments and civil society at all levels, provide high quality services to a growing number of beneficiaries. Health systems must be improved to increase women's use of services of midwife - women for pregnancy, childbirth and deal with complications that may arise for accelerating the reduction of morbidity and neonatal mortality by:

- Community mobilization and strengthening of communication for social change and behavioral work with local officials, religious institutions, cultural and professional organizations to support women, and by involving men
- Development of institutional and technical capacity to allocate tasks among members of health personnel and develop quality services of midwives, care and emergency obstetric audits institutionalized on maternal mortality

The social and institutional structures must be mobilized to accelerate the use of modern methods of family planning by women, men and youth.

- To support prevention of HIV among young people, armed forces, sex workers and people living with HIV / AIDS
- Intensifying the promotion of options and choices in family planning, use of community mobilization, groups of men, leaders, village health teams and organizations of women
- Mobilizing the political, social and donors for family planning, including increasing allowances and budget.
- Supporting the participation of young people and vulnerable groups in planning, decision making and action for social development and facilitating better access to information and services.
- Promoting behavioral change to prevent HIV and promote safer sex, condom use and HIV knowledge. This goal can be achieved by: a) mobilizing teachers and parents to maintain a safe school environment, including the services of nursing and improving sex education

Association for Social Action and Developpement (ASD)

Mr. Kotto Epee Gilles

President of Executif Committee

Douala - Cameroon

[www.everyoneweb.com/www.asd.com](http://www.everyoneweb.com/www.asd.com)

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### **Roli Mahaja**

Dear Moderator,

Greetings from a silent participant. It has been an informative opportunity to be a part of this discussion and to read the views and experiences of so many different people. I am still still light headed with so many perspectives.

One issue which I would like to draw everyone's attention to are "half-widows".

There is no proper data available about their status and lives (or at least not as far as I could find).



These are women who are married to people who go to War (militants/army people/infiltrators/young people taken from villages). Often the status of those men is not known as in whether these men are alive or not and in societies where the woman's position in society is defined by the man she is married to, are left to their fates as they are denied the rights of a widow or a married women. This status makes them ostracized from the society that would have accepted them with open arms as a married woman or given them an identity of sorts with some some rights as a widow.

I have heard of cases like these in Turkey (through a film), Kashmir (a few personal accounts) and am sure there would be more known under different names in turbulent societies. I am not sure whether these women are even recognized by policy makers or civil society groups to be considered as recipients of help.

In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?

The bracket of women mentioned below (half widows) live in deplorable conditions where no one comes up to support them and they are left alone in their poverty stricken state. I do not know of any surveys or administrative data that has been collected about them or their condition.

Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples.

Since data is not available so how will public policies be formed?

Something I found to help illustrate what i am talking about:

<http://www.burnmagazine.org/essays/2009/04/brent-foster-kashmirs-half-widows/>

Hope this explains my desire to send this mail to your list.

Kind regards,  
Roli Mahaja

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**Dated: 28 January 2010**

**Flore Antonio and Justine Améyo Assilévi, UNDP Togo**

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below our contribution to the e-discussion :

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Women vulnerability did not decrease in Togo since 1995. We can even say that women are more vulnerable than before. Only the elite (women who have high standard of life, women who are literate and have a job, women traders in the cities, women leaders in CSOs) has reached a better condition, but very few women participate in the decision making.

The country went through a political crisis since 1990. This crisis has become an economic crisis which brought serious social problems. Togo has been cut from international aid since 1993. From 2007 or 2008, donors are working with the country to back and program with the country.

For many years now, the government has no more social investment as such. This is noticed in the field of education, health and infrastructures. Therefore, women have become more vulnerable. Maternal mortality and morbidity are high. They have to walk longer distances to get water.

Most women in the country are small traders and farmers. The roads are so bad that women cannot easily sell the products of their farms in markets other than the one of their villages. Even in their villages, the customers from the cities who are also women cannot come because of the bad condition of the roads.

The recent economic crisis increased poverty in the country since the prices of basic needs goods increased.

Some efforts can be noticed in the past ten years. Micro finance schemes managed by CSOs are giving small loans to women for their economic activities. UNDP gave support to organize the microfinance activities.

The country adopted a PRSP program in June 2009. This program has lines which provide for poverty reduction for the women. It also has provision for education, health and infrastructures (water, roads...).

In 2009, a lot of investments started to face the gap created by the period of the crisis.

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

The lack of statistics is one of the consequences of the crisis the country has gone through. Data are difficult to have. Statistics information is poor. The last collection dated of the year 1980s. There were two main data collections from 2000, but they are not enough to have a genuine picture of the reality on the issues of poverty, hunger and employment. Most of the time the data and information are not disaggregated by sex. There is great need for statistics. More resources are needed to conduct quality censuses, surveys and studies. A gender analysis of poverty must be conducted.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?**

The data and analysis have been the exclusivity of the government, international donors and development partners. Things are being changed from 2008, but it is still not common for the other stakeholders to use the data and analysis. Most of the time, the results of the data collections, of censuses, of surveys are not disseminated so few people have the information. Civil society has not a lot access to the information and data so they use them scarcely. To improve the use of data and information, there is a need for

- ü more censuses and data collection on development issues
- ü dissemination of the results of the censuses and surveys
- ü capacity building for the policy makers and CSOs to use the data
- ü development of CSOs capacities to be more professional so that they can monitor the policies and programs
- ü institutional support to CSOs to be efficient in their field of work.

Best regards,

Flore Ayélé Antonio, Programme Associate VIH/Gender – UNDP TOGO / Justine Améyo Assilévi,  
Programme Associate Microfinance – UNDP TOGO

**Puleng Letsie, Tiina Turunen and Alka Bhatia, UNDP Lesotho**

Dear all,

Below please find UNDP Lesotho's contribution to the discussion:

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

In Lesotho the incidence of poverty increased between 1986/1987 and 1994/1995 and beyond, with increasing numbers of people and women specifically becoming ultra-poor. The Lesotho Poverty Reduction Strategy (2004 -7) even indicates that *"Poverty has a human face, and in Lesotho it is frequently the face of an unqualified person without employment, who is poorly dressed, has no money and lives in a decrepit house far from basic services. Often – but not always – the person is a woman or a child, frequently left more vulnerable by disease and death. Without protection, the person is often a victim of crime and feels abandoned by Government in general, and by the legal system in particular. He or she fears that political struggles may easily result in conflicts or the inappropriate use of resources"*.

In most, or virtually all national household surveys, it has been noted that there are striking variations of poverty in relation to a number of factors including gender. Poverty is mostly concentrated in the rural areas in Lesotho and women are generally poorer than men. Female headed households are generally poor compared to the male-headed households as traditionally, men are providers or breadwinners and the loss of a husband in a family setup places the household in a very unstable and vulnerable situation, especially in those families that largely depend on the labor and income (remittances) of the husbands or the male member.

Increasing number of households are now officially headed by women who are either single, divorced, widowed or abandoned by their husbands, and more recently aged women looking after orphans and other vulnerable children whose parents have either died (estimated mainly due to AIDS related diseases) or have left for employment opportunities in the urban cities or in the neighboring South Africa. Although the majority of poor live in male headed households, the proportion of poor female-headed households increased from 30.1% in 1994/1995 to 35.7% in 2002/2003 (2002/03 and 1994/95 Household Budget Survey, 2006) and further to 38.2% in 2009 (Continuous Multipurpose Survey (CMS 2009 Draft). Female-headed households are less likely to have access to household facilities, such as electricity, toilet and safe water. There are high incidences of property grabbing from women who have lost their husbands by the extended families, further plunging the household into deeper levels of poverty. Over 55% of the population in Lesotho lives below the poverty datum line (Lesotho Demographic & Health Survey 2004). As poverty and hunger increase, marginalised population groups are likely to become even more marginalised, e.g. people whose livelihoods are dependent on agriculture, women (including pregnant and lactating mothers), children and the poor.

Sexual and gender-based violence are high in Lesotho as a survey conducted revealed that sexual abuse and assault of women was reported as high as 18.3% in Lesotho's urban centers, and is likely to escalate as women tend to bear the brunt of poverty and food unavailability. If stressed further, they are also likely to engage in negative coping strategies which may put them in danger of contracting HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, food insecurity and poverty in general negatively impact the health of pregnant women, ultimately worsening maternal mortality. With targeted interventions Lesotho may be on track in achieving MDG on promoting gender equality and empowering women, especially in eliminating gender disparity in primary education. Girls are better represented in the primary education than boys and

currently women represent a total of 30% in Parliament. The proportion of females who had never attended school was significantly lower than men. 9.3% of females in rural areas had never attended school, when the proportion for male was 18.9%. Only 4.1% of females and 6.9% of males in urban areas had never attended school. For females, pregnancy was the major reason for leaving school and among age groups 15-19 years; 19% in urban and 21% in rural areas had left school due to pregnancy. The proportion was significantly higher among 20-24 years old and 24% in the urban areas and 29% percent in the rural had left school for the same reason. (CMS Draft 2009)

HIV and AIDS is also one of the major contributing factors to the myriad challenges facing Lesotho as the country has the third highest HIV prevalence globally (23.2%), with women and children being the most adversely affected population groups. It is estimated that there are 60 new HIV infections every day and these are predominantly among younger women and children. Women also tend to bear a much larger burden in caring for the sick and the increasing numbers of orphans, which affects their ability to participate to income generating activities. Malnutrition among women is less common than obesity, but 9.5% of women in HIV and AIDS beneficiary households were undernourished (Lesotho Fact Sheet, Community and Household Surveillance (CHS), March 2008).

The economic crisis has also had a major impact on women's employment and income. Over 30% of Lesotho's exports are made for the United States of America; of these, textiles form approximately 90%. Hence, a slowdown in the American market and a reduced demand for textiles have impacted the industry severely and textile exports have diminished by roughly 45% from 2006 to 2009. The industry employed over 40,000 people in February 2008, mostly women. Retrenchments have led to increasing unemployment among women in Lesotho, where unemployment and lack of employment opportunities are severe. In 2008, unemployment was estimated to be 23%, when in 2009 it stood at 29.4% already. Women's unemployment was 24.6% in 2008 and already 33.1% in 2009. Young people (15-29 years) are most affected by unemployment and the unemployment level among them is over 30%, and even higher among young women (Labour Force Survey 2008, Bureau of Statistics Lesotho and CMS Draft 2009).

Some policies, programmes and projects have been and are being implemented to reduce poverty and women's vulnerability. The country has a Gender and Development Policy (2003) which 'aspires for a nation that perceives women, men, girls and boys at all levels and spheres of life as equal partners'. In addition, the Government of Lesotho has enacted legislation in order to address women's vulnerability and gender inequality in the form of the Sexual Offences Act of 2003 and the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2006, of which the latter removed the minority status and other incidental matters concerning married women. Anyhow, challenges still persist in the interpretation and implementation of this law resulting in women, e.g., still being denied credit and land ownership. In 2002/03 only 13.4% of females owned land, when at the same time 27.5% of men owned land. Ownership of agricultural equipment was also much lower for women. (2002/03 and 1994/95 Household Budget Survey, 2006). The Land Bill has been reviewed in 2008, which aims at giving women equal rights as men in terms of land and property ownership, where they have historically been disadvantaged.

UNDP and UNFPA are supporting the establishment of a centre for abused women and children, which will provide training in HIV, GBV, Human Rights, and economic opportunities among other things. Ongoing counselling and emotional wellness programmes will also be provided, as well as Legal services. The UN is also supporting the Government and other partners to mainstream HIV and gender in development planning and programming – complemented by collaborative harmonization efforts through various multi-sectoral fora such as the Gender Technical Committee and the Joint UN Programme of Support on AIDS from the UN side.

Despite all efforts, gender disparities remain strong in Lesotho and they represent a real obstacle to effective participation of women in the socio-economic and political development of the country. Even

though many legal impediments have been removed, women are still disadvantaged in terms of their access and control over productive resources and their decision making, particularly over their sexual and reproductive health rights. This is mainly attributed to cultural practices, whereby men dominate decision making processes. This is often accentuated in cases where women have limited economic power and they become more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV and AIDS, and unplanned pregnancies. Overcoming the equality deficit will be critical to reducing poverty, unemployment, maternal and under-5 mortality, reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS as well as gender-based violence.

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

Household Budget Surveys and Population and Housing Censuses provide sex disaggregated data for many indicators (e.g. mortality, life expectancy, migration, basic household information, education, literacy, economic activity and employment, land ownership, distribution of poverty by household heads, nutrition, etc.) Anyhow, detailed analyses with recommendations for programming needs to be improved.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?**

The data is sometimes used to inform public policies, with some usage by civil society, but as indicated above, there are great opportunities which are not being explored enough in an effort to use evidence to inform programming and policy-making. It is also worth mentioning that there are great strides being made in mainstreaming HIV and Gender in programming.

Best regards,

Puleng - With support from Alka Bhatia (Economic Advisor) and Tiina Turunen (Programme Analyst)

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**Susana T. Fried and Emilie Pradichit, UNDP New York**

Dear colleagues:

Thanks so much for initiating this important conversation, especially as we approach the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and look toward the 2015 and the MDGs. Addressing economic insecurity, gender inequality and HIV are all essential elements of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. HIV exploits the societal fault lines of inequalities and social norms entrenched in society. Persistent gender inequality, particularly in access to economic resources, greatly affects how women and girls can and cannot protect themselves from HIV, how they cope with HIV once infected and care for themselves and others living with the virus. Discriminatory practices have long kept women and girls from education, training and remunerated work, as well as from access to critical assets such as inheritance, land and housing. Women working in the informal sector are often sexually harassed,

targeted for violence and therefore put at greater risk of HIV infection. In sum, women in many parts of the world bear a disproportionate burden of the social and economic consequences of AIDS, including loss of property and inheritance and custody of children.

