

Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction and Human Development

A concerted international drive against poverty gained momentum at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. It was propelled by strong advocacy for debt relief by civil society organizations. One outcome was the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, which provided for the use of resources freed up by debt relief to target key social sectors in line with strategies set out in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. The global commitment to poverty eradication would reach its apex at the Millennium Summit held in September 2000 in New York, with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. The 1990s also saw the international community strive to address threats to human life and progress, particularly HIV/AIDS, and to develop the capacity to access knowledge and other resources through new information and communication technologies.

The question remains: just how effective are these efforts in addressing the structural causes of poverty and inequality of access to services and resources? Indeed, even if the international community succeeds in halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015, as set forth in the first Millennium Development Goal, there will still be 900 million people living in extreme poverty in the developing world. And while the number of undernourished people fell by 40 million during the 1990s, a staggering 826 million people remain undernourished in the developing world today.

In spite of some achievements in addressing poverty, disparities have been on the increase in many countries, where the income gap has widened among regions, between men and women, and among ethnic groups. Implementation of measures for debt relief is

Millennium Development Goals

- 1** *Halving extreme poverty and hunger*
- 2** *Achieving universal primary education*
- 3** *Promoting gender equality*
- 4** *Reducing child mortality*
- 5** *Improving maternal health*
- 6** *Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis*
- 7** *Ensuring environmental sustainability*
- 8** *Developing a global partnership for development.*

proving painfully slow, particularly when set against the urgency of the debt crisis and its impact on the poorest countries and peoples.

Thus, it is valid to ask how global and national macro-policy frameworks relate to the reality of people's lives, particularly people living in poverty. Furthermore, is there an understanding of the gender differences that prevail, especially given that development indicators show an undeniable link between poverty and gender inequality? Are special measures taken to bridge gaps resulting from long-standing disadvantages? Or, is it assumed that policies and programme interventions addressing poverty, HIV/AIDS and access to new technologies would equally benefit women, men, girls and boys?

A. GENDER AND THE GOALS

The Millennium Development Goals are a set of quantified and time-bound commitments to address the most critical of human development challenges. By setting such goals, the world's governments have pledged to be held accountable in the year 2015. The goals, however, should not be taken as a comprehensive strategy for poverty reduction and human development, but rather as selected indicators of human progress.⁴¹ To monitor progress towards the eight Goals, clear targets and indicators have been set – 18 targets and more than 40 indicators.

However, gender is not sufficiently mainstreamed in the targets and indicators. Specific gender issues are spelled out under the following: Goal 2 on education (but not in the targets); Goal 3 on promoting gender equality (which is to be measured by the ratio of females and males in education and literacy, and proportion of women in wage employment and in parliament); Goal 5 on improving maternal health; and target 18 under Goal 6 on HIV/AIDS. Gender issues and disaggregation are absent from other goals, targets and indicators, including those relating to poverty, health and the environment. The point is not to add an unwieldy number of goals and targets but to ensure that both the target and indicator statements are gender sensitive. That is, they should make clear reference to the different status and

conditions of women and men in the areas under consideration.

Unless things are stated, they are generally not monitored. A sampling of the country reports that had been submitted by end-2002 showed that apart from Goals 3 and 5, the information provided on obstacles and achievements do not reflect the disparities between women and men. Thus, any policy and resource allocation decisions based on an analysis of progress towards the Goals will overlook the realities in the lives of a significant number of people.

As Jan Vandemoortele has pointed out, "a good assessment of progress towards the MDGs must go beyond averages and aggregates. The failure to disaggregate for gender, for instance, easily leads to the fallacy of 'misplaced concreteness' [Daly and Cobb, 1994]. Average household income is very much an abstraction for women who have little or no control over how it is spent; it may exist in the mind of economists but it does not necessarily correspond with the reality faced by millions of poor women. Cost recovery in a water project in western Kenya, for example, was low despite a seemingly high average household income. The cause was traced to the fact that women were responsible for this expense but had little or no control over household income."⁴²

To take the education goal as one example, further gender disaggregation and analysis would reveal that while the gender gap in education had narrowed in the 1990s, there was not enough progress in girls' primary school enrolment to meet the target of equality between boys and girls by 2005 – at present rates the gap would exist until 2025. Yet girls' education is key to achieving the Goals: educated girls marry later and their children are better nourished, healthier, and more likely to attend school, helping to break the cycle of poverty.⁴³

At the same time, good gender analysis would also reveal that in several countries, boys are not faring as well as girls in the education system. A report produced by UNESCO – as part of its contribution to the

⁴¹ For more on the pros and cons of the Millennium Development Goals, see the discussion note by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, chief author of the global Human Development Report, which will focus on the Goals in 2003.

⁴² *Are the MDGs feasible in Targeting development?: Critical perspectives on the Millennium Development Goals and International Development Targets*, edited by Richard Black and Howard White, Routledge (forthcoming). Jan Vandemoortele is Principal Adviser and Group Leader of the Social Development Group in UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy.

⁴³ Vandemoortele, op.cit.

UN Girls' Education Initiative launched at the Dakar Forum on Education for All in 2000 – notes that in the majority of developing countries, access for girls is lower than for boys. However, in some countries of Southern Africa, disparities are slightly in favour of girls. Gender imbalances in favour of girls are also observed in some Latin American and Caribbean countries and in some Asian countries.⁴⁴

Rosina Wiltshire⁴⁵ points out that the fact that girls are outperforming boys in the Caribbean is leading to resistance to the call for gender mainstreaming. "It is often not recognized that this calls for a deepening of gender mainstreaming rather than abandonment of the goals. We need to expand and make clear the core objectives of gender mainstreaming so that the process and ends are easily grasped by a wide range of actors including parents and teachers." UNDP field staff in countries as diverse as Mongolia, Lesotho, and Algeria reported similar trends.

Disaggregation is also important for Goal 4, given the disparities in mortality rates between female and male infants and children: infant mortality rates are higher among baby boys because baby girls have a biological advantage, while child mortality rates are higher among girls, who often have less access to health services. Disaggregation is also crucial for HIV/AIDS, revealing, among other things, that adolescent girls are a particularly high-risk group (see Section 3c below).

Interestingly, demand to engender the Goals is coming from countries themselves. UNIFEM speaks of "tremendous demand" from countries for support to engender the Goals, including Ecuador, Cambodia, and Albania.⁴⁶ Yet, the extent to which gender has yet to be mainstreamed in the Goals is an indication that at the macro-level, and in spite of all the work to date on gender mainstreaming, there is insufficient understanding of its purpose and significance. The general absence of gender in macro-policy and development frameworks such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the UN Development Assistance Framework, and the New

Partnership for Africa Development, as described below, is particularly disturbing.

B. GENDER-BLIND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Many development organizations are now advocating the need to incorporate equity, social inclusion, women's empowerment and respect for human rights in anti-poverty strategies. At the policy level, failure to analyse the likely impacts of public expenditure changes on women in poverty can actually worsen their situation. At the programme level, the power embedded in gender relations could modify desired outcomes in, for example, micro-credit initiatives where men may reduce their contribution to household expenditures, as women's access to resources increases. It should be noted that greater access to resources could also increase the burden on women's labour.⁴⁷

Yet, greater understanding is not translating into macro policies, which remain gender-blind. In their analysis of macroeconomic policies, Diane Elson and Nilufer Cagatay identify three biases that prevent the "formulation of gender-equitable, people-centred macroeconomic policies": (i) deflationary bias, which prevents governments from dealing effectively with recession; (ii) male breadwinner bias, which assumes that the "non-market sphere of social reproduction is articulated through the market economy of commodity production, through a wage which is paid a male breadwinner"; and (iii) commodification bias, the replacement of state-based entitlements by market entitlements "for those who can afford them."⁴⁸ Such biases underscore the need for social outcomes of macroeconomic policies to be explicitly stated and addressed upfront.

Development organizations have not yet moved in this direction. For example, experts in West and Central Africa found that gender perspectives were only integrated in some sections of the UN-supported Common Country Assessment (CCA), the UN Development Assistance Framework and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) supported by the

⁴⁴ *The challenge of achieving gender parity in basic education: a statistical review, 1990-1998*
http://www.unesco.org/education/just_published_en/index.shtml

⁴⁵ Rosina Wiltshire is the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in UNDP Barbados.

⁴⁶ Interview with Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM Executive Director.

⁴⁷ See Sally Baden's essay "Gender, Governance and the Feminisation of Poverty," in *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance*, op cit, p.28.

