

Fulfilling

The Beijing Commitment

Reducing Poverty,
Enhancing Women's
Economic Options

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Recommendations

Preface

In June 2000, the United Nations held a formal review to assess the progress made in implementing the goals set at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995. This paper reflects the authors' stocktaking in preparation for this review, known as Beijing Plus Five. The Platform for Action adopted at Beijing outlined 12 critical areas of concern as necessary for advancing the status of women. While we support action in all 12 areas, in this paper, we offer our own perspectives on what we think are two pivotal areas in advancing the status of women—poverty reduction and enhanced economic opportunities for women and adolescent girls.¹ We urge action in these two areas and greater understanding of and support for women's economic roles overall.

While poverty reduction and improved economic opportunities are very often on the agendas of governments, inter-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations, addressing the gender dimensions of these issues is not often adopted as a goal. Fortunately, the gender dimensions of poverty reduction and economic advancement *were* raised as critical areas at Beijing and their importance was reinforced at Beijing Plus Five.² However, implementation of the actions in these areas agreed upon at Beijing has been slow. Of course, poverty reduction and the closely linked need to improve economic opportunities for women are persistent and intractable problems, and only limited progress can be expected in five years. Nevertheless, for any change to occur, these problems need to be addressed deliberately, systematically, and consistently.

If continued progress is to be made on Beijing, people committed to particular aspects of it must take concrete and measurable steps to advance their issues. This paper is intended as a guide for policy action by those who share our concerns for poverty reduction, the economic and social advancement of women, and broad-based and equitable development.

Acknowledgments

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The Platform for Action (PFA), issued in 1995 as a result of the United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, is a visionary document. It offers a comprehensive set of recommendations for reducing gender inequities and for advancing the status of women. In the five years since the Conference, women around the globe have made important advances that reflect some of the commitments made in the PFA. Areas of advancement include, for example, increasing the visibility of gender-based domestic violence, with its ill effects on women and society, as well as documenting and addressing the violence. Another area of progress since Beijing has involved the focus on adolescent girls—the recognition of their distinct multiple needs and the important opportunities that exist for addressing these needs to help shape a better future for them.

However, implementation of most other recommendations remains slow.³ In the words of Angela King, Assistant UN Secretary-General and the Secretary-General's special adviser on gender: *"No country has fully implemented the recommendations of Beijing or fully achieved de facto equality for women and men."* She goes on to state that some countries may even have taken steps back.

The inability to fulfill the commitments of the PFA is most evident in many developing countries and in the transition economies, particularly with respect to women's economic advancement. Poverty among women persists and there is not even sufficient information to agree on whether or not women are disproportionately affected or what should be done.⁴

While economic opportunities overall have grown with economic reform, trade liberalization, and advancements in technology (particularly information technology), the limited information available shows that women may not have benefited and in some cases even suffered negative consequences. For instance, in the transition economies of the former Soviet Union and in the East Asian economies facing the crises of the 1990s, the economic and social responsibilities of women increased even as their opportunities to meet them suddenly diminished. Moreover, very little information and analysis are available to explain how and under what conditions women can overcome gender-based inequities and benefit from these changes.



"No country has fully implemented the recommendations of Beijing or fully achieved de facto equality for women and men."

The June 2000 UN review offered an important opportunity for the nations of the world to act together to move forward on implementing the PFA. Agreement is now needed to take concrete steps to ensure that more of the recommendations are accomplished. In particular, it is most important to move forward on two complementary aspects of the 12 critical areas of concern: reducing poverty among women and enhancing their economic opportunities. Reducing poverty will address the root cause of the disadvantages that pervade the lives of hundreds of millions of women worldwide and contribute to their ill-being— poor health and illiteracy, for example. Enhancing economic opportunities for women, in turn, is likely to make poverty reduction efforts more effective.

