

## **All Development Goals are Gender Goals**

LEAD: Crises are not gender-neutral. The crises affect the women because they exacerbate already existing inequalities and highlight the negative effects on women and women dependent economies. Yet hardly any measures taken by the countries to tackle the crisis have highlighted promotion of women's employment and livelihoods. There is need for an enabling environment that integrates a comprehensive justice and human rights framework with social and gender justice at the forefront of internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs.

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Thirty one years ago, many of the governments of the world committed legally to women's rights by signing the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Sixteen years later the Beijing World Conference on Women adopted a comprehensive plan of action towards gender equality. And this September, the presidents and prime ministers of the world will meet in New York at the Millennium Development Goal summit to assess a decade of antipoverty efforts. They will discuss how to progress in spite of the tremendous challenge coming from multiple and overlapping crises on climate, food, energy, finances and the economy. The challenge will take the combined efforts of men and women to make the next step towards eradication of poverty for both men and women.

In spite of some progress, the follow-up of Beijing conference and CEDAW commitments are not yet complete. Gender equity is not yet fully implemented nor is it an equal component of sustainable economic and social development. By any measure, including Social Watch's Gender Equity Index, it becomes quite clear that where advances are most needed is in gender equality. Social Watch members share a concern that governments are quick to sign on to international instruments but short on implementation. There is also a gap in gender legislation and its actual implementation. With the present global recession there is also a need to take stock of the progress made towards Internationally Agreed Development Goals including the MDGs and of emerging issues.

In September 2008, ministers from around the world agreed that "1.4 billion people—the majority of them women and girls—still live in extreme poverty..." In January 2010, the World Bank estimated that an additional 64 million people are now living in extreme poverty as a result of financial crisis. So the total number of the poor is now 1.5 billion. So our challenge has grown! In addition to poverty, we also need to address deprivation, social exclusion and marginalization of poor people many of whom are women.

Lack of progress in achieving the MDGs –WHICH ARE ALL GENDER RELATED—and growing poverty does not just result from the external shocks and crises. It also results from the lack of commitment to build an enabling environment (in other

words MDG 8 must be achieved and is essential for realizing the other MDGs). Such an enabling environment would require global partnerships around sustainable trade, aid, debt and technology transfers. There has been some progress in cancelling bilateral and multilateral debt but a more comprehensive and systematic debt mechanism is still required. It is still far from being concluded. ODA in proportion to the total economy of the donor countries “peaked” in 2008 but at the same percentage level of 1992! OECD estimates that DAC countries will fall short by US \$21 billion from their 2010 Gleneagles commitment. Developed countries are still far from achieving the goal of mobilizing 0.7% of GNP in ODA.

MDG 8, which is to be met largely by developed countries, is the only goal which lacks time-bound commitments. It is also the one where insufficient progress is registered. This dynamic is a symptom of the double standards in global governance –where there are more demanding international standards for developing countries and the non-binding standards for developed ones. At the same time, trade and investment agreements as well as policy conditionalities by the Bretton Woods Institutions are restricting the policy space of developing countries. These conditionalities could have the effect of creating a new debt crisis. New financial challenges now also call for new strategies to tackle and control financial speculation with financial regulation and by establishing new financial transaction tax aptly nicknamed the “Robin Hood tax”.

In times of crisis it is women who bear the brunt of decreased financing for development. It is women who have to juggle taking care of feeding their children and other family members in dire economic situations and as social programs are cut they take on the burden of unpaid labor. The poor have no cushions and reserves to cope with crises. Yet there is hardly any discussion about this. The same countries that cannot find money to fund development nevertheless quickly mobilized trillions of dollars to rescue failed banks and corporations. The sarcastic comment we often hear is that “if the poor were a bank, they would have been rescued.”

### **The need for a new paradigm**

Crises are not gender-neutral. The crises affect the women because they exacerbate already existing inequalities and highlight the negative effects on women and women dependent economies. Yet hardly any measures taken by the countries to tackle the crisis have highlighted promotion of women's employment and livelihoods. Without employment promotion of women, poor women are bound to sink deeper into precarious work and into jobs with lower productivity, meager incomes and lack of social protection. Many of them also become more vulnerable to trafficking and illegal jobs. While tackling these crises and protecting women from worst forms of exclusion and exploitation, we also need to have long-term social development policies that truly encompass gender as a key step towards equality and increased human well being. Social indicators always take twice as long to recover during crises—we have learned this from previous crisis in Asia and Latin America—and there is a need for a better assessment of how those indicators

are doing. In other words economic growth is no longer a valid measurement of human well being and achieving human rights.

It is necessary than to decode situations within households since people who share the same space maintain asymmetric relationships and authority systems tend to prevail. Furthermore, despite advances the limitations placed on women by the division of labor by sex and social hierarchies determine a socially unequal situation between three closely linked systems: the welfare and social protection system, the labor market and the household. So together with the gender-sensitive employment policy, we also need to promote women's equal social status both in society as well as in family. There is a need to not just develop policies for women but of designing and developing a new development paradigm with equal opportunities for everyone and without discrimination.

A transformation of the present economic paradigm is also needed because of the environmental crisis. When developing new economic environmentally friendly approaches, we also need to incorporate the views and roles of women. We cannot just reflect on the monetary economy. We must also include the care economy and non-monetary contributions of women.

The 2009 Social Watch Report, based on reports from civil society organizations in over 60 countries, found a lot of evidence in support of investing in the poor, most of whom are women and girls, through social services or even direct cash transfers. It makes for a better economic stimulus package than subsidizing those who are already rich. In times of crisis affluent people save and the money does not circulate. Whereas those living in poverty will spend all the money they get and thus boost the economy.

The poor not only suffer from crises, but they too are expected to pay the cost of the crisis. They too will contribute to stimulus packages through higher taxes and reduced salaries and social benefits.

## **We need justice**

In this context, "business as usual" is no longer possible. A change is necessary. We must have a fair enabling environment for developing countries that includes equitable trade terms. Such an enabling environment must integrate a comprehensive justice and human rights framework with social and gender justice at the forefront of internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs. In addition, the financial sector should be made responsible for the crisis it has created. A comprehensive justice program should include:

- **Social and gender justice** (achieve the MDGs, promote gender equality, universal basic social services and "dignity for all")

- **Financial, fiscal and economic justice** --the financial sector should pay for the crisis they created, through a financial transaction tax or similar mechanism; speculation needs to be regulated, tax heavens and the 'race to the bottom' in tax policies ended or reverted, developing countries allowed defensive control of capital flows and policy space.

Additionally, donors should review and, if appropriate, increase or redirect their assistance to developing countries to enable them to mitigate and more effectively respond to the crisis in accordance with their national strategies." The crisis should be seen as an opportunity to advance in key reforms in the global economic governance, including reforms of the Bretton Woods Institutions and debt workout mechanisms.

- **Climate justice** (recognition of the "climate debt", investment in clean technologies and promotion of a decent job creating green economy) and...
- **Plain old justice** (judges and tribunals) to demand the basic human rights.

Crises are a challenge, but it is also an opportunity to advance reforms in the global economic governance, including reforms of the Bretton Woods Institutions, reforms that would be difficult to initiate in conventional times. Crisis is a time for courage and for bold and innovative action. Ten years ago the Millennium Declaration promised "a more peaceful, prosperous and just world" in which gender equality is key. It's time to move those promises forward.