⁴⁸ "The Social Content of Macroeconomic Policies," Diane Elson and Nilufer Cagatay, *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 7. pp. 1347-1364, 2000.

World Bank, rather than being mainstreamed throughout.⁴⁹ They further found that:

- Gender was addressed as a “women’s issue,” and there was no analysis to identify the social mechanisms of poverty, of which gender relations were a significant part.
- Although indicators were disaggregated by gender, they were not used to analyse gender gaps or explain gender relations.
- Strategies focused particularly on education and women’s associations, but did not address the gender dimensions of poverty reduction and human development.

These findings reinforce the perception, mentioned in Chapter 2, that development professionals lack the skills to mainstream gender at the technical level. Indeed, the experts reviewing development frameworks for West and Central Africa noted that specific tools to address gender as a cross-cutting concern were lacking, and urged that existing gender mainstreaming tools be adapted to the CCA/UNDAF and PRSP exercises.

Another important macroeconomic framework that lacks gender sensitivity is the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD). According to Zo Randriamaro, this shortcoming is due to the absence of true participation in the process.⁵⁰ Her gender critique of NEPAD identifies several serious flaws, including the following:

- It ignores the prior impact of structural adjustment programmes on women and gender relations and their contribution to the impoverishment of African countries, which saw “a decline in access to credit and productive resources among small farmers and micro and small enterprises, as a result of reforms in fiscal policy, cuts in public spending in social services, and a shift in the cost

burden on communities, households and individuals, especially women...”

- It does not include the “interaction of entrenched social and gender inequalities, along with differences based on race, ethnicity, regional/rural/urban location, which perpetuates the marginalisation of women and other disadvantaged groups in the economy.”
- It sees equality as being achieved by “micro women-specific projects, as opposed to tackling the fundamental structural causes of women’s poverty and inequality, such as discriminating laws, cultural norms, male-biased development priorities, land reform, or public expenditures, and macroeconomic policies, just to name a few.”
- Women are “perceived as passive, in need of income-generating activities, training, education and credit, with no recognition of their agency and their actual ‘participation in the economic life’ of their countries through their unpaid and uncounted work in production and reproduction.”
- The crucial contribution of women to food security and agricultural production is ignored in the analysis of the issues and in the actions to address them.
- In African countries where gains in women’s participation in the labour force had been made so far, “these are characterised by jobs with low wages, low standards of health and safety, poor workers’ rights, low security and limited career opportunity.”

Similarly, in the Arab region a seminal report on women and globalisation published in 2001 identified key areas of concern that have yet to be incorporated in macro-policy frameworks.⁵¹ For example, in most Arab states, foreign direct investment was not going to sectors where female labour was likely to

⁴⁹ “Report on the Workshop on the Regional Assessment Study on the Gender Perspective in the CCA/UNDAF and PRSP,” summary report, UNICEF initiated the exercise, and the workshop was jointly organized by UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNIFEM, WFP, and ILO and other partners.11 – 12 June 2002, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire. CCA/UNDAF: Common Country Assessment and UN Development Assistance Framework.

⁵⁰ “The NEPAD, Gender and the Poverty Trap: The NEPAD and the challenges of financing for development in Africa from a gender perspective,” presented at the conference of Africa and the Development Challenges of the New Millennium 23 – 26 April Accra. Zo Randriamaro is manager of the Gender and Economic Reforms in Africa Programme at the Third World Network twnafrica@ghana.com.

⁵¹ *Globalisation and Gender: Economic Participation of Arab Women*, published by the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAW-TAR), in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA, and AGFUND (the Arab Gulf Fund for UN Development Organizations).

grow, and there were no far-reaching changes in the overall share of female labour in service sectors linked to global restructuring. Moreover, public sector retrenchment, as part of economic restructuring, had affected women more than men, and there was a trend towards the feminisation of unemployment.

Another missed opportunity in terms of bringing gender into the development mainstream comes in the National Human Development Report initiative. The majority of developing countries are now producing National Human Development Reports (NHDRs), and important work is being done to disaggregate data for gender and other inequities along the lines of the global Human Development Report. However, a recent study states that “an overall conclusion drawn from this preparatory review was one of missed opportunities: the necessary links between gender and human development are, for the most part, still under-analysed.”⁵²

Many organizations are attempting to address the need for tools to support development practitioners in their efforts to mainstream gender in macroeconomic policies. For example, in advance of the International Conference on Financing for Development (March 2002), UNDP and WEDO (the Women’s Environment and Development Organization) produced a *Financing for Development Gender Policy Briefing Kit*, which includes some of the cutting edge thinking on macroeconomics and gender budgeting, as well as tools and resources. However, although the Women’s Caucus and others managed to secure references to gender in the Conference outcome document, they pointed out that by failing to systematically address gender and other social concerns, the Financing for Development process is likely to fall short in achieving its stated purpose of poverty eradication.

There is no doubt that the macroeconomic framework is a strategic arena for engagement to transform the mainstream, and that it is still a relatively neglected area. If there is a silver lining to the macro-policy cloud, it is the fact that women now engage in macroeconomic discussions and challenge traditional economic prescriptions. Feminist economics is itself being mainstreamed.

UNDP is particularly well placed to engage in policy dialogue with governments on gender, and to bring the expertise of academia and voices of civil society organizations to the spaces where decisions are made: in ministries of finance and planning. The message that comes through loud and clear is that investment is needed in specific programme tools, in order to provide practitioners with the necessary technical skills and expertise. Such skills would enable them to contribute to the debate, bringing social issues – and in particular gender issues – to the forefront of macroeconomic analysis and policy development.

Tools targeted at specific programme areas, such as the *Financing for Development Gender Policy Briefing Kit*, and the guidance provided in the *Gender in National Human Development Reports* paper, are a welcome step in this direction.

C ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS ON WOMEN AND MEN

An estimated 40 million people around the world are believed to be infected with the HIV virus. Twenty-eight million people have already died of AIDS. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is also taking its toll on the Caribbean and on some Central American countries, where the disease is approaching such devastating magnitude. While some countries are achieving results in reversing the epidemic – Brazil, Uganda, Senegal, Thailand, and Cambodia – it is now fast spreading in Asia and Eastern Europe. India now has the second largest population living with HIV, after South Africa.

Needless to say, the epidemic weakens the general health status of entire populations and sharply increases child and adult mortality rates, further deepening poverty. The average life expectancy could fall below 30 years in the worst affected countries, and could substantially reduce national GDP. Millions of children affected by HIV/AIDS are dropping out of school to care for their parents or siblings, to produce food or supplement family income. The disease has become a major obstacle to achieving development goals, particularly in Africa and Asia. For example, in many of these countries, teachers are dying at a faster rate than replacements can be trained.

⁵² *Gender in National Human Development Reports*, UNDP April 2002.

Moreover, recent evidence suggests that the social epidemiology of the disease is changing in that new infections are disproportionately concentrated among illiterate and poor people. Women tend to be more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS for both biological and social reasons. The Declaration of Commitment, adopted by acclamation at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001, recognizes the need to address HIV/AIDS by strengthening respect for human rights, particularly the rights of women and children. Resolution 14 states that "gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental elements in the reduction of the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS."

The threat to development is so serious that organizations like UNDP have made this a priority area for their own programming, over and above the contribution made through UNAIDS (UNDP is one of eight co-sponsors). UNDP's policy on HIV/AIDS underscores that women are particularly vulnerable to infection, that they play a key role in prevention, and that they carry much of the burden as caretakers and breadwinners.

However, a review of efforts to address the pandemic and discussions with development practitioners indicate that while gender issues are frequently factored into problem analysis, programming with a gender perspective is much more difficult. Again, the dearth of skills to deal with gender issues at the technical programme level comes to the fore, especially since the need is acute in the face of such a rapidly spreading epidemic that threatens development as a whole. But programming with a gender perspective can be done; examples are given below from Africa and Asia. These gender-sensitive initiatives, however, stand out as exceptions rather than the rule.