Programs that promote economic empowerment of women and girls are at the core of addressing the structural drivers of the HIV. Research suggests that addressing women's basic economic needs through programs such as microfinance, youth livelihoods and life skills training, and initiatives to protect women's food security and property and inheritance rights not only targets women's economic vulnerability directly, but can also offer a strategic opportunity for attracting sustained group based participation in HIV prevention activities among the poor. One successful [project linking microfinance, women's empowerment/anti-violence programming and community mobilization](#) in a group-based lending format to prevent HIV in a community is the Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) study in South Africa (Pronyk, 2005)<sup>[i]</sup>. Results for reducing gender-related vulnerability were encouraging: after two years, IMAGE participants showed improvements in economic well-being and multiple dimensions of empowerment, including autonomy in decision-making, relationship with partner, challenging gender norms, and participation in collective actions. Among participants, the risk of physical and sexual intimate partner violence dropped by 55%, and young programme participants reported higher levels of HIV-related communication and HIV testing and greater condom use with non-spousal partners.<sup>[ii]</sup>

As in the IMAGE project, experience with combined economic empowerment and HIV interventions suggest that it is feasible to address structural factors such as poverty, gender inequalities and gender-based violence as part of HIV prevention programs, and these goals should be explicitly included within national HIV/AIDS strategies. Policymakers and planners at the global, national and local levels should address these factors to achieve their HIV prevention, care and treatment objectives. The time has come to shifting the AIDS response to addresses the key structural determinants of vulnerability. There is an important need for integrating structural factors in shaping HIV epidemics.<sup>[iii]</sup>

In response to this, UNDP's work on HIV concentrates on addressing structural drivers of HIV as well as some of the broader human rights and development impacts of the epidemic. This includes support for scaling up interventions addressing gender dynamics in HIV prevention, treatment, care and impact mitigation, and developing and tracking targets and indicators to measure gender-related outcomes and impacts of AIDS programmes. In Asia, for example, UNDP has actively supported the development of the Women and Wealth Project (WWP), in partnership with Population and Community Development Association (PDA), an NGO based in Bangkok. This regional pilot initiative pursues the socioeconomic empowerment of women living with and affected by HIV through development of small-scale social enterprises in Cambodia and India. The initiative has already shown tremendous progress since its inception in mid 2006. The Women's group in Cambodia launched a small sewing business and produces a variety of bags and garments. The Women's group in India launched a graphic design business that offers comprehensive services in communication design and printing production. As they continue to strengthen their business and build their marketable skills, the women experience many other positive effects: WWP women have expressed increased confidence, dignity, hope, and reduced stigma and discrimination against them. The Women and Wealth Projects in Cambodia and India illustrate the effectiveness of small social business enterprises to improve the quality of life of people infected with HIV and foster compassion in communities affected by HIV. <sup>[iv]</sup>

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[i] UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia & the Pacific. [\*Women and HIV in Asia and Pacific: A Development Practitioner's Guide\*](#)  
(Chapter 4: Women and Economic Empowerment)

[ii] Julia Kim, Giulia Ferrari, Tanya Abramsky, Charlotte Watts, James Hargreaves, Linda Morison, Godfrey Phetla, John Porter & Paul Pronyk. *Assessing the incremental effects of combining economic and health interventions : the IMAGE study in South Africa*, Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 2009

[iii] Aids2031 Social Drivers Working Group. *Revolutionizing the AIDS Response: Adopting a Structural Approach, Synthesis Paper Draft*

[iv] Mechai Viravidya, The Women and Wealth Project (WWP) website (<http://www.wwp-we.org/wwp.php>)

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**Nahla Zeitoun, UNDP Egypt**

Dear All,

Further to Nidia Hidalgo's contribution regarding the work in El Salvador related to Conditional Cash Transfers, please allow me to share with you a similar pilot initiative here in Egypt implemented with the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

There is an ongoing pilot project on CCT's in Egypt that speaks to the concerns of this vibrant conversation. It is an experiment undertaken by the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity to pilot conditional cash transfers in both an urban and another two rural settings. The program has specific women's empowerment goals, objectives and is informed by issues of women's burdens, citizenship and aspirations. It is small but 'scientific' in so far as the rural pilot is introduced using a randomized control trial framework. It is part of a larger programme related to Women's Pathways to Empowerment.

Best regards,

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**Kifle Tekleab, UNDP-Eritrea**

Dear Colleagues,

A glance at history reveals that the issues of poverty and women date back to times immemorial. Different civilizations had different stances towards poverty and women's roles and rights. Obviously,



countless measures were taken to address poverty and improve women's rights across the globe at different epochs, indifferent places by different governments or civilizations. Humanity has travelled a long journey amidst these rough roads. The United Nations System itself had been so busy to help eradicate poverty and advance women's situation for the last three decades. Yet, the issues of poverty reduction and ensuring women's rights and equality remain among the top controversial concerns in our contemporary development endeavors. As articulated in terms of different conventions and declarations, never in history had the international community shown its solidarity as in the last few decades to reduce poverty and improve women's status in different walks of life. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is in fact a lively case in point. As the result of the different actions pursued at the international, regional and national levels some basic achievements are accomplished to date but far below the pre-set expectations or intensions.

In the case of Eritrea, the pursuance of concrete measures to ensure women's rights and equality dates back to the armed struggle for independence i.e., early 1970s. Likewise, in the post independence period, the government enacted a series of laws including FGM to safeguard women's rights and equality. Through the National Union of Eritrean Women diverse activities aimed at promoting women's concerns in different dimensions are carried out. At the expense of generalization, the renewed expansion of health, education, transport and water supply facilities into the rural and remote areas of the country has greatly enhanced the access of women and girls to basic socio-economic services. As per the MDG Report (2006), Eritrea is on track to achieve MDGs pertaining to gender equality in primary education, child and maternal health, HIV/AIDS, and other major diseases including access to safe drinking water. Despite these commendable achievements, however, a lot remains to be done in the foreseeable future, especially in terms of policy, development programming, attitude and cultural transformation; if the status of women in the country is to improve drastically and sustainably. The measures thus far taken are consistent with the Beijing Platform of Action.

If we twist the course of the discussion back to the global level, despite continued efforts to end poverty, today, we are witnessing a world with more than 1 billion people trapped in poverty and some estimates indicate that 70% of the world's poor are women. The ultimate effects of the international economic crisis on the poor and in particular on women and girls are still to be seen and accounted into this pejorative scenario. Let alone in the developing world, the issues of women's rights, equality, empowerment and access to opportunities still remain a concern even in the developed countries. Definitely, there are infinite factors acting behind this muddling trend; yet this by no means should discourage us from moving forward with our development agenda. Our motto should firmly be based on constructive transformation – a transformation that systematically addresses the ills of poverty and ensures women's rights and equality.

In my view, to clear up the way forward for women's rights, equality and empowerment including the eradication and de-feminization of poverty; collective and individual efforts should be re-focused to the following key areas of concern:

- a) During the last half of a century, experience has witnessed the proliferation of sacks of theories and shifting development thinking paradigms. None of these theories were gender sensitive in essence. Instead, they all tended to be gender-neutral. Even at this stage, while mainstreaming gender concerns at the macro-level is critically important, there are no tested tools to do this effectively. Overall, it is now high time to develop sound and workable development thinking and tools that put gender concerns as their centerpiece. The inclusion of sporadic gender issues in a country's development agenda is by no standards enough to propel development with women as actors for their destiny. As part of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action extra efforts should be poised towards deeper research to come up with workable development frameworks that fit for countries in different situations.

b) The availability of a sound development paradigm is not an end by itself; among others, the practical commitments of governments to implement the Beijing Platform of Action is exceeding important. Despite this reality, however, it is not uncommon to observe that international solidarity and cooperation are conspired by the drive to put national interests over international interests and commitments. While the developing countries require the assistance of the developed countries to fully implement the Action; the latter have not yet lived up to their commitments. Genuine commitments at country and even household levels are *sin qua non* for the success of the Action as women's rights are not only violated in public but also at the household level. Briefly, it seems today we have become captives of the paradox whereby everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die. In this case, special thrust should be pushed forward to trigger genuine and implementable commitments at all levels.

c) In reality, poverty is a symptom of the ills operating within a given system or for that matter an economy. On the contrary, the approaches used to address poverty so far tend to unduly emphasize on the symptom (poverty) rather than attacking the root causes of poverty. Even in the Beijing Platform of Action, the concept of women's participation is coined in many instances. However, for women, participation per se is not enough; they have to be actors and owners of their development agenda. Rights and empowerment are not alms to be dashed out. They have to be nurtured through concerted efforts involving both women and men. In brief, such approaches have to be reversed. The critical causes of poverty and in particular that of women need to be clearly identified, remedies designed with proper sequencing and integration as well as implemented competently. While doing so, care has to be taken that we are not caught in the cause-effect dilemma.

d) Poverty should not be much confined to material deprivation. One of the ugliest faces of poverty is the lack of skill. It is there the way people perform their functions and manifested everywhere in their daily life. The shortest way out of poverty is through education, especially for women and girls. If women are to have wider opportunities, strive effectively for and safeguard their rights, then they have to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. It is unlikely to expect women retain their rights in a sustainable manner without possessing the basic awareness, skills and knowledge even if they are provided with the rights. Thus, special emphasis to educate women and girls should be given; no matter education has become in a way the victim of its success particularly when viewed in terms of the sliding employment opportunities for the educated in the developing world.

All the Best,

Kifle.

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## Chantal Ekambi, UNDP Congo

Thank you for giving us this important opportunity to participate in the E-discussion on policy debate around poverty reduction, gender equality and women's empowerment and to share some of our own country experience:

Since the beginning of Beijing implementation we believe that poverty has increased in DRC. It was even worsened by the two war cycles and instability in the Eastern part of the Country.

Insecurity and violence are impediments to local development and jeopardize all the local and foreign efforts to sustain development. In this context, the poor and the vulnerable are undoubtedly women and children of all ages: young, middle-aged, and old.

However, one important paradigm is to be considered. In spite of the abject poverty, insecurity, loss of shelter, dislocation of families, SGBV trauma and stigma, their limited access to economic resources, women remain the main actors for the majority of the population survival. In formal employment they are 2.8% as against 12% for men. They are 2% present in the mines, 3% in factories, 3% in services and 8% in entrepreneurship, are mainly concentrated in agriculture, especially traditional agriculture and in the informal sector notably in trade. In 2008, they constitute 52.2% of the labor force and had catered for 71.5 % of the food production. Amazingly, poor women are working women...

To assess the poverty dimension in DRC, the Poverty Unit of our Country office has published in March 2009, 11 province profiles extracted from the available data of latest national censuses. They comprise the results of household surveys (income, employment), administrative and institutions employment, health and education data, disaggregated by sex where available. It appears clearly that poverty prevails in all the provinces and the socio-economic indicators show a very precarious life of most of the populations. Access to drinkable water and electricity is limited. Health services are insufficient. A socio-economic analysis of women's condition clearly shows that there are no equal opportunities for paid work, resources (land, inheritance, credit, property) and there are more illiterate women than men. On top of all, the survey clearly indicates that transforming gender relations is key to combat poverty.

What the UNDP DRC response in this context ?

UNDP/RDC country office has designed two programmes pillars: Poverty and Governance.

The Poverty programme covers the 2009-2012 period and comprises five components:

- Community recovery
- Support to Micro-finance
- Environment and climate change
- HIV/Aids and other pandemics
- Supporting the national implementation of SPRP/MDGs.

The overall objectives are that, at the term of the programme :

- National capacities in formulating politics to attain the MDGs are reinforced
- The question of HIV/aids is addressed and the national capacities for the programme management are reinforced.
- The communities are pacified and local economies are boosted.

Gender mainstreaming all initiatives is considered as a way of capturing the gender differences of poverty and boosting local economies in a post-crisis context. To that respect, for further and detailed information on projects and programmes, please visit [www.undp.org.cd](http://www.undp.org.cd) website.

### **To start with the discussion:**

- There is a close link between Poverty reduction and the promotion of a democratic, inclusive and participative Governance. Addressing women in poverty undoubtedly solves the basic practical needs, on the one hand, but also it opens the gate to women participation : a women with income is socially “considered” and is more likely to have a say in family and community affairs.
- Comprehensive surveys are costly and lengthy, at a time when the beneficiaries are expecting concrete resolutions for their daily struggle. Data can be compiled progressively when situation analysis are carried for specific projects and programmes. In the course of time, there will be a consistent and referential data-base constituted that should be recorded, shared and disseminated by national institutes for statistics.
  
- The unavailability of data and analysis, though important to elaborate efficient strategies should not be put forth to impede action. For example, the costing of MDG3 in DRC was made and the figures are known. This was made to inform the policy makers. Some part of foreign aid should then be used in favor of gender equality and support women’s empowerment. Then it should be done...Surprisingly, gender-blind budgets are continuing to be elaborated and resources are geared towards other sectors considered more important. Unfortunately, gender considerations remain second hand issue.
  
- The factors that increase women’s vulnerability are known, among which and the most important of all, being the traditional dependence of women on their partners due to patriarchal system as well as the legal framework for succession and inheritance. Other causes and consequences such as privatization, trade free-zones, neo-liberalism, global economy and industrialization, the new financial crisis come in addition to make things worse and deter the attention from more than half of the most resourceful, talented, industrious and dedicated world population.
  
- To tell the truth, solutions also are known and success stories exist all around the world to prove that communities are able to change their own destiny when :
  - Gender relations in religions, customs and traditions are transformed to mitigate discrimination and reduce dependence and violence,
  - Investments are made on girls education and women vocational training,
  - Financial support is given to women’s economic initiatives at local, national and international levels,
  - The legislation ensures that women are present in decision-making spheres,
  - A credible judiciary system promotes and protects women’s human rights,
  - A strong Civil Society platform exists to render the state accountable,
  - All citizens are informed of existing local and global institutional frameworks and opportunities that can improve their living conditions, .
  - And when ACTION is taken; action supported by a strong political will to accelerate reforms.

### **TAKING ACTION is the key.**

What lacks most of the time is the will – of husbands, brothers, sisters, parents, opinion leaders, governments, donors, development partners - to clearly consider and put gender issues at the centre of any development initiative. If not, we will keep on having Beijing+5, then Beijing +10, Beijing +15 etc. After 15 years of a planetary commitment, we should not be in a process of measuring the progress of a process as in diplomacy, but be counting, in each country, final, concrete and satisfactory results in the name of social justice and equity.

Thanks to all for now.

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## Raveloarisoa Noro Lalao, Madagascar

Nous aimerions nous inscrire à l'e discussion; nous vous transmettons nos réponses aux questionnaires. Merci de votre collaboration.

Reponses Aux Questionnaires Sur L'e-Discussion Sur Les Femmes et La Pauvrete, Madagascar

**Question 1 :** Les actions de lutte contre la pauvreté et ses dimensions genre depuis l'adoption de la Plate forme de Beijing

1. Mise en place de la Politique Nationale de la Promotion de la Femme (PNPF) en 2000
2. Le renforcement des capacités en genre et Développement pour les groupements et associations de femmes
3. L'intégration de la dimension genre dans les programmes et projets de développement par la prise en compte du genre comme critère de financement des projets, le développement d'outils pratiques de planification des activités, la mise en place de points focaux genre au niveau des départements ministériels
4. Actions affirmatives sur les domaines économique, social et juridique concrétisées dans les plans d'action nationaux comme le DSRP, le MAP ...
5. Mise en place d'un programme d'alphabétisation fonctionnelle
6. Gratuité de l'éducation de base, sensibilisation en faveur de la scolarisation des filles et réduction de la déperdition scolaire des filles
7. Gratuité de l'accouchement et des kits de prise en charge
8. Formation des l'accoucheuses traditionnelles sur l'hygiène
9. Sensibilisation des femmes enceintes à effecteur des consultations prénatales et à accoucher dans les centres de santé
10. Facilitation de l'accès de la femme aux centres de santé
11. Appui des femmes dans les AGR par le biais des institutions de micro finance
12. Mobilisation des ressources (de 1999 à 2004, les ressources mobilisées par le Gouvernement pour l'égalité de genre s'élève à 1.330.000 USD)
13. Collaboration avec la plate forme de la société civile en matière de la promotion du genre et de la lutte contre les violences

**Question 2 :** Les bonnes pratiques dans la promotion du genre et la lutte contre la pauvreté

1. Promotion de la culture favorable à l'égalité entre les sexes par l'implication des gardiens de la tradition ou chefs coutumiers et les autorités locales pour changer les considérations culturelles défavorables à la formation de la femme
2. Regroupement des femmes au niveau des associations/coopératives / réseaux et renforcement de leurs capacités en leadership
3. Collaboration avec les institutions de micro finance pour l'accès des femmes aux crédits
4. Mise en place du réseau des femmes parlementaires pour renforcer l'égalité et l'équité dans les relations homme femme
5. Intégration de la dimension genre dans le curricula de formation des grandes écoles
6. Mise en place de structure de prise en charge des femmes victimes de non droit (Centre d'Ecoute et de Conseils juridiques)
7. Collaboration avec les centres de santé de base pour soutenir les victimes de violence

**Question 3 :** Renforcement de l'environnement institutionnel et politique de la promotion du genre par rapport aux recommandations de la plate et Beijing et aux PMD

1. Mise en place des points focaux genre au niveau des ministères
2. Mise ne place et redynamisation du réseau des femmes parlementaires

**Question 4 :** Les messages des politiques pour les chefs qui participeront au CSW 2010

Adoption d'un cadre institutionnel et organisationnel favorable à la promotion du genre

**Question 5 :** Les actions les plus critiques pour aborder le genre et la pauvreté face aux nouveaux obstacles et défi tels que le changement climatique et l'impact de la crise économique globale

#### Obstacles

- Insuffisance de la sensibilité genre au niveau gouvernement et de la communauté
- Environnement socioculturel défavorable au développement de la femme
- Dépendance économique de la femme
- Surcharge de travail de la femme au foyer
- Taux d'analphabétisation élevé des femmes

#### Défis

- Renforcement et amélioration des acquis
- Intégration de la dimension genre des les budgets nationaux
- Promotion d'une culture favorable à l'égalité entre les sexes

#### Question 6 : Mobilisation des ressources financières pour l'égalité entre les sexes

1. Plaidoyer auprès du gouvernement pour l'affectation et l'augmentation de budget nécessaire à la promotion du genre
2. Plaidoyer auprès des partenaires techniques et financiers pour le financement des projets de développement intégrant le genre.

