



2010 UNDP/UNDESA E-discussion on Women and Poverty

Responses in Full by Contributors: Part III

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Dated: 11 February 2010

Vanessa Farr, UNDP PAPP

Dear Mark and colleagues,

I am writing to all of you from Nairobi where I'm visiting the Somali CO from my duty station, the occupied Palestinian territory, as a participant in a workshop on Community Security. This setting prompts my response to your request for more core messages about new (or indeed ongoing!) challenges and specific messages/intentions that need to be articulated as commitments for 2015 and beyond.

In my view, the most important thing that needs to take place this year is a significant corrective: **we have to make a commitment to understanding how violence, including armed violence, leads to de-development and impoverishment, and how such violence specifically undermines advancement towards women’s empowerment and gender equality; and we have to work out how to mitigate this complex problem.**

May I remind everyone that in 2000, not one but two instruments were passed that have profoundly shaped the collective gender work of the United Nations over the last decade. In September, the Millennium Summit resulted in the Millennium Declaration, a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 as articulated in the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). *However, despite the human security work that began in earnest in 1999 in Norway (at the first Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network in Lysøen), not one of these goals mentions the impacts on development of violence, including armed violence in non-conflict settings and situations in which security is severely degraded although there is not officially a war; and none considers the nexus between all forms of violence, the absence of human rights, and poverty, especially as these combine to dis-empower women, maintain and aggravate gender inequality.*

Only a month later, in October, the Security Council passed Resolution 1325 (on women, peace and security), the first ever such Resolution on women and the first to result from the efforts of an international civil society lobby (the global women’s peace movement, which had begun working towards the goal of this SCR at the UN Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995). *While SCR1325 makes a clear demand for the inclusion of women in all aspects of security decision-making, it neither references the freshly minted MDGs nor the human security discussion and so it, too, misses a chance to articulate the necessary relationship between the promotion of human rights (with a specific emphasis on women’s rights), the achievement of peace and security for all, and the achievement of development goals.*

In 2005, Kofi Annan suggested a corrective with his speech *In Larger Freedom*, a statement that addresses the nexus between development, security and human rights. His groundbreaking speech, delivered in preparation for the five-year review of the MDGs, is the first clear statement that the insecurity brought about by armed violence, HIV and climate change actively militates against the achievement of development goals. His powerful statement concludes that it is only through the perfection of the “triangle of development, freedom and peace” which understands the connectedness between threats, challenges and opportunities, that the larger freedom – freedom from want, the purpose of the MDGs – will be achieved.

Five years on, it is 2010 and the 10th anniversary of both the MDGs and SCR 1325. However, there is still a yawning gap between the two issues – development goals and endemic violence – and the policies and practical work to which both the MDGs and 1325 have led. We are still far from acknowledging, let alone understanding, how chronic, prolonged armed violence leads to “de-development” – a reversal in development gains, greater impoverishment and more gendered inequalities, and the creation or escalation of a humanitarian crisis. While a lot of work is done to understand issues such as food security and shelter, there are many aspects of human security that still go unconsidered.

In case readers find this argument abstract, I will move now to some suggestions about how the ideas of the MDGs and 1325 can be connected. In practical terms, which of course have significant policy implications, we can understand how human security dimensions underpin development aspirations by means of a careful analysis of the safety of different individuals in a society. Analysts can ask a number of questions to establish a picture of the relative security of women, men, girls and boys. Some ideas follow:

How does the violence in this society undermine, reverse or make impossible development gains? How does this violence prevent individuals from gaining access to their rights and the fruits of development?

What are social attitudes to sex and gender based violence? Has it become more common since the crisis? Who is most commonly the perpetrator, and who the victim? Do weapons play a part in perpetrating such violence?

What other forms of interpersonal violence (i.e. violence between individuals, including in families) and organized violence (i.e. violence by militaries, police, armed gangs) are common in this society? What measures are in place to address this violence, whether it is public or private?

Do survivors of sexual and other interpersonal violence have access to justice? Are perpetrators likely to be punished?

Do people in this society understand their human rights and have access to human rights defenders?

What are social attitudes to small arms and light weapons? Are such weapons readily available in this society, and if so, who has access to them (women or men, old or young)? Who is most likely to fall victim to them? Who is likeliest to bear the burden of caring for injured or disabled survivors? How does the injury or disability of a family member contribute to family poverty?

Are there large numbers of former or current combatants in this society? Are they employed or idle? Have they formed gangs? Do they still hold weapons?

To what extent are police services functioning in this society? Do individuals trust the police? Have any attempts been made to undertake security sector reform (SSR?) and if so, were gender issues taken into consideration in the course of the reform?

I hope this makes a helpful contribution to this debate and work arising from it.

Best regards,

Vanessa Farr
Social Development and Gender Advisor
UNDP/PAPP

Rita Luthra, Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC)

Dear Mr. Mark Blackden,

Here is our response to this question, I hope you find it helpful.

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

Today, maternal, newborn and child health are no longer discussed in purely technical terms, but as part of a broader agenda of universal access. We must spare no effort to find financing solutions which work for rich and poor countries alike because a population's good health is one of a country's most precious assets. As the reform of health care systems progresses, countries are searching for a balance between the financial benefits of a competitive health care market, and the need for fairness in sharing the burden of treatment costs. Differences between countries mean that no single model of health care financing will apply everywhere; principles must be adapted to the specific local context. The key to moving towards universal access and financial protection is the organization of financing. Current government expenditure and international flows cannot guarantee universal access and financial protection, because they are insufficient and because they are too unpredictable. Better health through better use of resources.

Repositioning Maternal, Newborn and Child Health:

The requirement for countries to formulate Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as a precursor to debt relief and the shared commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have cemented the links between pro-poor policy and maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) priorities. What does it take to encourage national leaders to act to ensure the health rights of mothers and children - rights to which they are committed? There is extensive knowledge of the technical and contextual interventions required to improve maternal, newborn and child health. In contrast, little is known about what can be done to make national political leaders give it their sustained support. The international community knows how to put things on the global policy agenda - the MDGs are proof of that - but there is a lot more to learn about how to bridge the gap between global attention and national action, and on how to maintain attention spans long enough to make a difference. Political-will first requires information on magnitude, distribution and root causes of the problems that mothers and children face, and on the consequences, in terms of human capital and economic development, of failing to confront them effectively. Maternal, newborn and child health can boast a large network of advocates at the international level that has done much to produce and disseminate such information. Considerable progress has also been made in developing a battery of interventions, to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness, and to share that knowledge. Finally, much has been done to emphasize the need for a wide range of interventions to be implemented simultaneously at household level, in communities, and through health centers and hospitals.

The common project that can bring together the interests and preoccupations of the MNCH programs, as well as those of sector managers and health care providers, is that of universal access to care for mothers and children, embedded within an overall strategy of universal access for the whole population. Presenting MNCH in terms of progress towards universal access to care is not only a question of language. It frames the health of mothers, newborn babies and children within a broader, straightforward political project that is increasingly seen as a legitimate concern and is the subject of a wide social debate: responding to society's demand for the protection of the health of all its citizens. In poorest countries, where large numbers of people are excluded from access to health care, financial protection is often absent. The limited supply of "free" services is usually tax-based and under-funded. Current estimates show that out-of-pocket expenditure in these countries is between two or three times the total expenditure by government and donors, a substantial proportion of these out-of-pocket expenses being captured by commercial providers or through the payment of informal fees. The latter have become a major obstacle which has prevented the poor from accessing scarce public services, with the unpredictability of the cost compounding their reluctance to seek care.

Making the most of transitory financial protection mechanisms - as countries expand their health care networks, they often also supplement the limited coverage of public or quasi-public health insurance (social health insurance based on taxation, or mixed systems) through a multitude of voluntary insurance schemes: community, cooperative, employer-based and other private schemes. These usually proved limited financial protections from catastrophic expenditure, support equality in the distribution of spending, and facilitate the provision of affordable quality care to the enrolled population. In countries where the health care network is well developed, and exclusion from access to care is limited to a relatively marginal group, the need to generalize financial protection persists, also for the non-excluded. Historical patterns of financial management - incremental adjustments of the recurrent program budgets, supplemented by donor-funded projects - have often been slow to adapt to initiatives aimed at scaling up universal access to health care. Funding flows have not only to increase; they have to be channeled in a different way.

Thanks for inviting us to this interesting discussion. We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals.

Rita Luthra, MD
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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
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Ameena Alrasheed, University For Peace, Mandated United Nations University, Costa Rica

Dear All,

Greetings from the University for Peace, mandated United Nations University, in Costa Rica. Thank you very much for the UNDP Gender Team for providing us with such a great opportunity to participate in an e-discussion, dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. This is my brief input that would have led to more academic substances should the time allow us, nevertheless, the whole issue of poverty has turned into a quandary that needs serious articulation.

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

Gender equality is a multilayered issue that encompasses different variables, and I believe it is important to surface the floor in front of us before we rush rightly to the issue of women and poverty, nonetheless women are the great bearer of such unfortunate position. The UN inter-governmental decision –making has the duty of contextualizing and identifying the mechanism through which any polices or programmes should be effectively implemented. Enforcing measures on policies and programmes of income generating activities, or lifting women and children from the grip of poverty, all necessities a holistic approach, starting form addressing the political the social and the economic situation. All efforts seems to be endless in their failure to tackle poverty and women's equality, so why don't we start addressing the issue globally as well as locally simultaneously, women are poor across culture in developing countries, while the metropolitan economies are flourishing, economic crisis as well as climate change hitting these women harder, are we able to enforce an alternative global politics? The MDGs now approaching the year 2015, what will be the outcome, not much as we can all see that, I would call for an alternative policy messages that would reinforce new politics and policies globally.