In Botswana, for example, the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) has adopted an intensive multi-sectoral response to the epidemic. NACA is strengthening the capacity of local government by supporting the establishment of District Multi-sectoral AIDS Committees. Specialists from the United Nations Volunteers have been posted in each district to help out with planning and coordination of activities. UNDP is supporting these efforts and helping to

HIV/AIDS AND THE GOALS

One of the Millennium Development Goals aims to reduce HIV prevalence in persons aged 15-24 by 25 percent in the worst affected countries by 2005, and globally by 2010. Given the devastation of the epidemic, failure to reach this particular goal will greatly undermine, if not make impossible, the attainment of all the other millennium goals. For example, UNDP estimates that in Burkina Faso, Rwanda and Uganda, the proportion of people living in absolute poverty will increase from 45 percent today to 51 percent in 2015, instead of falling by half as per the internationally agreed target. This, as a result of HIV/AIDS, which had also brought school enrolment in the Central African Republic and Swaziland down by 20-36 percent, on account of AIDS orphans dropping out of school and extinguishing any hope of attaining universal primary education by 2015.

HIV/AIDS Results
United Nations Development Programme
www.undp.org/hiv

integrate HIV priorities into the Ninth National Development Plan and Botswana's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The messages aimed at prevention focus on the vulnerability of girls to infection, particularly as older men have sex with younger women, whereas boys get infected later in life. A key message is to "have sex in your own age group," which in theory will lead to an AIDS-free generation. Other initiatives addressing the specific impact of HIV/AIDS also tackle violence against women. More than 50 percent of women in Botswana are said to have been subjected to domestic violence. Rape cases are growing in number, with half of them involving women under 20 years old. In addition to raising awareness about violence against women and children, work is underway to amend the Penal Code against HIV-positive rapists.

In Ethiopia, the total number of people infected with HIV is estimated at 2.6 million, out of which, around 250,000 are children under the age of five. To date, there has been little research on the impact of the epidemic on poverty reduction. National development targets in the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper have been formulated without taking into account the added challenges resulting from sharp increases in AIDS-related adult mortality rates. Data on the socio-economic and cultural determinants specific to the epidemic in Ethiopia, especially on its gender dimensions, is also scarce. It is hard to accept that this highly critical condition has not prompted significant changes at the policy or at the implementation level, whether by governmental or non-governmental organizations.

A new project has been designed to mainstream both HIV/AIDS and gender into national development efforts and address the social, cultural and economic factors that increase people's susceptibility to HIV infection.⁵³ Among other things, the project aims to develop the capacities of the political leadership. Government institutions, such as the National and Regional AIDS Councils, civil society organizations (including religious organizations, NGOs, women's

and youth groups, and organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS), the media, and the private sector must understand and factor the multi-sectoral and gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS into development planning processes. In addition, data will be collected on the gender-related determinants and consequences of the epidemic and inequalities will be addressed as a major factor that puts women at higher risk of infection than men.

Another good illustration of sensitivity to the needs and conditions of different groups comes from the Regional HIV and Development Programme in Asia, which builds on the capacity of NGOs and groups of people living with AIDS to target different population sectors, such as migrant workers and trafficked persons, while also addressing issues of the law and human rights.⁵⁴ For example, one sub-programme focused on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into trade union agendas, focusing on the specific vulnerability of migrant workers in their destination areas. The project, which was implemented at five sites in three countries India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, covered migrants working in hosiery, construction and small scale industries; women migrants in free trade zones in Sri Lanka; and truckers and fishermen in Pakistan as well as their communities.

Several obstacles had to be addressed, including the fact that most migrant workers are in the unorganized sector. Local employers associations do not have an incentive to participate, as there is a surplus of skilled and unskilled workers. Other obstacles are the mobile nature of the migrant community populations and the fact that migrants themselves do not perceive HIV/AIDS as a high priority issue and are more concerned about immediate needs of food, shelter, employment, and loneliness. Thus, information and communication on HIV/AIDS have to be linked to tangible benefits for the community, such as access to care and support services, and issues of livelihood. It is also important to move at the pace of the community – even though certain situations may demand urgent action – in order to forge stronger partnerships.

⁵³ Data extracted from UNDP HIV/AIDS & Development project document and additional information supplied by Susanna Fernandez, gender specialist UNDP Ethiopia.

⁵⁴ The programme is supported by UNDP, the South Asian Research & Development Initiative, the American Centre for International Labour Solidarity, and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

Bringing in all segments of the migrant communities is essential to reach a critical mass for action.

Yet, this and other efforts remain concentrated in the areas with high-risk populations, rather than encompassing the ones where infections are rapidly growing. For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave a \$100 million grant to India in 2002, for use in HIV/AIDS infection prevention among mobile populations. However, as the New York Times reported:

The patients who are coming into the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine are members of populations that had been considered low-risk. At least a third of the new patients are women, most of them monogamous housewives. Seventy-two percent of new cases are from rural areas, once thought to be shielded from the epidemic. In 1996, the hospital had 10 cases of children with HIV; now it has 250. Reaching sex workers concentrated in a red-light district is one thing. Reaching, in a deeply conservative society, not into diffused villages, but the marital home, to teach infected men to start using condoms and their wives to demand that they do so, is quite another.⁵⁵

In dealing with HIV/AIDS, analysis that is sensitive to the needs and conditions of different population groups, including adolescent girls and wives who have no control over their partners' sexual behaviour, has long been available. The need to translate this analysis into policies, strategies and programmes that encompass these groups is now acute. There is a special need for capacity development to deal with socio-economic factors, including gender factors, at the technical programme level.

D. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES: NEW OPPORTUNITIES OR OLD INEQUALITIES?

The potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) to break barriers to knowledge, participation and economic opportunity is tremendous. There are vivid, inspiring examples of the ICT promise, as a tool for positive change for poor women and men in the South: a group of women artisans selling their textiles directly to consumers

in the North via the World Wide Web; a rural health clinic in Africa accessing life-saving information from a leading hospital in London; women's organizations using the Internet to share information and build a national coalition for change; two-way, real-time e-mail exchanges between government representatives and their constituents spurring greater accountability and transparency.

However, harnessing the potential of the ICT revolution for advancing human development remains a monumental challenge. The speed of global, technological and economic transformation has created a huge chasm – the so-called digital divide – between those with ICT capacity and access and those without. Most developing countries and all the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) find themselves on the wrong side of this divide: connectivity is poor, infrastructure is inadequate, access to ICTs is severely limited, the regulatory framework is unfavourable, and the high costs put ICTs out of everyone's reach but the elite's.

ICTs also include "older" communications technologies, such as radio and television, telephones and fax machines, and some in the development community argue that these older technologies can be more useful to poor women in developing countries than the newer ones. They are easier for them to access and cost less; operating them requires neither literacy nor special training, and local languages can be used. On the other side are those who see opportunities for technological leapfrogging, who question consigning poor women to inferior technologies, and who argue that the newer technologies can (and should) be adapted to the needs of poor women, rather than the other way around.

The UN ranks access to ICTs as the third most important issue facing women globally, after poverty and violence. Poor women in the South suffer from a "triple divide" — as citizens of low-income countries, as poor residents within their own societies, and as women. The mistaken belief that technology can somehow stand on its own, independent of the situation in which it is created, disseminated and used, is a surprisingly stubborn one. But gender is a major factor in determining

⁵⁵ 11 November 2002.

Box 7: INFORMATION EMPOWERS UKRAINE'S RURAL WOMEN

The “Sustaining Women Farmers” project, which established 12 fully equipped information centres in rural Ukraine, has provided training to nearly 2,000 in business management, agricultural marketing, entrepreneurial and land legislation, accounting, and basic ICT skills. The centre services address a wide range of women’s needs – from information on markets, to business skills, to a better understanding of their legal rights. Women have used the information to start new farms, and or improve existing businesses.

Among the most strategic results of this project is the increased influence participating women have gained within their communities, thanks to their new agricultural management and accounting skills, legal knowledge, and access to information on weather forecasts (which has helped increase agricultural yields). Their new information and skills have enabled them to fight corruption and unfair taxation, and, through the networks, access cheaper inputs – avoiding exorbitant prices of local distributors. Farmers are now lobbying for their interests in legislation – they have, for example, recently influenced and participated in changing the law on VAT as it regards applied to farmers; . They have also lobbied for clarification of the law on cooperative farms, which has helped to reduce the issuing of unfair and unlawful tax penalties.

Eight of the 10 Centres are now self-financing. Teams of volunteer experts – lawyers, economists and agricultural specialists – provide free consultations for to farmers.

Christine Musisi, UNDP Ukraine

who has access to, and who benefits from new information technologies. Closing one’s eyes to that fact can entrench inequality and even enlarge the gender gap, making ICT a “gender-negative” technology. For example, the high concentration of women in information-processing jobs – the modern day equivalent of the secretarial pool – rather than the analytical and creative jobs of today’s much discussed “knowledge worker,” simply reinforces the existing gender division of labour.

