



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

**MDG3 Conference
in Copenhagen
25 March 2010**

Programme



MDG Employment Targets

MDG3 – promote gender equality and empower women – has one target and three indicators. In relation to women’s employment one indicator is of special interest: *“Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector”*.

In 2005 the target on *“full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people”* was added to Millennium Development Goal 1.

How far are we from achieving these targets?

Extracts from the Millennium Development Goals Report 2009 state:

- Far more women continue to be out of the labour market than men. Northern Africa and Western Asia have exceptionally low female employment-to-population ratios.
- Well over 80 per cent of the female labour force in Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia are expected to have been engaged in vulnerable employment in 2008.
- Globally, the share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has continued to increase marginally over the years. But in Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, employment opportunities for women remain extremely low.
- Women are also poorly represented in non-agricultural employment in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 64 per cent of women’s employment is in agriculture, and women’s overall representation in the labour force is relatively high: 55 per cent of working-age women in that region are employed, although mostly in vulnerable jobs.
- In Northern Africa and Western Asia, where industry and services are the most important sectors, only 23 per cent and 21 per cent of working-age women, respectively, are employed.
- Close to two thirds of all employed women have vulnerable jobs, either as contributing family workers or as own-account workers.



Freedom – also for employment



Freedom and human rights are fundamental values. They must be respected by us all and should be enjoyed by us all. Women as well as men. Unfortunately not everybody enjoys neither freedom nor the full implementation of human rights.

Women in particular are often deprived of their human rights and their freedom to utilize their potential, whether it is their right to choose education or employment or their right to decide over their own body.

Investment in women pays off. We know that. And yet huge obstacles to employment bar women from accessing well-paid and secure work or establishing themselves as self-employed.

The MDG High-level Meeting in New York in September 2010 will take stock. Where are we? What has been achieved? And especially: Where do we need to push forward? MDG3 is not only a goal in itself, but a means to achieving the other MDGs. So it is vital to address shortcomings in MDG3 achievements and in other MDG targets related to women's empowerment.

This conference aims at exactly that. It focuses on women's employment, which is a vital link between poverty reduction and economic growth. The issue is complex and includes not only political and legal frameworks but traditional roles of men and women, power relations and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Governments – politicians – have a special obligation to strengthen efforts to achieve the employment targets, but the responsibility does not rest exclusively with governments. The forces of the private sector, primarily, have to be released and work in close cooperation with international organizations and civil society.

Fortunately, we have a basis to work on. During this last decade we have gathered very valuable experience about what works and what does not work. And we have learnt that coordinated interventions can produce remarkable results.

I therefore welcome the discussion on this complex set of issues related to women's employment and look forward to our joint – and I am confident – fruitful and inspirational sharing of information and best practices to feed into the MDG High-level Meeting.

Søren Pind
Minister for Development Cooperation

The important link of employment

Why is it vital to provide employment for women and empower women to access employment opportunities?

- Because women must be able to engage in productive and profitable economic activity if growth and poverty reduction is to be sustained in the long run.

Women's waged non-agricultural employment as well as women's paid employment within the agricultural sector bring significant benefits in terms of women's capacity to control income and decision-making, benefits which will spur economic growth and improve the livelihoods of the world's poor people.

Gender discrimination on the labour market is costly. For Asia it has been estimated that gender discrimination costs up to 80 billion USD a year due to restrictions on women's labour-market participation and access to schooling. And for India alone, GDP would go up by 8 per cent if the ratio of female to male workers is increased by 10 per cent.

Out of the 3 billion people that were employed around the world in 2008, 1.2 billion were women. This equals 40.4 per cent. Only a small portion of employed women were working in industry. Of all female employment in 2008 – outside agriculture – the service sector accounted for 46.3 per cent.

Women suffer multiple disadvantages in access to labour markets. Very often they do not have the same freedom as men to choose whether to work and where to work. Discriminatory laws, failure to implement non-discriminatory legislation that does exist, weak presence of women in labour institutions such as trade unions and lack of awareness by women of their labour rights remain some of the key impediments to employment.

Other barriers can be found within the family unit, and they can be embedded in culture, norms, behaviour and customary law.

This clearly underlines the importance of applying a holistic view of how to undertake – and sustain – efforts to increase women's access to employment. And it raises the question of how to maximize synergy among improvements in the legal framework, the cultural and social aspects and women's well-being and strengthened capacity to access new employment opportunities.

Employment is linked to the public as well as the private sector. Many sector employers view, women's double burden of earning a living and caring for their families as an impediment to their productivity. For many women, employment is excluded because of household obligations and care giving.