Raveloarisoa Noro Lalao  
Directeur De La Promotion Du Genre  
Ministère De La Population Et Des Affaires Sociales  
Madagascar

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#### **Sandy and Carol Reynolds, International Director Y's Menettes, Canada**

Good afternoon to all:

It is with great trepidation that I enter this discussion but at the same time I am honored to join in. I say that I join with hesitation is due to the fact that I live in a small community in the Province of Nova Scotia, Canada and do not see poverty on the level as most of the contributors.

Having said that I have done some research on a Canadian perspective and the following are a few of the stats:

One in seven women in Canada lives in poverty (2.4million). When mothers are poor so are their children (more than 1 million). Income levels are the main key to poor physical and mental health. Women in poverty are more likely to experience violence and abuse.

Here in my community back in 1992 a centre was established called the "Every Women's Centre" and I have taken a couple of paragraphs to show what they are all about.

The Every Woman's Centre has been working with thousands of women in Cape Breton since 1992. The Centre grew out of a volunteer group of women who met and discussed the problems and issues of women living in poverty and the challenges faced by marginalized women. Declining social-economic conditions in Cape Breton had a large impact on the lives of women and their families. Provincial and federal policy and program changes in welfare rates, housing security, health care and education made life even more difficult for low-income women. In early 1992, a feasibility study was conducted; it showed there was no place for women to go to in Cape Breton that was free, non-judgmental, and focused exclusively on women. The group of women initiated a funding drive to raise money for a centre. The Every Woman's Centre opened in 1992. In 1996, the Centre expanded to include short- to long-term residential housing units.

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Centre was to innovate and establish services and programs, to improve the quality of life of women in the community. To achieve this goal, a range of services and programs were offered. These programs were designed to meet the changing needs of women by addressing issues in areas such as mental health, addictions, **poverty** and homelessness. The Centre was a feminist agency. As a feminist agency, the goals and objectives focused on promoting women as autonomous, self-determining, inter-dependent human beings. Women also live within families, work, cultures and communities. We believed empowering women brought positive outcomes to women, men and children. We also believed that women had the basic human right to make the decisions that determined their own lives.

## Operations

The Centre was for homeless women and their children and low-income and isolated women. The Centre provided information and referrals, a drop-in program, and a comprehensive resource library. Two coordinators offered counseling and on-site programs for women in areas such as building self-esteem, assertiveness training, and dealing with anger, supplemented by special workshops on topics like family law, job readiness and stress management. The Centre also offered aftercare and follow-up support and service to women. Every September, the Centre ran its Back to School Campaign to assist families with increasing cost of school supplies.

This is our main resource in helping women get out of poverty.

Another item that arises in our area is seniors in poverty. This I will have to do more research on because I am not sure of the numbers but I do know that is growing really fast. Where I live it is starting to look like a retirement destination. All our young people are moving away to find work and all people that had gone away are coming back to retire.

Not a great circle to have operating at this time.

That is all for now, thank you for letting me voice in.

Take care

Carol Reynolds  
International Director Y's Menettes  
Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada  
B1R 1R3

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## Cheikhdiaw Diaw, Senegal

En Francais:	In English:
<b>Feminisme Et Developpement : Le Developpement Peut-Il Composer Avec Les Inegalites De Genre ?</b>	<b>Feminism and development: Can development flourish with the persistence of gender inequalities?</b>
La participation de tous les citoyens sans exclusion à l'œuvre du développement de la société est un principe démocratique et une exigence en matière de droit humains. En effet ; ni le sexe ni le statut social, ne doivent être des critères pour priver le citoyen quel qu'il soit de ce droit fondamental	The participation of all citizens without exclusion in development processes is a democratic principle and human rights demand. No criteria, be it gender or social status, can deprive the citizens of their fundamental right to participate in development. Women represent half of the world population. For



qu'est la participation au développement. Les femmes représentent plus de la moitié de la population, elles ont investi depuis des décennies le champ de la participation citoyenne et ont montré la preuve de leur engagement quotidien à contribuer à l'émergence d'une société plus démocratique, elles se mobilisent et participent activement aux processus de développement. Paradoxalement ; il apparaît aujourd'hui que les bénéfices du développement sont mal répartis et les femmes sont les principales victimes. Et de plus des voix s'élèvent pour dire qu'il faut accorder plus d'importance aux femmes car elles sont plus désavantagées que les hommes. De nos jours les questions d'équité ont tendance à prendre le pas sur les revendications exclusivement féminines. Toutefois il n'est que de justice que de reconnaître le rôle pionnier joué par les féministes aussi bien dans le cadre de la lutte contre l'oppression que de l'évolution des rôles dans le développement et de ses impacts sur la libération des mentalités.

L'habilitation économique des femmes reste encore un chantier qui mérite d'être exploré ; en effet même si des initiatives des micro crédits, de la promotion de la micro entreprise et de l'auto emploi ont contribué à la réduction de la pauvreté, il est temps d'évaluer l'impact des mécanismes de la micro finance sur l'amélioration de la situation des femmes et leur autonomisation en vu de tirer des conclusions pour le futur. Les lois ne suffisent pas, dans tous les secteurs de la vie politique, administrative, économique,...il faut un dispositif et des stratégies claires et efficaces qui veillent à faire éviter toutes formes de discrimination et d'inégalité de droit à l'égard des femmes. La clarté de la vision et des objectifs est un élément important des stratégies visant à instituer l'égalité. Est-ce que l'on vise seulement l'institutionnalisation du genre ? L'égalité des sexes ? Ne cherche t-on pas en réalité à défendre simplement les droits des femmes et une meilleure justice sociale ? Notre combat n'est il pas partie intégrante d'un engagement pour un développement durable, pour un monde sans pauvreté, sans violence et moins d'inégalité.

L'institutionnalisation de l'approche genre n'est pas un objectif en lui-même mais un moyen qui fait parti d'un projet sociétal plus large d'évolution et de progrès. Elle présente des effets structurants,

decades, they have been involved in civic participation. They have daily proved their political commitment by contributing to the emergence of more democratic societies. They mobilize and actively participate in development processes. Paradoxically, it seems today that the benefits of development are badly distributed and women are the principal victims. More and more voices speak up to have more importance granted to women because they are more disadvantaged than men. At present, the questions related to gender equality tend to transcend the claims exclusively raised by feminists. However, it is only fair to recognize the pioneer role of feminists in the fight against oppression and the broader engagement of women in development as well as the impact that these evolutions have had on the liberalization of cultural mentalities.

Women's economic empowerment remains a major field that needs to be explored. Even though micro-credit initiatives, promotion of micro-enterprise and self-employment have contributed to poverty reduction, it is time to evaluate the impact of micro-finance on the improvement of women's economic situation and their autonomy to make conclusions for the future. Laws are not sufficient. In every sector of society, be it political, administrative or economic, there is need for clear and efficient strategies that watch over the avoidance of all forms of discrimination and legal inequalities. It is crucial to have a clear vision and objective for all the strategies concerned with the establishment of gender equality. Do we only aim to institutionalize gender perspectives? Gender equality? In reality, are we not simply defending women's rights and a better social justice? Is not our battle an integral part of an engagement to ensure sustainable development, a world without poverty, without violence and less inequality?

The institutionalization of a gender approach is not only an objective in itself, but also an instrument that is part of a broader social project for societal evolution and progress. Gender-mainstreaming has structural impacts because it encourages and accelerates changes to modernize the public management and to ensure public services, which respond to the different needs of men and women to ensure sustainable development. It is crucial to treat gender issues as transverse questions to

<p>impulse et accélère le changement de la modernisation de la gestion publique pour aboutir à des services publics qui répondent aux besoins différenciés des hommes et des femmes afin de parvenir à un développement durable. Il faut traiter les préoccupations du genre comme des questions transversales pour la réalisation d'un développement durable à travers un processus d'intégration des outils de genre dans la planification, en institutionnalisant les objectifs du genre et développement ainsi que l'élaboration du matériel pédagogique et la mise en place d'un processus de renforcement des capacités en genre afin de faciliter l'intégration dans les stratégies et plans sectoriels. La transformation du cadre économique affecte les hommes et les femmes d'une façon différente en effet ; les rôles, les besoins responsabilités et les contraintes propres aux femmes sont différents de ceux des hommes. Bien qu'elles aient un rôle clair dans l'économie leur contribution à la production en général,, est en grande partie masquée dans les statistiques nationales, si bien qu'elle est ignorée tant dans l'analyse économique qu'au moment de la formulation des politiques .Une telle situation représente un obstacle majeur à l'évolution d'un développement durable équilibré en terme d'égalité Hommes et femmes. Le contexte politique et économique actuel tout en préconisant la participation des femmes , n'encourage pas nécessairement une analyse des questions relatives à l'égalité genre lors de la planification et de la mise en œuvre des politiques, des programmes et projets .</p> <p>La mondialisation de l'économie influe de plusieurs façons sur le contexte général du développement Ainsi toutes les instances politiques et économiques ont compris que le développement durable ne peut être réalisé sans se soucier du sort des femmes et particulièrement des inégalités genres très frappante . La mondialisation a eu pour effet d'accroître de manière spectaculaire la migration et l'exploitation de la main-d'œuvre notamment féminine qui se retrouve au bas de l'échelle de la hiérarchie professionnelle.</p> <p>Il ne peut y avoir de lutte contre la pauvreté sans participation des bénéficiaires et que l'inégalité genre est le moteur principal de la reproduction de la pauvreté. Il s'agit donc d'intégrer les femmes</p>	<p>realize sustainable development through an integrative process that uses gender approaches in public policy planning. Moreover, it is important to elaborate pedagogic material and to enhance gender capacity-building to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender into policy strategies and sectoral planning. The transformation of the economic framework affects men and women differently. The roles, needs, responsibilities and constraints vary among men and women. Even though women play a clear role in the economy, their contribution to the general economic production is largely hidden in national statistics. Women's economic role is equally ignored in economic analyses and in the formulation of policies. Such a situation constitutes a major obstacle for the evolution of balanced sustainable development in terms of gender equality. The current political and economic context, which advocates for women's participation, does not necessarily encourage a thorough analysis of questions related to the planning and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, programs and projects.</p> <p>The economic globalization impacts in many ways the general context of development. All political and economic leaders understood sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing women's lot and, more specifically, of striking gender inequalities. Globalization brought about a dramatic increase in migration flows and workforce exploitation – particularly the female one that is stuck at the lowest stage of the professional hierarchy. There can be no fight against poverty without participation from the ones who benefit from the current economic system. Besides, gender inequality is what mainly drives poverty reproduction. Hence, one should include in particular poor women in the development processes and facilitate their participation in every level of the socio-economic and political life.</p> <p>The goal is to favor their emancipation and better their situation but it is also to give them the means of acting for the society welfare, as they are perceived as responsible for families' stability, social cohesion and natural resources management. Women are the poorest, they are not enough taken into account for land and water management, education, health and other basic social services.</p>
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<p>pauvres en particulier dans les processus de développement et de faciliter leur participation à tous les niveaux de la vie socio économique et politique.</p> <p>L'objectif déclaré est de favoriser leur émancipation et d'améliorer leur situation mais aussi de leur donner les moyens d'agir pour le bien être de la société, tant elles sont perçues comme responsable de la stabilité des familles ; de la cohésion sociale et gestionnaires des ressources naturelles. Les femmes sont les plus pauvres des pauvres, elles ne sont pas suffisamment prises en comptes pour l'accès à la terre ; à l'eau, à l'éducation, à la santé et autres services sociaux de base .Elles sont exclues à la prise de décision à tous les niveaux. La lutte contre la pauvreté et les engagements internationaux ont généré une demande croissante et diversifiée non satisfaite d'informations désagrégées selon le genre Il faut établir et analyser les statistiques relatives à la problématique genre ; ce sont les données ventilées selon le sexe qui constituent les outils indispensables permettant de faire le suivi des progrès du développement et au ciblage des politiques Des statistiques fiables ventilées selon le sexe permettent de proposer des solutions adoptées pour lutter contre la pauvreté Les analyses sexo-spécifiques des budgets permettent de mieux prendre en compte les objectifs de l'égalité entre hommes et femmes et de l'élimination de la pauvreté.</p> <p>La multiplicité des travaux à exécuter et le temps exigé pour leur réalisation font que l'emploi du temps des femmes est surchargé et leur laisse peu de temps pour se reposer et pour faire .des activités alternatives génératrices de revenus. En effet ; malgré leur forte participation à la contribution alimentaire (80 %) l'essentiel de l'activité agricole ; les revenus tirés de cette activité ne vont aux femmes que dans une proportion de 10% par ailleurs seul 1% des terres utilisées sont contrôlées par les femmes à cause leur statut social. Ainsi ; les femmes sont obligées de s'orienter vers les activités économiques risquées telles que les productions vivrières dont le marché est incertain et saturé puisque tout le monde produit pour l'autoconsommation. Le revenu des femmes est faible parce que leur statut social limite l'accès aux facteurs de production ;</p>	<p>They are excluded from the decision-making level at every level. The fight against poverty and international initiatives generated an increasing and diversified demand unsatisfied with disaggregated information according to the gender. One should develop and analyze statistics relative to gender issues; these data sorted out by gender constitute indispensable tools that allow the follow-up of development progress. Reliable statistics sorted out by sex make it possible to put forward solutions adopted to fight against poverty. Gender-focused budget analyses make it possible to better take into account the objectives of gender equality and the eradication of poverty.</p> <p>The variety of the tasks women execute and the tight deadline of their realizations entail an overloaded schedule which gives them little time to rest and undertake alternative activities generating revenues. Indeed, despite their strong contribution to the food sector (80%), only 10% of the agricultural activity revenues go to women. Besides, only 1% of cultivated land is managed by women due to their social status. Therefore, women are compelled to turn themselves toward risky economic activities such as food-producing. However, this market is uncertain and saturated since many produce with the objective of home consumption. Women's revenue is low because their social status limits the access to production factors. Indeed, this situation takes women away from the possibility to provide guarantees to get a loan. They do not have enough savings to bring the cash needed to obtain a traditional loan. Even though they got loans, they would not be able to pay them off because their activities' management would not enable them to generate enough revenues. This situation puts them in a growing and permanent dependency position.</p> <p>Women tend to position themselves in strategic places of society and the economy. It would only take a better social status and a better implication to get significant multiplicative and decisive effects in the economy and impact development. As they manage food security, a better productivity would entail a cumulative process of economic and social improvement. They ameliorate the social return of investment because thanks to their concern for guaranteeing family members' security, public investments have a high</p>
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<p>en effet, cette situation enlève aux femmes la possibilité de fournir les garanties requises pour postuler à un crédit. Elles ne disposent pas de suffisamment d'épargne pour apporter la participation personnelle exigée par les règles traditionnelles du crédit. Même si elles obtenaient des crédits ; elles seraient dans l'impossibilité de rembourser car la gestion de leurs activités ne leur permet pas de générer suffisamment de revenus pour honorer leurs engagements. Cette situation de blocage les maintient dans une position de dépendance accrue et permanente..</p> <p>Les femmes tendent à se positionner massivement dans des endroits stratégiques de l'économie et de la société ; il suffit d'une amélioration de leur statut social ; de leur implication pour obtenir des effets multiplicateurs significatifs et décisifs dans l'économie et influencer ainsi le développement. Comme elles gèrent la sécurité alimentaire ; une amélioration de leur productivité enclenchera un processus cumulatif d'amélioration économique et sociale. Elles accroissent la rentabilité sociale de l'investissement car par leur intermédiaire les investissements publics ont une rentabilité sociale élevée grâce à leur souci de garantir la sécurité des membres de la famille. Les ressources publiques transitant par les femmes ont un apport coût / bénéfice très favorable pour la société. Le taux d'exploitation des potentialités socio-économiques de la femme dépend évidemment des performances de l'ensemble de l'économie et des moyens financiers techniques et humains mise en œuvre pour améliorer les conditions de vie de l'ensemble de la société ; en particulier des femmes.</p>	<p>social return. Public resources managed by women have a very favorable cost/benefit advantage. The exploitation rate of women's socio-economic capacities obviously depends on performances of the global economy and on technical and human resources used to improve living conditions of the society as a whole, and of women in particular.</p> <p>Cheikh Diaw Responsable Suivi/Evaluation ONG Enfance et Paix Sédhiou/Sénégal BP: 191 Sédhiou Site web: <a href="http://www.enfanceetpaix.org">www.enfanceetpaix.org</a></p>
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### **Louise Gonsalvez, Canada**