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

The economic crisis and the climate change are just an extension of an already existing challenge for women in the developing countries; it adds more misery and aggravated an already strenuous situation. Now; those who are in the academia would wonder whether it was /is a viable articulation, that the chain should be broken between the monopolies and the peripheries, endless features of the crisis takes place over time. Should we start a serious investigation of the neo-liberal policies, neo liberal economy? Or should we wait and witness yet another phase of crisis and troubles that impact women even within the neo-liberal economy zones ? Gender equality would effectively and critically take place, within a global economy that does not repatriate, and extract from the poor, and when we have balanced policies, fair trade, in place of economic hegemony, of neo-liberalism, and then we might be able to challenge gender inequality effectively.

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

1. Hard hitting poverty reduction/alleviation programmes.

2. Locally social reforms, laws and policies and programmes, that challenges inequalities and poverty at large.
3. Women in the decision making process, addressing here particularly the mishaps of peace agreements, across the globe, where the UN has failed women in Kosovo, Nepal, Sudan and continuing to do so in other parts of the world.
4. A robust articulation of gender and poverty issues that does not compromise.
5. Women in decision making process quantity as well as quality need to be emphasized.
6. Commitment to women's issues as core issues in development, and not a secondary issue. Access to food, shelter and education are rights.

Ameena Alrasheed Nayel,
Assistant Professor
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Marina Durano, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Dear All,

Many thanks for your contributions to this discussion. For a while, I had a feeling that it was more like a survey in search of facts rather than a policy discussion which would have been more useful for inter-governmental debates. But many of you have raised pertinent issues as we strive for gender equity and economic justice.

I became curious on how the UN Statistical Commission would have responded to the questions raised during Phase I.

I would also have found it useful to hear what the multilateral financial institutions are doing with respect to promoting decent work and social protection. I understand that the World Bank funds several projects on conditional cash transfer programs. Does anyone know how much money has been devoted to these projects? How does this compare with the support that the World Bank provides to infrastructure projects-let's say compared to typical roads and public works and then to infrastructure for educational institutions or health systems?

The questions seemed after all to be geared towards national state authorities as if they acted beyond the influence of major donors and multilateral financial institutions. It would be particularly enlightening if we tried to understand the complexity of international politics, especially when played out in inter-governmental commitments around official development assistance.

Finally, I should like to offer a few thoughts on the questions raised for Phase III.

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

The UN ECOSOC needs to take action on the ad hoc Panel of Experts on the World Economic and Financial Crisis and its Impact on Development. The most recent global economic crisis has highlighted the importance of a stable environment for productive and socially reproductive economic activity.

Unresolved issues in global macroeconomic imbalances, including over-reliance on the US dollar as the de facto global reserve currency, and on the structures of global economic governance, including the weak influence of the rights-based approach espoused by the UN System and its Charter on macroeconomic policies of its Member States, threaten the sustainability of women's livelihoods.

Instead of focusing exclusively on balanced budgets, Ministries of Finance and Central Banks need to work together to secure stable financing for physical and social infrastructure needed to enhance domestic productive capacity and improve human development. Further to seeking ways to expand fiscal space, policymakers need to implement effective countercyclical policies in times of crisis. Governments also need to enhance the linkages between macroeconomic and social policies through the strengthening of automatic macroeconomic stabilizers.

Many of these issues have been raised and discussed by the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, whose statements are available on **DAWN's** website (<http://www.dawnnet.org/index.php>).

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

Structural changes in the labor market, such as gender-based segregation of occupations and industries, are needed. The burden of responsibility for care activities and perceptions that women should be doing only the low value-added, low-waged portions of the job ladder have been detrimental to women's ability to take advantage of wage improvements associated with technological advance. Caring responsibilities have also been limiting factors in mobility and choice of location for work. Although migrant workers have managed to challenge this limitation, it is not without personal cost. At the same time that there is a definitive break-up of labor market segmentation there must also be a clear commitment to promote decent work and reduce the casualization and informalization of work. A few governments have already considered re-structuring their economies towards a "green economy" and/or "a high value-added economy". In order for women to take advantage of opportunities that may arise, education and training needs geared towards giving women the skills to gain jobs in these new sectors.

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

The MDG3 indicator on maternal mortality is the worst performing indicator among the MDGs. Avoidance and political conservatism contrive to make the reduction of maternal mortality rates a neglected concern. Strengthening health delivery systems will contribute significantly to reducing maternal mortality rates. UN Member States need to confront this issue squarely so that lives are saved rather than lost.

Many thanks,

Marina Durano
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

Sylvia Sitawa, Men for Gender Equality Now - MEGEN, Kenya

Dear Mark,

Greetings from Men for Gender Equality Now - MEGEN Secretariat in Nairobi Kenya, I hope this mail finds you in good health.

Below find my contribution to the E – discussion:

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

1. Some the core policy messages to be communicated revolve around effective use of national resources (natural / human) and capacities in order to achieve development ahead of 2015.

2. Involvement of more women in all levels of decision making whether at the grassroots or key opinion leader level.
3. Mainstreaming gender in the school / college curriculums, in work places, in other public institutions i.e. churches among others.
4. Involvement of more men in all matters that concern gender equality. One lesson learnt from MEGEN is that men always want to generate ideas, want participate in the implementation of the ideas and in so doing be part of the solution. “Women’s rights are human rights” but in order for this message to be embraced by all in the community, men need to be involved in all the processes that will ensure gender equality is achieved ahead of 2015

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

1. Some of the critical action required includes involving more men both at the grassroots and in key decisions making positions in dialogue that will foster gender equality.
2. Target boys and girls of school going age (6 – 18 years) and sensitize them on gender issues; give them life skills which will enable them make informed choices in future; inform them of necessary steps and measures to take in order to get justice for crime committed against them in case they fall victim to abuse.

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

Some of the specific commitments that I would recommend to leaders as they prepare for 2015 include:

1. Engaging men more in enhancing gender equality. For a long time men have been perceived to be the key perpetrators of gender violence whether social, economic or physical. At Men for Gender Equality Now - MEGEN we have learnt that sensitized men can be key allies in the fight to put an end to gender violence. Men in the areas we work in (22 Constituency teams across Kenya) have also proven that it is easier for men to talk to other men about the need / importance of promoting gender equality; about empowering women who are also their mothers, sisters, wives & daughters; about combating the spread of HIV/AIDS; about the sharing of responsibilities within the home; as well as about ratification of policies that will positively impact the lives of women and children.
2. Accountability: The leaders need to be more accountable to the public on the promotion of human rights and in addressing the realities of violence; poverty; HIV/AIDS prevalence; unemployment; and youth involvement.

Thank you for the continued contribution and for forwarding very interesting discussions for our information.

Regards,

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Bani Dugal, United Nations Baha'i International Community

I would like to express my gratitude to the UNDP gender team for hosting this e-discussion. It has brought to light many different perspectives and initiatives of institutions and civil society to address poverty and its gender dimensions.

The Bahá'í International Community, representing 5 million Bahá'ís in over 180 countries, has sought to contribute the perspectives and experiences of its community to the issues of gender equality and social and economic justice throughout its 60 years at the UN. The central tenet, the core spiritual belief, which animates the spiritual, social, intellectual and diplomatic work of our worldwide community is the oneness of humanity—an inherent reality which becomes evident to the extent that justice is the organizing principle in the arrangement of all human relationships. The purpose of justice, we believe, is the very appearance of this unity of humankind.

It is our belief that the equality of men and women is a fundamental truth about human reality and not just a desired condition to be achieved for the good of society. The reality of the human being--his or her soul--we firmly believe has no gender. In those aspects that make human beings human, men and women are without distinction. Such an orientation has profound implications for institutional decision-making at all levels.

It is widely recognized that the economic empowerment of women is an essential aspect of the advancement of the equality of women and men. It is necessary for assuring that women have options and the ability to make decisions conducive to their own well-being and that of their families. Yet, those who work towards women's full and equal participation in society will also need to reflect on the nature of the economic arrangements within which this participation is to take place.

Economic activity and the strengthening of the economy—a process that may include, but is not synonymous with, economic growth—have a crucial role to play in achieving the material and spiritual prosperity of a region and its people. However, the narrowly materialistic worldview underpinning much of modern economics has contributed to the degradation of human conduct, the corruption and dissolution of important institutions, and the exploitation and marginalization of large segments of the population—women and girls key amongst them. Moreover, when we consider the spiritual dimensions of existence, and we acknowledge the spiritual potential that is latent within all human beings, it is clear that the assumptions underlying today's dominant economic systems do not draw out these latent potentials—such as our capacity to love, to build unity and to serve others. Furthermore, these dominant systems are set up in such a way that in many cases they severely disadvantage those whose economic behavior is consistent with spiritual and moral principles. Finally, the fact that increased flows of goods, services, capital and labor within existing structures and processes benefit only a very few at the expense of so many—giving rise to the impoverishment of entire local communities, the exploitation of vulnerable populations, and the mass destruction of the environment—can clearly not be ignored.