The economic advantages of increasing women's access to employment are to be considered alongside women's equal rights to employment opportunities. These are separate but inseparably interlinked issues.



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Rights and resources

Women – like men – can contribute to economic growth if they are provided with equal rights and an enabling legal and economic environment. Yet, in many developing countries women's potentials are not matched by their economic opportunities and rights.

Women's share of employment has increased but at a slow rate, and a gender division persists. Discriminatory norms and practices still hinder women's increased access to paid work and employment.

Improving the legal status and rights of women is a key element in creating and sustaining an enabling environment for women's empowerment and employment. Land is the most important asset for households in developing countries. In many countries, women are less likely than men to own and control assets and therefore have limited opportunities to effectively participate in economic activities.

The situation is particularly worrying in Africa. Agriculture is the central economic sector and there is a huge gap between women's considerable contribution to the production and their benefit and influence. Women in Africa represent 52 per cent of the total population, women's contribution to the agricultural work amounts to 75 per cent and they produce 60-80 per cent of the food. Yet, women earn only 10 per cent of Africa's income and they own less than 1 per cent of the continent's assets/landmass.

Women's employment outside the agricultural sector is increasing but very slowly. According to ILO estimates, women's participation in paid, non-agricultural employment averaged 40.4 per cent in 2008 compared to 35 per cent in 1990.

However, almost two thirds of women in developing countries work in vulnerable jobs as own-account and unpaid family workers. In southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, vulnerable jobs account for more than 80 per cent of all jobs for women.

Self-employed women tend to end up in the informal business sector and in small-scale agricultural production, and their often substantial economic contribution becomes "invisible". The reasons are many: self-employed women, more often than men, work from the home, and their businesses are less likely to grow, primarily due to lack of capital. Furthermore, potential female entrepreneurs face legal, regulatory and administrative barriers to starting, registering/formalizing and running a business. Combined with women's financial illiteracy and the lack of appropriate financial services this result in huge barriers. To overcome them a whole package of education, technology transfer, business development services and marketing assistance is needed.



What women can do and “cannot do”

Numerous studies document the important multiplier-effect of empowering women economically and the valuable impact of women as agents of change. There has been less focus on the culturally embedded barriers for women to perform as change agents and for women to increase their share of employment.

Traditions, cultural norms and values and behaviour have been confined to the outskirts of the debate on women’s economic empowerment, their access to employment opportunities and their contribution to economic growth.

The importance of traditional roles of men and women has been recognized. So has the need to address formal and informal power relations, but the vital importance of culture in sustainable development calls for increased attention.

As the ways of social interaction, power relations, the patterns of gender inequalities/injustice are most often outside the public eye, they are easily overlooked and neglected when translating development cooperation and policies into practice.

For millions of teenage brides, early marriage means lost opportunities for education as well as limited chances of social and political participation. In some regions with tradition of early and forced marriage, lack of parental investment in the education of girls is reinforced by the assumption that they will leave the family upon marriage. Early pregnancy is also one of the factors restricting access to productive jobs.

Stereotyped gender roles and the prejudices about what women and men can do are in general culture specific. An exception is the assumption across most regions and at all levels that care work is the domain of women and girls, not of men and boys.

Unpaid care work – the housework and care of persons that occurs in homes and communities of all societies – has a vital bearing on women’s ability to undertake other work and regular employment. It also entails missed opportunities for attending school and participation in education and training.

A fundamental step in increasing women’s empowerment and employment is to ensure access to education for girls and that a broader range of educational choices is available to girls. All over the world, social and cultural norms generate gender stereotypical educational patterns to the detriment of both women and men.

Gender stereotypical educational patterns result in a concentration of women in public, lower paid and less prestigious professions, which again results in the universal gender wage gap.

As social cohesion is an important factor in bringing about development, the role of men in women’s empowerment and employment is vital. In many cultures men are a key instrument for opening labour markets and business opportunities to women.



