

EC/WSRWD/2009/INF.1
12 January 2009

ENGLISH only

United Nations
Division for the Advancement of Women
Expert Consultation on the 2009 World Survey on
the Role of Women in Development
Copenhagen, Denmark
17-19 February, 2009

AIDE-MEMOIRE

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I. Introduction

1. The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development is presented to the Second Committee of the General Assembly at five-yearly intervals and is focused on development issues affecting women. It has been prepared since 1986 to provide critical input for enhanced attention to gender perspectives in regard to economic and development issues. The relevant resolutions of the General Assembly on 'women in development' have provided guidance to the Secretariat on the theme of the World Survey.

2. The 1999 World Survey focused on globalization, gender equality and work, while the 2004 World Survey addressed women and international migration. The General Assembly Resolution A/RES/59/248 adopted in 2004 requested the Secretary-General to update the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development for the consideration of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session; noting that the survey should continue to focus on selective emerging development themes that have an impact on the role of women in the economy at the national, regional and international levels.¹

3. At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly decided that the theme for the sixth survey would be "Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance".²

4. An Expert Consultation on "Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance" was organized by DAW in Bangkok, Thailand, from 12 to 14 November 2008, hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The meeting provided the opportunity for experts and observers to provide guidance and recommendations for the development of the World Survey.

5. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) is organizing an Expert Consultation on the 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 17 to 19 February 2009. The meeting will be hosted by the Government of Denmark. The Expert Consultation is part of the Division's preparation of the 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance.

II. Conceptual Framework for the Expert Consultation

A. Background

6. Women's access to financial and economic resources was addressed at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), and other intergovernmental processes, including the Millennium Summit (2000), the 2005 World Summit, and International Conference on Financing for Development (2002). A number of ILO Conventions and international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International

¹ A/RES/59/248, para. 2.

² A/RES/60/210, para. 38

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, also contain provisions promoting women's economic empowerment, including through access to and control over economic and financial resources.

7. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, recognized that the empowerment of women was a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.³ The Platform highlighted the differences in women's and men's access to and opportunities to exert power over economic structures in their societies. It emphasized that the development of economic structures and policies had a direct impact on women's and men's access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently the extent of equality between them at the individual and family levels, as well as in society as a whole.⁴

8. The Platform for Action recommended that Governments and the international community analyse policies and programmes from a gender perspective to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services.⁵ The Platform also recommended facilitating women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade through, inter alia, promoting and supporting women's self employment and the development of small enterprises, and strengthening women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men.⁶

9. At its twenty-third special session in 2000, the General Assembly addressed the need to improve the access of women to financial and economic resources.⁷ It acknowledged that policies and programmes should be formulated to achieve the goal of people-centred sustainable development, to secure livelihoods and adequate social protection measures, including safety nets and strengthened support systems for families, to promote equal access to and control over financial and economic resources, and to eliminate increasing and disproportionate poverty among women.⁸

10. Recent outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women have addressed the issue of economic empowerment of women within the context of its priority themes, and have focused on, inter alia, gender-sensitive macroeconomic policies, employment opportunities for women, and women's equal access to and control over resources and markets. In its agreed conclusions on "Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalizing world" adopted at its forty-sixth session, the Commission urged Governments to ensure that national legislative and administrative reform processes, including those linked to land reform, decentralization and reorientation of the economy, promote the rights of women, particularly those of rural women and women living in poverty, and take measures to promote and implement those rights through women's equal access to and control over economic resources, including land, property rights, the right to inheritance, credit and traditional saving schemes, such as women's banks and cooperatives.⁹

³ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 150.

⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 58 (b).

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 166 (a).

⁷ General Assembly resolution S-23/3 of 16 November 2000, annex, para. 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, annex, para. 53.

⁹ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 7 (E/2002/27- E/CN.6/2002/13), chap. I, sect. A, Agreed Conclusions, page 11, para. 5 (aa).

11. In its agreed conclusions on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” adopted at its fifty-second session in 2008, the Commission noted the growing body of evidence which demonstrated that investing in women and girls had a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth, and that increasing women’s economic empowerment was central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to the eradication of poverty. It also recognized that adequate resources needed to be allocated at all levels, mechanisms and capacities needed to be strengthened, and gender-responsive policies needed to be enhanced, to fully utilize the multiplier effect.¹⁰

12. Resolutions adopted by the Commission have also focused on women’s economic empowerment. Resolution 49/8 on “Economic advancement of women” in 2005, for example, recognized that improving women’s economic status also improves the economic status of their families and their communities and thereby creates a multiplier effect for economic growth. It called for actions to promote economic advancement for women at the national level.¹¹

13. Global leaders at the 2005 World Summit acknowledged that “progress for women is progress for all”¹² and resolved to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by, inter alia, guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own and inherit property and ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women; promoting women’s equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate labour protection; and ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology.