This is some information I found on women and poverty in Canada. Please click (<http://www.socialjustice.org/index.php>) to view it.

A new report on incomes, jobs and professions show women still have a long way to go.

The gender gap is much wider than is commonly believed - women's incomes are 61% of men's, despite years of trying to close the gender gap. Two decades of women's progress has resulted in marginal improvements. Women's average incomes have risen by less than \$3,000 – significant perhaps, but still far short of men's. In 1998 (the most recent data available), women have average (or median) incomes of

\$13,806 while men's incomes average at \$22,673. The study reveals that this income gap persists across age, educational attainment, labor market situation and family type.

Women are over-represented in the ranks of the poor and under-represented among upper income earners. They are segregated by occupation, having too few good jobs and too many contingent jobs. They are additionally marginalized if they are women of color, aboriginal, with disabilities, younger or older. For women raising children alone, they bear tremendous poverty rates. When examining how many women make it to the ranks of the wealthy, the study reveals that not many do. Women are under-represented by almost a 3-fold factor in the top 20% of Canadian earners. Only 11% of women get into the top 20%, whereas 29% of men access upper incomes of \$32,367 and beyond. Strongly related to this trend is occupational segregation. Women also are still denied access to many of the prime high paying professions and jobs. Women made up only 5% of skilled trades, 10% of fire and police forces and a meager 21% of senior managers. The barriers to women's employment must be significant to have such results. One such barrier is access to post secondary education where skyrocketing tuition and erosion of scholarships means women are denied such access.

Not surprisingly, women are over-represented among the contingent work force. This is the fastest growing sector for women's employment, where the wages are low and the work is part-time, non-unionized and insecure. Women in this category earn median incomes of less than \$11,000. This category also includes self-employment where women have median incomes that are only 59% that of men's.

One bright spot in terms of women's equality is in the results found for women who work in unionized environments. Women make 82% of men's incomes in such environments – even when comparing full time, full year employment. When assessing the impact of unionization, the study reveals that non-unionized environments create a wider gender gap – women make only 72% of men's incomes in such environments.

Unionized settings do much for women's equality – and, as such, are a recommended strategy for reducing inequality. Other policy recommendations include improving the minimum wage to levels above the poverty line, implementing a national child care strategy and providing free post-secondary tuition. Underlying these initiatives is the building of a core commitment to actively prohibit discrimination. Policies such as pay equity and employment equity are fundamental requirements.

Additional startling statistics:

The poverty rates for women in general is 20%, for women of color is 37% and for aboriginal women 43%. Women in couples with children under 16 had median incomes that were only 48 per cent of their male partners. Their median incomes were \$13,153. Women aged 45-64 made only 51 per cent of their male counterparts. Their median after-tax income was only \$14,779. As retirement income is a function of lifetime earnings, women's low income in this age group means they will be at great risk of poverty in retirement.

Women in the Atlantic provinces had the lowest incomes in Canada. Their median after-tax income was \$11,235. Thirty-five per cent of Canadian women have not completed high school and 72 per cent of these women had median after-tax incomes under \$13,786. Statistical studies of low income generally focus on the family. Using the family as the unit of measure hides the rate of women's economic inequality as men's higher incomes (due in part to men's greater likelihood of having higher paid, full year, full-time jobs) is likely to raise the total family income above the Statistics Canada measures of low income. This report looks at the frequency with which women, whether they are in relationships or not, earn lower incomes in comparison with men.

**Grace Mbugua, Women's Empowerment Link, Kenya**

Dear All

The fact that women economic growth has not been achieved, its evident that we cannot tire in challenging the governments and policy implementers to identify the gaps. The big question is "Why is Poverty among Women Still high and more of so in the rural areas? What structures, policies need to be developed, or are the existing ones not implemented effectively.

In Kenya women continue to contribute heavily to the economy considering they are the most in farming. However, women till land which they do not own as such the proceeds hardly go to them.

It would be important to have continued engagement in inclusion of women in agricultural policies in recognition of their contribution and more so evaluate how to equip them to be more effective with large volumes.

Currently, women don't have access to the advanced technology to improve quality and quantity. Its within our mandate as advocates to lobby for participation of women in access to ICT for women especially in the local and national level.

Regards

Grace Mbugua

Organizational Director,

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**Dated: 1 February 2010**

**Dr. Priya Chattier, UNIFEM Pacific Regional Office, Suva (Fiji)**

Dear All,

Greetings from Fiji Islands! Thank you for initiating an interesting debate on Gender and Poverty. I have been working in this area, especially within the context of Fiji and the Pacific for my PhD thesis.

Please find below my initial thoughts as a contribution to this discussion.

Fiji ratified the CEDAW in 1995, but progress has been limited in incorporating and implementing its provisions. According to a report by Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), women gained more rights with the introduction of the 1997 Constitution. However, they experienced a severe setback as a result of the recent political developments in the last decade. Recent political events in 2006 have significantly changed the political environment in Fiji and therefore affected some aspects of the implementation of CEDAW in the country. Women's role in decision making in political life in Fiji, particularly at the higher levels, has been very limited, despite some good legal protections and policies to promote women's equality. All citizens, men and women, were given the right to vote and to stand in elections in 1963. The 1997 Constitution provided legal protection against discrimination on the basis of

gender, stating that ‘every person has the right to equality before the law’ and that ‘a person must not be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly, on the ground of his or her actual or supposed personal characteristics or circumstances, including gender’. In 1999, the Government endorsed its Women’s Plan of Action (1999-2008) with the aim of achieving 50% gender balance at all levels of government. This aim, however, was not achieved. This can at least in part be explained by the political instability that the country has seen during this period.

In terms of institutional strengthening, the Department of Women and Culture has gone through numerous changes with the changes in Government. The Department of Women and Culture was upgraded to a full Ministry in 1997 (although it was a full Ministry in 1987 but restructured in the general re-organization of Departments) with Government Gender Focal points at Deputy Secretary Level established in 17 Ministries and Departments in 1998. This was mainly to ensure the implementation of the Women’s Plan of Action, which as noted above has not been successful. The Ministry of Women was again downgraded to a Department within the Ministry of Health and Social Services with a Government restructure in 2008.

Women in Fiji have full ownership rights, including the same legal rights as men in access to land, access to property and other financial resources. However, in reality, access is biased towards men as they are better positioned to inherit property and have access to resources. An analysis of the HIES (Household & Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2002/2003) conducted by the UNDP Pacific Centre on female headed households revealed 12.7% of all households in the country or an estimated 19,860 households were female headed households. The analysis conducted for a World Bank study of social welfare and social safety nets in Fiji revealed that female headed households were over-represented in the two lowest income deciles (ranked by average household per capita adult equivalent income). Female headed HH were more likely to be in the bottom two deciles and had a higher share than proportionate of the population, i.e. the household size was generally larger than average. In total there were an estimated 22,022 children living in female headed HH, of these 4500 (20.4%) lived in households in deciles 1 and a further 3934 (17.9%) lived in deciles 2; thus children in female headed HH were likely to be especially disadvantaged and likely to be living in the poorest households in Fiji. An estimated 10.8% of the total population lived in female headed households and on average 2.9% of all children lived in female headed households. This analysis of the aggregate data suggests therefore that there is scope for social welfare or social safety net interventions specifically targeted at female headed households with children. The most disadvantaged of all would appear to have been those living in female headed HH in squatter and urban village areas where 42.3% of the population in such female headed HH were below the BNPL, and almost 60% of all children in female headed HH were below the BNPL.

Furthermore, the situation of women in Fiji depends on their ethnic origin. The population is culturally diverse, comprising indigenous Fijians (55%), Indians (37%) also referred to as Indo-Fijians and others (8%). An underlying patriarchal ideological system and processes is common to most of these ethnic groups. Key areas of concern to all women in Fiji include poverty, discrimination in labor market and gender-based violence. Women’s location also plays a dominant role on who has access to resources and opportunities in life. In fact, women in rural areas live in communities demarcated by distinct ethnic and cultural settings. Indigenous communities live in villages or settlements within the periphery of their own native land with Indo-Fijian families mostly living in settlements either on freehold land or native lease or as farm laborers. Recent Gender audits on agriculture and land settlement funded by the Asian Development Bank states that:

“Women traditionally have the caregiver role and consequently their time to engage in agricultural activities is reduced. In the Fiji islands where traditional family structures are still strong, women are able to still draw on community support when they are required to care for sick family members. However, as families become more urbanized, these traditional supports



may deteriorate and a woman's ability to look after her family and participate in agricultural production may decrease."

### **Gendered roles of Women in Fiji**

Women's position in rural areas is determined by the various intersecting hierarchies of age, gender, ethnicity, kinship status and prevailing socio-economic conditions. Traditional patriarchal power relations still influence present day experiences of many Indo-Fijian women in rural areas whereby gendered social norms and perceptions about well-being affect intra-household relations, that is, 'who gets what' within the household. Gendered differences in opportunities, resource control, distribution and prioritizing at the household level are predominantly dictated by protocols that are culturally and religiously sanctioned. A recent study on *Gender and Poverty amongst Rural Indian Women in Fiji*, highlighted that while gender forms a significant basis for understanding inequality and power relations in rural areas, family/household relations, contextualized within the wider socio-cultural environments, such as village life and livelihood and structures of kinship based on age and hierarchy, determine women's access to resources and opportunities (Chattier, 2008). For example, the division of power among household members, such as relations between husband/wife, children and parents, siblings and in-laws, impinge on how claims, rights, needs and obligations are negotiated in terms of 'who gets what and why' and 'who does what in the house and outside'. The research further highlighted that the management of labor, income and resources is something which is crucially bound up with household organization and sexual division of labor. Evidence showed that rural Indo-Fijian women are discriminated against in terms of access to medical services, land and house ownership, domestic work and non-market care for children, elderly and the disabled, paid work and autonomy in household spending, time-autonomy and access to leisure activities, physical and social mobility, and access to education and knowledge. Therefore, micro-level analysis of Chattier's study evidenced that rural Indo-Fijian women are more vulnerable to poverty because of their unequal access to resources and opportunities. The same could be said for Indigenous Fijian women who are registered at birth as a member of their father's mataqali (sub-clan or lineage) emphasizing the importance of the male. It is through the man that the local group continues to exist. He is the protector and provider for the mataqali as girls are recognized to marry out of their mataqali and serve those of their husbands. Traditional Fijian parents are usually overjoyed if they have sons whilst to have daughters only is considered with some quiet and suspicion; it is stigma that is sometimes taken so seriously by married couples they seek ways to beget a male child. While these ideals may not be as prevalent with Fijian families in the urban areas, anecdotal evidence identifies this response is still common.

### **Economic role / activity**

The ideology of gendered roles is still predominant in the organization of daily life for rural women in Fiji. Evidence shows that men's primary role is as breadwinner and decision-maker, and women's primary role is as a family caretaker whereby women are identified as the keepers of the family. They are responsible for the health, education and wellbeing of the husband, children and the elderly. Gendered patterns of activities within rural Indo-Fijian & indigenous Fijian household's reflect culturally-defined gender roles and expectations and determine whether or not women have access to paid work, education and leisure activities. On a similar note, Narsey (2007) provided a comprehensive analysis of gender issues in employment, underemployment and incomes in Fiji which highlighted that 76% of all the household work in total is done by females, with over 86% of cooking and washing clothes and 79% of child care. In terms of total household work done, females aged between 20 and 39 do the largest portion, 41%, while males in that comparable age group do 12%. Interestingly, the 10 to 19 age group do some 8% of all household work, with females in that group, already doing more work than their male counterparts. Overall, Indo-Fijians have the highest gap whereby Indo-Fijian females do 330% more household chores than males, compared to 182% difference for Fijians and 158% for others.

Consequently, females have a higher incidence of falling below the poverty line because of their restricted access to paid work and unpaid domestic household chores. Narsey (2008) noted that some 40% of all economically active females earned below \$60 per week, as opposed to 20% of males. But if unpaid household workers are included in the labor force, the incidence of poverty would rise from 35 percent to 75 percent. For instance, if unpaid household workers are also included as part of the “poor”, then three quarters of all working women, broadly defined, can be classified as “in poverty”, from the point of view of the income they receive personally within the household for household chores. The incidence of poverty also varies spatially and ethnically which cuts across gender. It is higher in rural areas than in the urban areas (40 percent in 2002-2003 in rural areas compared with 29 percent in urban areas). Additionally, based on existing data, Indo-Fijians have a higher incidence of poverty than indigenous Fijians (37 percent compared with 34 percent).