This paper offers these two goals as recommendations along with two others that complement them—the need for building a better future for adolescent girls and stronger advocacy to enhance women’s economic roles and status. The four recommendations and the actions needed to implement them are shown in table 1.⁵

Table 1. Accelerating Implementation of the Platform for Action

Recommendations	Actions needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Set targets for poverty reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Set sex-disaggregated country-specific targets ▶ Obtain sex-disaggregated country-specific poverty data ▶ Allocate appropriate resources to meet targets ▶ Establish benchmarks and monitoring plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide better economic opportunities for poor women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reconstitute economic policies, plans and programs to take full account of women's roles ▶ Collect sex-disaggregated employment and wage data for the formal and informal sectors ▶ Conduct gender impact analyses of macroeconomic and trade policies ▶ Establish benchmarks and monitoring plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide better futures for adolescent girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Close data and analytic gaps in girls' and boys' employment ▶ Meet international targets set for universal basic and secondary education ▶ Institute non-formal education and workplace skills development and training ▶ Involve adolescents in designing and implementing programs ▶ Eliminate abusive, exploitative, and dangerous work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase advocacy to enhance women's economic roles and opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve representation of women's economic interests in international and national planning and negotiating forums, e.g. Financing for Development (FfD) Conference in 2001 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Meet target of 0.7 percent of GNP for official development assistance (ODA) ▶ Increase national and international allocation of resources to advance women's economic roles and status ▶ Make rapid progress in debt reduction for highly-indebted poor countries (HIPC) ▶ Improve understanding of gender impacts and of macroeconomic and trade policy changes ▶ Tap innovative sources of financing for development, e.g. private funds and private-public partnerships

Recommendation 1: Targets for Poverty Reduction

1

Set achievable and sex-disaggregated targets for poverty reduction, allocate appropriate financial and human resources to achieve targets, and adopt a monitoring and evaluation plan to track results.⁶

The PFA made an important commitment to poverty reduction in 1995 by including poverty as one of the 12 critical areas of concern. This commitment was as appropriate then as it is now.⁷ An estimated 1.2 billion people around the world live in extreme poverty on less than \$1 per day. As table 2 shows, the number of people

living in extreme poverty around the world increased slightly in the decade after 1987.

Comparable data on women living in extreme poverty is not available but estimates done by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 1988 showed 564 million rural women were living in poverty. This represented an increase of 47 percent over 1965-70 estimates.⁸

It is well known that women who are poor are unable to support themselves or ensure their own well-being. It is now becoming clearer as we deconstruct the various components of poverty that it affects all aspects of women's lives and involves more than just income deprivation. For instance, recent research done at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) shows that poverty and economic dependence are critical factors in women's vulnerability to domestic violence—a widespread and pervasive phenomenon through-

Table 2: People living on less than \$1 a day (in millions)

Region	1987	1993	1998
East Asia and the Pacific	417.5	431.9	278.3
Europe and Central Asia	1.1	18.3	24.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	63.7	70.8	78.2
Middle East and North Africa	9.3	5.0	5.5
South Asia	474.4	505.1	522.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	217.2	273.3	290.9
Total	1,183.2	1,304.3	1,198.9

Source: World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/draft/>

Box 1 Women's Contributions to Household Support


- ▶ In India, women working as agricultural wage laborers are often the main, or even sole, income earners in landless or near landless households.^a
- ▶ In rural Bangladesh, women's earnings account for about half of household cash income.^b
- ▶ Among the Nso people of Northwest Cameroon, women grow over 90 percent of the food consumed in the household and contribute, on average, 41 percent of the total household income.^c

Sources: ^a Agrawal, B. 1988. "Who sows? Who reaps? Women and land rights in India." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 15(4): 531-581. ^b Mahmud, S. and W. Mahmud. 1989. *Structural Adjustment and Women: The Case of Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies. ^c Goheen, M. 1988. "Land and the household economy: women farmers of the grassfields today," In J. Davidson (Ed.), *Agriculture, Women and Land: The African Experience*, Boulder: Westview Press.

out the world.⁹ Research also shows that poverty and economic dependence contribute significantly to the growing rate of HIV infection among women, and that they are important factors limiting access to care once women contract the virus.¹⁰

More generally, research deconstructing the components of poverty demonstrates its varied economic, social, and political dimensions. Elements include poor health, illiteracy, and low levels of education, high levels of economic risk and income insecurity, low representation of women in governing bodies, and social and psychological insecurity. Poverty also undermines women's rights and prevents them from being able to take political and legal action to improve their status. All these factors lower the quality of women's lives. They also undermine women's capabilities and leave them inadequately prepared to determine and improve their own lives in the future. Most importantly, they undermine women's ability to access and benefit from economic opportunities that could help lift them out of poverty.