14. The recent General Assembly resolution on “Women in development” (A/RES/62/206) in 2007 recognized the need to empower women economically and politically, particularly poor women, and encouraged Governments, with the support of their development partners, to invest in appropriate infrastructure and other projects, as well as to create opportunities for economic empowerment, in order to alleviate for women and girls the burden of time-consuming everyday tasks.¹³

15. The articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) require Governments to take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas, including in the field of employment and in other areas of economic life. Article 3 asserts that States parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. Article 15 of the Convention asserts the full equality of women in civil and business matters. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addresses the issue of the economic empowerment of women in its general recommendations¹⁴ and concluding comments.

¹⁰ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 7 (E/2008/27- E/CN.6/2008/11), chap. I, sect. A, Agreed Conclusions, p. 2, para. 11

¹¹ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7 (E/2005/27- E/CN.6/2005/11), chap. I, sect. D, Resolution 49/8, pages 24-29.

¹² A/RES/60/1, para. 58.

¹³ A/RES/62/206., para. 19.

¹⁴ These include “Temporary special measures”, “Equal remuneration for work of equal value”, “Unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises”, “Measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic

16. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights require State parties to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic rights set forth in the Covenant. It includes a specific provision on fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value for women.

17. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted a number of Conventions of particular relevance to gender equality, in particular the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

B. Issues to be addressed

18. At the first Expert Consultation in Bangkok, Thailand experts provided guidance on the issues to be covered in the World Survey. A consultant, Ms Naila Kabeer from the Institute for Development Studies in Sussex, UK, has been commissioned to prepare the report on the basis of consultation with a broad group of experts in the area of women's economic empowerment. Inputs have been received from United Nations entities, including the regional commissions.

19. The World Survey will address women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance, within the broad framework of the economic empowerment of women. There is increasing recognition that women's economic empowerment is a key strategy for economic development. Increased access to and control over resources and opportunities for women not only improves the economic status of women themselves and their households and communities, but also creates a multiplier effect for economic growth. The lack of economic empowerment for women both jeopardizes growth and poverty reduction and leads to less favourable development outcomes for women and their children.¹⁵

20. The World Survey will focus on what has been achieved so far in terms of women's economic empowerment. It will identify the remaining gaps and challenges, and address some of the key constraints that have hindered progress in achieving women's economic empowerment. It will also explore the unrealized potential of women's economic empowerment and provide strategies for moving forward.

21. The following issues will be covered in the World Survey:¹⁶

- opportunities for and constraints and challenges to women's economic empowerment at micro, meso and macro levels, as well as the interlinkages between the different levels;
- the impact of policies covering a wide range of areas, including, inter alia, agriculture, migration, urbanization, poverty reduction and trade;

activities of women and their recognition in the gross national product" and "Equality in marriage and family relations".

¹⁵ "Gender equality as smart economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal years 2007–10)" (September 2006).

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of the issues to be covered in the World Survey, please refer to the Note by the Secretary-General on the "Preparation of the 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development" (E/CN.6/2009/14).

- the ways in which public finance management can ensure resources are allocated to promote women's economic empowerment;
- official development assistance as a critical mechanism for the empowerment of women;
- women's access to labour markets and decent work, and the impact of unpaid work on women's economic empowerment;
- the implications of social protection for women's economic empowerment;
- the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment;
- women's access to land, property and housing, including through inheritance, markets and legislation;
- women's access to common resources and public goods;
- women's access to financial resources, including credit, savings and insurance; and
- constraints to women's economic empowerment resulting from emerging issues, such as climate change and the food and energy crises.

22. The World Survey will address conceptual and methodological issues related to the measurement of women's economic empowerment, in order to systematically and effectively monitor progress in women's economic empowerment and use lessons learned and good practices to inform policy development and programmes.

III. Objectives and outcome of the Expert Consultation

23. The objective of the Expert Consultation is to provide further guidance on key issues and the way these should be addressed in the World Survey. In the first day and a half, experts will present brief overviews of the issues they consider critical to include in the World Survey. The second part of the Expert Consultation would focus on reviewing the consultant's first draft of the report, which will be made available prior to the Expert Consultation.

24. A report summarizing the discussions and key findings and recommendations at the Consultation will be prepared.

IV. Organization of the Expert Consultation

Methods of Work

25. The Expert Consultation will work in plenary. The working language of the Consultation will be English. Documentation will be made available in English only.

Profile of Participants

26. The Expert Consultation will be attended by 15 to 20 experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

27. In selecting the experts, in addition to relevant expertise, the criteria of geographical and gender balance, will be taken into consideration. Experts will include academics and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to appointed experts.

28. The Expert Consultation will also be attended by a number of observers.

Documentation

29. Documentation for the Consultation will include:
- A draft of the World Survey on the role of women in development (prepared by the consultant);
 - Papers prepared by experts on issues in line with their expertise;

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