The presence of many poor people in a given region can constitute a clear factor in vulnerability, as would the presence of poor people in any one sector. Accordingly, Indo-Fijians are expected to be slightly more vulnerable to disasters than indigenous Fijians, because they have a higher level of poverty. Lal *et.al* (2009) highlighted that the disaster risks of the Indo-Fijian people are likely to be highest in the Northern division where almost 60 percent of the poor Indo-Fijian population lives. The primary industrial sectors located in rural areas (Northern and Western division) are most vulnerable to natural disasters (particularly cyclones, floods and storms) and hence poorer people relying on primary industries face a double jeopardy, that is, sensitivity of their main income source to disasters, as well as to poverty that renders them less accessible to cope with the effects of disasters. The poor are more vulnerable than other income groups because they live in poor social conditions, in hazardous locations, their housing is poor and they have poor health conditions, including high child mortality and maternal mortality (UNDP, 2007). At the household level, women within low income families, often living in marginal or rural areas, are more vulnerable to disasters and ultimately to higher incidence of poverty. Rural women, often with very limited education and financial assets to quickly respond to disaster and then recover and rehabilitate puts added pressure on their poverty status and socio-health conditions.

Gender conventions and norms surrounding the institution of marriage determine differences in parental and societal expectations and notions of honor and shame for men and women in the Indo-Fijian society. In the Indo-Fijian kinship system, the eldest son has seniority over the siblings and incurs added responsibility as well as status. Marriage to the eldest son therefore entails extra responsibility as well as authority as the senior sister-in-law (Carswell, 1998). In-marrying sisters-in-law are ranked according to the seniority of the son they marry. In Indo-Fijian kinship relations there is a traditional taboo between father-in-law and daughter-in-law and between elder brother-in-laws and younger sister-in-laws. This involves not speaking together or having any contact unless absolutely necessary. Probably, the most important relationship for a new bride coming to her husband’s home, besides that with her husband, is her relationship with her mother-in-law. While the mother-in-law is still able, it is her responsibility to organize and oversee the work of other women and younger children in an extended household. However, in recent times the expiry of land leases on sugar cane farms and rural settlements and the move towards nuclear establishments has meant that Indo-Fijian women tend to have greater autonomy in the daily organization of the household and not be instructed by the mother-in-law.

Amongst the indigenous Fijian community, marriage has evolved from being traditionally arranged with marriage between individuals of two groups which had no traditionally defined social and economic relations rare to more of a choice between individuals with parental approval sometimes sought later. Ravuvu (1983) writes that while marrying person’s outside one’s ethnic group is not often acceptable to many, it is practiced wherever and whenever it is socially and economically advantageous. While gender conventions and norms determine relationships between the extended family the once elaborate traditional marriage procedures and rituals are not adhered to rigidly. Anecdotal evidence on marital abuse amongst

within indigenous Fijian marriages confirms that a gendered notion of “ownership” & “submission” with the belief that a wife serves her husband’s group is prevalent. As Ravuvu writes, apart from looking after the husband personally, the welfare of his group becomes one of her main concerns. To stay away and not get involved in serving the husband’s family is the hallmark of a worthless wife, considered only good as a sexual partner for the husband.

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### **Patricia Alexander, Consultant Economist**

Dear Winnie, Anna and friends,

Thank you for launching this welcome and important discussion opportunity. Your excellent questions ask the following question: “Are poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets):

- Disaggregated by sex?
- Widely available?
- Analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)?

In addition, the discussion tackles the following questions:

- What needs to be done to improve the availability of these data and gender analysis of poverty?
- Are such data and analysis used to inform public policies?
- Does the civil society use these data to advocate for or to monitor these policies?
- What needs to be done to improve the use of such data and analysis in policy-making?

**I believe the data have not been compiled and have not been made available to a sufficient degree.**

The advocacy work on data leading up to Beijing 1995, and the agreements in BP4A have not been realized, despite the achievements made then and the directions shown. My comments address this view, and note some examples of the “promises to keep” that are still on our agenda.

i. Prior to Beijing, the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) was revised in 1993, in part to clarify the definitions of Economic Activity – this revision took place thanks to the advocacy of gender/statistics specialists. SNA is the UN system for data standards; it now clearly shows that the unpaid work women and children do to provision the family farm in water and fuel, to pound rice, and process bean curd, to cultivate individual plots, grow vegetables, care for animals, make clothing, cull forest products, and so on, including for own consumption in the family – all are rightly considered Economic Activity, and the persons carrying out these activities are considered “in the Labour Force” – whether they are female or male, adults or children. The revised SNA, i.e. SNA93, was produced because advocates saw how much of poor and rural women’s work was not being counted, even though the unpaid subsistence farming work of males had been counted all along. These advocates lobbied for these changes, and we all felt that SNA93, and the agreements on better data production contained in BP4A, were victories that would ensure great improvements in data on gender.

ii. But after Beijing, governments did not understand that in order to implement the changes in SNA93 and BP4A, we needed to support training in all the national statistical offices (NSOs) of every country to show the leadership and staff (and the gender networks) **how to make**

**these changes in practice**, and what would be the result if retraining did not take place. Today, it seems that this training has not taken place. The World Bank, UNDP and other agencies continue to hire international consultants to guide national surveys and the Census, and women's work is still undercounted or uncounted. As a result, for example,

- In Timor-Leste the Living Standards Survey in 2001 counted only 34% of women as “economically active” or “in the labour force”; however, when SNA93 was properly applied to the survey results, 77% of women should actually have been counted.
- Some countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, produce survey results showing as few as 10-20% of women economically active, whereas NGOs working in these countries observe women at work from before dawn to after dusk gathering fuel, processing milk and cereal products, weaving, hauling water, and caring for livestock and poultry.
- Several Pacific countries fail to count ANY unpaid work, whether of women or men, as economic activity.
- Almost all Asia-Pacific countries confuse unpaid *care* work in the home (“housework” and child/elder/sick care) with unpaid *economic* activity: provisioning, processing, gardening, culling etc., and fail to report and measure the latter group (while also failing to take account of unpaid care work).

Therefore, in answer to the question you pose: No, the MDG poverty and other data are not adequately compiled or made available, they are unreliable, and cross-national comparability is weak.

1. **On poverty, and the outmoded “Female-headed Household” (FHH) term:** Although the industrialized (OECD) countries have done away with the inappropriate concept of “head of household”, international experts continue to endorse the use of such terminology in developing country surveys and the Census. Long ago OECD statistical offices dropped the notion – after all, why is there necessarily a “head”? It is clear that a household may be a partnership, and in any case the idea of “head” might be differently understood by different households. OECD countries use the term “reference person” – and analysis is not limited by this approach.

Unfortunately, in developing countries, we continue to see confusing results arising from the use of this inappropriate and gender-biased terminology. When we look into the [mis]use of the “head of household” term, we find that the household reports headship according to its individual, *cultural* understanding of the term, and the experts try to apply *economic* analysis to the results – it is apples and oranges, and the results are, as might be expected, at best meaningless and more often distorted. We read in the poverty reports: “female-headed households are not poorer than male-headed households”. Yet observers know that women raising children on their own often experience acute hardship.

We need to do away with this term. It doesn't work. When we analyse country data, we find that the term “household head” reports older women more than it does older men; it reports women living with adult, working children more than it does for men; it reports women who are not in the labour force more often than it does men. Further, the characteristics of so-called heads may be in no way representative of the characteristics of the household. Analysis is misled by this term, and misled in a gender-biased direction. In most cases “headship” does not enable us to identify women carrying the burden of household support on their own, and it fails to provide means for targeting poverty-reduction measures. If it doesn't work, don't fix it – get rid of it.

2. **Can official (survey and Census) data give us sex-disaggregated information, and can these data enable us to identify poverty among women** (or by other characteristics)? Yes to both questions, but the key is: the data must be accessible to researchers. That is, gender analysts

must be accorded access to the unit-level data (the “raw data”); so that they can have a free hand to do the analysis they need for their policy and advocacy purposes. While NSOs are knowledgeable about compiling data, they are not well equipped to know what questions women’s groups and gender ministries are trying to answer. Women know what they need, but in the past they had little means to find the answers in official surveys. Nowadays, computer time and software programmes are accessible to a wide public, and the official computers have stored the sex of every survey or census respondent. This means we can sex-disaggregate all the survey data, and we are not limited to those tables the government has chosen to publish in the annual report.

Here are some examples of what we can find out if we can get the data in our hands:

- Are women “poorer” than men within the same household? Two women researchers have demonstrated, using Tajikistan data, that household survey data can show the differences in poverty levels of men, women and children, given women’s lower wage earnings, if we have any evidence of differential “income pooling” behaviour between women and men in a country or region – even if all the farm income cannot be analysed individually. (Income pooling behaviour is the extent to which individuals share their individual earnings with all the household members. For more information on this subject matter, click [\[here\]](#) to view a paper published by Jane Falkingham and Angela Baschieri.

- Can we measure women’s contribution to poverty reduction in the household? Using data from the household surveys of Cambodia and Nepal, we have shown, using regression analysis, that the higher the proportion of women among the working-age adults in a household, the higher the per capita consumption (income measure of well-being) of the household members – and this despite the fact that in both countries women’s individual earnings are much lower than those of men. But to run this kind of regression analysis, we must have the unit-level data, or the sections of it we might request for such a study, in hand.

- Using data from the household survey of Viet Nam, we can show that, whereas the misleading term, “head of household”, showed only 25% of households “headed” by women – when we measure properly using SNA93, we find that in 52% of households the highest contributor of economic activity is a woman.

3. **What needs to be done to improve data availability?** UN and donor agencies, gender advocates and women’s ministries should ensure that governments make all unit-level official data available, and affordable, to bona fide researchers working for equality and empowerment. This is a fundamental issue of rights, transparency and accountability. The people of the developing countries contribute hours of each household’s time every year to answer questionnaires, and the donor agencies spend public funds to conduct official surveys and censuses. We need to say: Give us the data to explore, ourselves – and we can use them to provide evidence for policy and advocacy.
4. **What needs to be done to improve data analysis?** In our aid coordination, we need to re-direct some of the funding to training in the use of data. While billions have been spent on conducting official surveys and censuses (which are often analysed by international experts outside the survey country), not one tenth of one percent of these amounts have been directed toward training in-country analysts in women’s ministries and networks. Yet such training is feasible, and far less costly than the surveys, which lie on shelves and gather dust while advocates lack materials and mentors to put these data to work. In-country, practical training in data use, that is action- and policy-linked, is an affordable kind of technical assistance for agencies like UNDP and bilateral donors, and such project funding has a disproportionately large impact potential.

Learning to use our own data and exploring the results we can achieve is exciting and empowering.

However, developing national capacity and sustainable local networks of expertise for data analysis is not a simple, one-off exercise in any country. Learning data analysis takes time, and newly trained experts need to be supported with jobs or contracts from the government, business and donor networks. Otherwise, they will be obliged to desert their ministries or countries for better opportunities with the international actors. UNDP is well placed to spearhead programmes of national and regional data-use training for gender advocates, because it has country offices, convening powers with host governments, and donor coordination roles among many of the most willing agencies in this field.

Thanks again to all in this discussion, and warm regards,  
Patricia

Patricia Alexander  
Consultant Economist

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### **Dr Fidoline NGO NONGA, Université de Yaoundé II –SOA, Cameroun**

Bonjour à tous les discutants, Trouver ici ma contribution sur le Cameroun Cordialement,  
Dr. Fidoline NGO NONGA

#### **Quelques Données Cameroun, OMD et Pauvreté**

Au Cameroun, les autorités ont porté une attention particulière aux Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement au cours de la période de mise en œuvre du DSRP I. En vue de mesurer les progrès réalisés dans ce cadre, un rapport national, élaboré en 2008, fait le point sur les évolutions enregistrées au niveau de chaque objectif. De manière générale, les tendances actuelles montrent qu'il est très improbable que le pays puisse atteindre les cibles fixées d'ici 2015. Ce bilan mitigé vers l'atteinte des OMD est conséquent aux difficultés rencontrées dans la mise en œuvre de la stratégie, ainsi qu'aux coûts élevés de la mise en œuvre des actions y relatives.

#### **Pour les 3 premiers objectifs, la situation se présente de la manière suivante :**

- **OMD 1 : Réduire l'extrême pauvreté et la faim**

De 2001 à 2007, la proportion de la population vivant en dessous du seuil de pauvreté national est restée quasiment stable, passant de 40,2% à 39,9% tandis que pour la même période l'indice d'écart à la pauvreté est passé de 12,8% à 12,3%. Concernant la pauvreté alimentaire, les données indiquent que la proportion d'enfants de moins de 5 ans souffrant de la faim au niveau national est passée de 22,2% en 1998 à 18,1% en 2004. Que ce soit le taux de pauvreté ou la proportion d'enfants souffrant de la faim, les objectifs à atteindre à l'horizon 2015, soit respectivement 25,1% et 8%, semblent compromis au regard des évolutions constatées ci-dessus.

- **OMD 2 : Assurer l'éducation primaire pour tous**

Entre 2001 et 2007, le taux net de scolarisation primaire a connu une légère hausse de 0,3 point. La situation est restée quasi-stagnante du fait notamment : (i) d'un timide accroissement de l'offre d'éducation ; et (ii) du manque de stimulation de la demande (la sous scolarisation des femmes perdure dans les provinces de l'Extrême-Nord et de l'Adamaoua). Pour ce qui est de l'alphabétisation des 15 à 24 ans, le taux est resté stable, passant de 82,3% à 83,1% sur la période. Même si ces deux indicateurs n'ont

pas nettement évolués en 6 ans, ils restent maintenus à niveau suffisamment élevé de sorte que l'objectif prévu en 2015 d'atteindre les 100% reste encore réalisable.

- OMD 3 : Promouvoir l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes

Au niveau éducationnel, l'évolution des indicateurs, relatifs aux cibles retenues, montre que la situation des femmes connaît une nette amélioration notamment dans l'enseignement primaire où le rapport filles/garçons est passé de 0,83 à 0,89 entre 2001 et 2007. Ce rapport connaît une légère baisse dans le secondaire où il est passé de 0,93 à 0,86 sur la même période. Par ailleurs, l'alphabétisation des femmes des 15-24 ans est restée stable à environ 0,88.

Au niveau de l'espace économique, le taux d'activité salariale des femmes dans le secteur non agricole est en nette augmentation passant de 20,3% en 2005 à 21,4% en 2007. Ce taux reste faible et s'explique non seulement par l'évolution lente des mentalités mais aussi par le fait que les femmes accèdent plus difficilement que les hommes au crédit, à la terre et aux biens de production de façon générale.

### **Tendances et profil de pauvreté**

La période 2001-2007 a été marquée par un taux de croissance moyen annuel du PIB compris entre 3% et 3,4%, soit des taux de croissance moyen annuel par tête du PIB de 0,5%-0,7% par an ; niveau trop faible pour influencer de manière positive l'évolution des conditions de vie des ménages.