Economic pressures such as these have, among other things, resulted in the disruption and dislocation of families and communities and the disappearance of diversified, ecologically sustainable small-scale agriculture, mostly in rural areas where it is often women who carry out the bulk of the work and who are disproportionately affected by these trends. Collective human prosperity will not be achieved merely by integrating more and more people into the dominant economic order as it currently exists. This insight is directly relevant to the struggle for the advancement of women, who have been structurally marginalized within this order.

We see the nature of development as a fundamentally global enterprise, in which individuals, communities and institutions are assisted to develop the capacity to participate in the overarching goal of

development—which is the establishment of spiritually and materially prosperous society. Within this context, poverty can be described as the absence of those moral, social and material resources needed to develop the capacities of individuals, communities and institutions. Alongside the provision of material means (and the removal of the crippling extremes of wealth and poverty)—moral reasoning, freedom from racism and conflict, collective deliberation, good governance, and institutional integrity, an orientation towards service towards one’s community—to name a few—are all important conditions for poverty alleviation. The goal at hand, we can say, is not only to remove poverty, per se, but to enable the masses of humanity to participate in the construction of a more just global order.

Here, the emphasis has been placed on girls, boys, men and women alike. Just as women are held back by the unjust and oppressive socioeconomic conditions defining their life, so too, boys and men are trapped by habits, attitudes and behaviors that hold back from reaching their spiritual and social potential.

As a concrete effort to work towards the construction of such an order, the worldwide community has been involved in grassroots efforts to establish new patterns of community life—patterns conducive to the spiritual empowerment of its members and institutions and towards the wider community. In this context, spiritual empowerment refers to the development of qualities and attitudes that help to develop a strong moral foundation and a capacity to serve the wider community. In hundreds of thousands of neighborhoods around the world, Bahá’ís have turned their attention to the needs of children and youth. Cognizant of the aspirations of children, Bahá’ís have focused on helping children to build a strong moral framework—incorporating themes of the unity of humankind and a love of humanity in all of its diversity, helping them to achieve excellence intellectually, materially and spiritually. These classes are open to all children in the community. Similarly, for youth, ages 11-14, classes have been created to assist youth to navigate this crucial period in their lives, helping them to develop the power of expression, and to develop in them to desire to serve and to be of service to society around them. The fundamental purpose of this kind of education is seen in light of social transformation—the building of capacity in children and youth to play their role building a social order that enables all of humankind to prosper and benefit there from.

At this stage we need leaders who are prepared to show moral leadership and integrity; who can demonstrate a commitment to the most marginalized among their population; who can lead their populations in the direction of greater solidarity with the peoples outside of their borders; and who can balance national responsibilities with the development imperatives of populations around the world.

Bani Dugal
Principal Representative to the United Nations Baha'i International Community

Shirley Randell, Kigali Institute of Education (KIE), Rwanda

Congratulations on moderating this excellent topic Mark,

I am sure others will bring it up but I think one of the key recommendations has to be insisting on sex-disaggregated data in every ministry, department, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGO). We need targets and measures for all recommendations. Even when policy will is great as it is in Rwanda, if you cannot track what is happening to girls and women, boys and men, you miss out on key information that will lead to effective policy development.

I will be in NY for CSW and Beijing plus 15 – will you be there. It would be good to catch up again.

Best,
Shirley

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Anita Mathew, Consultant on Women and Children Rights, India

Dear Mark,

My suggestions are the following:

- Women's participation across the board, at least 50% in all decision making bodies should be ensured;
- The meaning of empowerment needs to be clarified when it comes to gender-related matters especially that it applies to human rights programmes to be part of the school curriculum to make this happen effectively;
- Legal instruments implementation must be monitored especially those based in countries that have signed the CEDAW and UNCRC;
- MDG goals must be rethought of within cultural contexts to enable change in attitudes and values to make them relevant at the country level;
- Poverty is related to health and when it comes to women reproductive health and sex education for both men and women needs to be reassessed in a country like India to make it linked to rights education where participation of children must be allowed in schools and colleges to understand how it affects psychosocial well being; and
- Economic requirements should be balanced with the ecology and women are the leaders in this aspect as they work on land and climate change policies must listen to women again to include them in fora that talk about change in environment and agriculture.

I have enjoyed participating online and will be in the US from March 7th to 31st . I have registered for the Beijing+15 discussions that will take place in New York but did not hear further about it so now but will be flying to Arizona and returning from LA. Do be in touch.

Best wishes,

Anita Mathew (Consultant on Women and Child Rights, Goa, India)

Sushil Bhardwaj, Indian Federation of University Women's Associations, India

I am Sushil Bhardwaj, Vice President, IFUW from India. I am taking up the last issue "**What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?**"

It is essential that Leadership in government and NGOs is made aware of the fact that female poverty will not decrease without, basic education at the lowest level, better education at middle level and higher education at the level where they have reached middle level education. It is not a separate issue from job requirements at the moment at all these levels, earning power is essential and that is what will take them out of poverty. Women are capable, conscientious and responsible but they do not get appropriate jobs,

quite a few do two full time jobs all the time (regarding the time spent on each of them) in office as well as in home care or elderly care).

Some kind of insurance is needed to cover the period that they give up from jobs to care of the house, children and elderly so that their pensions do not suffer. Poor elderly have given their life to offices, manual work and home care and have a miserable old age to look forward to.

Ancient wisdom proclamation that children would look after the elderly is no longer valid, not because children have become callous or selfish, they too have tough lives and cannot be expected to do more than certain amount of work for their elders.

Percentage of elderly is not small and a planned approach is needed. Elderly women get more neglect than men, they have lesser pensions if any and live longer.

These are very general remarks but true in most of the developing countries where the tradition of looking after the elderly is still somewhat there.

Sushil Bhardwaj

Dushiyant Gunatilake, Plantation Community Welfare trust, India

Dear Friends,

Our Core-Policy Messages for UN:

- 1) Support New NGOs/CBOs/Empower them with Basic Needs(such as Registration/Partnership with UN/International NGOs/with NO FEES/Invite them for Seminars with FREE Travelling Facility/Empower them with Knowledge they require and in Funds for Vehicles/Office equipments/Allowances for workers etc.)
- 2) Women in Tea Plantation sector of Sri Lanka work as slaves: Join us to empower them/ Make policies which would enable us (NGO/CBO) to represent them in the government nominating us by your UN. Make room to be involved with them providing sufficient Funds for Joint Projects. 18, 000 deprived children in Nuwara Elya are present in the district only and 85% are illiterate in the plantation sector. In addition, nutrition related problems are ample. Women are addicted to liquor and there are no Birth Certificates.
- 3) Religious Liberty in Sri Lanka is being violated and there is a bill called Anti-Religious Conversion in the Parliament, ready for the third reading which is inconsistent with the constitution of Sri Lanka. Adopt a Policy to discuss and settle such violations as soon as possible with a special committee and representatives from Sri Lanka. Please note this is VERY URGENT.

Dushiyant Gunatilake
Project Coordinator
Plantation Community Welfare trust
C/o Council of Human Rights of Deprived Communities in Sri Lanka
56, Lanka Lands,
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Sri Lanka.

Hope Kabuchu, Uganda

Many thank to the UN, to Mark Blackden and all participants for providing this forum and platform for us to express our thoughts. I am a Ugandan, a social development practitioner, based in Kampala, Uganda. I contribute to this forum as an African Woman who has watched the wave of promoting gender equality rise and fall, and who is wondering how high or how low it will go this time round with this new interest. My reflections and thoughts on your questions are mainly on Sub-Saharan Africa.

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

1) Positive Progress: World Political Leaders and the UN should be commended for the MGDs agenda, especially which concretely focused world attention and resources on addressing human development challenges. There is no doubt that the MDG Agenda is well intentioned and if the intention was met with commitment with resources and investment, the world leaders would indeed go a long way in addressing gender inequalities in accessing practical and some strategic gender needs. The leaders should be commended for the current progress towards attaining MGD 2 on Universal Primary Education and MDG 3 - in relation to the indicator for attaining gender parity in Education where some regions such as Asia have reported over 90% net enrollment. This is good testimony that a lot of positive progress can be made on goals that are supported by targeted financial resources and commitment. However, Quality education and retention especially of girls in upper primary and secondary school is still a major challenge that many countries are still grappling with. It is important for the leaders and the UN not to lose sight of the goal of gender equality: In the discussion for achievement of MGDs and 2015 agenda, leaders should not lose sight of the ultimate goal - MGDs, should not become an end in themselves, they are a means to attaining gender equality and a more just society.

2) Limited Progress in Sub Saharan Africa: Reports on Global Progress on MDG goals show slow progress on attainment of MGD goals in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to other regions. On MDG 2 on Achievement of Universal Primary Education, the Net enrollment is reported to be about 71% while in Asia it is over 90%. According to the report, little progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, while Asian region “might attain the goal.” Some countries in our region also have reported a regression on progress for Maternal Mortality. This means that more women are dying from pregnancy related deaths compared to the past, implying that attainment of Goal 5: to Improve maternal Health is still elusive and a major challenge for many countries. These results contradict the increasing budget and resource investment in the health sector in many countries. Sub Saharan Africa Leaders, together with their Development Partners must revisit the Aid Modalities and its accountability mechanisms, the governance culture and systems in our countries especially issues of corruption, commitment to ensuring accountability, democratic governance at all levels and the respect for citizens rights, especially women’s rights.

