

# International Conference: Gender Mainstreaming and the MDGs 28-30 March 2005, Islamabad, Pakistan

## Abstract Format for Speakers:

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**Workshop:** Please indicate which Workshop you wish to participate in as a speaker:

- Workshop A: *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (MDG 3)*
- Workshop B: *Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Peace (Millennium Declaration and MDG 8)*
- Workshop C: *Gender Equality and Poverty Alleviation for Rural Women (MDGs 1, 7 & 8)*
- Workshop D: *Gender Equality and Health (MDGs 4, 5 & 6)*
- Workshop E: *Gender Equality and Education (MDGs 2, 3 & 8)*

**Session:** Please indicate which Session, of the Workshop you indicated above, you wish to participate in as a speaker:

- Session 1
- Session 2
- Session 3

Session title/theme: Gender Equality and Poverty Alleviation; Integrated Rural and Environmental Sustainability

### Outline of the Abstract:

#### *1. Introduction and Definition of the Session theme:*

The United Nations defines the main purpose of the Organization to prevent, maintain and build peace as well as promote sustainable economic, social and cultural development. The Organization believes that by achieving sustainable development, peace and security will be secured for all peoples and their posterity. To achieve sustainable development, that is long-term environmental, economic, political and social security and prosperity for all, the issue of chronic poverty must be addressed in rural areas. Approximately,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world's poor live in rural areas with women representing the vast majority. Sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be achieved unless a holistic and integrated approach to rural poverty alleviation is taken through comprehensive local sustainable development efforts coupled with long-term economic aid, environmental security and partnership development. These poor rural populations, especially rural women, have little to no access to resources, training and support networks, and because most rural economic activity is agriculturally driven, environmental shifts and non-integrated or holistic approaches can be detrimental.

The struggle to eliminate women's poverty begins with an analysis of the gender impact of economic policies and programmes. Based on these analyses, policies should be reevaluated in order to maximize their ability to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets and support, wealth, opportunities, income and services. Only through such a holistic and gender sensitive approach will the MDGs and sustainable development be achieved.

The development and international community has long recognized the need for holistic approaches to the development of rural areas, through efforts in the second half of the twentieth century largely subscribed to a "one-size-fits-all" approach, which at the core was a top-down administrative system that alienated local authorities and civil society while minimizing the essential needs for the poor. Recently, it has become clear that through a more inclusive, regionally based and targeted rural development approach, the rural poor and civil society could be empowered and encouraged to initiate development with the support of integrated local, regional and national programs. The importance of local ownership and responsibility was recognized, as well as the effectiveness of a more people-centered, local and multi-stakeholder approach.

Only through cooperative and integrated approaches that engage a broad and diverse group of sectors and stakeholders, including civil society, under-represented groups and local authorities while taking a gender-sensitive approach, will sustainable economic and social development be achieved.

## *II. Linkage of the Session Theme with the Workshop title:*

As stated above,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world's poor live in rural populations with a large majority being women. Women who live in poverty and rural areas have little or no access to basic services and resources, including education, health services, resource management and support and employment. This degrading way of life fosters many inequalities and only contributes to the cycle of poverty, generation after generation. Only through taking integrated and holistic approaches to sustainable development that engage all stakeholders and integrate local, regional and national programs will poverty be eradicated and gender equality secured.

## *III. Success or Failure Story:*

Four case-studies will be presented: Tunisia, Senegal, Mali and Cambodia

1. Tunisia: Tunisia is a developing country with significant rural populations and many citizens living below the poverty line. Previous governmental efforts were poorly integrated, supported, maintained and failed under weak guidance, institutional support and funding. Little economic and social improvements were seen. A different approach was then taken in order to address four areas of concern: quality of life and environmental management/protection; access to social services in rural areas by all and in particular women; no significant environmental protection; no sustained and harmonious local development and poor institutional efficiency. With large national funding and support, three programs were targeted: Program for Regional Development (PRD: short-term), Program of Integrated Rural Development (PIRD: mid-term); Physical Sector/Space Planning at National and Regional Level (SNAT-SRAT: long-term).

