



**ECOSOC Special Event on “Engaging Philanthropy to Promote Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”  
22 February 2010**

**Summary<sup>1</sup>**

**A. Background**

It has become quite clear that achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the target date of 2015 hinges largely on making tangible progress with regard to gender equality and women’s empowerment, particularly across the developing world. Innumerable studies have demonstrated that they are a precondition for sustainable growth and poverty reduction worldwide. Where women are empowered, we observe better health and education outcomes for their children, as well as a more sustainable use of natural resources. In instances where women are better integrated into the labour force, impressive advances in social well-being have been achieved. Women’s empowerment through improved access to health, education, earning opportunities, rights and political participation can help accelerate a country’s development.

At the same time, ending violence against women is a prerequisite, given its immense social and economic costs. These include the direct costs of services to treat and support abused women and their children and to prosecute those criminally responsible. Indirect costs include lost employment and productivity, as well as physical and mental stress and suffering. Women and girls suffering from sexual, physical and emotional abuses are constrained in their contribution to development, peace and security. However, evidence shows that the chances of women becoming victims of violence greatly decrease when their status, both within the family and society, improves through being given increased economic opportunities.

In preparation for its 2010 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) on gender equality and women’s empowerment, to be held in New York from 28 June to 2 July 2010, the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened a half-day meeting to discuss ways in which to strengthen partnerships between the United Nations and the business and philanthropic communities in efforts to end violence against women and promote women’s economic empowerment. These two issues were selected as the focus for the conversation following consultations with United Nations experts, as well as the co-organizing partners: the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> This is an analytical summary prepared by the secretariat and presented for information only. It is not an agreed or negotiated outcome of proceedings.

(DESA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP) and the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy (CECP).

## **B. Opening session**

In his welcoming address, the **President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Hamidon Ali**, commended the progress made, so far, towards achieving the MDGs. However, he emphasized that increased progress needed to be made, in order to achieve these goals by 2015, especially the goal of gender equality (MDG 3). The recent economic and financial crisis had further deepened gender inequality, as the downturn affected women and men and girls and boys differently. Against that background, the President underlined the importance of public-private sector partnerships. Cooperation between the philanthropic community, the private sector, the United Nations and Member States was a creative and sophisticated mechanism for addressing priority challenges and to leverage the skills and resources of the private sector and civil society toward the development goals of the United Nations. Partnerships were the lynchpins for advancing the MDGs.

The **Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon**, stressed that the commitment of foundations, the brain power of research centres, the innovative spirit of the private sector and the dynamism of civil society were all critical to advancing women's rights. He underlined the urgent need for widening "the coalition for action" to end tolerance of the use of rape as a weapon of war, excuses for domestic violence, and turning a blind eye to sex trafficking so called "honour" crimes and female genital mutilation. That was his goal when launching his "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign. Four efforts in support of the Campaign were especially significant - Firstly, the creation of a dynamic gender equality entity, the second, the launching of a Network of Men Leaders, and thirdly, the appointment of a Special Representative to intensify efforts to end sexual violence against women, and fourthly, the continuation of contributions towards the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. He called on the private sector and philanthropic community to engage with the UN in supporting the Summit on the MDGs to be held in September by sharing ideas and success stories, as well as by bringing their comparative advantages to bear on the challenges that should best be faced in partnership by all.

In her keynote address, **Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York**, stated that the key to equality was "good mothering". She stressed that the nurturing power of mothers could change the landscape of economic, political and social issues, and that motherhood is the strongest fighting force in the world. She stressed the importance of the empowerment of women. Fifty per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) is earned by women; yet, inequalities remain with regard to entry to work, conditions at work, and upon leaving the labour market. Initiatives, such as micro loans, were crucially important to fight those inequalities.

**H.E. Ms. Carmen Andrade, Minister Director of the National Service for Women of Chile**, delivering a statement on behalf of **H.E. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile**, declared that achieving gender equality was a shared responsibility

of both governments and civil society. In order to achieve it, alliances between governments, private corporations and philanthropic organizations were crucial. Such alliances, in turn, could give rise to policies and programmes to promote civil, political and economical rights of women. Philanthropic actions did not only serve to provide assistance but could also play an important role by recognizing and supporting the specific capacities of women and of their communities. In that respect, philanthropy could be part of the shared aspirations held by women's social movements throughout the world, namely, achieving a more just and equitable society.