Paradoxically, households in poverty often depend disproportionately on women's incomes for survival (see box 1). In women-headed households, which tend to be poorer than male-headed households and range from 13 percent in South Asia to 35 percent in the Caribbean, women are often the sole economic providers.¹¹ Despite the fact that poor women work in the



Income in the hands of women has important beneficial effects on family well-being.

home and outside in subsistence-related and income-generating work, they are unable to properly support their families or ensure their well-being. They are unable to provide their children with access to good nutrition, education, and health care. As a result, poverty is intergenerationally perpetuated.¹²

On the other hand, research has shown that income in the hands of women has important beneficial effects on family well-being because a greater proportion is spent on children’s food, health, and education, important reasons for ensuring that women have improved access to economic opportunities.¹³

The PFA provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for poverty reduction through national, regional, and international agencies. But, in fact, very little progress has been made. Instead, poverty has increased. For example, in East Asia, countries have been affected by economic and financial crises since the Beijing conference and women have been disproportionately affected. The economic crises that occurred earlier in the 1990s in the transition economies, and that had severe consequences for women, have not yet been resolved either. Unfortunately, little systematic data are available to track trends or to evaluate progress in poverty reduction in a sex-disaggregated way.¹⁴ Unless specific targets are set, it is unlikely that progress will be made in implementing the international commitments.

The one clear international commitment to poverty reduction was set by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) and it now has the support of the World Bank and the United Nations.¹⁵ The target is to reduce by one-half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. However, there is no specific mention of the need to reduce poverty among women—a critical omission.¹⁶

The follow-up to the five-year review of the PFA represents an important opportunity for governments and the international community to:

- Obtain sex-disaggregated poverty data at the country level;
- Set country-specific targets for reducing poverty among women;
- Use these targets as tools to guide planning of poverty reduction policies and programs and to make appropriate resource allocations for poverty reduction; and
- Set in place processes for monitoring and evaluating progress in reducing poverty among women.

2

Act upon the knowledge that improved economic opportunities for poor women are vital for reducing poverty and improving the well-being of women and their families: design and implement gender appropriate policies, allocate appropriate resources, set targets, and track results.

Although there are many components that characterize poverty, as described above, a key component is “income poverty.” Low incomes affect individuals’ ability not only to access such vital goods as food and clothing, but also limit access to resources and services that affect well-being and “capability building,” such as education, training, and health care. As a result, low

incomes trap people in a vicious cycle of poverty and perpetuate its intergenerational transmission.

Lack of income and employment opportunities are particularly problematic for poor women, as shown above, because they make critical contributions to the economic support of their households, especially in women-headed households (see box 1). During periods of economic downturns when poverty increases, women enter the labor force in greater numbers, presumably seeking to “compensate” for the loss of income among men who are displaced. Ironically, women are also disproportionately displaced from employment sooner in recessions. As a result, they end up working for lower wages or working in the informal sector. This occurred, for example, in the recession of the 1980s in Latin America. Likewise, during transitions from state to market economies, women are the first to lose employment at the same time that their social safety net benefits shrink.

Table 3. What women earn compared to men, in agriculture (1988)

Region	Ratio
Asia	0.70
Asia, excluding China & India	0.54
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.51
Near East & North Africa	0.57
Latin America & the Caribbean	0.73

Source: I. Jazairy, M. Alamgir, and T. Panuccio. 1992. *The State of Rural Poverty. An Inquiry into its Causes and Consequences*. NY: New York University Press/IFAD.

women are employed in better-paid formal sector jobs (e.g., manufacturing industries), they remain concentrated in low-remuneration positions. These

Women are disproportionately affected by income poverty because they are often not paid for the work they do; for example, in the agricultural sector where many women work as unpaid family members. Also, due to low education and literacy levels, lack of job skills, lack of mobility and, sometimes, discrimination, women are trapped in low-paying employment in the informal sector. Even when

Recommendation 2: Economic Opportunities for Poor Women

disadvantages are reflected in global statistics, which show that women’s wages lag at about two-thirds those of men (see table 3). Unemployment and underemployment also tend to be high among women and, when businesses restructure, women are more likely to be fired.¹⁷

Improved economic opportunities—“more and better jobs” in the language of the International Labor Organization (ILO)—are the way out of income poverty.¹⁸ Fifty years of development efforts, however, have not resulted in significant gains in improving women’s economic status. The UN’s Human Development Report (1995) defined women’s “empowerment” by two big factors — the expansion of opportunities and choices for women and their increased capability to exercise those choices. As shown in table 4, investments in education and health have resulted in great progress in enhancing women’s capabilities but this has not translated into improvements in women’s economic status because investments in women’s economic opportunities have lagged.

