

## Empowering Women to End Poverty

### Key Statistics

- **15 per cent of the population in Oceania is undernourished, which is an increase from 12 per cent in 1990**
- **1.4 billion people still do not have access to sanitation**
- **884 million people worldwide still rely on unimproved water sources for drinking**
- **Women bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty**
- **Women represent 70 per cent of the world's poor**
- **In 2008, the average wage gap between men and women was 17 per cent**
- **Women perform 66 per cent of the world's work, produce 50 per cent of the food, but earn only 10 per cent of the income and own only 1 per cent of the property.**
- **In Oceania in 2008, 64 per cent of women remained in unpaid work as contributing family workers**
- **Six out of ten of the world's poorest people are women who must, as the primary family caretakers and producers of food, shoulder the burden of tilling land, grinding grain, carrying water and cooking.**

### What is Poverty?

Poverty is a very complex and multidimensional term used to describe the conditions in which billions of people around the world live. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), poverty is not only insufficient income or the deprivation of material resources, but it has also come to describe the lack of opportunity to access an education, basic healthcare, clean drinking water or to influence political processes.

The current poverty line, as outlined by the United Nations, is \$1.25 a day. Those living on less are considered to be living in extreme poverty. As of 2005, there were approximately 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty. This statistic decreased from the estimate of 1.8 billion in 1990, before the Millennium Development Goals were introduced. Last year, however, this number increased because of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). It has been estimated that 55 to 90 million more people will be pushed into extreme poverty because of the GFC combined with the global food and housing crises.

This economic turmoil has pushed tens of millions of people into vulnerable employment, the majority of whom (67 per cent as of 2008) are women.

### Why is Poverty a Gendered Issue?

Women are disproportionately the victims of poverty worldwide. Statistics indicate that women are more likely than men to be poor and at risk of hunger because of the systematic discrimination they face in education, health care, employment and control of assets. Poverty implications are widespread for women, leaving many without even basic rights such as access to clean drinking water, sanitation, medical care and decent employment. Being poor can also mean they have little protection from violence and have no role in decision making.

Women face persistent discrimination when they apply for credit for business or self-employment and are often concentrated in insecure, unsafe and low-wage work. Eight out of ten women workers are considered to be in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with global economic changes taking a huge toll on their livelihoods.

### Impacts of the Global Financial Crisis on Women

The current financial crisis is likely to affect women particularly severely. In many developing countries where women work in export-led factories, or in countries where migrant women workers are the backbone of service industries, women's jobs have taken the greatest hit. The International Labour Organization estimates that the economic crisis could push 22 million more women into unemployment in 2009, reversing some of the gains made in women's empowerment in the last few decades.

- Women constitute around 60 – 80 per cent of the export manufacturing workforce in the developing world, a sector the World Bank expects to shrink significantly during the economic crisis.
- The GFC is expected to plunge a further 22 million women into unemployment, which would lead to a female unemployment rate of 7.4 per cent, compared to 7 per cent male unemployment rate.
- Women are concentrated in insecure jobs in the informal sector with low income and few rights; they tend to have few skills and only basic education.
- The global vulnerable employment rate is expected to range between 50.5 and 54.7 per cent for women, compared to a range of 47.2 and 51.8 per cent for men
- 80 per cent of women workers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are considered to be in vulnerable employment
- 700,000 clothing and textile workers in India lost their jobs in 2008
- More than half of the 40,000 jobs lost in the Philippines come from export processing zones, where 80 per cent of workers are women

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### Impacts of the Global Financial Crisis on Women (continued)

- Sri Lanka and Cambodia have each lost 30,000 mostly female garment industry jobs to date – in both countries, the garment industry accounts for at least half of export earnings
- In Sri Lanka, food took up to a quarter of migrant women workers' wages in 2008, so women since then have reduced their meals from three to two times a day and/or reduced the quality of their diet in response to declining wages and increases in the costs of basic necessities.
- Growth collapses have a direct impact on development. In times of crises, parents are likely to take their children, often girls, out of school and send them to work. They might be forced to feed their children less nutritious food or be unable to take them to the doctor when they are ill.

Although the initial shock of the GFC hit men the hardest, there is evidence that women will experience longer-lasting effects of the crisis; women's unemployment is likely to continue increasing at a rapid pace, while the rate of increase of men's unemployment is slowing.

### What can be done and UNIFEM's Role

Advancing women's economic security and rights and reducing feminised poverty has always been a core UNIFEM priority. UNIFEM supports women to reshape conditions at both ends of the economic spectrum – from boosting women's participation in economic policy-making to supporting efforts to provide women and their communities with practical skills needed for securing sustainable livelihoods.

Since poverty traps women in multiple layers of discrimination and hinders their ability to claim their rights, ending feminised poverty has always been a core UNIFEM priority. Not only do women bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty, in some cases globalisation has widened the poverty gap, with women losing more than their share of jobs, benefits and labour rights. From tax systems to trade regimes, economic policies and institutions still mostly fail to take gender disparities into account. With too few seats at the tables where economic decisions are made, women themselves have little chance of rectifying the deepening of existing inequalities.

### UNIFEM's Approach

In more than 40 countries, UNIFEM supports national and local initiatives to include gender perspectives in budgeting processes, and to collect and use sex-disaggregated data in public policy formulation to ensure that macro-economic policy frameworks address women's priorities. UNIFEM also works to strengthen women's rights to land and inheritance, increase their access to credit and decent work, and empower women migrant workers as well as home-based workers.