In introducing the two leadership dialogues on ending violence against women and women's economic empowerment, **Mr. Michael Patsalos-Fox, Vice-Chairman of McKinsey**, stressed that there was a strong linkage between economic growth in developing and emerging markets and gender equality. He highlighted the example that the gender gap in education has constrained GDP growth with a 1.77 per cent loss in developing markets. To promote women's empowerment, it was important to integrate investments in women into core business strategies and to work with both men and women, in order to achieve that goal. CEOs played a critical role in ensuring the success of those types of strategies.

### **C. Leadership dialogue on “Ending violence against women and girls”**

On average, at least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by an intimate partner in the course of her lifetime. It is estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape during the course of her life. Violence against women kills and incapacitates as many women of reproductive age as cancer does. It is the most common, yet least punished, crime in the world that poses enormous obstacles to achieve gender equality worldwide. Violence against women and girls has a far deeper impact than the immediate harm caused and affects women's social and economic equality, physical and mental health, well-being and economic security.

Participants acknowledged and applauded various initiatives by the state, civil society and the private sector to eliminate violence against women in line with the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995. Sadly, achieving an end to violence against women and girls is still a distant reality, as numerous challenges still remain.

The discussion highlighted that one of the greatest challenges was that, in many societies and cultures, violence against women is still understood only as **domestic violence and regarded as a personal matter**, with limited or no intervention from the state. It was stressed that **establishing accountability and eliminating impunity**, both in the public and private sectors, were crucial to end violence against women and girls. It was noted that such issues were commonly overlooked and strong political will was needed so that this was addressed properly, both in the private and public sectors. Participants recognized the need to strengthen **international obligations**, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to prevent, protect, punish and promote the rights of women to be free from all kinds of violence.

There was also an important role that the private sector could play in helping to end violence against women - **a zero tolerance approach** towards preventing all forms of violence against women needed to be reflected in the constitutions and mission/vision statements of companies worldwide. Moreover, the corporate world could also channel its circle of influence to stop violence against women and girls, both within as well as outside of the work environment. The Carlson Hotels' policy of refusing business contact with any individual or group dealing in child trafficking or sexual exploitation of children was shared as an example of the type of positive role the private sector could play. It was also proposed that private sector efforts could begin "locally", market by market and scaled up as evidence is accumulated to demonstrate results.

It was noted and emphasized that violence against women should not be solely an issue of concern to women; rather, it was a development issue that affected both women and men equally. There was a need for **closer collaboration between women and men** through sensitization campaigns and by engaging specialized agencies, such as UNIFEM, UNDP, etc. The work done by White Ribbon Campaign to engage men in working towards the goal of ending violence against women in any form was highlighted as an example that could be scaled up and replicated.

Participants noted that both public and private initiatives required funds and resources, in order to adequately address the issue. In particular, they noted the limited availability of resources, especially at the local level, to effectively support women's empowerment programmes. **Separate funding sources** needed to be earmarked for initiatives geared towards ending violence against women, rather than reallocating funds already available from women's empowerment programmes. Larger and longer grants were recommended to support and scale up good practices. In this connection, multi-year funding was recommended to ensure sustainability. UNIFEM announced that, as of 2009, it had received 1100 funding proposals, amounting to over \$800 million. However, out of that desired target, it had managed only to support 30 proposals worth \$22 million. This clearly reflected the wide resource gap women's empowerment programmes faced, with an even greater shortfall for those targeting programmes aimed at ending violence against women and girls. Overall, the importance of **demonstrating results** was underlined to justify additional funding and, in this context, evaluation of projects was critically important. Aid effectiveness was identified as a crucial means of channeling increased funding to these issues.