Programme

Moderator

Trine Sick, *Journalist*

08.30-09.00 **Registration and coffee**

09.00-09.10 **Official opening**

Søren Pind, *Denmark's Minister for Development Cooperation*

09.10-10.00 **Introductions**

Robert B. Zoellick, *President of the World Bank Group*

Private sector development and recovery from the economic crisis

Helen Clark, *UNDP Administrator*

The importance of a favourable economic and legal environment for women's empowerment

Questions & answers

10.00-11.10

Panel 1: Promotion of a favourable economic and legal framework

Yukiko Omura, *Vice President, IFAD*

James Michel, *Counsellor to USAID*

Annie S.C. Wu, *Hon. Pres., Hong Kong Women Prof. & Entrepreneurs Ass.*

Questions to be discussed by panel and plenum:

- *Which key legislative and administrative issues need to be addressed to ensure women and men with equal economic opportunities?*
- *How to increase women's access to credit and financial services?*
- *How to empower women to fully utilize their entrepreneurial potential?*
- *How to promote an investment climate that facilitates women's participation in the private sector?*

11.10-11.40

Coffee break



YUKIKO OMURA



JAMES MICHEL



ANNIE S.C. WU



KANDEH K. YUMKELLA

11.40-11.50 **Key note speaker**
Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, *State Minister of Women, Bangladesh*

11.50-13.00 **Panel 2: Crossing cultural and social barriers**
Kandeh K. Yumkella, *Director-General, UNIDO*
Jane Hodges, *Director of Bureau of Gender, ILO*
Codou Diaw, *Executive Director, Forum for African Women Educationalists*

Questions to be discussed by panel and plenum:

- *How to change perceptions that limit schooling for girls and women's educational choices?*
- *How to overcome social and cultural norms that lead to discrimination of women on the job market?*
- *How to promote a more even sharing of unpaid care work?*
- *How to dismantle stereotypes and structural inequalities that hamper women entrepreneurs in developing their businesses?*

13.00-14.00 **Lunch**

14.00-14.10 **Key note speaker**
Thoraya Obaid, *Executive Director, UNFPA*

14.10-15.20 **Panel 3: Ensuring good health, incl. sexual and reproductive health and rights**
Hannah Tetteh, *Minister of Trade and Industry, Ghana*
Jill W. Sheffield, *Founder Women Deliver, USA*
Godfrey Mbaruku, *Ifakara Health Research Institute, Tanzania*

Questions to be discussed by panel and plenum:

- *How to promote the strong linkages between women's employment opportunities and their sexual and reproductive health and rights?*
- *What is required to make further progress in delivering free maternal health care services?*
- *How to ensure a sufficient number of skilled health workers?*
- *Are improved financial mechanisms to accelerate investments in women's health needed?*

15.20-15.35 **Recommendations from the conference and the way ahead**
Carsten Staur, *Ambassador of Denmark to the UN*

15.35-15.55 **The UN High-level Meeting on the MDG's in September**
Asha-Rose Migiro, *Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations*

15.55-16.00 **Concluding remarks**
Søren Pind, *Minister for Development Cooperation*



JANE HODGES



CODOU DIAW



HANNAH TETTEH



JILL W. SHEFFIELD



GODFREY MBARUKU

Biographies



Robert B. Zoellick

is President of the World Bank Group. Prior to joining the Bank, Mr. Zoellick served as Vice Chairman, International of the Goldman Sachs Group, and as the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. State Department. He was the Department's Chief Operating Officer and policy alternate for the Secretary of State, in addition to having lead policy responsibility in a number of areas. As the US Trade Representative in the cabinet, he worked with Ministers from nearly 150 economies to launch the Doha Development Agenda in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 and then to complete the framework accord for opening markets in 2004. A Harvard Law School graduate, he has received a number of awards. He also served on many non-profit boards, such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the European Institute, and the Overseas Development Council.



Helen Clark

has been the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme since 2009, and is the first woman to lead the organisation. She is also the Chair of the United Nations Development Group. Prior to her appointment with UNDP, Ms. Clark served for nine years as Prime Minister of New Zealand. Throughout her tenure as Prime Minister, Helen Clark engaged widely in policy development and advocacy across the international, economic, social and cultural spheres. As Prime Minister, Helen Clark was a member of the Council of Women World Leaders, an international network of current and former women presidents and prime ministers whose mission is to mobilize the highest-level women leaders globally for collective action on issues of critical importance to women and equitable development.



Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury

is State Minister in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Bangladesh. She is a Doctor in Law with a specialisation in constitutional law and human rights. She is a Member of the Standing Committee in Parliament relating to Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Ms. Chaudhury has long experience of practice as an advocate in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, where she conducted many important constitutional, political and human rights violation cases. She is also an extensively published author on issues of human rights, electoral law and the status of women in South Asia.



Thoraya Obaid

was appointed as Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, on 1 January 2001, making her the first Saudi Arabian to head a United Nations agency. Ms. Obaid has a long and distinguished career at the United Nations, including in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and as Director of the then-Division for Arab States and Europe at UNFPA, occupying that position until 2001, when she assumed her current post. Throughout her career, Ms. Obaid has championed the causes of women’s and young people’s health and empowerment. As UNFPA Executive Director, she has introduced a focus on culture to the Fund’s development work, linking gender, universal values of human rights and values of the human worth promoted by all religions and found in all cultures.



