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## **FINANCING DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN**

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*\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **FINANCING DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN**

A major shortcoming of these dialogues is that they have focused on the technical aspects of resource mobilization, and have failed to incorporate a conceptual and methodological framework consistent with the stated goals of financing gender-sensitive, people-centred development. Incorporating such a framework is of critical importance, as it serves to create and shape the linkages that will translate policy into effective implementation. And ultimately, this is what really matters – effective policy implementation that results in real cash transfers to poor households, and to women in those households, such that their lives and livelihoods are substantially improved.

Critical to such a framework must be an emphasis on full employment and decent work as essential to poverty eradication and the realization of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nor can there be effective gains in poverty alleviation without a sustained focus on the structural causes underlying the increasing feminization of poverty. In focusing on the theme: “Financing Decent Work for Women,” this Paper makes the case for a holistic methodology that links resource

realizing the MDGs and securing sustainable livelihoods for people in poor communities. They rather contributed to usurping fiscal space, as well as the capacity of governments to engage in much needed social sector investments. The series suggests that social sector provision will be better served if developing country governments shift from privatization and Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs) for the provision of basic services, to public investments. Clearly, these conclusions also apply to social provisioning for the health and education sectors. Governments need to recapture lost policy space, and oppose conditionalities that hinder their capacity to achieve critical development goals such as poverty eradication and improvements in well-being for their citizens.

The series proposes a number of funding mechanisms including improved tax collection, progressive taxation and cross- subsidies that mobilize resources from the wealthy, from capital, from larger firms and from multinational companies. Regional Development Banks had, potentially, a significant role to play, according to the Conclusions of this Dialogue series, in providing loans on concessional terms for public investments. An example was given of the African Development Bank (ADB) which had established a dedicated window with low interest rate loans to municipalities, community-based organizations (CBOs) and

An important starting point for the formulation of FfD policies should be an understanding of the nexus between women and work in an increasingly globalizing world. Financial and trade liberalization, along with unfavourable terms of trade and the growing integration of markets for capital, products and services are serving to undermine the productive bases of national economies and to weaken labour markets, pushing increasing numbers of people into informal, casualized and insecure work. Women are disproportionately affected by these processes. Women's access to opportunities for education and other socially provided services has been undermined by World Bank-inspired economic policies of privatization and cuts in social sector spending in many developing countries. This has shifted the costs

## **THE DECENT WORK AGENDA**

Policies should focus on pro-poor growth strategies that maximize cash flows to households and to women within households through employment and income-generating mechanisms, support for provision of income-enhancing opportunities, access to services and social security income. This is in keeping with the Decent Work Agenda, and with the FfD objectives emerging from the multi-stakeholder dialogues of building physical and social infrastructure. Development activities should target sectors where women are to be found.

Building physical infrastructure such as roads that bring produce to markets, water resources for irrigation and household use, - these are important for supporting the income-generating activities of women in the agricultural sector. Providing funds to capitalize MFIs, ensuring women's access to credit, providing training and other support to SMEs, - this range of interventions will support women in both rural and urban areas including in the informal economy.

Building social infrastructure through public investments in basic utilities, health, education, and ensuring women's access to these services, - this range of interventions is important for securing a decent quality of life for women. They help also to compensate women for their unpaid labour in the care economy by providing the social services needed to support their activities. Access to such services can free women from domestic, unpaid duties, enabling their access to other economic activities (it is estimated that \$1 invested in water services returns more than \$7 in productive activity). Social protection schemes that cover work-related risks such as loss of income, accidents, disability, - these also provide cash transfers which should be accounted for as entitlements to workers, including women workers in the informal economy.

place to cover workers at this level of the economy. The longer-term objective should be the progressive construction of a welfare system that extends the rights and protections of the formal economy to the informal economy, thereby effectively formalizing the informal economy and empowering women. With their rights as workers recognized, women could then engage in social dialogue with government authorities and employers, with a view to advocating for workplace and development strategies that would improve their conditions of work and life.

To enhance social dialogue, consultative frameworks should be established, where policy-

important objective of alleviating feminized poverty through the decent work agenda, decent work indicators should be incorporated into GRA development indicators. These should include:

**I Indicators to assess the conduciveness of the policy environment to decent work strategies:**

- § Level of resources devoted to employment and income-generating programs
- § Level of public and social security expenditure
- § Level of ratification of ILO core labour standards for the country concerned

**II Gender-sensitive decent work indicators**

1. Employment Opportunities

- § Labour force participation rates disaggregated by sex
- § Non-agricultural wage employment disaggregated by sex
- § Non-agricultural self-employment disaggregated by sex
- § Agricultural wage employment disaggregated by sex
- § Workers with recent skills training disaggregated by sex

2. Earnings

- § Average earnings in selected sectors disaggregated by sex

3. Hours of Work

- § Time-use surveys of women's work disaggregated by paid/unpaid work
- § Time-related underemployment rate disaggregated by sex

4. Social Protection

- § Share of population over 65 benefiting from pension, disaggregated by sex
- § Beneficiaries of cash income support disaggregated by sex

5. Social Dialogue and Participation

- § Union density disaggregated by sex
- § Beneficiaries of collective bargaining by sector, disaggregated by sex

**CONCLUSIONS**

The ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) constitute the ILO's contribution to UN country programmes. Gender mainstreaming is a key component of the DWCPs. It may be interesting to explore avenues for making linkages at country level between the DWCPs and the FfD policy-making process along the lines proposed here, in terms of conceptual framework and methodology. The international labour community is convinced that the Decent Work Agenda offers some real potential for translating wealth in the global economy into shared prosperity through a range of policy interventions such as those outlined in this Paper. It would be important to ensure that effective strategies are put in place to enable women to benefit fully from that shared prosperity.