In addition, participants noted that a series of **solution-oriented strategies** were, in practice, in different parts of the world, which did not solely rely on availability of funds. Rather, **collaborative action** comprising efforts by governments, civil society and the media helped to reinforce these important efforts. Nevertheless, the importance of strengthening partnerships between the public and private sectors was echoed throughout the panel discussion, with some participants noting initiatives towards that end. For example, UNIFEM highlighted its partnership with Johnson and Johnson, aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS among women and girls through addressing the links between violence against women and the spread of the disease. Another was the "La Pietra Coalition" to advance women's rights and status in society, recently launched by the

Vital Voices Global Partnership, an international NGO, which integrates members from civil society, the private sector and the government that strives, *inter alia*, to safeguard women's human rights through a multi-stakeholder approach.

It was noted that, often, women were not aware of their rights as citizens and human beings. Forming well-educated women's groups was one way of helping women to be better protected. It was emphasized that **men and women should both be equally informed and educated** and should have equal work opportunities across different sectors. Women's transition from micro-credit to macro-economics and greater economic reliance was noted as a crucial step that can help to make an immense impact towards eliminating violence against them.

Participants stressed that there was a need for adopting **a holistic approach and extending comprehensive support** to eradicating violence against women. In this connection, participants suggested supporting multifunctional centres for women, where a range of issues affecting women could be addressed. Such an approach required an engagement of all stakeholders at different levels. It was vital that **global, national and local leaderships** should have the vision and dedication to address the challenges faced in tackling this issue. Overall, women's empowerment and men's active engagement were identified as lynchpins towards eradicating violence against women. However, panelists highlighted that many efforts, including, in some instances, United Nations-funded programmes, have adopted the "victimization model", which was quite redundant and demeaned the dignity of women as equal citizens. Participants emphasized that the paradigm - women as victims of violence and men as perpetrators - must be changed and expanded.

### **Key recommendations**

Despite the fact that the economic status of both women and men had ameliorated significantly, why was it that violence against women and girls was getting worse? Participants agreed on the need for developing proactive partnerships between the private and public sectors and that engaging men was a critical element to end all forms of violence against women and girls. Participants suggested that, in addition to a need for additional financial resources, other resources, such as human resources and more focused policies were needed in the quest for the elimination of violence against women and girls. The need to adopt a broader outlook and holistic approach on the issue of violence against women and girls was reiterated. It was proposed that global initiatives to end violence against women and girls should be in sync with the local realities. Participants highlighted that a series of commendable initiatives were going on at the local level in different countries; however, serious challenges were faced while scaling up those good practices to end violence against women and girls at both the regional and global levels. The importance of supporting and strengthening "multifunctional centres" for women and girls for fostering an integrated approach to gender equality at both local and global levels was strongly suggested. Participants agreed that leadership was crucial to generate momentum and provide direction towards ending violence against women and girls at both the public and private sectors. Participants

envisaged a greater role for the private sector CEO's in this direction by promoting and inculcating a culture of values and respect for women and girls within the companies. Rather than aiming for short-term or incidental successes, the focus should be on transformational and sustainable changes. This required the engagement of all stakeholders - public, private, and civil society - at different levels of intervention. National government and international institutions needed to come forward with more serious and strictly legally binding obligations to protect, prevent and prosecute without impunity those guilty of violence directed towards women and girls. Participants further suggested that there was a strong need to document good practices and sharing them through different platforms, highlighting what worked as examples of best practices in ending violence against women and girls. In addition to investing in women and girls, it was also important to demonstrate commitment and accountability. This can be done by adding a target linked to ending violence against women and girls in MDG 3 on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

**D. Leadership dialogue on “Promoting women’s economic empowerment”**

Strong interrelationships exist between economic development and gender empowerment. Women’s empowerment, through improved access to health, education, earning opportunities, rights and political participation can help accelerate a country’s development. Conversely, development can also help reduce inequality between men and women.

The economic empowerment of women is widely seen as an effective mechanism to help break the cycle of discrimination and vulnerability. There are already effective mechanisms in place to support women’s economic and social empowerment. Reaching out to women and girls deepens their confidence, creates opportunities and raises profits.

The leadership dialogue’s main focus was on the following issues:

- Providing women’s access to knowledge to bring about economic change;
- Supporting women’s access to education and basic human rights;
- Strengthening public/private partnerships to promote women’s empowerment;
- Encouraging women’s participation in small businesses (entrepreneurship);
- Lobbying for women’s land and property rights, through legal reform; and
- Promoting the work of women farmers globally.