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

1) MDG 3 Indicators are wanting on gender equality: Ensuring attainment of Gender Parity in Education is one of the important strategies. Education alone however does not necessarily deliver Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Women are the majority among the poorest of the poor, their economic status is low and are heavily hit by climate changes as they struggle to feed their families. The rights of women and girls are still contested in the national laws, debates and parliaments in our African Countries. Cultures and traditions are accepted as a reasonable excuse; i) to deny women and girls opportunities and rights to ownership of property, especially land, and ii) to abusive treatment of women, girls and boys, especially through violence and control. Yet the inextricable link between gender inequality and poverty has long been established by poverty studies in many countries and is well documented – also by the

World Bank. The Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa still hides behind Cultures and tradition and has failed to address fundamental issues of power relations between men and women- and how these perpetuate gender inequality. Leadership commitment needs to be backed by clear actions and investment in time, finances and human resources. The indicators for MDG Goal # 3: Promote gender equality and Empower Women - should therefore reflect more of the strategic indicators and interventions that can genuinely address gender inequality. There should be more investment in the indicator for wage employment in non-agricultural, and in agricultural sector where the majority of women work. The goal should reflect indicators that protect the rights of women and girls - such as Laws and Practices that promote Women's Rights, Property and Economic Rights, - indicators that address rights in Culture and Traditions - indicators that protect the rights of women, girls and boys. This Goal is central and fundamental to the achievement of ALL the MDGs.

2) Effective Leadership, Commitment and non-resistance to change: African Political leaders, including the UN leadership has made and signed to good statements and international instruments and protocols that "claim" to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Some have gone ahead to write "Good Constitutions" that proclaim gender equality, and "give concessions" for affirmative action for women. This is good for public relations and gives them what to write and report about in the next UN Session, ECOSO AMR and CSW, AU etc - and gives a good feeling of what to talk about when the next national elections come round. Sadly, Development Partners have also joined the rhetoric and write "good statements" on gender equality as a "core principle" for their support. At the end of the day, they do not hold themselves accountable to their promises. Words mean nothing - we have become comfortable with political correctness and very little commitment. In many nations in Africa, there is no commitment shown by any of the leadership - Governments, UN and Development Partners - in genuinely wanting to change the status quo in power relations between men and women. Promoters of gender equality, and we as women are fatigued by the rhetoric and the many statements and documents. They weigh heavily on our minds, on our rights, on opportunities for attaining gender equity and equality. The least we expect of leaders especially, the UN Leadership Globally and at Country level is to make good their statements and translate these into clear goals and actions for attaining gender equality in the instruments especially the UNDAFs and UNDAFs and CPAPs etc ! Continued silence in the UN goals, actions and budgets and resource allocation at Country level implies your consent and contribution to maintaining the status-quo. As we move towards 2015, we expect clear Goals, concrete Actions and concrete Financial investments in strategies that promote equitable distribution of power and resources especially in issues of property and economic rights, legal and political rights and a move towards gender parity in representation in leadership positions at all levels. The UN should take the lead, starting with the UN Secretary General's Gender Parity Goal of 50/50 by 2010!

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

- 1) Global Agenda: Globally, set clear gender goals, actions and indicators, including refinement of indicators for MDG Goal 3 to address gender power relations.
- 2) Aid Modalities & Donor Harmonization: At national level, Aid Modalities of Donors/Development Partners should reflect clear investment in gender equality, include gender criteria and indicators in reporting on different modalities, especially for General Budget Support and Project/Sector Support.
- 3) Investment in Finance, Human Resources and Time. Invest Resources (Money, People and Time) in programmes and strategies for attaining gender equality at global and national levels. Set minimum budget percentage criteria.
- 4) UN Agencies: Strengthen accountability mechanisms for UN Agencies including mandatory reporting on gender targets, and establishing incentive mechanisms and rewards on progress. Align staff responsibilities and functions to goals for gender equality especially for the UN leadership and staff at Global and Country levels.

5) Impact Assessment: It is currently difficult to know the impact of national and global interventions on gender equality. Concerted effort should be put in developing instruments for monitoring and tracking progress, and investment in processes for collection and analysis of gender statistics in all sectors.

Dated: 12 February, 2010

Jelena Tadzic, UNDP Serbia

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

UNDP Serbia is currently supporting study to map the most vulnerable groups at the labor market and investigate the impact of economic crisis on their position with the aim to provide recommendations on the measures for improvement, taking into account a wider perspective of their social exclusion.

The study was conducted in 2009 by leading Serbian economic think tank, Foundation for Advancement of Economics (FREN). In the final stage of research, results were presented to Government representatives on 11th February 2010 with the aim to incorporate their comments in final study recommendations. Representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, National Employment Service, Gender Equality Directorate, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, ILO and UNDP participated in the discussion.

According to study indicators (participation in the labor market, unemployment/employment rate and level of employment vulnerability) the most vulnerable groups on the labor market in Serbia whose members are disproportionally affected by the crisis are *the young, Roma, rural population in the Southeast of Serbia, persons with disabilities and women belonging to marginalized groups*. The study confirmed that significant majority of working age population belongs to at least one of the vulnerable groups in the labor market. As a rule, the risk of extreme vulnerability and ultimate exclusion from the labor market for an individual increases with the number of vulnerable groups this individual belongs to simultaneously. The vulnerability of women is even deeper according to data obtained through the research: unemployment rates in 2009 within each of the most vulnerable groups are higher for women than for men: 43,7% of young women compared to 38,5 % for young men; 68,2 for Roma women compared to 28,0 % for Roma men. According to data from the Labor Standard Measurement Survey from 2007, employment vulnerability of persons with disabilities is extremely deep. Women with disabilities are especially vulnerable as unemployment rate is higher than it is the case with men (16,5% compared to 11,8% for men).

Recommendations suggest that active labor market measures need to be better targeted, combined and treated within a wider social exclusion context in order to have significant positive impact on the position on the most vulnerable men and women. Specific recommendations for women suggest that particular attention should be paid to:

- Multiple factors of vulnerability (for instance less educated and single mothers or Roma women in rural areas...);
- Making more investments in vocational programmes, functional literacy and ensuring subsidies for employment;
- Enabling non-discriminatory institutional framework in the area of labor as well as development of flexible forms of work;

- The fact that programmes leave stronger effects on women than on men (as confirmed by comparative experiences);
- Ensuring proportional participation of women in the labor market measures to their participation among the unemployed.

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

On strengthening the UNDP expert and advisory role at the country level to support government to develop gender responsive policies, especially in a changing host country environment.

Serbia shifted from PRSP country to the status of middle income country and EU candidate country few years back. Positive social developments imposed need for remodeling and re-examining the role of UNDP. The country is obliged to set the policy standards in line with the EU requirements which also stands for social inclusion and human rights agenda that are capturing gender equality issues. The state often lacks both political will and capacity to shape gender mainstreamed policies. UNDP role as a reliable provider of policy advice to the government of Serbia in the area of gender equality is positively assessed both externally and internally in recent surveys (MOPAN, 2009 /GSS, 2009, CPD Evaluation, 2009). UNDP is strategically committed to program gender equality into its activities, yet it is not adequately supported by the organizational structure. Visible and sustainable results with government counterparts cannot be achieved if gender equality related issues are tasked to staff on an ad hoc basis. Strategic and systematic approach needs to be introduced in HR policies which will sustain already introduced mechanisms/tools aimed at strengthening and evaluating the level of gender mainstreaming of UNDP programme (UN scorecard, gender marker, RCAs....).

Best regards,
 Jelena Tadzic
 Programme Officer
 UNDP Serbia

Bernd Wachholz, Center For PROFS

UNDP and UN/DESA – E-Discussion on Women and Poverty: *“Sharing of experiences and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles“* (the emphasis of the 54th session of the CSW).

Dear Mr. Mark Blackden,

Thank you very much for your good final questions that bring us forward and your commitment.

The global community – the United Nations, its Agencies as well as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) – have for years now asked that the scientific community develop and implement *solutions* to the global challenges that are on their agenda.

The CENTER for PROFS is committed and acting with determination to take on these challenges – resulting in *solutions* that have been introduced and are available.

These are in respect to *“poverty reduction, gender equality and women’s empowerment”*.

Here an insight in *“challenges and remaining obstacles”*: The Participants of the *“Global Consultation on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting”* (Addis Ababa, August 2007) *“note with concern the slow pace of*

progress despite decades of interventions to end the practice and the continued unnecessary suffering of millions of women and girls”.

To the first final question:

What are your core policy messages for UN intergovernmental decision-making?

1) It is necessary to invest in the certification and qualification of *Anti-FGM Experts* to promote the overcoming of the custom FGM. Please note, that Anti-FGM Experts, educated and qualified by the CENTER for PROFS, have already been requested by a number of African FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) ethnic groups to come to their regions. This is the result of the outstanding, sustainable large-scale success of the hand-in-hand cooperation between the CENTER for PROFS and FGM grassroots people – having used the new and innovative strategy, called the *Value-Centered Approach* [\[1\]](http://www.fulda-mosocho-project.com) (www.fulda-mosocho-project.com).