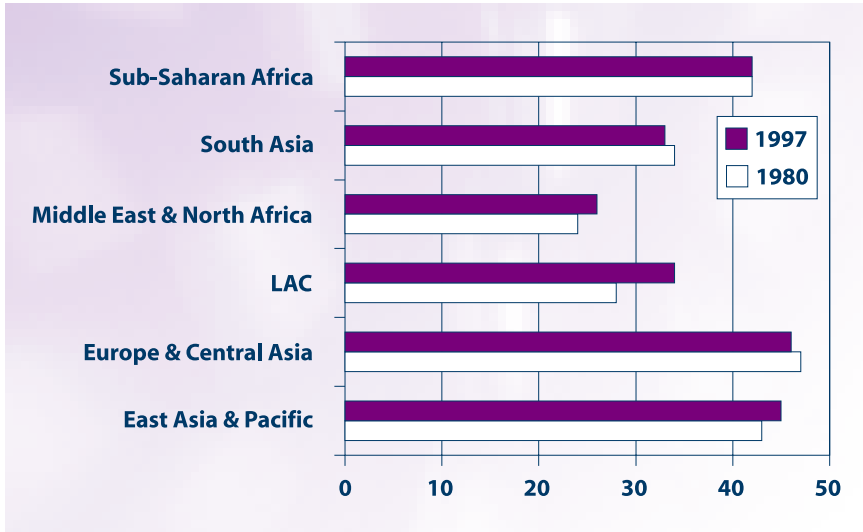
Although women are entering the labor force in greater numbers than ever before, they are unable to access employment opportunities that will lift them out of poverty.¹⁹ In the period from 1980 to 1997, for instance, women’s labor force participation increased or remained unchanged in four of the five developing regions shown in figure 1. Although women’s representation in

Table 4. Improvements in women’s education and health

	Life Expectancy		% of Girls in Primary School	
	1970 ^a	1997 ^b	1970	1997
Sub-Saharan Africa	46.7	50.3	39.0	51.8
Arab States	58	67.1	36.0	82.1
East Asia	64.2	72.2	48.0	99.8
South East Asia & Pacific	57.2	67.9	47.0	97.5
South Asia	48.3	63.1	36.0	72.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	64.0	73.0	9.0	92.4
OECD	75.4	80.9	49.0	99.9

Sources: ^a1970 figures from United Nations (UN). 1995. *WISTAT Database, Version 3*, New York: UN. ^b1997 figures from UNDP. 1999. Human Development Report. NY: Oxford University Press.

Figure 1. Women participating in the labor force (percent)



Source: World Bank. 1999. *World Development Indicators*, 2.3 Labor Force Structure. Washington D.C.: World Bank

the more stable and lucrative formal sector is growing, most women are still employed or self-employed in the informal and “semi-formal” sectors in microenterprises, petty trade, and home-based production for local and international markets.²⁰ In the informal sector, wages and income are generally low and uncertain, work is unstable, and working conditions are generally poor. However, for many women, employment in the informal sector is a better alternative than having no work at all.

The limited information currently available on progress in addressing women’s economic roles and status since the 1995 Beijing conference suggests that very little has been accomplished. In fact, as a consequence of the East Asian financial crisis women’s employment has suffered severe setbacks in countries such as Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand where women had made significant progress in the labor market prior to the crisis (see box 2). In addition, because the Beijing conference did not set targets to assess progress in enhancing women’s employment status, it has been very difficult to track global progress.