Without strategic, targeted actions, women will continue to be disproportionately represented among the “information poor,” and the great potential of ICTs to promote women’s equality and empowerment will go unrealised. Key issues include the following:

- **ICT is a uniquely male industry.** Women are underrepresented among ICT users and are nearly absent as substantive producers of information technology; they are left out of the key decision-making structures in the ICT world.⁵⁶
- **The persisting education gap.** The fact that fewer girls and women continue on to secondary and higher education – and are almost absent from science and technology training programmes – perpetuates the male bias inherent in the ICT sector. Moreover, the adult literacy rate in

developing countries is about 62 percent for women, and 78 percent for men. In LDCs, these figures drop to 39 percent and 59 percent, respectively.

- **Feminisation of poverty and rural life.** Because more women than men are poor, cost is a greater barrier to ICT access and use. Men have fewer constraints on their mobility than women, and are more likely to migrate to urban areas in search of work, leading to a greater concentration of women in rural areas with less access to ICTs.
- **Roles and responsibilities.** The frequently discussed double burden on women and girls leaves little time for learning new skills. Cultural norms and even personal safety concerns may make it difficult for women to attend training courses or visit telecentres.

Given the many factors that conspire to exclude the poor from the network age and the deeply imbedded male biases that pervade the world of ICT, a combination of gender analysis and extensive affirmative action is urgently needed. Education is key. It is particularly important in tertiary education to offer training programs in departments that have a higher percentage of female enrolment (i.e., information technology as opposed to engineering). Recruitment materials could be developed to appeal to prospective female

⁵⁶ From “Gender, Justice and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)” by Gillian M Marcelle, presented at the Expert Panel on “Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting women or equality between men and women” at the 44th Session of the CSW - New York 2000.

students and to depict women as leaders in the ICT workplace. They should be encouraged to form support groups for female students, faculty and professionals. In addition, programmes could offer financial incentives like scholarships or paid internships for young women.

It is equally important to increase opportunities for training and access to ICTs in non-formal settings if poor women are to benefit. Use of ICTs could be incorporated into health programmes, micro-enterprise initiatives targeted to women and community development activities (see Box 7).

Partnering with those who understand the social, cultural and economic circumstance of poor women is a useful approach, for instance offering training and access through women's groups or NGOs that have already developed outreach strategies and have the trust of local women, as in the example of Cameroon (see Box 9). UNDP's long-standing partnerships with civil society organizations the world over, as well as its alliance with UNIFEM, offer a good foundation for implementing such an approach. And targeting girls and young women in a community can open doors not just for them, but also for their mothers, with the youngsters acting as "techno-generational" intermediaries.

Training materials need to be geared to the skills and interests of women and girls. Materials should be available in local languages and adapted for those who cannot read. This may mean, as in the example from Jordan (see Box 8), going house-to-house to find out what women in a community want to learn, and then creating training programmes around that subject.

As the examples from Ukraine, Jordan, and Cameroon demonstrate, telecentres are an important tool for bringing poor women into the information age by giving them access to electronic mail, the World Wide Web, electronic networks, news groups, listserves, teleconferencing, CD-ROMs, and distance learning – as well as older (yet still useful) technologies like telephones, fax machines, and photocopiers. However, in designing telecentres, it is important to look at how both women and men will use the space and resources. Telecentres should be located where women can easily, safely and comfortably access them. A telecentre in Uganda failed when it was located in a building that also housed the jail and the police station, for instance. Facilities should allow for separate spaces or times for women and men in cultures where the sexes do not normally mingle.

But for the truly transformative potential of ICTs to be realized, women must participate in national and

Box 8i **BEDOUIN WOMEN CROSS DIGITAL DIVIDE IN JORDAN**

Jordan is better positioned than most developing countries to join the network age given its literacy rate, 79.4 percent for women and 93.4 percent for men, — the highest in the Arab world. Equally important is the priority given to ICTs: Jordan's King Abdallah II has called for computer instruction starting in second grade, and set out an ambitious plan for 1,000 telecentres throughout the country by 2006.

The first such centre opened in September 2000. The Sawafi Centre, funded by UNDP and managed by the Badia Research and Development Programme, a grassroots organization, has 15 computers, an Internet line, and a printer. It is the brainchild of the Royal Commission for Information Technology, a partnership between the Government of Jordan, BRDP, UNDP and UNESCO, headed by Jordan's Minister of Education.

Initially, women did not come to the Centre. Then, a locally recruited United Nations Volunteer started visiting women in their homes, finding out what kind of information they were interested in and explaining how the Internet could help them. In her visits to some 100 homes, she learned that health concerns were a priority and persuaded women to come to the Centre to find the answers on the web. Specific days were set aside as "women's days" to increase women's comfort level and Centre use.

Slowly, women – often with their daughters in tow – began to come in to browse Arabic websites on health, education, poetry and religion, to exchange e-mails with friends and relatives in other cities, to sign up for classes, to gather information to support their livelihoods, and to take part in distance learning. Gaining a formal education through distance learning is a particularly empowering and exciting new option for women in this village; the nearest university is 100 km. away, and both cost and cultural restrictions on women travelling alone keep women from attending. Within six months, the "women's days" at the Centres have seen "standing rooms only."

Adapted from an article in *Choices*, June 2001
by Sereen Juma, Information Officer, UNDP/Jordan

local policy setting and planning processes, to demonstrate the ways in which ICT can change their lives for the better – from getting information to help them in their own daily lives, to influencing government decisions. Strategic advocacy and advertising must be employed to convince poor women that ICT can help improve the quality of their lives. On the other hand, government leaders, educators, decision-makers and those in the ICT field must put women's needs on their agendas.

UNDP could assist governments to identify gaps in opportunities and outcomes for girls and women, and help them identify gender-specific, measurable goals and objectives for the ICT sector and its applications. UNDP could also support institutional structures promoting national ICT development in a way that benefits women, and help bring representatives of women's organizations and gender experts into the policy formulation process.

Unlike in the area of governance, where it is possible to identify strategic interventions and processes that are gradually being engendered, there are fewer examples when it comes to poverty reduction and human development. Two such examples are the efforts to: address the impact of HIV/AIDS and to promote access to new technologies. In all areas, the challenge is to mainstream gender at the policy level

and to give practitioners the tools they need to do so into specific programme areas.

An indication of the road still to be travelled is the fact that gender issues and disaggregation have been factored into some but not all of the Millennium Development Goals, missing in the areas of poverty, health and the environment. This gender blindness is then reflected in early country reports on progress towards the Goals. Further indications of gender blindness in macro-policy frameworks and analysis can be found in important processes such as the PRSPs, the CCA/UNDAF, NEPAD, and the NHDRs.

In the case of HIV/AIDS, while gender issues are frequently factored into problem analysis, programming with a gender perspective is proving much more difficult – at a time when the disease is beginning to impact more severely on women. For the transformative potential of ICTs to be realized, women must participate in the national and local policy setting and planning processes, and not just in small-scale projects, however successful.

Some tools are being produced to mainstream gender into specific policy and programme areas, such as financing for development and national human development reports – but clearly, much work remains to be done.

Box 9: BRIDGING INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS IN CAMEROON

UNDP's Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) in Cameroon is helping poor women at the grassroots level connect to the Internet by finding creative ways to bridge infrastructure gaps. Introducing cutting-edge technology in a country with a mostly rural population, five telephone lines for every 1,000 people, and unreliable, over-taxed local phone systems, was and continues to be a significant challenge. SDNP has provided comparatively cheap e-mail access (\$16/month) by establishing servers in each province. These local servers, which are hosted by NGOs and small businesses, exchange mail with the main SDNP server in the capital of Yaounde at night, when less pressure on the few available lines makes telephone service cheaper and more reliable.

The programme has established a network of 300 NGOs, women's groups, development practitioners, government officials, scientists, and academics. The network members serve as intermediaries and access points for women in poor rural communities, serving over 10,000 people through its Internet Help Desk. Since many members of the network can't afford the Internet service, they send e-mail to the SDNP staff, who then does the research, identify the appropriate web pages, download and bundle them, and send them out to the network as e-mail attachments. Clara Anyangwe, an agro-economist and network member says: "Nobody can underestimate the valuable role of the Internet in our lives today in Cameroon."