UNIFEM is currently working towards

- Bringing gender into trade and economic policies:
  - The path out of poverty for most women requires economic frameworks that address their exclusion from the economic mainstream. UNIFEM supports efforts to make budgets; national poverty reduction strategies, data systems and trade policies close gender gaps and protect human rights.
- Expanding access to markets, goods and services:
  - With many poor women either locked out of economic opportunities or into a growing number of low-wage informal jobs, UNIFEM assists women in securing the tools that offer a way out, including job training, information on labour laws and rights, credit, and access to land and water. With a focus on fostering opportunities across economic sectors, UNIFEM also helps build the capacity of economic institutions and networks to provide women with these forms of support.

### Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

A budget is the most comprehensive statement of a government's social and economic plans and priorities. In tracking where the money comes from and where it goes, budgets determine how public funds are raised, how they are used and who benefits from them. Therefore, implementing commitments towards gender equality requires intentional measures to incorporate a gender perspective in planning and budgeting frameworks and concrete investment in addressing gender gaps.

**Gender-responsive budgeting** is not about creating separate budgets for women, or solely increasing spending on women's programmes. Rather, gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It should be based on in-depth analysis that identifies effective interventions for implementing policies and laws that advance women's rights. It provides

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### Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) (continued)

tools to assess the different needs and contributions of men and women, and boys and girls within the existing revenues, expenditures and allocations and calls for adjusting budget policies to benefit all groups.

Gender-responsive budget analysis, along with legislation and other practical policy measures, can address gender bias and discrimination. It is a step not only towards accountability to women's rights, but also towards greater public transparency and can shift economic policies leading to gains across societies.

Since 1997, UNIFEM has provided support to gender-responsive budgeting initiatives. At the forefront of global advocacy for application of GRB, UNIFEM has built partnerships with UN agencies, the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Development Research Institute, and the Economic Commission, to further efforts at the country level, and demonstrate GRB's relevance to the Millennium Development Goals, aid effectiveness, public sector reform and financing for development. UNIFEM also facilitated knowledge-building and maintains the only website exclusively devoted to GRB.

UNIFEM has contributed to building interest, capacity and commitment to incorporate GRB in budgetary processes by supporting initiatives in over 40 countries. UNIFEM's global program Gender Strengthening Economic Governance: Applied Gender Analysis to Government Budgets, launched in 2001, provided technical and financial support to gender budgets initiatives in Latin America, Africa, and Asia-Pacific.

### Success Stories

#### Philippines

##### Success Indicators:

- Participation of a large number of individuals, institutions, NGOs, women's machinery and Government agencies in the process of project implementation and engagement in gender responsive budget initiatives in the Philippines
- Expanded partnerships brokered by UNIFEM and NGOs resulting in increase in civil society/government partnership
- Increased understanding of the results of the Philippines Gender and Development (GAD) Budget

Over the period between 2004 and 2005, UNIFEM supported Women's Action Network for Development (WAND), a well-known women's coalition, to implement local level GRB projects in two local government units (LGUs, the term used to local government in Philippines). GRB work has a longer history in Philippines than in most other countries in that in 1995 a law was passed stating

### Success Stories (continued)

that 5 per cent of the budget of all nation-level agencies must be allocated for gender and development. This GAD budget policy was later extended to other parts of government, including LGUs..

WAND hoped that the GRB project would assist with increasing civil society participation in budget-making, and increase civil society's ability to analyse budgets and lobby around budget preparation, implementation and monitoring. It hoped, further, that it could assist the LGUs to develop indicators for measuring gender performance in programmes and budgets of different sectors. The partners took advantage of government's shift from input-based budgeting to results-oriented performance budgeting as the new type of budgeting makes it easier to measure performance and to ask for gender-related indicators.

The concrete outputs of the project include gender profiles of the health and agriculture sectors in the two sites and sectoral GAD plans for incorporation in the existing multi-year plans of the local government. In addition, the 2006 budgets of the two LGUs were more gender-responsive and results-based than they had been previously. For example, in Sorsogon City the health budget increased from 25 million pesos in 2005 to 37 million pesos in 2006. This increase allowed for a much bigger allocation for reproductive health, family planning and prevention and control programs in respect of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. Less concrete outputs included increased gender awareness and GRB-related skills among local actors, and increased commitment by local leaders to GAD, and enhanced service delivery. The LGUs' operations were also more transparent both because local people knew more about how government worked and what questions to ask, and because the LGUs were reporting more and better than before.

### Useful Links

- [www.mdgmonitor.org](http://www.mdgmonitor.org)
- [www.endpoverty2015.org](http://www.endpoverty2015.org)
- [www.endingextremepoverty.org](http://www.endingextremepoverty.org)
- [www.makepovertyhistory.com.au](http://www.makepovertyhistory.com.au)
- [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)
- [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- [www.unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/](http://www.unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/)

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- GRB Work in Philippines, 2006, UNIFEM
- Millennium Development Goals Report, 2009, United Nations
- Poverty Reduction, no date, United Nations Development Programme
- Women, Poverty & Economics, no date, UNIFEM
- Women, Poverty & Economics, no date, UNIFEM Australia