The lack of data on women’s employment, in fact, has been a critical limiting factor. A recent review showed that no data are available for women’s paid employment in industry and services for about 80 percent of countries in Africa, for 74 percent of countries in Central and Western Asia, and for somewhat more than half the countries of Asia and the Pacific. Data availability on women employed in the informal sector is grossly inadequate.²¹

Box 2 Women, work, and the East Asian financial crisis

- ▶ Between 1995 and 1996, the unemployment rate was 2 percent in the Republic of Korea; between April 1997 and 1998, overall employment shrank 5.1 percent, employment for women fell 7.1 percent and 3.8 percent for men.
- ▶ In Thailand, a survey showed 60 percent of workers who lost their jobs were women over 30 years of age.
- ▶ Although women made up just over one-third of the labor force in Indonesia, after the crisis (1998), 46 percent of the unemployed were women.

Source: USAID Office of Women in Development, GenderReach Project. 2000. "Working without a net: Women and the Asian financial crisis." *Gender Matters Quarterly*, No. 2, January.

Women's employment is an important avenue for reducing poverty and enhancing women's well-being; therefore, it is critical for all countries and the international community to focus deliberately again on women's economic roles as follows:

- Reconstitute development policies and programs to take full account of women's economic roles. This requires recommitment to and concrete steps to implement the international commitments made at Beijing:
 - ▶ to expand employment and improve self-employment opportunities for women in the formal and informal sectors;
 - ▶ to expand credit delivery for low-income women along with business development services;
 - ▶ to improve access to skills training, particularly in expanding sectors such as information technology; and
 - ▶ to improve wages, provide better working conditions, and enhance childcare options and social insurance in both the formal and informal sectors.
- Collect sex-differentiated data on all aspects of women's employment and self-employment in the formal and informal sectors to guide policymaking and progress monitoring.
- Conduct sex-differentiated analyses of macroeconomic and trade policy changes to guide policy and planning to improve women's economic opportunities and status.
- Set targets to accomplish the goal of improving women's economic status within a specified time frame and set in place a monitoring and evaluation plan to track progress.

3

Prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty and ensure the future of adolescent girls with policies and programs that balance their current livelihood needs with the benefits of long-term education.

Adolescence is a period of life full of energy and hope. It is a time when adolescents can prepare for life's challenges and opportunities by acquiring, among other things, a good education, proper nutrition, and sound health. It is also a window of opportunity, when direct intervention can prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Until recently

the policy and program focus on adolescent girls has been on reproductive health. Many of the world's one billion adolescents (11 to 19 years old) do not have adequate access to other fundamental opportunities and rights. And a significant proportion of adolescents—nearly one-fourth—are already employed either within their homes or outside, and already facing many of life's challenges.

Poverty is a driving factor that compels adolescents to work. In fact, the poorer the country, the higher the percentage of working adolescents. The majority work to help reduce the economic vulnerability of their households. Official labor force statistics show that 61 percent of all adolescents in Asia are employed, 32 percent in Africa, and 7 percent in Latin America.²² Many in the informal sector rely on part-time, seasonal, and occasional jobs. Their employment is not reflected in most labor force statistics nor in unemployment figures. What little data are available show that there are twice as many unemployed young women as men in Africa and even some countries of Europe (Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain).²³ Many adolescents are also in the ranks of the underemployed, a large and growing population of poor and marginalized people.

Adolescent girls and boys are concentrated in different types of work. Adolescent boys are commonly in more visible types of employment outside the home while adolescent girls predominate in work that is unpaid but vital to the care economy. They supplement or complement adult women's labor in the household by taking care of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, and fetching water or firewood. Adolescent girls may also be employed outside the home and in productive activities within the home.

At work, both adolescent boys and girls can be exposed to dangerous and exploitative conditions. Work may curtail their physical and psychological

Recommendation 3: Better Futures for Adolescent Girls

development and can result in adolescents dropping out of school—a factor of great significance in determining their economic futures and well-being. ICRW studies also show that married adolescents who are at the bottom of social and familial power hierarchies and have very little control over their lives are often omitted from policy and program planning.²⁴

It is important to note, however, that employment also offers adolescents the opportunity to expand and develop their skills and learn work-related behaviors that offer them a lifetime of benefits. Studies have shown that employment can be especially beneficial for adolescent girls in delaying early marriage and deferring child bearing.²⁵

The challenge in preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty, therefore, is complex. It requires balancing the current livelihood needs of adolescents with the long-term benefits of more and better education, their current need to work with the right to grow and develop freely and safely without being exploited in the home and work place. In a labor market that is rapidly changing and becoming highly technical, a good education, job skills, and training are key elements for ensuring future access to better employment and self-employment opportunities. Recognizing the importance of education and training for the future of girls and the links to employment, the PFA challenged governments to ensure equal access to education; close the gender gap in primary and secondary education; eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development, and training; and eliminate the economic exploitation of child labor and protect adolescent girls at work.

