



Breakfast Dialogue on

Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development with Gender Equality

Friday 26 June 2009, from 8.15 to 10.00 am in Delegates Dining Room

I. Objectives of the breakfast dialogue

UNDP and UNIFEM, in collaboration with the Governments of Australia, Finland and Nicaragua are organizing a breakfast dialogue during the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development. The objective of the breakfast panel is to provide a space for Governments, United Nations and civil society to discuss ways to build inclusive economies that offer equal opportunities for women and men.

II. Current financial and economic crisis

In 2009, it is now apparent that the spread of the financial sector crisis to developing markets has led to major setbacks in delivering on the global commitments made in the Millennium Declaration in 2000. Impact has been felt with regards to ODA, trade, debt (MDG8), to family incomes and food intake (MDG1), girls education (MDG2 and 3), gender equality (MDG3), and children's and maternal health, and HIV/AIDS (MDG4-6), access to water and sanitation (MDG7).

The World Bank has estimated that as many as 53 million more people have been pushed into poverty as economic growth decreases around the world. This is on top of the 130-155 million people already pushed into poverty as a result of ongoing food crisis and energy crisis. Between 200,000 and 400,000 more children a year may die if the crisis persists. ILO has warned that the number of unemployed women could increase by 22 million in 2009. Major concerns have also been raised with regards to the number of girls dropping out of school, levels of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation; HIV/AIDS prevalence rates; and criminal activities and security risks.

The economic slowdown is impacting on women and men in developing countries through three key transmission channels: *Trade*: declining demand for manufactured and commodity exports, as well as services (e.g. domestic and tourism services) in developed countries, which has resulted in declining exports in developing countries; *Capital*: diminishing foreign direct investment in developing countries as well as ODA from donor countries; *Remittances*: declining remittances due to rising unemployment for migrant workers. These three channels by which the crisis is impacting on developing countries are having a differential impact on women and men because of three major pre-crisis factors: (i) Differences between women and men in their *labour market participation*; (ii) Women's unequal access to *financial resources* and other assets; (iii) Poor women's higher burden of *unpaid care work*, and higher reliance on social safety nets.

III. Gender equality: speeding up economic recovery and economic stability

It is now critical for development partners to unite their crisis response, at both global and national levels, and turn the crisis into opportunity to improve the prospects of the millions of women and men, girls and boys living in poverty. The actions that are taken now will determine the length and depth of the crisis and its effects on human development—girls and boys who drop out of school today

may not return tomorrow.

Analysis of past recessions have taught us that focusing on the poorest segment of the society, in particular women living in poverty, through increased targeted social spending, is the most effective response in reversing the impact of crises. National governments are doing what they can to protect expenditures that are critical for MDG achievement, including health, basic education, water and sanitation, agricultural extension and infrastructure. Empowering women and girls is a smart and often low investment. Significant savings can be made through more effective aid coordination/management, as well as through improving governance and public sector reform.

Most developing countries lack resources to launch stimulus packages or other measures to cope with the crisis and addressing other challenges, such as environmental sustainability. Therefore, it is critical to give financial support to developing countries not only to recover from the financial and economic crisis, but also to make available additional funds for social expenditures that yield benefits for both women and men.

The crisis makes even more critical the need for instituting enabling policies for women to enter male dominated sectors by providing women with training and orientation in these sectors. There are documented examples of how gender-informed design of public works programmes can benefit women and whole communities, such as physical infrastructure projects (e.g. rebuilding irrigation systems, land development, reforestation and afforestation, establishing rural roads and controlling floods), and expansion of social services such as water, domestic energy, and child care. Creating jobs by investing in social infrastructure, expanding and improving the provision of health, education and nutrition would lead to less care work for women and would allow women to enter paid employment.

Social protection offers protection against livelihood risks and vulnerability, help mitigate the adverse effects of different shocks to household income, and prevent inter-generational transmission of poverty, in particular from women to girls. Measures include social insurance, social assistance (e.g. cash, food, vouchers and subsidies) and social services (e.g. maternal and child health and nutrition programmes). Such social safety net programmes are possible and should be encouraged, including in middle income countries. In that regard, it is important to stress the need for renewed support from developed countries to enable developing countries to provide social safety net programmes.

At the international level, it would be critical to adopt a new financial architecture that benefits developing and developed nations, and women and men alike.

IV. Breakfast dialogue methodology

The breakfast dialogue will feature the experiences of policy-makers from developing and developed nations, United Nations, academia and civil society. Speakers will engage with participants in an interactive debate on ways to build inclusive economies that offer equal opportunities for women and men. The dialogue aims to conclude with a set of practical recommendations to relevant stakeholders in responding to the crisis.

V. Speakers

H.E. Alberto José Guevara Obregón, Minister of Finance and Public Credit, Government of Nicaragua

H.E. Gary Quinlan, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

H.E. Jarmo Viinanen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations

Inés Alberdi, Executive Director, UNIFEM

Obiageli Ezekwesili, Vice President of the Africa Region, World Bank

Rania Antonopoulos, Research Scholar, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College

Gigi Francisco, DAWN/Women's Working Group on Financing for Development