It was felt that **education was among the most important means of human development**. Education could enhance women’s economic productivity and growth and protect girls from HIV/AIDS, abuse and exploitation. Participants argued that, if women are empowered, it would offer them a pathway out of extreme poverty, eliminating illiteracy, developing self esteem and self confidence and providing skills for income generation.

The main aim was to encourage women to get better jobs by **investing in strategies** to improve wages, working conditions, labour standards and training

opportunities. Participants suggested that women needed to be trained in organic farming and sustainable solutions should be put in place for those that were not entrepreneurs. Hindustan Unilever's initiative to provide employment to 45,000 women through micro-finance and rural marketing, which led to over 100,000 products being sold in rural villages, was highlighted as a practical and sustainable example of the corporate sector's engagement in promoting women's economic empowerment. Economic suitability and productivity should be combined to **engage men** in helping with the economic development of communities. It was important to convince men that better education of women would be beneficial to the entire family and to society, as a whole.

The importance of forging **new partnerships** to provide greater opportunities to women in the global economy was stressed as a means of supporting women's economic empowerment and rights. Some examples were highlighted in this regard. **Hasbro, Inc.** spoke of its partnership with local NGOs in Afghanistan to create increased opportunities for women and girls in the local economy, and the **European Union** expressed its willingness to work with both the United Nations and the private sector towards promoting women's economic empowerment and ending gender-based violence.

It was also highlighted that women needed to be **empowered in science and technology**, as the use of technology was powerful in transforming women in society. It was noted that technology and the growing commitment to philanthropy have also created new opportunities for public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships could promote women's empowerment and aid in ending violence against them.

Women across the globe should be empowered and provided opportunities to own their own businesses and achieve economic independence and gender equality. **Everyone had a part to play** in achieving these goals. UNDP has, for example, established a partnership project with IKEA in India, reaching out to 50,000 women. But the key factor to the partnership process went back to the direct collaboration of all actors with multilateral agencies and governments. **Public-private partnerships** were important for outsourcing and for investing in the infrastructure women needed, in order to have a chance in life. It was further stressed that the corporate sector should utilize its marketing prowess to influence public opinion for creating public policies that promote economic independence of women and gender equality.

Participants stressed the importance of focusing efforts mainly on **women and children**. The aim was to create **women resource centres** and to find out how such women centres worked. The development of these women centres should focus on skills training; ending domestic and physical abuse, including prevention of rape, pregnancy and female genital mutilation. Women needed to learn economic skills and economic sustainability. Working conditions, wages, health care, etc. are still issues to be considered for women. There was also a vital need to use women empowerment programmes to bring in women who were missing out on formal employment, so as to give them the power to move ahead.

It was stressed that **the renewed global attention to agriculture needed to focus very heavily on women**. The strengthening of women's roles in rural agricultural

organizations was considered vital. Three actions had to be taken; firstly, significant new resources were needed to support the economic empowerment of women through agriculture. Secondly, within the context of affirmative action, projects should lend earmark resources for women and quotas for participation in leadership should be included in those projects. Thirdly, capacity-building must be strengthened through support for education and training particularly for negotiating skills and developing self-esteem.

### **Key recommendations**

**It was agreed that it was important that economic empowerment and women’s rights be considered together. By economically empowering women, their status within the household and the community could be increased while, at the same time, this serves to decrease their chances of suffering violence. It was, therefore, vital to involve women fully in the macro economy and not solely in the so-called “survival economy”. To empower women, it was necessary to support women’s entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas, through improved access to property and economic assets, microfinance and also agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers. The support of local governments was crucial for a successful change in multiple ways. First of all, governments needed to facilitate access to markets and to address existing supply-side constraints and other stumbling blocks. Second, governments could help in scaling up successful local initiatives, together with NGOs and private sector corporations. Participants agreed that finding innovative ways of empowering women and matching them with ways of scaling up was pivotal to advancing women’s empowerment. Partnerships between NGOs and private sector companies were, therefore, essential to achieve this. There was consensus that public support for the empowerment of women was a crucial element. To that end, men should be sensitized to the potential of women in economic life and on the benefits that the whole society can draw from their economic empowerment.**

### **E. Closing session**

Facilitated by the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP), a number of important initiatives were announced in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment:

**Ms. Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, *Founder, Mothers’ Army Initiative***, made a brief statement, presenting the “Mothers’ Army Initiative”, a new initiative developed to harness the collective power of mothers. She stressed that the nurturing power of mothers can change the landscape of economic, political, and social issues, and that motherhood was the strongest fighting force in the world. The Duchess also encouraged people to join her in her work to empower women and girls.