Since the 1995 Beijing conference, education policies have changed in a number of countries to reflect the needs of adolescent girls. Yet, many governments have not fulfilled their commitments to the PFA. Seventy-three million girls of primary school age are still without access to basic education. In the least developed countries, only 13 percent of adolescent girls and 22 percent of boys are enrolled in secondary education.²⁶ Factors involved in the lack of progress include the financial crisis in East Asia, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, conflict in many regions of the world, cuts in social spending in a number of countries as a result of structural adjustment programs, and the introduction of school user fees and privatization in education and health.

Until recently, policies and programs have only partially addressed the needs of adolescents or have addressed them in a compartmentalized way. In particular, few policies and programs have integrated adolescents' livelihood and economic needs and capabilities into their frameworks. There is much to be

The challenge in preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty is complex and requires balancing livelihood needs with more and better education.

gained from adopting an integrated and comprehensive framework. Although adolescents do not enter the labor force by choice, the work environment can offer opportunities for interventions that enable them to learn, grow, and be better prepared for the world of work. Understanding the domestic roles and responsibilities of adolescent girls can be crucial in designing educational and work programs that are more responsive to their needs and constraints and can help achieve the policy balance needed to enable them to live better lives now and in the future.

The Beijing review offered an opportunity to use this growing understanding of the complex realities of adolescents' lives in improving policy responses. Key actions recommended for follow-up are:

- Fill in the data and analytic gaps on the employment of adolescent girls and boys—how many work, where, why, and under what conditions;
- Meet targets for universal basic education set in 1995 by 2015, eliminate disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and ensure education is high quality and relevant;
- Invest in alternative non-formal education and workplace training programs that build market-relevant skills in new and growing employment subsectors;
- Provide seed money to support enterprise and employment programs, and support cooperative schemes and development banks for adolescents;
- Involve adolescents and youth in designing and implementing programs as indicated in the World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;²⁷
- Eliminate abusive, exploitative, and dangerous work for adolescents by using provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child advocating for policy change.

Recommendation 4: Advocacy for Women's Economic Opportunities

4

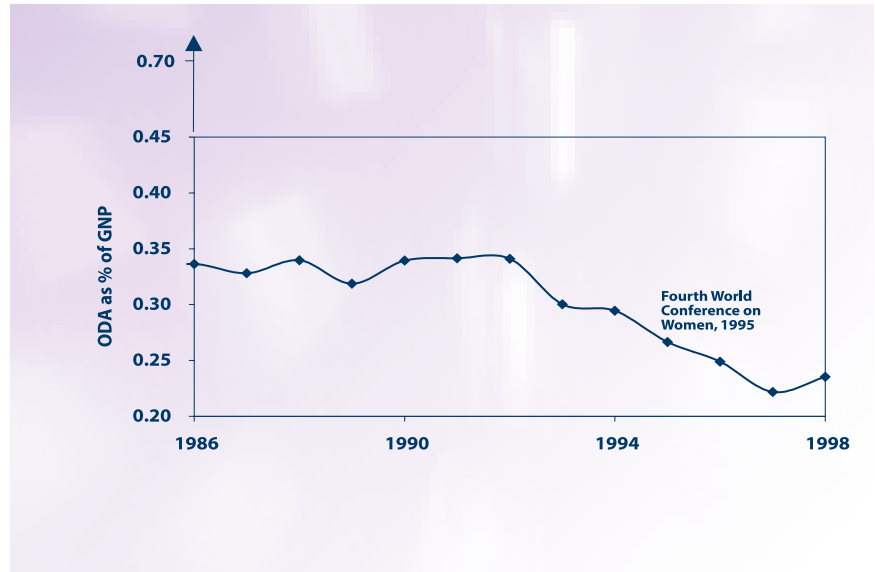
Strengthen advocacy efforts to increase funding for and policy attention to women's economic opportunities and status in international forums and during bilateral and multilateral negotiations on financing for development.