This allows for the sustainable overcoming of the terrible custom of FGM, meaning that all the saved girls have the guarantee by their parents, families and their communities “*to keep their clitoris forever*”.

Overcoming this terrible custom goes hand in hand with the implementation of human rights for women – which goes hand in hand with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 = Gender Equality – the gateway for all the other MDGs! And the implementation of human rights for women equals the realisation that Gender Equality is *the* pre-condition for women to better their lives and that of both their families and communities. In Africa about 400 Mill. people (the girls and their families) are subject to this situation. This extremely difficult process to empower Women in FGM Ethnic groups and to decrease poverty in these areas needs *specialty trained experts*, who initiate and supervise the process: Social workers / educators / teachers with the qualification to work in the fields of sexuality and reproductive health, in gender-based violence and gender equality, like the ‘Anti-FGM Experts’ – qualified in the *Value-Centered Approach*.

2) Several hundreds of social workers and/or trainers and teachers, qualified as Anti-FGM Experts are needed. In Fulda, Germany, their education would take 1½ years. These Anti-FGM Experts should be sent to FGM ethnic groups where more than 50% of the girls are subjected to FGM and where there has already been a request for such services. The task of these Experts is educating thousands of African teachers (50% male, 50% female) together with the national education and health authorities so that these people can graduate as: “*Psycho-social Trainer, Educator and Counsellor in the areas of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights with a focus on FGM*” (which takes between 2½ and 3 years).

Such graduated teachers have proven within the framework of the [Fulda-Mosocho Project](http://www.fulda-mosocho-project.com) ([http://www.fulda-mosocho-project.com/](http://www.fulda-mosocho-project.com)) in Kenya to serve as excellent (and genuine) “*multipliers*”, winning over and convincing tens of thousands of community inhabitants to make the personal decision to change their fundamental attitudes and behaviours. And it has shown results: fathers and mothers, clans, chiefs, officers, etc. safeguard their daughters. Within three to four years the majority of the girls in danger would be safe in their familiar settings, and this on a sustainable basis!

To the second final question:

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

The research findings of the CENTER for PROFS, which represents *practice-oriented* scientific work and research, has shown that the most “*critical action*” now required is to get the attention of leaders and donors for the importance of qualified Anti-FGM Experts, so that they invest more funds in policies, actions, plans, projects and measures that:

- 1) are conducted on site (in Africa!) by Anti-FGM Experts as described above – that is by those who are at the same time professionals in implementation of gender equality! And
- 2) are *requested by the beneficiaries themselves* and that are subsequently planned, organized and carried out hand in hand with them!

To the third final question:

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

To use the scientific results / achievements / solutions leaders have been asking for – especially those that in the realisation / in practice have already proven their effectiveness concerning the “*implementation of gender equality*”, the “*empowerment of women*”, of “*decreasing gender-based violence*” and “*alleviating poverty*”.

Dear Mr. Mark Blackden, could you please be so kind as to forward this message to **Mrs. Winnie Byanyima, Director of the UNDP Gender Team** and to **Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination?** Thank you very much.

With best regards,
Dr. Bernd Wachholz
CENTER for PROFS
Independent Institute for Research, Education and Implementation of Gender Equality

Carmen Rodríguez, Ñaa te Kuni, Coordinadora de Mujeres Oaxaqueñas-Mexico

Dear All,

It has been very enriching to follow the arguments of this discussion. From a historical perspective, certainly the “new understanding of poverty and its gender dimensions” in México, has to do with the awareness that ‘poverty’ is not a *natural, spiritual, moral, or political* attribute of womanhood; but rather a manifestation of a concrete scope of social relations.

As such, the “good practices in gender-responsive poverty analysis and poverty reduction activities”, have developed from the very process of women’s collective empowerment through awareness. Women in México, like throughout the planet are the group most exposed to all the aspects of social violence. That threads the global hierarchy of social representation at the production base, where colonialism rooted the economic ‘development’, sustained from the marginalization that manifests into the shades of labor and sexual exploitation.

Therefore, within the political scope where neo-liberalism is a judicial reference to the social categories inherited from colonialism, the women’s organizations from C Juárez, to Oaxaca, Atenco or Chiapas, have awoken as alternatives not only of survival but as a quest for a vindication of women’s social participation.

A concrete situation to face the social components that sustain the political marginalization of women, has been the struggle for dignity –in the face of a chauvinist system of legal, judicial and political prerogatives-, that have allowed the conditions for the extreme violence and impunity, from which the women in Ciudad Juárez have become ‘famous’ for.

As it has been said before, and as the case of México neatly manifests, I believe that “the institutional and policy environment for addressing the gender dimensions of poverty be strengthened, building on the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration” –should keep in mind that as a historical fact, those at the top of the political ‘representation’ of our societies, are the representatives of the legacy of the oligarchic prerogatives that shaped “underdevelopment”, as a requisite of the geographical aspect of development-.

Therefore, I would like to point to the experience where the “international aid” has resulted in many stances, as a political encouragement to the local groups, that keep the social disparities inherent to the face of underdeveloped nations. The so called “paternalism”, where the international scope of developed nations, avoids to acknowledge the historical right of ‘vulnerable’ groups to speak for themselves.

Therefore, I would point at the need to address ‘development’ as a possible scenario where women’s views, experience and needs, are acknowledged –as the very ‘reproductive’ vectors of generational conditions-. A starting point, could be to implement economic policies of investment, related to the historical need to address the access of girls to schooling and health (as alternative to abstract stock criteria of investment).

From that point of, and considering that as the last resource of ‘peace’ the UN has are the “blue helmets” –where most of those exposed to war are women and children-; investment alternatives of women empowerment, should seek to reach out beyond the *facto* structures that sustain social disparities.

But certainly, the main and most urgent point to address women’s poverty, as the trans-generational condition to make the Millennium Declaration a sustainable policy; and chore of the agricultural aspect that allows the ‘legal’ scope, that lead to the environmental depletion –is to address the right to land tenure and inheritance of women, specially and rural areas-. By far and definition the most pervading condition of patriarchy.

Carmen Rodríguez
Ñaa te Kuni, Coordinadora de Mujeres Oaxaqueñas

Natalia Cardona, Social Watch

Dear Colleagues,

Given the questions in this note. We would like to share with you Social Watch’s most recent occasional paper and Gender Equity Index. The Occasional Paper is entitled Beijing and Beyond: Putting Gender Economics at the Forefront, Fifteen Years After the World Conference on Women.

This paper demonstrates that, notwithstanding some advances since the Beijing Conference and the adoption of CEDAW, the UN member States still have not fully implemented their commitments to gender equity as an essential condition for sustainable economic and social development. Also, the evolution of the gender statistical indicators, along with the narratives included in this publication, prove that that there is an evident gap between gender legislation and its implementation of actual policies.

Furthermore, the GEI uncovers a staggering wipe out of the economic gains made by women at the global level and the negative impact of the global financial crisis on them. These commentaries draw attention most specifically to the financial crisis as its effects are widespread and exacerbate already existing inequalities. They also highlight the gendered nature of the crisis and its effects on women and women-dependent economies. Moreover, the articles point to concrete policies that which should be implemented to deal with the current crises.

To view the report in English: <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/11561>

Para ver el informe en Español: <http://www.socialwatch.org/es/node/11566>

Best Regards,

Natalia Cardona
Advocacy Coordinator
Social Watch
www.socialwatch.org

Judith Wedderburn, Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean

Writing from Kingston;

We recently organized a series of workshops, in collaboration with the local UNDP office, in which we helped participants make the links between MDGs 1 and 3, to help build understanding of how these goals and their indicators are used to measure movement towards the eradication of poverty, and most importantly, to demonstrate that achievement of the MDGs are not likely to take place without gender equality. What was evident was that it was difficult for participants (after reflecting on the gendered realities of their lives), to grasp the possibility of eradicating poverty without gender equality, and that the absence of a focus on or a link to violence against women was a major weakness. Gender-based violence is such a major factor in the daily lives of women, worldwide, that any attempts to support their efforts to "work their way out of poverty" with whatever types of government or non-government programme support, without dealing with violence are not likely to be successful. Education (MDG 1) is not enough. The link between violence against women and girls (either domestic, as a result of war, or political strife or a natural disaster like the earthquake in Haiti), gender equality and women's empowerment has to be explicitly made, beginning at the level of policy, national and global. (Click info@normangirvan.info to view more information on extreme difficulties and dangers women in Haiti are currently facing).

Against this background, I would have to support the points made by Vanessa Farr *when she states below that "not one of these goals mentions the impacts on development of violence, including armed violence in non-conflict settings and situations in which security is severely degraded although there is not officially a war; and none considers the nexus between all forms of violence, the absence of human rights, and poverty, especially as these combine to dis-empower women, maintain and aggravate gender inequality"*. Our experience in our work in Jamaica indicates clearly a situation in some communities in which organized gang warfare is a regular occurrence and is one in which women and girls, are seriously at risk, and are literally dis-empowered by these organized criminal activities.

She goes on to note that *"While SCR1325 makes a clear demand for the inclusion of women in all aspects of security decision-making, it neither references the freshly minted MDGs nor the human security discussion and so it, too, misses a chance to articulate the necessary relationship between the promotion of human rights (with a specific emphasis on women's rights), the achievement of peace and security for*

all, and the achievement of development goals". At the global inter-governmental level, the UN and its agencies need to take the policy and programmatic lead aggressively, and follow through on Kofi Annan's 2005 statement in which he "concludes that it is only through the perfection of the "triangle of development, freedom and peace" which understands the connectedness between threats, challenges and opportunities, that the larger freedom – freedom from want, the purpose of the MDGs – will be achieved". Gender equality and women's empowerment (economic, political and social) sits squarely at the center of the triangle of development, freedom and peace to which Mr. Annan refers.