Ainsi la pauvreté monétaire qui a reculé de 13 points entre 1996 et 2001 reste stable sur la période 2001-2007. En effet, l'incidence de la pauvreté qui était de 40,2% en 2001 est de 39,9% en 2007. La conséquence immédiate de cette stabilité du niveau de pauvreté est l'augmentation importante du nombre de pauvres à cause d'une croissance démographique (2,7%) qui reste importante. Ainsi sur une population estimée à près de 15,5 millions d'individus en 2001, 6,2 millions étaient considérés comme pauvres. Quant à l'Enquête Camerounaise Auprès des Ménages (ECAM 3) en 2007, elle estime la population du pays à près de 17,9 millions d'individus dont 7,1 millions de pauvres.

**La pauvreté est plus marquée dans les ménages dont le chef est de sexe masculin par rapport à ceux dont les chefs sont de sexe féminin.** En effet, 41,6% des ménages dirigés par les hommes sont pauvres contre seulement 33,4% des ménages dirigés par les femmes.

La sévérité de la pauvreté qui mesure l'aversion des populations vis-à-vis de la pauvreté, ou d'inégalités entre les pauvres est située à 5%. Ce résultat montre que la population pauvre tend à s'homogénéiser. En effet ce taux était de 13,8% en 2001 (ECAM 2).

Par ailleurs, la profondeur de la pauvreté est restée aussi stable sur la période : 12,8% en 2001 et 12,3% en 2007. En d'autres termes les pauvres n'ont globalement pas pu tirer grand profit des effets de la croissance économique pour que soit réduit de façon significative le gap moyen entre leur niveau de consommation et le seuil de pauvreté, même si l'effet croissance a bénéficié essentiellement aux 10% des ménages les plus pauvres. Cette profondeur correspond à une intensité de la pauvreté de près de 31%, soit un déficit de 83 500 FCFA en moyenne par personne pauvre.

**La croissance enregistrée au cours de la période ne s'est cependant pas accompagnée d'une hausse des inégalités.** En effet, l'indice de Gini qui était de 0,416 en 1996 est passé à 0,404 en 2001 et à 0,390 en 2007. Il est d'ailleurs intéressant de noter que l'inégalité recule plus fortement dans les villes, avec un indice de Gini qui est en 2007 inférieur à celui du niveau national, contrairement à la situation constatée en 1996 et 2001.

Sur le plan spatial, de grandes disparités de taux de pauvreté ont été observées entre 2001 et 2007. La pauvreté a nettement reculé en milieu urbain de l'ordre de 5 points notamment dans les villes de Douala et Yaoundé, alors qu'en milieu rural l'incidence de la pauvreté s'est aggravé de près de 3 points, surtout dans les campagnes des trois provinces septentrionales.



En 2007, plus de la moitié des individus sont pauvres en milieu rural alors que seulement 12,2% sont pauvres dans les villes de 50 mille habitants ou plus. Dans les deux métropoles que sont Yaoundé et Douala, environ une personne sur vingt est pauvre, contre une personne sur cinq dans les autres villes. La quasi-totalité (94%) des personnes classées dans le quintile le plus pauvre réside en zone rurale, contre 2% seulement à Yaoundé, 2% à Douala et 6% dans les autres villes. Les disparités observées sont probablement tributaires des opportunités d'accès au revenu qu'ont les populations dans leur milieu de résidence. Hormis les régions de l'Est et de la partie septentrionale du Cameroun, les autres régions ont connu de manière générale un net recul de l'incidence de la pauvreté. Quatre provinces à savoir le Sud-Ouest, l'Ouest (qui a connu le meilleur recul de l'incidence de la pauvreté de près de 12 points entre 2001 et 2007), le Sud et le Littoral (hors Douala) ont une incidence de pauvreté proche de 30% tandis que ce taux est de 41% dans le Centre (hors Yaoundé) et avoisine les 50% dans le Nord-Ouest, l'Est et l'Adamaoua.

Ainsi, à l'exception du Nord-Ouest et de l'Est, les autres provinces méridionales ont un taux de pauvreté inférieur à la moyenne nationale de 39,9%. Yaoundé et Douala et dans une certaine mesure les autres villes, bénéficient relativement plus de la proximité des services publics et privés, pourvoyeurs d'emplois mieux rémunérés.

### **Principaux Déterminants de la pauvreté**

Au nombre de ces déterminants on peut principalement citer la taille du ménage, le niveau d'instruction, le groupe socioéconomique.

1. La taille du ménage. Le premier de ces déterminants est le poids des charges démographiques sur le niveau de vie du ménage. Quel que soit l'âge ou le sexe d'un individu, sa présence dans le ménage contribue à faire baisser le bien-être du ménage. En fait, les ménages pauvres ont en moyenne plus de membres (6 personnes en moyenne pour les ménages pauvres contre 3 pour les ménages non pauvres). Ce résultat, mis en regard avec le niveau de fécondité qui reste élevé (l'indice synthétique de fécondité est de 5 enfants en moyenne par femme) et la forte croissance de la population (2,7% en moyenne par an), montre que les politiques démographiques doivent continuer à être prises en compte dans les stratégies de réduction de la pauvreté.

2. Le niveau d'instruction. Quand ils évoluent, le niveau d'instruction du chef de ménage et celui de son conjoint contribuent à améliorer de manière importante le bien-être du ménage. Un ménage dont le chef a fait des études primaires améliore sa consommation par équivalent adulte de 11%. Cet effet est respectivement de 26%, 38% et 75% pour un ménage dont le chef a un niveau d'études secondaires 1er cycle, secondaires 2nd cycle et supérieures. Néanmoins, on remarque que le niveau d'études du conjoint est peu significatif en milieu rural. Comme la majorité des conjoints sont des femmes, cela traduit le peu d'opportunités d'emplois décentes dans les campagnes.

En termes d'évolution, la comparaison entre 2001 et 2007 montre qu'il y a une plus grande proportion de chefs de ménages ayant le niveau de l'enseignement secondaire second cycle et celui de l'enseignement supérieur. Cela se traduit par le fait que le stock de capital humain s'est amélioré, conduisant à de meilleurs revenus. Mais les « rendements » de l'éducation ne s'améliorent que pour les ménages dont le chef a le niveau du supérieur et se détériorent pour ceux dont le chef a le niveau du secondaire (ces derniers sont plus nombreux).

3. Le groupe socioéconomique. Les secteurs d'occupation économique, que sont le secteur institutionnel où l'individu exerce son activité et la branche à laquelle appartient son entreprise sont aussi des déterminants clé de la pauvreté. S'agissant du secteur institutionnel, il y a une prime nette pour un ménage dont le chef travaille dans l'administration et dans le secteur privé formel. En milieu urbain, un ménage dont le chef travaille dans l'administration a un niveau de consommation par équivalent-adulte

supérieur de 16% à celui dont le chef est sans-emploi ; pour le privé formel, ce pourcentage est de 14%. Ces chiffres sont respectivement de 14% et 22% en milieu rural. En revanche, il n'y a pas de différence significative entre le fait de vivre dans un ménage dont le chef est sans-emploi et le fait qu'il exerce dans le secteur informel urbain ou dans une petite exploitation agricole rurale. Ceci est dû au fait qu'en réalité les limites entre l'activité, l'inactivité et le chômage sont floues dans une certaine mesure et compte tenu de la faiblesse des barrières à l'entrée dans le « petit » secteur informel, les personnes peuvent rapidement passer d'une situation à l'autre.

Quant à la branche d'activité, on constate qu'il y a une prime d'être dans les services (administration, services financiers) et une décote de travailler dans les branches primaires.

Entre 2001 et 2007, on constate proportionnellement qu'il y a moins de ménages dont le chef travaille dans l'administration et dans le secteur privé formel (les deux groupes à plus faible taux de pauvreté). Parallèlement, la proportion des ménages dont le chef exerce dans le secteur informel s'accroît. Ces deux effets conjugués conduisent à une détérioration des revenus. Concomitamment, les rendements des facteurs de tous les groupes de ménages sont à la baisse ; autrement dit, toutes choses égales par ailleurs, les gens sont en moyenne moins bien rémunérés, tous secteurs institutionnels considérés.

4. L'accès aux actifs de production (terre, crédit). Il y a lieu de lier l'accès aux actifs de production et le développement du capital social à la consommation et au bien-être des ménages. La possession des terres contribue à améliorer le niveau de consommation par équivalent-adulte du ménage. Les données recueillies montrent qu'au Cameroun 53,9% de ménages ont au moins un membre propriétaire d'une parcelle de terre exploitée (pour la culture, l'élevage, etc.) et la superficie moyenne de terre détenue est de 2,4 ha par ménage. Cette situation masque des disparités selon les milieux de résidence, les régions et le niveau de vie. En termes d'évolution, le facteur terre donne un meilleur impact sur la pauvreté en 2007 par rapport à 2001, seulement, les superficies cultivées auraient diminué entre 2001 et 2007.

De même, le fait d'appartenir à une association quelconque améliore le niveau de consommation par équivalent adulte de 9% à 10% respectivement en milieu rural et urbain. Les associations jouent en effet un rôle important pour améliorer l'accès au crédit afin de financer par exemple les activités génératrices de revenu.

Dr Fidoline NGO NONGA  
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### **Tanushree Gangopadhyay, Independent Journalist, India**

There are plenty of schemes for the uplift for women and children in the developing countries. Several nutrition programmes, poverty alleviation programmes, employment guaranty programmes. However the gap between the policies and implementation of all these programmes are very wide, in most developing countries so also in India.

Effectively women get vulnerable whenever the economy is in crisis. Globalization has had a worse impact on them. Most of the responsibility of running the households is vested in the hands of women, as in general men in rural as well as urban areas contribute meager parts of their income to the households. More often, men spend their wages on alcohol or gambling, thus leading to pauperization. Displacement of families due to several developmental projects like dams, mines etc further compute problems.

In many areas women are the main earners of income. But their reproductive roles coupled with nurturing of the children as well as domestic responsibilities have overburdened them, leaving them vulnerable. Large-scale farmers' suicides have overburdened the women who are burdened with looking after families.

Indian government's militarization in certain areas has had adverse effects on women. Armed forces and paramilitary forces have indulged in excesses in many tribal and border areas; whereas the entire populace is affected, the women are worst affected. They are subjected to sexual exploitation and more often they are not only raped but also murdered. There are several movements against such excesses.

### **Positive steps**

However in India some positive steps have been taken in the political sphere. Reservation of seats for women in the local self governments at the rural and urban areas has given women some powers. Women have taken over as elected leaders in some rural areas and have been able to make some dent in the policy. However, these are few and far between. Despite that they have been able to make a dent. However reservation for women at the State legislatures and Parliament has been debated for the past many years and bill has not been passed. Men do not want to give a share to the women.

Self Help Groups aided by government schemes have helped women improve their status in some areas of the country. Women have taken advantage of these schemes in some areas of the country. They are educating their children and some have improved their economic status. In many areas SHGs have done very well in giving micro-credit. These schemes have double edged weapon. Whereas women have increased their assets, they have also gone in for consumerism. In Kerala, a southern state where the woman's status is fairly higher, a government scheme of Kudumbashree where rural poor women as well as urban poor have been taking strides in forming self help groups which have improved their status. These innovative schemes have helped in taking strides.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) ensuring employment to one member in the family for 100 days has helped women in some areas. Women in some areas have benefitted as they take up jobs, which generally men are not availing of. Several research surveys have been done and volumes of data are available. However, these are almost always shelved. Several NGOs have done phenomenal work based on such data. These have made dents at micro levels.

A wonderful programme taken up by an NGO regarding the Right to Information (RTI) has made a dent in the government's work towards transparency. Following this, legislation has been passed which makes it mandatory for the government departments to furnish information sought by the people. Women's groups have used this in order to help them get relevant information to help them.

Tanushree Gangopadhyay  
India

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**Moses Garang, Sudan**

Dear all,

it is very commendable to have this good discussion on the issues of gender and poverty. In my country (Sudan), major factors affect women in the labor force, because of the sex, gender and education background. And as the world, we need to respond to these major obstacles affecting women, by building

the schools so that they have good educational background. There have been a little bit change in the Southern part of the country, by having a 25% of the women in both governmental jobs and official jobs.

Moses Garang, Sudan

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**Mohamed Benkassmi, Association Alhidn, Morocco**

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below our second contribution to the e-discussion:

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

Women poverty has significantly decreased in Morocco since 1998, according to the households' surveys, which are the main sources of data in the field. Morocco has undertaken three surveys (1998, 2001 and 2007) and a general census in 2004.

In our last contribution, we mainly referred to the MDG's national report of 2007, which gives a large landscape of both the situation and the evolution of women poverty and vulnerability. However, we can assume that some specific problems may affect seriously women. For instance, divorced women with children seem to be a very vulnerable population, yet a lot of progress has been noticed in Moroccan laws to protect them.

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

Morocco is one of the countries where statistics are permanently improved. They are also almost always disaggregated by sex. It is the case in all households' surveys and in the general census. We can also notify that the national human development report 2005 has specifically been devoted to the gender disaggregation statistics.

Last year, the High Commission of Planning has undertaken a new survey, devoted to the violence against women.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies? Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies? Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?**

Data and analysis became more frequently used by the media and civil society; which is a significant move towards a better awareness of citizens about the phenomenon.

Also, during the Parliament discussions, such data is more used as argument to support different claims. Of course, it is for now about general figures and official statistics, but it is improving.

Thank you and Best regards,

**Mohamed Benkassmi**

**Dated: 3 February 2010**

**Grace Achieng Okonji, Senior Gender Advisor, UNDP Southern Sudan and Asha Arabi, Gender Advisor, UNDP Southern Sudan**

Dear All,

Greetings from Southern Sudan! Thank you for initiating an interesting debate on Women and Poverty. *Below are our responses to the questions.*

**1. How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

At the time of the 1995 conference in Beijing, Southern Sudan was **in conflict situation**. Four decades of civil war and violence in Sudan have resulted in the immense loss of life, destruction of human and physical capital, and substantial loss of livelihoods, incomes and employment opportunities. **January 9th, 2005** brought an end to the Sudanese second civil conflicts that lasted for 21 years. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement was a historic moment and a great opportunity for the country; one which all its people should strive to uphold in order to ensure solid and long-lasting peace.

The protracted civil war between the government of Sudan and the former rebels (Sudan's Peoples Liberation Army) was largely fought in Southern Sudan causing displacement to millions of people. The conflict severely limited people's access to basic services such as health care, clean water and adequate shelter (if they even existed at the onset). The war also served to highlight the disparities that exist between the standard of living of those residing in the North and those residing in the South.

The conflict in Sudan affected men, women, children, youth, boys and girls. However, Sudanese women felt most of its impact because of the changing roles and responsibilities that they had to take in the absence of their husbands (who in these case were considered to be the breadwinners of the family), brothers, uncles and other father figures in the households. Many women and their families were displaced and lived in extreme poverty without access to clean water, energy, sanitation, and little access to livelihood and education.