Significant improvements were seen by taking a more holistic and integrated approach.

2. Senegal: Senegal also suffered from extreme poverty and uneven development between rural and urban areas. Corruption and poor political control in rural areas made for a difficult instigation of programs and social services to combat poverty and women were especially marginalized. With the support of UN advisory missions, Senegal initiated national and regional sector/space development programs that addressed poverty issues across all sectors and throughout the country. The program also called upon participatory governance from rural and local authorities and ensured a coherent synergetic framework of coordination and references for all actors and sectors. A strong monitoring and evaluation process was also established. Significant improvements were also seen.
3. Mali: Mali was prone to civil unrest and little government control, especially in rural areas. Poverty was rampant and rural populations were struggling to survive. Once the Malian government was consolidated and secured, a decentralized sustainable development approach was taken, monitored by the national government, so as to engage rural and local authorities and communities and take sector/sight/area specific approaches to poverty alleviation. Training was also provided for important stakeholders and administrators and a long-term economic social and sustainable human development program, (ESSHD Mali 2021) was promoted so as to engage local and rural populations, especially marginalized groups and women, in sustainable efforts, environmental maintenance and protection and education/training (especially in agricultural methods).
4. Cambodia: Cambodia suffered from a poorly coordinated national program and rural conflict. The UNDP initiated program “CARRERE” failed because of its no long-term efforts and no sustainable approaches. After a diagnosis/evaluation process, a more integrated approach was taken that included a peace-building program and a system to involve rural populations and authorities. A decentralized approach was also taken so as to take area and sight specific approaches.

#### Lessons Learned in Reviewing the Case-Studies:

1. Necessity of a serious diagnosis of the situation. Review weaknesses/strengths and threats/opportunities;
2. Consensus on a comprehensive prospective vision at all levels, for all, by all, everywhere, especially rural areas and engaging key and underrepresented players;
3. Policy/Strategy for integrated ESSHD/strategic planning and client-oriented and conflict-sensitive participatory approach;
4. Importance of human capacity development/lifelong learning process for HRD, cultural and behavior Changes for all Actors & at all levels;

5. Importance of Involvement & Participation of all & Effective Decentralization & Devolution at all levels
6. Transparency, accountability & equity
7. Importance of strong structures at all levels with clear mandates, missions, roles and responsibilities :
  - a. Design and policy formulation, leadership
  - b. Dialogue and consensus
  - c. Coordination
  - d. Implementation
8. Evaluation, monitoring, follow-up and control

*IV. Recommendations in reference to achieving the Session Theme's goal and corresponding MDGs:*

Therefore, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

1. To start with a comprehensive prospective vision at all levels, for all, by all, everywhere, especially in rural areas and engaging key and underrepresented players especially women. The vision has to be based on a serious diagnosis of the situation and needs resource (natural, human and financial) assessment and management;
2. To focus on human capacity development/lifelong learning process for HRD, cultural and behavior changes, transparency, accountability and equity for all actors and at all levels;
3. To promote participatory processes and Effective Decentralized and Devolution at all levels within good governance in order to involve all stakeholders including women and NGOs;
4. To promote exchange of innovate experiences/best practices among NGOs and Governments;
5. On-the-job learning/training workshops especially in the following areas:
  - a. Comprehensive and gender sensitive strategies for Poverty Alleviation, Sustained Economic Growth, Sustainable Development and Peace-Building;
  - b. Leadership, negotiation and communication skills;
  - c. Conflict resolution/peace-building (mind, behavior, culture and institutions);
6. Development of learning/training material;
7. Strengthening of networks among NGOs with UN-NGO-Informal Regional Network (IRENE)/NGO-Section of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA);
8. Design, formulation and implementation of joint pilot integrated and cross-sector programmes/projects/activities for sustained rural development for all in cooperation with UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO-Section/UNDESA.