**Ms. Maria Borelius**, *CEO, Hand in Hand*. The non-profit organization, Hand in Hand International, pledged to create 10 million additional jobs among the poor, rural and marginalized women. The project aims to create jobs by providing opportunities for business training, which has proven to result in positive outcomes on women's health, the number of female voters and an increase in children's attendance at school.

**Dr. Tariq Cheema**, *World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists*, provided a short introduction to the "Empowerment through enlightenment" initiative, developed by the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP). The purpose of the project is to raise awareness among the male population and offer skill-building opportunities to females. He also encouraged and invited the international community to become partners in this effort.

**Ms. Heidi Kühn**, *Founder, Roots of Peace*, spoke of de-mining and replanting in Afghanistan, an initiative set forth by Roots of Peace. She also called for action on the issue of landmines and inspired people to engage in the United Nations Landmine Awareness Day, to take place on 4 April 2010.

**Ms. Francine LeFrak**, *Founder, Same Sky*, briefed the audience on the work of Same Sky, an organization that focuses on developing projects with women artisans to sell in global markets. She declared that this was a way to provide sustainable income for women and further their empowerment around the world. Ms. LeFrak also spoke on behalf of the Cherie Blair Foundation and informed the participants on the foundation's conference that will be held in December 2010.

**Ms. Irene D. Pritzker**, *President, IDP Foundation*, gave a short presentation of how the IDP Rising Schools works to boost the development of existing private schools for disadvantaged children in Ghana. She emphasized that the fees of private schools were sometimes lower than those of public schools, thereby highlighting the importance in financing them. The project not only called for sustainable access to education for the poor but also for gender equality among staff and students.

**Ms. Mary Quinn**, *Senior Manager, Operations, Avon Foundation for Women*. The Foundation, which had already donated \$1 million to the United Nations Trust Fund to combat violence against women, announced an additional \$250,000 pledge to the fund. Ms. Quinn, who spoke on behalf of the Foundation, explained the focus on improving the lives of women and their families. The two focus areas are breast cancer and domestic violence, and the foundation was working on expanding their capacity to fund more projects on those issues.

**Mr. Erol User**, *Founder, Kids Parliament*, stressed the importance of investing in children and also pointed out that policy on women has immense consequences on children. When women are educated, their children are more likely to attend school. The Kids Parliament aims to create a safe community, in which children have the possibility to come together to engage in a true global dialogue.

**Mr. Andrew Whitley**, *Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) Representative Office in New York*, spoke of refugee girls and women in the Gaza Strip, who are the most economically and socially vulnerable in that area. If funding is available, UNRWA will embark a \$6 million project to improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for Palestinian women and girl refugees.

**Ms. Tamara Kreinin**, *Executive Director of Women and Population, United Nations Foundation*, gave a brief summary on the “Girl Fund”, whose main aim is to ensure that girls have access to quality education and health care, freedom from violence, HIV/AIDS, and prevention of harmful practices. In that respect, the United Nations Foundation cooperates with various actors, in order to promote women empowerment.

In her closing keynote address, **Ms. Geena Davis**, *Academy Award-winning actor and founder of See Jane*, highlighted the importance of **exposing children from an early age to a positive gender representation in the media**, as well as in the matter of equality between men and women. The stark gender inequality in media aimed at children was of significant importance to any discussion of MDG 3, as television and movies could wield enormous influence on young children, as they are developing a sense of their role in society. For example, more often than not, there is a ratio of three male characters to every female character in a motion picture. On top of that, female characters are usually highly stereotyped or hyper sexualized. The projection of girls in a non-stereotyped manner in the media could help heighten the suitability of women’s achievement, confidence and employment in non-traditional vocations. There was a universal need to empower women through increased inclusiveness in the workplace, as well as through political empowerment.