Judith Wedderburn
Director
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean

Khaled El Mohtar, National Rehabilitation and Development Center, NRDC - Lebanon

Let me first extend my gratitude for raising this important and interesting issue through the e-discussion which helps in exchanging thoughts, Ideas and useful information.

Even though we are going through 21st century still this issue is facing many challenges because of lack of knowledge and education.

In Lebanon and some other Arabic Countries we have had many and many activities and attempts, and we have reached a considerable development in regard of women rights and participation in different fields such as Parliamentary Elections, Administration, Municipalities, Universities and many other fields on National bases, but still women are suffering from a deep poverty and lack of opportunities in the rural areas because of literacy and very retarded customs and beliefs.

First of all, the main reason is that lack of knowledge and education, nothing is to be developed without education. Education should be compulsory and free for all, at least in elementary levels in all areas. Other resources come after education such as sustainable programs for training and empowerment of women to enjoy opportunities of work and development. Another important factor should be taken into consideration is the Gender discrimination which is a major barrier and essential reason for poverty in many societies where the systemic discrimination is still clearly noted, leaving women , and mainly women with disabilities deprived from their basic rights such as health and Medical care, housing, clean water, nutrition, etc...

NRDC had very successful activities , we organized several workshops and training sessions aimed to empower women in the Arab Region, mainly women with disabilities, in collaboration with UNDESA, Rehabilitation International, League of the Arab States, Ministry of Social Affairs in Kingdom of Bahrain and some other Regional and local Networks and NGOs.

Definitely, education, empowerment, non-discrimination and equal opportunities are master keys to reduce and lift poverty and insure women's rights to live with dignity.

Khaled El Mohtar,
National Rehabilitation and Development Center , NRDC
Lebanon

Théodore Mpatswenumugabo, UNDP Republic of Guinea

Chers Collègues,

En relation avec ce thème, je voudrais attirer l'attention sur un aspect qui n'est pas suffisamment pris en compte et sur lequel il faut beaucoup travailler dans certains pays africains : il s'agit du lien entre les activités génératrices de revenus (AGR) des femmes et les conditions de vie des enfants, la nutrition en particulier.

Dans beaucoup de pays, il va de soi que si les revenus des femmes augmentent, cela va se répercuter rapidement sur les conditions de vie des enfants. Ceci n'est malheureusement pas le cas dans certains pays ou zones. Nous avons en effet observé, surtout dans les pays sahéliens, que cela n'est toujours pas le cas et c'est ce qui est très inquiétant.

Il me semble donc qu'il faut que la question soit analysée de façon plus approfondie qu'elle ne l'est actuellement et que des solutions appropriées soient trouvées.

Ce qui est encore plus inquiétant, c'est que même quand les AGR concernent le maraîchage, la production, la transformation ou le commerce de produits agricoles, la qualité de la nutrition des enfants ne suit pas : les enfants n'ont même pas droit aux produits non vendus. On peut même être surpris de trouver des enfants malnutris dans des foyers où la femme est nutritionniste ou animatrice sociale pour les questions de nutrition.

Quel est le problème ? Je suis convaincu que le problème se trouve notamment dans le fait que dans ces sociétés, on dit que c'est à l'homme de nourrir le foyer et que la femme ne sent pas concernée par l'alimentation de la famille. Elle prépare ou fait préparer ce que le mari amène. Son argent c'est pour elle, exclusivement. L'amélioration de ses revenus se traduira alors par un meilleur habillement, une plus grande participation aux événements sociaux (cérémonies de mariages et de baptêmes notamment) ou par une plus grande contribution dans les dépenses de sa famille d'origine et non de son foyer.

On a même observé des cas limites où la femme ne touche pas à son argent pour faire soigner ses propres enfants ! Si son époux n'est pas là, c'est aux membres de la famille du mari de s'en occuper. La situation est encore plus corsée quand il s'agit de familles polygames qui ont une unité de marmite et de logement.

Dans de tels cas, les bonnes volontés sont découragées, car pour elles, ça ne sert à rien d'améliorer les revenus de la femme s'il n'y a pas d'impact dans le foyer, notamment à travers la nutrition des enfants.

Je pense donc que la lutte pour l'amélioration du statut de la femme doit adresser cette question et, de façon plus large, les rôles et responsabilités de l'homme et de la femme dans l'éducation et l'alimentation des enfants. Je suis convaincu que si cette question reçoit le traitement approprié, le taux de malnutrition va sérieusement chuter au Sahel, ce qui permettra de réduire la pauvreté en conséquence et d'atteindre quelques OMD.

Faut-il rappeler que tant que la malnutrition restera à des niveaux aussi élevés que maintenant (plus de 40% dans certains pays !), on n'aura ni de bons ouvriers ou paysans, ni de bons intellectuels ; bref, on ne produira que des « sous-hommes » !

Je sais que cette intervention est un peu iconoclaste, et quelque peu à la marge du débat, mais j'espère qu'elle retiendra l'attention de certains, car le développement est un tout.

Je serais ravi d'échanger davantage sur le sujet.

Merci.

Théodore Mpatswenumugabo
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Dated: 16 February, 2010

Bhawani Shanker Kusum, The World Bank

Dear friends,

At the outset I must be thankful to Mark Blackden for facilitating such a pertinent question with regards to women and involving so many activists working on this issue around the world.

I would like to share with you the experience of Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS) derived from its work with the rural poor and tribal women in hundreds of villages in the Rajasthan state of India for last 25 years.

In its work on empowering the women GBS as a national NGO has been working with women of two categories e.g. tribal and rural poor. Firstly, the tribal women (tribes like Rajnat, Kanzer and Bedia) who are traditionally involved in sex work for hundreds of years and still they are not in the main stream of the society. Living in the thatched hamlets at the outskirts of the villages far from the highways these tribal populations are deprived of even basic amenities i.e. safe drinking water, general health care, electricity etc. Primary level school education for their children is still not less than a day dream for them.

There are very peculiar customs in the 'Rajnat' and 'Bedia' communities where the daughters are involved in sex work and whole of the family members (normally 7-8 in a unit) depend on her income. The male members of the family without education and with no technical skill or land to cultivate on keep sitting idle, serving their daughters/sisters in sex work or the clients visiting them. Though the wives of the family are not involved in commercial sex, but they live a life like slaves. Cooking food and tea etc, washing clothes, cleaning (though so called cleansing doesn't mean anything for them as they enjoy everything sitting on the debris and other excessive household activities are the responsibility of the wives of the family. They can't wear shoes while inside the house and can't sit on the cot. That's why most of the girl children choose to be inducted into sex work and not to be married when they are asked by the parents in their childhood. These young sex workers have to serve the newcomers when they are retired normally at the age of 35 or so.

Unlike other middle or lower middle class families in India they prefer to have more and more girl children and producing a boy is seen as a burden on the family in these communities. According to the older women of the community "we have seen our grandmothers selling sex, we are doing that and our younger generation too have to do the same, hence there is no meaning for us to get our girls educated".
Human rights, gender discrimination or advancement of women doesn't mean anything for these tribal women

In another scenario the poor rural women of backward castes i.e. Harizen, Raigar, Chamar, Balai etc. involved in comparatively low profile work i.e. sanitation, building construction, weaving etc. are living a

different kind of life. They don't have any say in any kind of decision making process of the family. All the decisions are taken by their husband or other male members of the family, even the number of children they have to be born is not decided by them. They don't have any status in the family in spite of doing lot of household work from dawn to dusk including fetching water, fuel wood and fodder from long distances, cleaning house, washing clothes, cooking food, taking care of a number of children, grazing the cattle etc. they are just a sex machine for their husband and an unpaid servant for the rest of the family. Having sex (without their will or choice), begetting children, performing unlimited household work under the veil and to die one day is the harsh truth of life of these poor rural women. It becomes nastier and more cumbersome for those who can't produce a son.

Though I have described the situation of the women in the state of Rajasthan, but it is more or less the same in the rural areas in other states of India. **Human rights or advancement of women doesn't mean anything for these rural women too. Both these populations have never heard about MDGs or the gender equality.**

GBS, after carrying out a baseline survey in 160 villages in 10 districts of Rajasthan, has been implementing number of programs/projects with both of these populations on various issues including awareness on reproductive and sexual health and rights, prevention of infection from HIV/AIDS and other STIs, human rights, women's rights etc. and providing the women with general health care services, source of potable water and non formal education for their children during last 15 years. GBS has been organizing the women in Self Help Groups (SHG), motivating them for small savings every month and depositing in the Bank accounts opened in the name of their SHG. Also, they are provided with vocational training and involved in income generating activities. More than 8,500 poor rural women have so far been involved in 820 SHG. More and more women are now joining SHG in order to become economically independent. Focus of GBS work has mainly been on reducing the drudgery of these rural/tribal women and upgrading their status in the family and society as well.