Also during the war, Southern Sudanese women's participation helped in creating a sense of equality and lessened gender differences since both men and women tended to play different roles from traditional societal roles. When women were not present in direct combat, they continued to play important roles in supporting the cause; they operated within traditional frameworks by providing the men with vital support and back-up. Nevertheless, women became the backbone of their societies and took care of the households, agriculture, the sick, the wounded and the children. However, in the post-war era, South Sudanese women found it harder to maintain their positions because of their societies neglecting their roles without taking into account women's important contributions during civil war when some men were away from their communities.

South Sudanese women encountered gender violence both during conflicts and in post-conflicts. They experience all physical, emotional and sexual forms of violence. Many of them are/were subjected to torture, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced stimulation, forced termination of pregnancies, and mutilation. This prolonged conflict combined with poverty levels have also exacerbated and deepened risks for personal security and vulnerabilities, especially among women and children. Women in Southern Sudan find themselves trapped at the centre of a vicious cycle of extreme poverty and household vulnerability where entrenched patriarchies, religious customs and traditions, and sexual and gender-based violence consistently contribute to young women and girls being kept away from decision-making in the personal or public spheres of life. Sudan's laws, regulations, customs and courts for dealing with rape and violence are inadequate and there is limited justice for the victims. Human development indicators are, in general, quite low in Sudan in comparison to other African countries, and in Southern Sudan they are consistently lower than the national average.

Patriarchy is another cause of poverty among women today and is a prominent ideology in many African societies. As a result, men dominate economically, socially, and politically. This system has worked to the disadvantage of women, who are isolated and exposed to all kinds of violence. Sudanese women are the main contributors to the welfare of their families. They contribute resources to their families, the community and to the nation. Unofficial sexism is part of the everyday practice in Southern Sudan. The poor and working women of Southern Sudan have not been represent both in urban and rural areas.

Also, limited educational opportunities for girl/women can be viewed as another major obstacle to the realization of basic human rights. 92% of women in Southern Sudan cannot read or write and only 27% of girls are currently attending primary school. Education improves the livelihood of people through the improvement of the economy and provision of employment which help young people to be independent. It also gives young people vocational skills' training that might lead to their participation in the decision-making process on issues concerning their lives.

More than 90% of the population in Southern Sudan currently live on less than 1 USD per day. This burden perhaps is mostly felt by women who, due to longstanding gender roles, are responsible for maintaining households and sending their children to school. As a result, there is a need to strengthen women's self-help groups in Southern Sudan. Women's self-help groups do help in strengthening women's participation in the development of communities and the approaches to problem solving. It also aims at enabling women and youth to engage in micro-credit enterprises which will allow them to become self-sustainable in the long run.

Maternal mortality is causing another bigger threat to poverty among women in Southern Sudan. About 14,000 Southern Sudanese women die every year due to maternal mortality and other related deaths. One out of seven women who become pregnant in Southern Sudan will probably die of pregnant related deaths. For example, poor coverage of women's reproductive health (only 10 percent of births are attended by skilled health staff) coupled with high fertility has led to a very high maternal mortality rate (2,054 out of 100,000 live births).

Also, under-appreciation of women's informal sector (selling goods along road sides, brewing local beers, subsistent farming etc) is another cause of poverty among women in Southern Sudan. Southern Sudanese women are mostly engaged in informal sector and since there is limited data available, it's becoming very hard to know how much women have contributed towards the re-building of Southern Sudan. The recognition and the appreciation of the informal sector where women are mostly involved will be one of the cornerstones of tackling gender poverty in Southern Sudan.

## 2. What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women?

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, concerted efforts toward reconstruction in Southern Sudan have attempted to lay the foundation for reducing poverty and vulnerability of women by promoting peace and development. However, recovery has been slow. Approximately 2 million people have returned to south Sudan since 2005 to extreme poverty.

Additionally, the returning women and population at large has high expectations of quick dividends from the peace agreement. However, they are confronted with a challenging reality of limited opportunities and lack of basic services, finding it difficult to break the cycle of dependence and continuing to rely on handouts to ensure their food security. The lack of safety nets to protect women and girls means that some families are completely exposed to severe food shortages and ill-health.

- After the signing of the CPA, the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) created a Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs (MoGSWRA). This Ministry is mandated to mainstream gender throughout all government institutions and further tasked with creating women's empowerment initiatives such as the Ministry-supported rural micro-finance program that was implemented in 2008. The MoGSWRA also focuses on creating national policies that can be operationalized by their Ministerial counterparts in each of the ten states in Southern Sudan.

- **Violence Against Women** – A recent GBV study released by UNIFEM revealed that 41% of female Southern Sudanese respondents stated that they had experienced GBV. As a result, some UN agencies and NGOs have started creating awareness about GBV as a way of handling poverty since poverty is considered to be one of the contributing factors of Gender Based Violence in Southern Sudan and in other parts of Africa.

- The Government of Southern Sudan, as reflected in the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan, has expressed its commitment for equitable development and poverty eradication, but it has to build state systems and institutions from scratch, including a strong and capable civil service and effective service delivery structures. The institutional mechanisms for advancing women's empowerment and reducing their vulnerability are being built from Scratch.

- Among the most significant changes that were brought about by the CPA was provisioning of equal rights of men and women through an interim constitution. Article 20 of the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan, recognizes the rights of women and specifically calls all levels of government in Southern Sudan to: *(a) Promote women participation in public life and their representation in the legislative and executive organs by at least twenty-five per cent as an affirmative action to redress imbalances created by history, customs and traditions; (b) Enact laws to combat harmful customs and traditions which undermine the dignity and status of women; and (c) Provide maternity and child care and medical care for pregnant and lactating women. A draft gender policy has been prepared and one of the core areas addressed is women and poverty.*

- The 25% affirmative action is far from target in all sectors. There are only 3 women ministers at Government of Sudan level. There is only one women Governor out of 10. The Judiciary of Southern Sudan (JoSS) is yet to realize 25% women employment rate as provided in the interim constitution of Southern Sudan, this is reflected in the fact that women constitute 11.8% of the core professional staff (Justices and judges) in the Judiciary

- **UNDP Southern Sudan has come up with the following mechanisms for addressing gender issues and poverty among the less privileged in Southern Sudan:**



- Coordinating with and involving the Southern Sudan national network of women and women's organizations in key aspects of UNDP's development programming and ensure that all information and outreach activities target and involve both women and men.
- Developing and strengthening partnerships with existing national and international initiatives (especially those that focus on human rights, democratic governance, the promotion of women in peace-building and post-crisis situations, poverty alleviation, protection and assistance to victims of gender based violence) and represent UNDP in existing interagency coordination forums on gender issues.
- Identifying opportunities for strategic partnerships with national research and academic institutions working on gender issues at the national level
- Directing gender related research and analysis within the Southern Sudanese context
- UNDP has been implementing projects (such as Building Inclusive Financial Sectors in Southern Sudan), that are aimed at poverty reduction in Southern Sudan. These projects put special emphasis on addressing gender dimensions of poverty. This project aims specifically at improving the livelihood of women through the provision of financial services.
- Another project that aims at addressing the gender dimensions of poverty is "Support to Economic Planning" which has a component dealing with the collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data.

**3. In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

Availability of sex-disaggregated data is a big challenge in Southern Sudan. However, the National Baseline Household Survey (2009) provides useful data on poverty and hunger: number and proportion of Southern Sudanese women living in poor households; number and proportion of Southern Sudanese women in formal employment; poverty across male-headed and female-headed households; malnutrition among boys and girls under 5.

The South Sudan Statistical Yearbook (2009) also provides data disaggregated by sex. Some of the data available include: women (and men) in decision-making - representation in SSLA, state assemblies, council of ministers, etc; neonatal and post-neonatal mortality rate, maternal mortality rate; women awareness about HIV/AIDS; net attendance ratio in primary and secondary schools.

A comprehensive poverty assessment has been conducted by the South Sudan Center for Statistics and Evaluation which will be analyzed in 2010 to provide clearer indicators for Southern Sudan. The area of identification of priority data needs and supporting analysis of gender statistics requires attention to enable the Center produce reports that inform policy decisions.

Contributions by:

Grace Achieng Okonji: Senior Gender Advisor, UNDP Southern Sudan and Asha Arabi: Gender Advisor, UNDP Southern Sudan

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**Joan Osa Oviawe, Nigeria**

Dear All,

Warm greetings. I have been enlightened by many of the contributions thus far.

To respond to the question:

**1. How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

In many ways, poverty and vulnerability of women in Nigeria has not improved and maybe is getting worse. The primary reasons for this are: poor governance, massive corruption and a general lack of policy-implementation to advance the empowerment of women. Since 1995 and prior, as the economy of Nigeria worsened, so also, the plights of women. In one key area: political participation, women seem to have made some gains. However, due to the dearth in data, it is not possible to know how significant or marginal the gains in women political participation have been.

One key marker in the worsening economic situation of women in Nigeria is the alarming rates of women and girls that are being trafficked for prostitution in Europe and other parts of the world. This phenomenon is so bad in some parts of the Country that there is great concern of a generation of young girls being trafficked into prostitution.

**A need for a paradigm shift in National and International Interventions:** many empowerment schemes tend to focus on teaching women trades: sewing, handicrafts and so on. While these are good steps, I think it is time to take these skills acquisition initiatives a step further. Beyond acquiring the basic skills, which doesn't give women enough capital and profit to have much disposal income, thereby keeping them still within the poverty level, it is important that the focus should shift to helping women become small business owners; where they can be potential employers of labor- moving from a one-woman petty trade to a Miss Boss, who controls sizable capital. Thus, instead of teaching a woman simply how to put a thread through a sewing machine, she should be taught the fundamentals of running a successful fashion business. Beyond teaching the fundamentals, there should also be mechanisms put in place to link these women to the global market arena- so they have possibilities of expanding their business prospects and becoming potential suppliers of goods to the global market.

Teaching non-literate women how to read and write should also be a part of the skills acquisition training.

I believe this will go a long way in breaking the circle of poverty and assisting hardworking women all over the world to become economically self sufficient and empowered.

I thank you.

Joan.Osa Oviawe  
Grace Foundation  
Benin City, Nigeria  
[www.foundgrace.org](http://www.foundgrace.org)

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**Pauline Ngouanfouo, Cameroon**

Dear All,

I would like to thank the UNDP for this unique opportunity for women. I am glad to join others in this important discussion. Happy new year to all the women around the world specially for women and girls with special needs. Women in Cameroon are indispensable partners in development strategies. They constitute more than 51% of the population of Cameroon. Cameroonian women contribute a lot to the fight against poverty by doing agriculture for basic needs and selling, by the production and selling of non- timber forest products such as fruits, nuts, leaves, and medicinal plants.

Efforts are needed to train women in forestry and natural resources activities in order to enhance their participation at all levels from grassroots to international policy.

- Stakeholders have to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes across prioritized objectives, to ensure that men and women fully participate in benefit from forest research outcome;
- They have to invest in specific interventions that empower women, reduce their vulnerability, build their leadership, provide them with access to resources, and protect their human rights.
- The national policy should encourage women to be more productive by giving them a chance to receive loans to reach strategic positions.

We believe that women can efficiently work on poverty reduction efforts particularly in rural community. But in Cameroon as in other countries, we are facing climate changes which will take us back many years. My next contribution will be on climate change and poverty in Cameroon.

Pauline Lambou Ngouanfouo  
Special Education Teacher /Women Rights Activist  
GBHS ladies Bamenda - Cameroon

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**Dated: 4 February, 2010**

**Abebe Tesfaye, Ethiopia**

Dear all participants of this E-discussion,

I am very interested by the discussion regarding the poverty and vulnerability situation of women living all around the world. With regard to the questions forwarded, I would like to suggest the following replies with respect to Ethiopian women.

**1. How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted? What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women? Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?**

**Ethiopian women in the 1990s**

Soon after the downfall of the previous Derg regime, the various political and national organizations, setting aside their differences, formed a Transitional Government whose principles were set out in a charter in which peace was the main principle of governance. This brought a period of relief to all Ethiopians, especially to women. The democratic process is able to grow and develop effectively when all people are given equal encouragement to exercise their democratic rights, and when women can experience benefits of their labor on an equal basis with men. With this realization, the government of Ethiopia, both the Transitional Government and the first elected Government in 1995, has given priority to the speeding up equality between men and women.

Until recently, governments in Ethiopia have not had any policy on women's affairs. Hence, they have not been seen as important potential beneficiaries of government development programs. Although women have made substantial contributions to the struggle; Ethiopian people have waged to ensure their rights and freedoms, their struggle up to now has not been sufficiently institutionalized. Gender issues do not only concern women. Women's problems cannot be solved by women alone, but by the coordinated efforts of the society as a whole, including government. Careful planning in full consultation with women is essential, drawing lessons from past failures and experiences.

Women's demand to participate actively in national development and to exercise their right to enjoy its fruits is now receiving support in government and local communities. One effect has been the creation of a *modus operandi* which is increasingly free from partially and sexual discrimination. Of course there is still a long way to go.

## **Gender and Development**

The Government of Ethiopia has taken steps to improve the condition of women in the country, including formulating policies and strategies to integrate and mainstream the gender dimensions in economic, social, and political decisions. Accordingly, progress has been made in the adoption of a new Penal Code, which contains strong measures in support of women's rights. Protective legislations have been passed in terms of women's access to land, credit facilities, and productive resources as well. The Government has continued emphasizing gender equality in the process of decentralization and empowerment. Gender issues have also been addressed in key related social development policy areas of the country. Education policy, Health policy and prevention of HIV/AIDS, Population etc. have served as entry points to mainstream gender issues.

## **Progresses in the Implementation of National Action Plan for Gender Equality**

**Economic Empowerment of women and girls:** The contribution of Ethiopian Women to the country's socio-economic development effort is huge. Ethiopian women have not been able to enjoy the fruits of development equally with men. In order to enhance equity in agricultural sector, the following improvements have been achieved within the framework of the **National Action Plan (NAP) for Gender:**

- Regions have taken initiatives to register the name of both spouses for land certification in order to confirm the right of women to own and administer economic asset;
  - Food security program of the country has given more attention to women particularly for female headed household;
  - Agricultural credit services have been expanded throughout the country and women have gotten the opportunity to get better access to credit than before. This situation has helped women to engage in micro and small scale enterprises sector such as fattening, poultry, dairy etc;
  - In terms of reducing the burden of work load of women, the development program of the Ministry of Mines and Energy has given due emphasis to introduce appropriate technology such as bio-gas, energy saving stove, etc; and,
  - With regards to women's access to agricultural extension program, studies showed that women have had limited access to modern technology and agricultural input. In this regard, the MoARD has given special attention towards increasing participation of Women Headed Households and married women in rural society supported under the agricultural extension program and gender mainstreaming guide line has been developed in order to mainstream women's needs in different development programs and projects in the agriculture sector. In this regard, significant progress has been achieved specially in respect to the participation of women-headed households which has enabled them to benefit from short-term and modular agricultural training program.
- Education and Training of Women and girls:** To increase the enrollment and retention rate of girls in the education sector, the following measures has been taken:
- Parents' Teacher Association (PTA) has been established at community level with the objective of monitoring girls' educational progress in schools. Women's association and Women Affairs Bureau have become members of PAT in order to mobilize community to further promote girls' education;

- Educational Management Board has also been established ranging from the lower to the higher administration unit of the school. Women teacher at various levels are members of the board for the purpose of monitoring the progress in girls' education;
- To increase the participation of pastoralist girls and women in different educational program, Gender sensitive education package has been developed and being implemented in pastoral area of the country; and,
- Gender focal point has been institutionalized in higher educational institutes in order to address girls' problems and enhance their assertiveness by conducting different capacity building programs.