Here are some examples:

- Mama Dominica Lacombi, 57, is the leader of a group based in Mankon, a village near the provincial capital Bamenda, 370 kilometres from Yaounde. She is illiterate but that has not stopped her from being a successful entrepreneur. Her eight-person group borrowed about \$800 from the Society for Initiatives in Rural Development and Environmental Protection in Bamenda and received training on pig rearing. The group now owns a pig farm with 60 pigs. "Since we initiated our links with SIRDEP, our standard of living has improved, as well as our vision for the future," says the mother of seven grown children.*
- Economic crises in Cameroon have made many women dependent on selling a variety of produce to make ends meet. They join small njangis (informal cooperatives) that use the services of SDNP directly, or indirectly, for assistance in management, accounting and profit sharing. Juliette Tsangeu-Seppou captures it aptly, "By using the network, we also create our own local network by reinforcing capacities through women's organizations. This helps to bring out the creativity and competencies of women."*

Adapted from an article by Tamfu Hanson Ghandi, Choices magazine, June 2000

Gender, Environment and Energy: From recognition of realities to action?

A growing understanding of the intrinsic links between natural resource management and gender mainstreaming marked the UN Conferences of the 1990s. Agenda 21 noted in 1992 that despite women's crucial role in natural resource management, they often do not participate in decision-making and implementation. In 1995, the Copenhagen Declaration pointed out that: "Women carry a disproportionate share of the problems of coping with poverty, social disintegration, unemployment, environmental degradation and the effects of war." And the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 referred to women's multiple roles in the management and use of natural resources as providers of sustenance for their families and communities, and as environmental managers and decision-makers.

However, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 fell short of expectations.⁵⁷ In the Plan of Implementation, paragraphs on globalisation, energy, capacity building, and science and technology fail to mention the central role of women. Consideration of gender was often reserved to issues of education and health. The women's caucus was forced to concentrate on basic human rights and to focus much of their lobbying energy on holding the line, especially on reproductive health. There were some successes: one area of intensive lobbying that resulted in a significant gain was the right of women to inherit land, particularly critical to the livelihoods of African women and communities.

If the recognition of realities by the international community has been slow and uneven, the move to action has also been marked by slow progress and setbacks. To date, the field has been marked by many initiatives, but the environmental mainstream has yet

to be transformed by gender perspectives. The reasons include insufficient understanding of women's agency, as well as vulnerability to environmental disaster, institutional challenges, and the need to shift to more strategic areas of intervention that address underlying issues of power and control.

A. THE REALITIES: RESPONSIBILITY PLUS VULNERABILITY

As a result of continuous research and advocacy, it is now better accepted by policy makers and development practitioners that:

- Women the world over play a key role in the management of natural resources – water, energy, forests, biodiversity, and soil.
- Rural women possess considerable expertise with regard to the environments they live in.
- At the grassroots level, there are many success stories of women organizing to protect or clean up their local environment and to promote the sustainable use of natural resources.

In addition, it is increasingly understood that in both urban and rural areas, the gender division of labour typically assigns to women a distinct series of roles and responsibilities – collecting fuel; securing water for drinking and washing; cooking and ensuring overall household food security (including growing more than half the food in many developing countries) and caring for children, the elderly and the ill.

What is less well understood, however, are the ways in which these roles and responsibilities make rural women particularly vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation, including desertification, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity. Deforestation,

⁵⁷ See "Gender Analysis of the WSSD Plan of Implementation," by WEDO (the Women's Environment and Development Organization).

Box 10: QUESTIONING PROJECT IMPACT

First, project intentions can be subverted. Leaving environmental management to community level institutions – such as those promoted by the Aga Khan programme in northern Pakistan – does not guarantee women's access to project resources. And the aim of involving women at all stages of the project cycle often translates into demands on women to do voluntary work, without giving them a fair share of project benefits.

Second, compared to a gender analysis of the underlying problems, environmental projects promote a limited set of aims. Policy documents (e.g. World Bank, 1991) acknowledge that lack of property rights reduces women's capacity to conserve environmental resources but the new approach does not address this issue. Donors still favor giving women access to credit, to help them manage resources and build up assets. It is naive to assume that traditional male control over land and other assets will not extend to newly acquired natural resources. Trying to give women authority within isolated projects without taking into account their restricted property rights is almost bound to fail.

From "Do environmental projects promote gender equity?"
Susan Joeques, IDS, published by BRIDGE

for example, directly translates into more time spent by women collecting fuel – and less time to spend on more productive activities. The gender division of labour also means that women are hard hit by the low quality of services available to the 600 million urban poor living in the developing world – sub-standard housing, polluted water, lack of sanitation and solid waste systems, outdoor air pollution from industry and traffic, and indoor air pollution from low-quality cooking fuels.

The increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters (cyclones, hurricanes, floods, landslides) brought on by climate changes are also impacting women more negatively than men. For example, studies in Bangladesh show that women suffered most following the 1991 cyclone and flood. Among women aged 20-44, the death rate was 71 per 1,000, compared to 15 per 1,000 for men. Among the reasons given were: women were left at home by their husbands to care for children and protect property; their saris restricted their mobility; they were malnourished and thus physically weaker than men; and during the cyclone,

the lack of *purdah* in public shelters may have also deterred women from seeking refuge.⁵⁸

Women and girls disproportionately suffer the consequences of poor energy services. Two billion people are dependent on traditional fuels such as dung and wood, to meet their daily heating and cooking needs, creating indoor air pollution that is a significant health risk to women. Girls are often removed from school to help collect fuel to meet the family's energy needs. Furthermore, based on the existing division of labour, numerous productive activities that are primarily undertaken by women and which require fuels and heat are severely constrained by lack of modern energy services. This includes food processing for vending in markets, crop drying and roasting, fish/meat smoking for preservation and sales, and pottery making. The energy-gender linkage is thus critical in both the economic realm (women's productive work) and the household realm (women's reproductive work).

The pivotal role that women play in environmental management, as well as the gender-specific ways in

⁵⁸ From an article in "In Brief": "Bangladesh cyclone response fails to meet women's needs," drawn from BRIDGE Report no. 26: *Background Paper on Gender Issues in Bangladesh*, by S. Baden, A.M. Goetz, C. Green and M. Guhathakurta, commissioned by ODA, August 1994.

Box 11: INTEGRATION OVERLOAD?

Recent discussions on the UNDP thematic networks have focused on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into poverty eradication initiatives; mainstreaming gender into HIV/AIDS efforts; mainstreaming environment into poverty eradication programmes; mainstreaming gender into environment efforts; mainstreaming environmental issues in national human development reports; and mainstreaming ICT across the practice areas.

Clearly as an organization, UNDP has embraced mainstreaming as the best way to make policies and programmes more sustainable, more responsive to the needs of different populations and more reflective of the complexity of the development process.

But is this notion warranted? The experience from gender mainstreaming suggests not — a view supported by the fairly modest achievements of the development community's considerable efforts to mainstream environment into development in the ten years since Rio. The lion's share of progress in getting environmental issues onto the development agenda has come from environmental advocacy and activism efforts, donor interest, and environment-specific funding mechanisms like the GEF and the Montreal Protocol— not mainstreaming.

For instance, the Bank-led PRS process – arguably the most “mainstream” of mainstream development processes – has been criticized for failing to address environmental issues in a meaningful way. Yet the PRSP public information page on the Bank's website says that the “many links between environmental management and poverty alleviation provide the rationale for systematic mainstreaming of environment in PRSPs and their associated processes.”

In the absence of a coherent, well-grounded tool that integrates socio-economic and environmental imperatives, staff are left to deal with single issues as best they can, with the possibility that mainstreaming = disappearing.

which they are vulnerable to environmental hazards and degradation, have made them a key “entry point” for environmental programming. For example, “social forestry schemes have been redesigned, recognizing the diverse uses of tree products and the different species preferred by men and women: men typically want timber for construction and fencing, while women need fodder and wood fuel. And, in water and sanitation activities, women's participation on water committees or in maintaining facilities is becoming the rule rather than the exception.”⁵⁹

But has this focus on women as potential protectors of the environment as well as victims of its destruction furthered women's empowerment and equality? Generally, the answer is no. While there are many projects that have addressed women's immediate needs as users of environmental services and managers of natural resources, few address the underlying questions of ownership and control so critical to equality (see Box 10).

Indeed, some projects have taken an instrumentalist approach that overburdens women. Where gender has been mainstreamed in environment projects and policies, it has been primarily to make those initiatives

more effective in the short term and more sustainable in the long term – not to promote equality between men and women.

B. INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

Mainstreaming gender into environmental policies and programmes presents several institutional and even personal challenges for development agencies and practitioners. One important issue is that many in the environment field see environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change as the most pressing and urgent issues of our time. Bringing a gender perspective into their programming can be seen as a relatively unimportant concern in the face of the planet's imminent demise. An environmentalist at a meeting on mainstreaming gender into environment once compared the activity to “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.” Moreover, many environmentalists come from science and technology backgrounds and their training does not emphasize questions of power and exclusion. Advocates for women's equality may face an uphill battle in making such issues seem relevant to technical work in various environmental sectors.

⁵⁹ From IDS BRIDGE development and gender “In Brief” article, “Do environmental projects promote gender equity?” by Susan Joekes, IDS Fellow.

Another important reason is that the environment itself is a “cross-cutting” issue that its advocates are seeking to mainstream into development practice. For instance, one of the key tasks of UNDP’s Environmentally Sustainable Development Group is to mainstream environment across the other UNDP practice areas and integrate it into the organization’s policies, programmes and operational processes. To then try to mainstream gender into the environment creates a somewhat daunting “double mainstreaming” challenge, needing both conceptual and operational clarification (see Box 11).

Many staff in international organizations are committed to promoting equality between women and men and mainstreaming gender through their programmes. At UNDP, field experience has informed useful and innovative tools, strategies and guidelines, produced in partnership with NGOs, research and government bodies, to enable planners and project managers deal with the “how-to” of mainstreaming gender in environment. Some of these tools are described in Box 13 at the end of this section.

Yet, analysis of the UNDP Results-Oriented Annual Report for 2001 shows that most gender mainstreaming interventions are in the governance and poverty sectors, with environment seriously lagging behind. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of the change that has taken place over the last two years. The organization now approaches environment through the entry point of environmental governance, seeking to build cross-sectoral capacities, put in place effective institutions and policies, and help communities and governments govern natural resources and determine who decides over the management of such resources and the benefits that flow from them.⁶⁰

This new way of approaching environmental issues could address gender issues in a more strategic and potentially transformative way for women by addressing control, power and “who benefits” head-on. In addition, the organization’s approach to environmental issues has shifted to focus primarily on those most relevant to poverty eradication. Energy is another area where the emphasis on the environment-poverty nexus has been strengthened.

C. TACKLING THE POVERTY-ENVIRONMENT NEXUS

Under the auspices of the joint Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI), UNDP, the European Commission, the British development agency DfID, and other partners have come together to identify policies and strategies that have successfully promoted both poverty eradication and environmental regeneration.⁶¹ In previous years, discourse on the relationship between poverty and the environment have been dominated by the “vicious circle” and “downward spiral” metaphors. The presumption was that poverty and population growth invariably forced poor people to over-use and even exhaust their natural resource base, causing the environment to become more degraded and thus, further entrenching poverty. Poor women figured prominently in this picture, both as victims and perpetrators of environmental destruction. But although examples of such “vicious circle” relationships do exist, it is a highly simplistic model rooted in assumptions about the interaction between poor women and men and the environments in which they live.

There is growing understanding of the need to tackle the inter-related issues of poverty and environmental degradation together, but still very little understanding of how that might happen in practice. The PEI has identified several strategies for promoting “win-win” options for poor women and men and their environments. These options are particularly important for the empowerment of women in poverty, as they go beyond issues of resource availability to address the more strategic questions of ownership, access, control and management of natural resources. Such options also highlight the role of formal and informal institutions, and identify ways for poor women and men to earn income from their contributions to environmental conservation and regeneration.

For instance, in many cases, poor women have the right to manage key environmental resources, but they are not able to protect these rights. Large farmers may take excess irrigation water; companies may obtain concessions to tribal forests; and municipal funds meant for improvements in poor areas may be

⁶⁰ See the UNDP discussion note “UNDP’s Differentiated Edge in the Environment Theme,” 2000.

⁶¹ See “Attacking Poverty While Improving the Environment: Toward Win-Win Policy Options” as well as “Practical Recommendations” at <http://www.undp.org/seed/pei/newpublication/index.html>

Box 12: QUECHUA WOMEN HARVEST SAN AGUSTÍN'S MEDICINAL PLANTS

The highland village of San Agustín is set 3,800 meters above sea level in the southwest corner of Bolivia. The Quechua have discovered that many of the plants endemic to their harsh but beautiful region have curative properties, such as the aromatic rica rica, which settles an upset stomach, or chinchircoma, which helps ward off a cold. A group of women in San Agustín is capitalizing on their ethno botanical heritage by harvesting those plants and packaging them as medicinal tea, working out of a local women's centre with support from the GEF Small Grants Program.

San Agustín's desert-like environment and the dearth of industry and isolation – seven hours by a once-weekly bus from the nearest city, Uyuni – have conspired to keep nearly 95 percent of its citizens below the poverty line. The lack of income options has obliged the town's women to migrate to Chile for work as household servants for periods of one to six months. Since the men are unable to get Chilean work permits, they usually remain in San Agustín, where they take care of the farms and children. "We now work with a lot of enthusiasm," said Fabiana Huanca, as she clipped bits of foliage from a chinchircoma bush. "We don't want to go back to Chile anymore." Though only two men have been allowed to join their cooperative, membership is extended to spouses and children, bringing the number of direct beneficiaries to about 80.

The harvesting of wild plants for sale may seem contrary to the goal of preserving biodiversity, but according to the national coordinator of the Global Environment Facility Small Grant Program, Rubén Salas, that is exactly the criterion for which the project was approved. He said that the more benefits the community receives from the medicinal plants, the more likely they will be to protect the areas in which they grow. "We can't turn every wild area into a national park, which is why we have to find other ways of promoting conservation." Rubén Salas explained that a recently approved second phase of financing for the project includes an environmental study to ensure the sustainability of harvesting methods. Phase two will also finance the purchase of a second-hand teabag press – the women now have to send the sifted herbs to La Paz to be bagged – as well as the prerequisites for health ministry and ecological certification of the teas.

David Dudenhoefer for the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme

siphoned off for other projects. Possible steps include formally recognizing customary law and women's local use rights, legally recognizing local user groups, and developing and empowering community oversight and monitoring institutions.

Paying poor women for their contributions to macro-environmental improvements, such as watershed protection or nature reserves – which are public goods whose benefits to poor local people accrue only partially – is certainly a more empowering strategy than instrumental approaches that capture and redirect women's unpaid labour to solely environmental ends. The example of the women of San Agustín shows the extent to which improving poor

people's control over the environment provides an incentive to protect it (see Box 12).

In the area of energy, the lion's share of official development assistance has, to date, focused on improving energy supply. Very little is targeted to providing energy services for household use. Yet, it is energy services (heating, illumination and mechanisation) – not energy supply – that make the difference on the ground. A recent study concluded that providing energy services specifically designed to meet the needs of rural women for household and productive uses is a powerful entry point for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development for men and women alike.⁶² The study identified broad policy and

⁶² *Generating Opportunities: Case Studies on Energy and Women*, UNDP, 2001.

programme recommendations, including policy frameworks focused on rural energy needs, effective marketing strategies, short-term public policies to subsidize initial project costs and extend credit opportunities to women and rural communities, enhancing women's capacity to take part in all levels of planning and implementation, and ensuring stakeholder participation, especially women, in national energy policy-setting processes for the effective delivery of energy services.

Overall, for UNDP to ensure that its work in environment promotes women's equality, it needs to develop more systematic strategies for bringing the voices and views of women into the creation of national strategies for sustainable development; ensure that women are involved in participatory resource planning; strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks to protect and enlarge poor women's access to natural resources; and, in energy, shift the focus from energy supply to the provision of energy services. More critically, through its governance work, UNDP needs to address the strategic issues of land tenure, inheritance rights, resource allocation, and accountable, transparent local governance.

Box 13: GENDER IN ENVIRONMENT TOOLS FOR SPECIFIC SECTORS

ENERGY

The Energy and Gender Toolkit provides practical materials for programme officers to develop gender-sensitive projects with linkages to the energy-poverty nexus. These projects include energy projects and those related to rural development, health or poverty reduction, which are not energy specific but for which energy and gender are key inputs to development. It is intended primarily for UNDP programme officers who work in the development field but also for project managers in other UN agencies, bilateral organizations and NGOs. It complements existing guidelines and toolkits on energy or gender by focusing on issues that are relevant to energy-gender projects at the various stages in the project cycle (identifying issues, project design, implementation, monitoring/evaluation).