Asha-Rose Migiro

has been Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations since 2007. Ms. Migiro served as Tanzanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation from 2006 to 2007. She was the first woman in the United Republic of Tanzania to hold that position since the independence of the country in 1961. Before that, she was Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children for five years. Prior to government service, Ms. Migiro pursued a career in academia. She was a member of the Faculty of Law at the University of Dar es Salaam. She also served as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2000.

Healthy women deliver

The need to improve women's health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, has received growing attention as a crucial factor for promoting women's economic empowerment. It is consequently also an important precondition for women's employment opportunities.

- Women who can plan the timing and number of their births will have greater opportunities for work, education and involvement in the development of their society.
- Healthy women provide more and better for their children, families and communities.
- Healthy women who are able to earn an income are more likely (than men) to spend their earnings on food, education, medicine and other necessities for the family. In turn, the death or disability of a mother raises death and illness rates for children, destroys families, takes children out of school and reduces household and community economic productivity.

Early marriage and high fertility rates limit young women's possibilities to participate actively in economic activities, and for millions of teenage brides early pregnancy is one of the pitfalls restricting access to productive jobs.

Every year an estimated 536,000 women die as a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Almost all of these deaths (99 per cent) occur in developing countries. The majority of maternal deaths can be prevented. Every year there are an estimated 19 million unsafe abortions in the developing world, resulting in some 68,000 deaths. Up to a third of maternal deaths could be avoided simply by meeting currently unmet needs for contraception.

In 2008, one in four persons in developing countries were women of reproductive age (15-49 years). More than half of these women (818 million) wanted to avoid pregnancy and therefore needed effective contraception. Current figures estimate that 215 million women who would like to use contraceptives do not have the access.

Global investments in family planning have been in substantial decline in recent years, from \$653 million in 1997 to \$394 million in 2006. However, the economic benefits of preventing unwanted pregnancies and improving maternal health are well documented. According to a study in Vietnam, every dollar invested in family planning would save about 8 dollars in health, education and other social services. Another study points to the fact that where mortality is high, parents are likely to have more children and to invest less in each child's health and education, thus impeding economic prospects.

Meeting the unmet needs for reproductive health and family planning is crucial. And the unmet needs are likely to grow as the world's adolescents, of whom there have never been a greater number in history, enter reproductive age.





Links

- UN Secretary General's report 'Keeping the Promise': A forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the MDGs by 2015 notes that while female participation in the labour force has increased, there are still significant gender gaps in participation rates, occupational levels and wages. www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/sgreport_draft.pdf
- ILO report (March 2010) on Women in Labour Markets: Measuring progress and identifying challenges uses labour market indicators to measure progress or lack of progress towards the goal of gender equality in the world of work. www.ilo.org/empelm/what/pubs/lang--en/docName--WCMS_123835/index.htm
- World Bank report on 'Women, barriers and the law' (March, 2010) looks at legal differentiation between men and women in 128 economies with a focus on six specific areas: accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, dealing with taxes, building credit, going to school. wbl.worldbank.org
Also see www.worldbank.org/gender
- Gender equality at the heart of decent work campaign 2008-09 (ILO). www.ilo.org/gender/Events/Campaign2008-2009/lang--en/
- Atlas of Gender and Development : How Social Norms Affect Gender Equality in non-OECD Countries (March 2010): gives readers an insight into the impact of social institutions - traditions, social norms and cultural practices - on gender equality in 124 countries. www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?sf1=identifiers&st1=5KSF24PWS6F4
- The OECD Social Institutions Gender Index (SIGI) Slidecast presentation: www.oecd.org/document/39/0,3343,en_2649_33935_42274663_1_1_1_1,00.html
Also see SIGI 2009 results at a glance. genderindex.org/
- United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality: www.un.org/womenwatch/
- The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/impact_bdpfa/EGM%20Report_BPFA-MDG_FINAL.pdf
- Pathways of women's empowerment. An international research and communications programme which links academics with activist and practitioners to find out what works to enhance women's empowerment. www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/
- End Poverty 2015 Millennium Campaign: Goal 3. endpoverty2015.org/goals/gender-equity
- Unifem's site on Women, Poverty & Economics. www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/
- The Millennium Development Goals Network (MDG Net). www.undg.org
- World Bank interactive map on women in wage employment. devdata.worldbank.org/atlas-mdg/

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