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

Keeping in mind the situation of women in thousands of the villages in India I would like to mention here that the focus of the core policy must be on rural areas where the women are still deprived of any ray of development and so called '**advancement of women**'. Following could be some steps towards improving the situation:

- More budgetary allocations of funds for over development and advancement of the women of rural/tribal areas;
- Special cell to be established for advancement of women in rural areas;
- Focus of the work for the development of women in rural /tribal areas must be on education, RSHR, creating basic amenities and infrastructural facilities, mobile health care centers etc.
- Involvement of women representatives and civil societies including NGOs/CBOs at all stages of development works planned for them must be mandatory
- Rigorous M & E should be carried out in collaboration with the women representatives.

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate change)?

The two main reasons of low status of the women in the family and society in rural/tribal areas are their economic dependence on men; illiteracy and ignorance. Therefore, the preference must be given to:

- Non formal education for the women in rural/tribal areas;
- Establishing vocational training centers in order to develop their skill and making the women economically self-sustained;

Awareness building on the relevant issues i.e. forestation, water conservation, sanitation, hygiene, adopting small family norms and health seeking behavior etc.

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

The following might be the most relevant commitments and appropriate to achieve the MDGs:

Free and compulsory primary education for the girls;
Making the women of all ages literate must be mandatory;
Earmarking special budgetary provisions for delivering services and facilities to women in rural areas for reproductive and sexual health;
Campaigns for building awareness among the rural/tribal women on education, sanitation, health, democracy, franchise, women's rights, human rights, HIV/AIDS etc ; and
Vocational training centers in rural areas to make the women economically self reliant and raise their self esteem.

Bhawani Shanker Kusum
Secretary and Executive Director
Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS) & Observer, Clean Technology Fund Committee, The World Bank

[Ameena al Rasheed Nayel, University for Peace, Mandated United Nations University](#)

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

[Natalie Raaber, Association for Women's Rights in Development \(AWID\)](#)

Dear all,

It is great to follow all the contributions for this last phase of the e-discussion. Please find our inputs from AWID below. They complement and follow the same line as many of the previous comments on advocacy positions and proposals:

a) Rethinking development goals and gender equality in a crisis context

Before thinking about responses to the crisis it is key to stress again, as was pointed out before by other participants in the e-discussion, that the challenge we are facing is in fact a systemic/structural crisis of the entire international system and the dominant economic model. Financial and economic crises are interlinked with the food, energy, water, environment/climate, and care crises and are not isolated processes. As said before, this is not new for those living in the Global South. The novelty of this crisis is that it is also affecting the core economies and modifying some power-relations with the emergence of the so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, etc.).

The financial crisis was ultimately a result of the artificial decoupling of the financial markets from the economic activities that produce values, such as production and social reproduction activities. In the case

of social reproduction, this problem is rather unnoticed because of the invisibility of social reproduction activities – undertaken mostly within the family and through female unpaid work – for traditional economic analysis.

Therefore, it is critical to:

- Recognize the fundamental role of social reproduction activities to the functioning of the real economy, by collecting data on the amount of work and its impacts on social well-being, as well as developing public policies to avoid overreliance on women's unpaid work, thus overburdening women. Social reproduction work should be shared across government, market, communities and families – and equally between men and women.
- Ensure diverse sources of financing for development – especially needed in times of crisis.
- Not reinforce gender inequalities and thus assess the quality of financing for sectors of economies that are intensive in female labor.
- Ensure the participation of women's organizations and women's rights advocates in debates and decision making processes to find ways out of the crisis.
- Re-conceive and strengthen the role of the state at many levels, countering its on-going erosion (and address the need to reinvent the boundaries and interactions between the state and the market, focusing on strengthening citizenship and democracy).
- Focus on human rights, democracy and social justice, when seeking ways out of the crisis, not on the 'needs' of the macro-economy or the main economic players.
- Ensure that short-term responses do not come at the expense of long-term sustainability and the achievement of social justice.
- Have a moratorium on debt; funds that are needed to mitigate the fallout from the financial crisis should be non-debt creating, as well as in addition to the existing commitments on Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- Reform the International Financial Institutions and work towards a new global governance system.
- Have the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank eliminate policy conditions attached to their loans. All countries should be able to use counter cyclical policies to protect living standards and decent work.
- Consistently integrate a human rights based approach when examining and deciding on responses to tackle the current crises. In fact, this is the duty of the state as it has to protect its citizens and fulfill human rights obligations.
- Promote the human rights based approach as an accountability mechanism (with an ESCR perspective), not as a northern or UN imposition, but as states' obligations across the world. This will require stronger civil societies (and women's organizations in particular) and direct financial support for advocacy, watchdog and accountability actions; as well as stronger support to enable developing countries to strengthen their own state capacities to implement, report and be accountable for their international obligations.

For more information on our work on the impact of the crisis on women and feminist responses to the crisis, please click on (<http://www.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-Initiatives/IDeA/Systemic-Crisis>) to view the portal where you can also access the recently launched Sub-regional Briefs Series on the impact of the crisis on women.

b) The need for a rights-based approach perspective to 'invest in women'

While micro-credits are an important finance source for many poor women and men, policies and responses to the crisis must go beyond micro-credit and address the more structural problems at hand. For

example, issues of land property laws and regulations within financial institutions that often discriminate against women and prevent them from accessing larger loans, etc. need to be addressed and changed.

Responses to the systemic crisis must put human rights norms at the centre, including participation, non-discrimination and universality of measures, if they are to reduce vulnerabilities and promote sustainable change and just development for all and are not to lead to a new crash with the next speculation bubble.

Responses promoting policy coherence must also ensure coherence towards Human Rights standards and Internationally Agreed Development Goals including gender equality.

Investments in women should be firmly rooted in a rights-based approach based on the inherent dignity of every human being. Greater opportunities for women are linked to economic growth and development, but this can only be achieved if the international division of labor is deeply reformed and sustained through long-term investments in responses to the whole spectrum of women's rights violations.

Investments in women should take a holistic approach that recognizes the varied social, economic, cultural and political factors that dictate the roles and expectations placed on women. Linear strategies addressing any of these factors in isolation are unlikely to achieve lasting change, and a micro perspective that can deliver locally in the short-term will probably not be sustainable in the medium term, if this woman or group of women are then burdened by trade, financial or economic international rules that undermine their and their country's capacity to promote endogenous development.

Direct strategies that are being launched in response to the crisis to invest in women should be based on the priorities and agendas articulated by women themselves, and draw on their own experiences and lessons from the history of women-led organizing by women's rights movements and organizations. If we repeat the sad history of imposing development models, we will undermine the women's rights and women's empowerment agenda and reproduce a "paternalistic" approach that is not owned by those that are supposed to be "empowered" and thus, another waste of time and money.

c) A stronger UN policy and operational role on economic development and gender equality

1) A central UN role in crisis responses and the emerging global governance

The main forum for coordinating responses to the crisis, providing a space to build a common vision, representing 192 countries' visions and interests and with an existing institutional reality, is the United Nations (UN).

As members of the Women's Working Group (already referenced by Marina Durano from DAWN), we have been and are calling for a re-positioning of the UN's leadership role in a new global development, economic and financial architecture that fully integrates gender equality and women's rights, this includes amongst other points the need to strengthen the authority of the UN to lead the necessary rights-based pro-development economic and financial reforms, in particular responding to issues of global macroeconomic policy including its social and ecological dimensions.

Also the G20 and the IMF should be brought under the mandate and authority of the United Nations. The existing relationship between the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions will need to be reviewed and revised in support of a new deal for a sustainable future while the G20 must immediately take its rightful place among, not outside of, the G192, which has become the commonly used term when speaking of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

2) The new UN gender entity should have a strong operational capacity on the ground. The proposed new UN gender entity is an important opportunity to build on lessons from past experience and take a significant step forward in advancing women's rights and gender equality. However, it can only fulfill this promise if it has strong, operational capacity on the ground and avoids the pitfalls that past experience has shown come with a reliance on gender mainstreaming. Strong, specific accountability mechanisms and adequate resources are also vital for the new entity to deliver on its mandate.

d) Moving from aid effectiveness to inclusive and sustainable development effectiveness

The current Aid Effectiveness process under the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with its Paris Declaration (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008) has been evaluated by many civil society organizations, including women's organizations and other development actors as a narrow framework for development cooperation and as a very technical or instrumental agenda with a strong focus on procedures for aid management and delivery, not on the impact aid is having on achieving development goals. An understanding has evolved that sustainable development effectiveness (not aid effectiveness) is a more inclusive or comprehensive framework.

While such a development effectiveness framework must mean that any efforts directed towards improving the effectiveness of aid must ultimately aim at sustainable, inclusive, broad based and just development, there are several components to be taken into consideration:

- Any development processes, policies or practices must ensure that Human Rights, including Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) and environmental rights, are respected, protected and fulfilled with an integrated gendered approach.
- Developing countries' priorities and development plans are paramount; as such no policy conditionalities of any kind must be imposed explicitly or implicitly upon developing countries. The same applies for tied aid.
- Predictable and long-term aid must be the norm rather than the exception.
- Root causes of poverty and structural inequalities (such as gender inequalities or inequalities between and within countries) must be addressed systematically and be taken into consideration in all policies and practices.
- Indicators measuring progress must focus on development effectiveness outcomes and be gender sensitive and gender specific.
- International cooperation or "a new aid architecture" must be established and based on a holistic, rights-based approach and situated in a truly democratic and multi-stakeholder space (and thus the OECD should not be its norm-setting forum, considering its donor oriented vision and composition). The UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), under the United Nations Economic and Social Council, should be strengthened to become the main space for standard-setting on development cooperation.

e) MDG 8: Haiti as evidence of the lack of progress on a global equal partnership

There is no doubt that the international community is facing a difficult test in the current disaster in Haiti, and this, among many other considerations, shows the need for a real and equal global partnership, but also highlights the fragility of the current aid mechanisms and frameworks (official and NGOs, etc.).