FOOD SECURITY

UNDP's Global Programme for Food Security and Agriculture recently completed an assessment that found that the gender perspective of UNDP-sponsored agricultural project documents was weak. Through a handbook specifically designed to enhance project design, workshops, and support services, the Programme hopes to build on the strengths of the projects assessed and counter the weak spots. Knowledge of recent reports, studies concerning women's role in agriculture and a solid analysis of the current contextual situation, including sex-disaggregated data, were used in order to develop a gender-sensitive assessment of women's potential participation.

WATER

UNDP's Water Programme has developed a practical toolkit to help UNDP staff incorporate gender perspectives in water resources management initiatives, A Practical Journey to Sustainability: A Resource Guide for Mainstreaming Gender in Integrated Water Resources Management. The goal of the initiative is to improve the sustainability of water projects and water use through the incorporation of gender equality perspectives throughout the planning cycle. The toolkit is made up of short, accessible pieces, including a project cycle guide with supporting documents in electronic format; tools and resources on gender and integrated water resources management; case studies from other agencies as well as on UNDP experiences; and briefing notes on specific issues, water themes, or sectors. It is available at www.undp.org/water/genderguide.html

NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The Nairobi-based Drylands Development Center (formerly UNSO, the Office to Combat Desertification) runs a programme to promote strategic approaches to gender-sensitive planning for the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). In one initiative, the Centre supported 15 workshops in Asia, Latin America, and Africa to promote women's role in decision-making processes of the CCD during the celebration of the World Day to Combat Desertification in 1999. The workshops brought together farmer associations, NGOs, and local and central authorities with groups involved in the national follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action. This led to more space for women's participation, and a better understanding of the need to integrate other sectors in sustainable dryland development. Based on country experiences, UNSO prepared a Guide to Promote Gender Mainstreaming in National Action Programmes to Combat Desertification.

Accounting for Women in Crisis Countries

In October 2002, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, recognizing the critical role of women in peace building, as well as conflict prevention and resolution. Resolution 1325 calls for women's full and equal participation in key institutions and decision-making bodies; it is evidence of a significant shift in the discourse on women in conflict situations. The static image of women as helpless victims of war is giving way to a more nuanced and accurate understanding of not only the challenges women face, but also the active role they can, and in fact, do play in crisis situations.

There are many examples of development organizations capitalizing on the opportunities created in post-conflict environments to promote truly transformative change. Some examples include: bringing women to the peace table during the Burundi peace process (see Box 14 overleaf); and supporting the National Women's Forum in negotiations around the Peace Accord in Guatemala, which resulted in women's right to land ownership, access to credit and participation in the political process.

But despite such heartening efforts and the growing recognition of the risks and opportunities unique to women in crisis situations, gender mainstreaming is the exception rather than the rule along the prevention-to-relief-to-rehabilitation continuum. Experts and practitioners working on gender equality and the empowerment of women in special

development situations in Africa, the Balkans, Latin America and Afghanistan believe that:⁶³

- Gender issues remain underestimated and marginalized in international peace operations, relief efforts, and integration programmes;
- Women are largely absent from decision making on issues of war and peace; and
- Existing transition-to-recovery programmes are generally either inadequate or fail to analyse and address the different vulnerabilities and recurring challenges faced by women and girls in post-conflict environments.

Failing to analyse the gender dimensions of a conflict situation and to take concrete action to address women's vulnerabilities and reinforce their strengths before, during and after crisis is not a theoretical problem; it is a concrete, tangible problem with grim consequences for women and girls. The use of sexual violence to terrorize whole ethnic groups in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Taliban's virtual imprisonment of women in their homes in Afghanistan are striking contemporary examples of how very real gender issues are in shaping the impact of conflict and crisis.

Moreover, HIV/AIDS intersects with conflict and gender in ways that multiply the adverse impacts on people's lives. Evidence suggests that conflicts increase the risk and impact of HIV/AIDS in several ways: dislocating communities, bringing soldiers and fighters into contact with civilians in situations where

⁶³ October 2002 workshop on "Gender Challenges in Crisis and Post-Conflict Countries," organized by UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and Evaluation Office in partnership with UNIFEM.

Box 14: BURUNDI WOMEN DEMAND INCLUSION

The inclusion of women in the Burundi peace process in Arusha, Tanzania is a compelling example of how women are gaining greater access to the peace table. Emilliene Minani is the chairperson of the Burundi Women Refugee Network. She and six of her colleagues were granted observer status, enabling them to witness the initial peace talks, then being held among Burundi's 19 political parties. When formal negotiations began, however, the women were barred from entering the negotiating room.

Determined to be heard, Minani and her peers adopted a less formal tactic: they intercepted political party leaders in the hallways of government buildings, urging them to integrate women's perspectives into the official peace plans.

"Burundian women have continuously demanded inclusion in this process," says Minani. "We have been fighting for our right to be included, irrespective of our ethnicity, political affiliations and geographic diversities. We want to make sure that the rights of all Burundian women are protected in all aspects of political, social and economic spheres."

Imelda Nzirorera, from the Ministry of Human Rights and a member of the women's observers group, stressed that women and girls suffer disproportionately during armed conflict and noted that an estimated 65 to 70 percent of Burundian refugees are women and children.

The women's vision was partially realized in 2000 when, under the chief negotiator Nelson Mandela, each party named two women delegates to attend the All Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference, organized by UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation of Tanzania. The conference yielded a set of recommendations aimed at strengthening protection for women and girls, including establishing mechanisms to punish rape and sexual violence as war crimes, legalizing a woman's right to inherit land and property, and guaranteeing girls access to education. A large number of the women's recommendations were then adopted in the peace accord.

Adapted from article by Miriam Zoll in *Choices Magazine*, December 2000

women and youths are highly vulnerable to sexual violence and sexual exploitation and making combatants, especially child soldiers, susceptible to violent and other high-risk behaviour.⁶⁴

Gender considerations are absent from early warning systems designed to anticipate, develop response scenarios for, and (ideally) prevent conflict, by incorporating gender-sensitive indicators into information collection and analysis. This helps identify previously overlooked signs of instability, ensure that discriminatory policies are not perpetuated in post-conflict situations, and ensure that responses at a political and humanitarian level address the vulnerabilities specific to women and men.⁶⁵

Examples of engendered early warning indicators that can augur impending conflict include: an increase in sexual violence against women of a certain ethnic group, which both terrorizes women and, especially in "honour-shame" cultures, demoralizes

and symbolically defeats men; imprisonment, disappearances, or killing of men, a tactic to pre-empt opponents from building a strong resistance force, as seen in the Balkans; an abrupt change in gender roles, as was seen in the Taliban's imposition of its rigid interpretation of Sharia law; and sex-specific refugee migrations, for instance, when women and children left the town of Priador in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the busloads in March and April 1992, six to eight weeks before the situation deteriorated.⁶⁶

In crisis mode, it is hard for emergency workers to see that gender issues are critical to survival (see box 15). The "tyranny of the urgent" overrides longer-term development concerns, but it is important to break free of it to integrate gender concerns.⁶⁷ Use of Capabilities and Vulnerabilities Analysis can help relief workers hone in on the gender dimensions of their work. In the Philippines, this led to the creation of separate spaces for women and children in evacuation centres, the provision of supplies to women for menstruation, and the

⁶⁴ See the final report of "Preventing and Coping with HIV/AIDS in Post-Conflict Societies: Gender-Based Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa," a symposium hosted by Tulane University Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes.

⁶⁵ "Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action," Susanne Schmiedl and Eugenia Piza-Lopez, June 2002.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Bridget Walker of Oxfam, BRIDGE.

Box 15: THE VIEW FROM UNHCR

In the humanitarian arena, when emergency workers are in crisis mode, they can't seem to see that gender equality issues are linked to survival and sustainability. It's still a hard issue to crack. We have learned some lessons from Guinea and Sierra Leone. A year-and-a-half ago, large numbers of refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone were in Guinea. As the crisis heightened, UNHCR and others had to get involved in moving refugees from the border areas. We offered a gender specialist to work with the emergency teams, someone who could do the humanitarian nuts-and-bolts, day-to-day work, but at the same time are able to rise above the immediate and give more global and strategic advice.

The changes suggested by the gender expert ranged from the simple to the complex. At the very basic level, the lack of designated toilets for male and female refugees – and having no locks on the toilets – was contributing to opportunistic rape. She pointed out that several women had been raped and raised the whole issue of how they were going to be helped in a situation so influx (many were desperate to return to Sierra Leone). The gender expert designed a process of referral to make sure that if care started in Guinea it wouldn't end in Guinea but follow women to Sierra Leone.