## **Gender and Health**

Since 1997 the Government of Ethiopia has developed and implemented gender oriented health development programs. The 1993 Health Policy has aimed to provide a decentralized and equitable Primary Health Care (PHC); focusing on communicable diseases, nutrition, maternal and child health care and environmental health. It has accorded special attention to the health needs of the family, particularly women and children and the most underserved regions of the country.

## **Human Rights and Violence against Women and Girls:**

The Government has ratified various international conventions on the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality. The main international instruments include: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on Elimination of discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Violence against Women (VAW), and Convention on the rights of Children (CRC) have been integral part of Ethiopian Constitution. The Government has made effort to review the discriminatory laws and procedures in line with the principles of the constitution. The Family Law has been revised- age at marriage, divorce procedures are being addressed. Penal Code had been reviewed and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Rape and trafficking have been treated as a crime in the revised Penal Code. It is strongly believed that having gender sensitive laws and policies alone do not bring change towards equality. The practice of Violence against Women is related to the individual cultural belief and widely prevalent. In order to eliminate these traditional harmful practices, a lot of awareness creation programs have been undertaken at community level. Community conversation dialogue has been considered as a key strategy to bring attitudinal change of the community. Based on this Women's Machineries in collaboration with different donors and NGOs, have conducted discussion forums at all levels.

**Women's Participation in Decision Making:** In order to promote equal opportunity for women in decision-making position, a lot of awareness creations, advocacy and lobbying activities have been undertaken across the country. As a result, the number of women in decision-making and leadership has increased. For instance, the number of women representatives in the House of Peoples Representatives from both the ruling party and the opposition has reached 117. The number of elected women at regional level has increased to 40% and 3.2% in relatively developed and under developed regions, respectively.

The Civil Service Reform Program and Civil Servants' Proclamation, also contributed a lot to women's participation in decision making position and encouraging women for their participation in civil service to discharge their responsibilities.

Laws against gender based violence have been formulated in order to protect women from violence at work place;

HIV/AIDS prevention guideline which gives more attention for women has been formulated and is being implemented at work place;

Studies aimed at designing strategies have been initiated to promote women's participation in decision making positions.

**Institutional Mechanism to Enhance Implementation of Women's Action Plan:** Ethiopia has made a commitment to put in place structures to implement the Ethiopian Women's Policy efficiently. Mechanisms have been set up at all levels of Government organs in order to create an enabling environment for mainstreaming women's needs in development programs.

**2. In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex? Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)? What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?**

Regarding this question to tell the truth I have tried to look at some of the indicators of the survey made available by the country's main economic and social data sources, but I could not find any data that is disaggregated by sex. This is really very sad and shows how women economic and social problems are not addressed at sectoral level. But in the future if the ministry tries to encourage and pressurize the respected economic social and non government sectors, civil organizations to mainstream gender issues in all economic and social sectors aspects, the problem may gradually will decline.

Thank you!

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**Alpha Ayandé**

It may still appear strange in the wide public, when men are interested in the gender equality issues. Although we could think, gender equality promotion, could not be ignored as it is playing a vital role in the sustainable and harmonious development of the society as a whole. However, it is necessary to note that the promotion and the reinforcement of women capacities become a more difficult project to implement in the developing countries, due to infrastructure weakness already built to bring necessary strategic reorientations. In particular, mentalities' changes have slowly evolved at the level of the local populations. Certain values still remain deeply rooted within the culture: consequence of diverging opinions concerning competences, roles and specific responsibilities for men and women in their socio-economic relations. Women emancipation is a fundamental objective for a sustainable development.

As a matter of fact, when we have a closer look at the case of Senegal, statistics data (2002) reveals that women were: 52% of the Senegalese population, 37% of the working population, 70% of the labor force in rural region, 70% of the informal economy workers, 15% of manpower in the public sector, 35% of manpower in the formal private sector, 80% of the active arms of the agricultural production. This specific situation for Senegal can be interpreted as a difficulty for women to get into the formal labor market. These difficulties are shown by the women's low representativeness at the level of paid-employment. This may be due to discriminations at the time of recruitment. Furthermore, these difficulties can also be increased, by their family responsibilities, their lack of qualifications, or quite simply due to the lack of vacancies.

In this context, the practice of an independent activity or the creation of a Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are often the only means women have to generate income to ensuring their independent subsistence, care and educate their children and additionally fulfill their duties to their family and relatives. Many women undertake this endeavor because, the "head of household" specifically their husbands no longer manage to assume all the expenses related to the upkeep of the family; especially within marital union of a polygamist type. This situation could be one of the reasons which push women to launch out into the business world or to restrict them at a certain stage according to a specific industry

or professional areas of work. The fact remains that these reasons may be various and also rises from the real complexity and precariousness of their socio-economic environment.

Several constraints are attached to the promotion of their businesses. For some, they have a lack of technical and/or professional skills. For others, it is linked to an act of survival when faced with underemployment, within the general context of mass unemployment and of long duration. At this stage and considering the number of obstacles which women must face, it is necessary to raise the following question: “Do development policies in general integrate in a correct and implicit way the concerns of the Senegalese women, and in particular those which are committed to the management and the development their businesses?”

The impacts of women’s promotion policies should be analyzed in terms of employment opportunities, enterprises creation and creating a favorable environment to allow for business expansion. In spite of the various external constraints, certain actions might go in the direction of a sustainable balance. The result of such a balance would make it possible to reduce a growing number of women in the informal economy. Unfortunately, disparities still remain in regards to the economic and social context related to critical poverty and precariousness.

Consequently, women empowerment and promotion as well as the encouragement of actions and synergies for their fostering within their own Micro and Small enterprises are inherent in the problematic of the inequalities such as the right of access property, the right to access resources and the right to acquire competencies in order to identify their own development options within their hearths and markets. This requires a readjustment of the debate from the traditional point of view for distribution between the economic policies towards the labor market and the social policies in the perspective of employment, reproductive health, and well-being. As well as the improvement of capacities or the policies of participation that should be seen under these contentious terms and distribution of the socio-economic roles. It is imperative to deepen these assumptions also in the regards of the relevance of certain development and humanitarian program, when we empirically can observe that the number of the poor people is continually increasing, and especially among women. This phenomenon has been worsened by the global food, financial, economical and humanitarian crises, but more particularly the perverse effects due to a bad vision and policies in terms of local economy development issues.

The issue of promoting women still arouses debate. Currently a lot of progress has been achieved by the majority of governments around the world, in order to improve the status of women. Among the measures taken by the decision-makers, it is necessary to underline the upgrade on the level of women’s involvement in the decision-making processes relating to certain economic and social development options. However the progress which goes towards an increased participation still remains to be made. The gap is still broad, when taking into consideration the imbalance between the female and male representation on the level of active reflection and consensual decision-making.

For certain observers, this need of involvement is motivated by the concern of bringing another more positive sensitivity of choices making within a group, the local community or in the strategic business management of an organization - public and/or private. For others, to associate more women in the economic and social decision-processes demands, a change of mentalities in the scope of a real collective well-being that generates benefits for all members of the community in terms of a sustainable development. It is clear that various topics will return when analyzing the impact of women in economy and particularly in the entrepreneurship field. The standards, beliefs and habits which mainly define the relations between the members of a group or a family are essential in the analysis of the position of the woman from the economic and social point of view. The difficulties of the definitions of roles, the responsibilities and the resources are equally important topics as are the frequently named issues such as the constraints generated by sex-specificity poverty and women discrimination quoted by political



economist feminists. Other gender specialists put forward the problems of unpaid or household work which is often not taken into account with its right value in the statistics and the macroeconomic analysis, and which contributes in a certain manner to a slow down of the economic expansion of women as well as their capacity to create or manage a company.

In West Africa and in particular Senegal, this situation can be justified by the upgrading informal economy through which several women attain what we call “self-employment” by the means of generating activities of income. It seems that in Sub-Saharan Africa, women meet many problems when aiming to insert in the modern system of the formal economy, which on the other hand justifies the high numbers of women promoters of businesses in the informal economy. This can also result from their strategies to avoid all sorts of unforeseen related to their condition of survival and of their impoverished hearths. If the Micro Enterprise and Small Enterprises managed by women must be substantial so that they can take part in the larger economic progress, this is essential to overcome poverty. The policies of poverty eradication can only be effective, if the authorities maintain a level of growth which benefits poor people and the population on the whole.

The effectiveness of striving against poverty is closely joined to the establishment of true policies of redistribution of the income so that poorest can drag themselves out of poverty. The promotion of the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises managed by women in Senegal requires to take into account a certain dynamic components of the local economy. specifically an adequate global strategy of development, employment policies, education and training, legislation in force, in order to balance difficulties which are blocking the passageway of the informal enterprises towards formal and modern enterprises in the aim of a competitive economy perspective.

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**David Abbott and Carol Flore-Smrecznik, UNDP Pacific Center, Fiji**

Hi Anna,

I apologise for the lateness of this submission to phase 1 of the e-discussion on women and poverty, and its brevity, but Carol and I have been very involved in the preparation for the Pacific Conference on the impact of the global economic crisis on Pacific countries, with a particular focus on the impact on children and women, which was held in Vanuatu last week and attended by the Administrator. The following provides a very brief overview from the perspective of the Pacific Centre.

**How has poverty and vulnerability of women changed in your country or region since 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted?** Unfortunately there is very little definitive data on gender disaggregated poverty and vulnerability from 1995, and it is not therefore possible to say with any real degree of certainty how the situation of women has changed since the mid-nineties. It is however widely believed that the situation has probably worsened in many Pacific countries. The region as a whole has experienced relatively low rates of economic growth over the past decade, and with high population growth there has been little increase in real per capita incomes. Inequality has changed little and there have been few opportunities for the poor, and poor women especially, to move out of poverty.

In Fiji for example there have been a very large number of job losses in the garment industry since the late nineties; these were jobs mainly held by women. Similarly in Samoa, the global economic recession recently led to a significant number of job-losses for females in the automotive-part manufacturing sector. Increasing urbanisation and the monetisation of Pacific economies has added to the difficulties facing women as they cope with the changing socio-economic conditions.

In many Pacific countries we are now seeing evidence of elderly women being left alone in rural and outer island villages as the young move away to the urban centres in search of work. Often these elderly women are being asked to care for young children with working/migrant parents, thus there are increasing

dependency ratios in many rural areas. This increases the hardship and vulnerability of elderly women who have to continue with domestic tasks and child-care that might normally be undertaken by younger people.

**What key programmes and policies have been implemented to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women?** The Pacific Centre has supported studies, with BDP Gender team and others partners, of gender issues (available on the Centre web-site) on the following issues:

- Research and development of evidence-based policy options/recommendations on Gender and HIV; the recommendations were taken up by the Pacific's Independent Commission on AIDS and were endorsed by the Pacific Forum health ministers (at their regional meeting last year) as a guiding framework to implement gender sensitive HIV responses in the region; the social development programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) also incorporated study recommendations into its gender and HIV programmes.
- Research on migration, mobility and HIV vulnerability in the Pacific in partnership with SPC; it is planned that this preliminary research will be followed-up with country-specific research in 2010.
- Research on women's time use, particularly in relation to the impacts of the global economic crisis and the increasing incidence of care work related to HIV and NCDs.
- Ongoing research in Fiji on HIV spousal transmission in partnership with UNAIDS (led by UNDP) this research will fill an important data gap and help the country in developing more targeted prevention strategy for vulnerable women

In addition the gender costing tool has been introduced to all PICs and training in the use of the tool has been provided and its use trialed in Vanuatu. This will be followed-up in 2010, and it is planned to replicate the training and trialing in Solomon Islands and PNG in 2010.

**Are there any other factors that make women more vulnerable, for example to the recent economic crisis?** As already noted, many women were employed in the garment industry in the region, notably in Fiji, and in auto-part manufacturing, in Samoa, both of which industries have experienced significant job-losses as a result of the economic crisis.

The very sharp increases in basic food prices in 2008 had a very serious impact on household budgets and have put great pressure on women to adjust food purchasing patterns and to develop coping strategies. Overall it is believed that the quality of diet and nutrition has declined as a result of the high prices which have tended to focus food purchases by the [poor on a narrow range on basic food items. Although global food prices have fallen significantly from the peaks in 2008, for many Pacific countries prices have remained markedly higher as a result of increased transport and distribution costs, together with higher margins being charged by overseas suppliers. For women in the Melanesian countries, where they are responsible for much of the home gardening, the coping strategy of more domestic planting and garden-tending work has added to the pressures on their time for other activities.

Vulnerabilities also flow from the increasing care-work associated with non-communicable diseases, especially when these result in amputations caused by complications from diabetes.

Further natural disasters have highlighted the vulnerability of women in the Pacific, the recent tsunamis in Samoa and Tonga resulted in proportionately greater numbers of women (and children) being killed. The disastrous ferry accidents in Tonga and Kiribati also claimed the lives of disproportionate numbers of women partly as a result of cultural norms.

**In your country or region, is poverty, hunger and employment data (MDG 1 targets) disaggregated by sex?** Yes, in our recent work on poverty analysis in the Pacific we have made considerable progress in providing gender disaggregated poverty indicators. With the latest round of household surveys we have been able to provide gender disaggregated poverty data for eight Pacific countries. Work is still progressing on this and new analyses are being done to look at vulnerability and social protection. These analyses are now providing governments and development partners with new information on which to

base sound evidence-based policies aimed at improving gender equality and instituting measures specifically targeted at poor and vulnerable women and children. Data on employment from census, household surveys and occasional employment surveys is generally disaggregated by gender.

**Is it widely available and analyzed (e.g. from household surveys, administrative data, censuses and other sources)?** The analysis is largely done using census, household income and expenditure survey data, and employment surveys. There have been a number of Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in the last two years and these are providing additional insights into women's health. A new round of census for PICs is about to commence and we expect to see much of this census data disaggregated by gender in future.

**What needs to be done to improve the availability of this data and gender analysis of poverty?** AusAID has recently announced a A\$10 million programme of support over four years to improving statistics, conducting the next round of census and new household surveys, and building capacities in national statistics offices in the Pacific. UNDP is also providing direct support to a number of countries to improve their MDG statistics, this will include improvements to gender disaggregation of MDG data.

**Is this data and analysis used to inform public policies?** Increasingly the data and analysis is being used by governments to inform policy development. However capacity building for policy development is still needed in many PICs. **Does the civil society use it to advocate for or to monitor these policies?** Capacity for policy advocacy and monitoring is quite weak in many PICs although programmes run by PC, CO and the Millennium Campaign are all aimed at strengthening the ability of CSOs to adopt a greater role in this regard. Often governments are reluctant to release data to the public for analysis and this constrains its use by CSOs. **Please give concrete examples. What needs to be done to improve the use of this data and analysis in policy-making?** Capacity building is perhaps the main requirement, together with greater transparency on the part of governments.

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