With the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition we suggest the following policy considerations to address critical concerns for integrated security in Haiti following the recent disaster:

- Security and support for women human rights defenders and other activists and relief workers are paramount to uphold human rights and restore peace and security.

- Humanitarian aid delivery systems must uphold the principle of non-discrimination and meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including pregnant women and women-headed households.
- Humanitarian responses must include urgent attention to the psychological impact of the disaster, the need to grieve and recover.
- A safe space must be secured for women and LGBTI people to meet and organize as a key security consideration given the prevalence of gender-based violence in situations of crisis.
- Donors should allocate funds not only for emergency relief, but also to determine the distribution of aid with the aim of securing human rights and long-term development in the country.
- The highly militarized response to delivering humanitarian aid in Haiti should eventually give way to increasing participation of civil society and defenders of women's and human rights in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

You can access the full statement from which these points are drawn (<http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Women-and-Sports/Policy-Recommendations-to-Address-Critical-Security-Concerns-and-Needs-of-Women-Human-Rights-Defenders-in-Haiti-in-the-Aftermath-of-the-12-January-2010-Earthquake>)

Kind regards,

Natalie Raaber, on behalf of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Linnette Vassell, Women's Resource & Outreach Centre, Jamaica

Dear Colleagues:

Thanks all of you for this wonderful discussion.

Among the specific commitments that I propose that we seek towards 2015 are :

- 1) Addressing the provision of water and sanitation as a priority to support, enhance and undergird the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment. A discussion on the link of water and sanitation and the MDGs and in particular MDG 3, and strategies to bring this as a key aspect of the work of the international women's movement is needed and can perhaps be part of the agenda of CSW and CSD
- 2) Supporting with resources (financial and technical) the work of civil society organizations, especially women's and community based organizations that are committed to the agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, the work and reach of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF).
- 3) Focusing on agreed accountability systems that will support the achievements of the MDGs targets and focusing on these through the work of UN Agencies in the respective countries.

Thanks for your attention.

Linnette Vassell
 Women's Resource & Outreach Centre,
 Jamaica

Dated: 20 February 2010

Anita Mathew, India

Dear Mark.

Regarding the three areas you have delineated here goes:

What are your core policy messages for the UN inter-governmental decision-making?

UN agencies and country governments must ensure **participation of women** based on the outcome of the work that is being done with women across the board with capacity is development in mind and not empowerment seen as capacity building alone! since to measure empowerment all rights have to be covered which is not the way M&E is followed in most places where work is done in rural or remote areas. Some NGO's and INGO's have direct access to government and they could be giving tokenistic services the way government wants them to due to funds and that defeats the purpose of true efforts to empower women and children in patriarchal societies where mindset changes is needed to understand the meaning of capacity is development.

Opportunities to be provided based on what women need and are their rights, dedicated and enabling environments have to be created by UN and government to allow for effective participation or there will be waste of resources and we would be running on the same spot in countries of large population as India happens to be with the divide between rich and [poor advancing drastically despite progress as recorded in areas of development which suits the policymakers who hardly give any credence to voices of the poor due to vested interests who have pelf and power.

What critical actions on gender equality are now required in light of the new challenges (e.g. economic crisis, climate changes)?

Gender equality needs to be understood first in totality for which men and boys must be allowed to work with women on their platform rather the seeing women take on male roles as is often done when we see women as lesser than men the meaning of equality cannot be divided as is done but rather get across the message how women are treated now and do men think they are treated unfairly and then go from there what needs to be emphasized to change attitudes that are not conducive to both rather than keep harping on women's disadvantaged state ..why are they disadvantaged? is the key question to be tackled women have been made to feel like victims by male dominance being encouraged in many societies-this must stop! as many times women themselves join men in de,meaning women! or vice-versa.. then we have forgotten the very meaning of equality a rethink now is a must if we have to get the definition itself right.

Critical actions:

Treat men and women as equal partners when it comes to policy and decision making taking into account the separate needs based on cultural contexts and how society is already biased.

Women to be empowered to respect themselves first understand their physical, emotional, psychosocial make up in relationship to men and men to respect women as human beings and not objects to be used for their own pleasure and discarded at will to know the meaning of being responsible to women as fellow partners on an equal platform when it comes to planning and implementation of any decision affecting children etc in the home(private) and then it should be followed up when women reach positions of decision making in public life.

What are the specific commitments that you would like leaders to take forward to 2015 in order to advance achievements on the MDGs?

To work together with the LED! what is leadership? be it in any sphere including MDG's. Rethinking the goals to empower women and the poor or the disadvantaged would be a better way to put it if women are the disadvantaged. Just working for women is not going to help it is time we all worked together to achieve progress in the quality of life that is being drastically eroded due to climate change and economic crisis countries from the north and south the developed and developing must sit with educated women of the

south and listen to their experiences in the UN led forums to make decisions on funding etc and insist on relevant M&E where women and child led indicators must be given due weightage and not just what government puts up. Civil society has to be included if there is to be any change in goals set out by the MDG's which seem too narrow and has to be now reassessed by involving more by working out wider participation of those who have benefited to come forward to talk about it but again how many are aware of what the NDG's are for except NGO's who are made to speak about it but never get back how far it's impacted the lives of those it's meant to help change for the better or how far do governments use them to make policies.

M&E is not done in India using participation and I as a women's and child rights consultant find facing too many hurdles when it comes to chalking out women or child led indicators where active participation by the targetted groups who are usually the exploited or disadvantaged due to lack of proper education and poverty are sidelined or as consultant you are asked to quit when it becomes uncomfortable for the organizational heads who hold the funds and have their own personal agendas! I can give examples but refrain to do so for the moment.

I have greatly enjoyed participating freely and frankly in the discussion hope some of the suggestions would find their way into the consultations when they occur.

Thanks. With best wishes,

Anita Mathew
Consultant women and children's rights Goa, India

Dr. Fidelis K. Babugura, Uganda National Women's Shelter

Recommendations for Gender Inequality and Poverty Reduction

Gender equality is a cross-cutting perspective and the major objective of all governments and organizations to be mainstreamed in all policies and programmes.

Therefore, governments, institutions and organizations should visibly show commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1 and 3 through coordination with other development agencies dedicated to achieving similar goals.

Players should show commitment by coming up with genuine budgeting, resource allocation and other processes that guide a programme priorities.

The poor African countries need to put in place national poverty reduction strategies. For example, how the developed countries can intensify their support to the underdeveloped countries, particularly.

There is need to address gender inequality more systematically as addressed in UNDP overall policy dialogue and programming with the countries to ensure that national development plans actively support the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action. Involvement of women's representatives in this process is central to both ensuring that women's needs are high on the agenda and that the gender impacts of proposed plans are analyzed and understood.

Poverty can be reduced significantly by addressing the issues of inequality and discrimination, based on gender, race, ethnicity, social status, disability, political affiliation and other differences.

National Poverty Reduction Strategies (NPRS) should be used as a framework for reform in all external contributions in line with national priorities. Programming should include a selection of an appropriate mix of instruments and must be more clearly linked to the NPRS.

Programming should be linked to the ongoing implementation of the Beijing agenda.

Activities and decisions should be appraised from poverty reduction and gender perspectives. If the anticipated poverty reduction outcomes are irrelevant the proposal should be disapproved. If the planners have forgotten to gender disaggregate the planning data, the proposal should be disapproved.

We can systematize anti-poverty and gender impact assessment into all decision making processes by working in partnership with others and sharing resources rationalizes the way we work. It contributes to stronger national ownership.

We can find opportunities at local national and international levels by identifying risks facing women: violence, lack of economic security, exclusion from participation in decision making processes should be high-lighted in all poverty reduction activities: The insecurity and risks for widows, aged women, unmarried women and women with physical or mental disabilities should be visible. In this regard, more in-depth-discussions on gender based violence (domestic violence, rape, sexual assault etc) should be considered as necessary.

Monitoring and evaluation should be seen as important sources of information on what works and what does not for poverty reduction. A systematic and transparent approach to monitoring information is an indication of commitment to achieving results in reducing poverty and gender inequality. Immediate action can be used to clarify the classification of poverty-oriented and gender equality projects.

Statistics on assets, returns and instability should indicate differences for women and men in terms of access to land, credits, cash, technologies and others. Vulnerability, governance and other issues should be disaggregated by sex to demonstrate differences in political and economic rights, wages, physical violence, health, education and others. Data on democratization and poverty should be disaggregated by sex to illustrate how fewer women than men participate in d democratic processes at local council levels.

Mainstreaming poverty reduction and integration of gender equality into all activities involves staff that has the necessary knowledge and skills.

It would be a good idea to allocate more poverty and gender specialists not only into the specialized sustainable development and women in development units but also into their operational departments. There is need for reviewing human resources policies and the inclusion of gender & poverty training.