Also, she pointed out that you can't just set up a referral centre with a sign out front saying "victims of violence" – no one will come. To lessen the stigma for these women, the expert suggested offering services in places where women would naturally go, such as a health centre. The specialist also helped to prepare health and community workers to understand the gender differentiated impacts of crisis – what it does to people's livelihoods, the higher forced conscription of boys, the targeting of girls for sexual slavery. "If you're going to prevent you have to understand."

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timetabling of activities to fit the routines of both women and men. Employing gender specialists or community liaison staff to work in tandem with sectoral specialists can counterbalance the tendency of relief workers to focus on technical requirements.⁶⁸

It is particularly critical that relief not undermine women's traditional sources of power, such as the management of food and the home. Food distribution schemes that target men as heads-of-household do just that. Not taking into account women's true care-taking responsibilities – for instance, a woman may have among her dependents orphaned children she is caring for in addition to her own – could put women under pressure to exchange sex for food. To avoid this problem, relief workers administering food distribution could widen their definition of a "family" to include a woman, her children, and the dependents that regularly eat with her.

The physical layout of camps is also critical: water pumps and sanitation facilities need to be located and designed in such a way that they promote

women's safety and protect them from opportunistic rape, for instance.

A recent study by USAID confirms many of the points made above, and also notes that, despite many profound hardships, conflict and post-conflict recovery situations provided women unique opportunities for increasing their public role. "In the absence of men, women took on leadership roles in both civic and political institutions... [and had] an exceptionally active and visible role in peace processes and reconciliation efforts."⁶⁹ Women's organizations blossomed in post-conflict situations due to the collapse of traditional order, their increased participation in public life, their unwillingness to return to the status quo and their eagerness to take on opportunities created by transitional governments, and donor support. The emergence of these organizations "enhanced women's empowerment as individuals and as groups... [and] provided assistance to women across sectors to help them rebuild their lives, their families and their communities."⁷⁰ Donor support

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Intrastate Conflict and Gender," Information Bulletin No. 9, December 2000, Office of Women in Development, USAID.

⁷⁰ Ibid

was important, not just in funding and capacity development, but also in opening political space and giving credibility and legitimacy to the women's groups.

UNDP has a critical role to play at the country level in promoting a multi-faceted approach to addressing the issues of gender in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. Attention must be given to early-warning protection and assistance, women's role in peace processes, and women's full participation in post-crisis reconstruction. Support to women's organizations is a particularly strategic area of intervention (see Box 16). UNDP's strong commitment to contribute to the implementation of Resolution 1325 particularly focuses on the integration of gender concerns in its post-conflict interventions and transition to recovery programmes.

Box 16: NEW WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS IN RWANDA

In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, women formed the majority of the population and found themselves being called upon to play a vital role in the reconstruction process. Groups of women organized themselves into associations to improve their living conditions, and a large number of women's associations were formed. UN and bilateral development agencies worked hand in hand with the women's organizations to target development assistance to women and to influence national policies and programmes. One of the major successes of this collaboration was the advancement of property rights for women. Previously, Rwandan women could not inherit either land or property under customary laws. As a result, thousands of war widows found themselves with no legal claim to their husbands' or parents' land and houses.

Rwandan women's associations also worked towards the promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance. A Rwandan woman from Profemme, Xaverine, says: "Our association is part of a group of women's associations called 'Profemme' and they carry out many activities, for example, the "Action for Peace" campaign. We feel that without peace, we will fail in our endeavours. We are also dealing with the issues of women and empowerment. Some of us came from abroad, from the diaspora, while others came from Rwanda. There were Hutu and Tutsi women. We came together and we were often at loggerheads with each other. We were lucky to succeed in doing something concrete. We built "peace villages," the first of which was called 'Nelson Mandela'. In these villages, we placed the orphans and people who lived in that region. There were all sorts of ethnic groups there, including survivors of the genocide and others who had fled from other regions. We managed to achieve good results because there was a lot of tolerance – people liked coexisting peacefully." The Rwandan women were awarded the UNESCO prize for tolerance because of their positive action.

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Conclusions

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most consistent finding from this review of experiences is that when capacity, resources and commitment come together, there is progress towards equality for women and in mainstreaming an understanding of social factors in development programmes. Emerging repeatedly in all areas surveyed is the issue of whether the staff of national and international development bodies have the capacity to mainstream gender, or to design and manage gender-sensitive programmes in different sectors. Uneven commitment – especially by senior management – to the goal of equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming was also an issue. By 2002, for example, gender had not been well mainstreamed in the most important exercise in goal setting and monitoring – the Millennium Development Goals. Practitioners that do have the commitment do not have access to decision-making fora where they could help translate ideas into action, backed by the requisite resources.

The picture is not uniformly bleak, however. Agencies are pooling their resources to tackle gender at the country level, and in several instances, collaboration between UNDP and UNIFEM was strong, with UNIFEM providing technical expertise to UNDP programmes. The number of UNDP field staff who are strongly committed to the issue is heartening. Dozens of staff members from different regions and in different positions provided information and ideas during the preparation of this publication. The electronic discussion that took place on the gender network was thought provoking and enlightening. These staff members, however, do not yet constitute a critical mass that will transform the development agenda at UNDP. Among other issues that emerged are:

- Mainstreaming is difficult, not just for gender, but also in other “cross-cutting” areas such as the environment and HIV/AIDS. There is a need to discover less compartmentalized ways of working, supported by an integrated socio-economic tool that can help practitioners understand the inter-relationships between economic, social and environmental concerns. With such tools, it would be easier to weave gender mainstreaming into the programmes they are managing.
- More specific mechanisms and tools are needed, together with the capacity to use them, so as to incorporate gender into technical policy and programme areas covering strategic frameworks like the CCA/UNDAF and the PRSPs, threats to development such as HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation, and emerging opportunities such as ICTs. New tools in the water sector and in financing for development are a good step forward.
- There is a pressing need to use the term “gender” only within the context of socially constructed roles and responsibilities to avoid conceptual confusion. Many practitioners are using gender to mean women’s empowerment or human rights of women – thus excluding men’s roles.
- It must be made clear to development practitioners and repeated again and again that women-specific programmes are needed to address past inequality – but that these programmes must be strategic and not marginal.

- The fact that gender involves power relations and cultural beliefs should not be sidestepped but rather acknowledged and addressed. Men should be brought in to the debate to ensure that gender is not simply another term for “women” and that men’s perspectives and issues are factored in, as well.
- Governance at the country level is the area where programmes targeting inequality between women and men are most strategic. Efforts in other areas of intervention need to be more strategic. In particular, programmes to reduce poverty by supporting alternative macroeconomic frameworks and other policy work must factor in gender, drawing on the new research and tools now available.
- Programmes in the areas of poverty and the environment also need to address the tough issues, such as land ownership and control of resources. In the environment, the aim of gender mainstreaming in environment projects, where this has happened, has been primarily to make those initiatives more effective in the short term and more sustainable in the long term – not to promote equality between men and women.
- Investment also needs to be made in tools to measure success in mainstreaming, particularly in areas involving capacity development, where measurement is difficult.
- The way in which national and local efforts build upon and reinforce each other – as in the examples given from the budget exercises in Uganda and Nepal – is worth noting and planning for in future development interventions.
- It is unrealistic to expect a handful of professionals with a tiny budget and no real line authority – often compelled to rely upon temporary staff as well as the goodwill and personal interests of overstretched colleagues – to make a real impact on gender mainstreaming in a large, geographically dispersed organization. UNDP needs to make a greater investment in its in-house gender expertise.
- UNDP staff must be supported to move beyond “politically correct” phrases in project documents to actions that require resources, creativity and initiative. Some examples include earmarking resources to hire gender experts; obtaining sex-disaggregated data; finding and adapting gender-mainstreaming tools; building coalitions and garnering political commitment and support. To motivate change, not just in attitudes but also in actual behaviour, would require gender-related targets and objectives in the workplans of individuals and units, and holding staff and managers accountable for results through incentives, rewards and sanctions in the performance appraisal system.
- Much investment has been made in promoting equality and mainstreaming gender at UNDP. Yet overall, the returns are not always commensurate to the investment. There is an urgent need to take stock, reaffirm commitments and resource efforts with top managers leading the way, and holding staff accountable for results.

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