The need to improve the economic status of women has been addressed at several UN summits and conferences and the action plans generated comprise a global agreement to do so. This consensus, however, has not led to significant changes. In fact, very limited resources from both donors and developing

country governments are currently committed to enhancing women's economic status as compared with the resources allocated to women's education, health, and family planning. Policies pertaining to the gender impacts of macroeconomics and measures to mitigate their negative effects are especially lacking.

Two critical factors account for this lag between international agenda setting and policy and program action. First and foremost is the decline in official development assistance (ODA), which reached its lowest level in 1997 at 0.22 percent of developed country gross national product (GNP) (see figure 2). In 1998, the last year for which data is available, ODA increased slightly to 0.24 percent. In the context of declining resources for development assistance, it is highly unlikely that funding for and greater policy attention to women's economic status will be increased. So the first step is to meet the UN target for ODA which is set at 0.7 percent of GNP. Governments agreed in 1995 that effective implementation of the PFA would require meeting the ODA target.

Figure 2. A significant decline in ODA since 1995



Source: www.oecd.org

A second important factor constraining appropriate policy attention to women's economic roles is the lack of a broad-based, vocal, visible, and informed constituency and leadership at the international and national levels that persistently advocates for improvements in women's economic opportunities. To date, most advocacy efforts have focused on social issues (such as violence against women or reproductive health) with very little attention given to women's economic roles and opportunities.

As a result, great progress has been made in recognizing the importance of investing in women's capabilities—such as education and healthcare—and it is now widely accepted that women should receive social services and benefit from them.

Much less progress has been made in expanding women's economic opportunities; in improving women's access to resources such as land, capital, and information; and in providing services such as labor-saving technologies, agricultural extension, and job skills and training. Development policymakers and practitioners have failed to invest in enhancing the economic opportunities of poor women in their roles as economic producers—as farmers, wage-earners, and microentrepreneurs. And women's and other development advocates have generally not held them accountable for this omission.

The PFA identified the key economic and macroeconomic issues that need to be addressed in order to enhance women's economic status. But, five years later, with few exceptions, little progress has been made. To move the PFA agenda forward, advocates must focus more pointedly on the impact of economic and macroeconomic issues on women.

An important opportunity for pushing the PFA agenda forward is the upcoming UN intergovernmental consultation on Financing for Development (FfD) to be held in 2001. For the first time, the UN will focus on the wide range of issues concerning financing for development. The meeting will involve key stakeholders who critically influence development policies and outcomes such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, regional banks, donors, corporations, NGOs, and the media.



An important opportunity for pushing the Platform for Action agenda forward is the upcoming UN intergovernmental consultation on Financing for Development.

The Beijing review process offered an opportunity to start building a coalition of advocacy groups and identifying a set of issues critical for influencing the international macroeconomic policy debate and agenda at the FfD Conference. Issues of relevance to advance women's economic status include:

- Meeting the internationally agreed upon target of 0.7 percent of GNP for ODA;
- Urging national governments and the international community to allocate appropriate resources for poverty reduction and investment in women's economic development (the growing use of gender budgets may facilitate these efforts);
- Rapid progress in debt reduction for the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) to free up resources for social and economic investment;
- Policy-oriented analysis of the gender impacts of trade and other macroeconomic policy changes;
- Tapping innovative sources of financing for development such as private and private-public partnerships.

It is not too early to identify the appropriate constituencies and strategies for promoting a gender-responsive policy agenda during the FfD Conference. A good place to begin is by building coalitions with like-minded groups that are currently following this intergovernmental conference, some of which were represented at the Beijing review process. A concerted effort at addressing women's economic roles at the FfD will be a strategic starting point for the broader and more intensive efforts that are needed to improve women's economic status worldwide.

¹The 12 critical areas are women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl-child.

²United Nations, "Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action." Report of the Secretary General, Advance Unedited Version, 3-17 March 2000. E/CN.6/2000/PC/2.

³In May 2000, we reviewed data available on the Web (www.un.org/womenwatch/followup/countrylist.htm) from country responses to the "Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action." At that time, data were available from 18 countries of which just 6 were developing or transition countries. We reviewed responses particularly on the following 4 areas: Poverty, Education, the Economy, and the Girl Child.

⁴Ibid. The absence of data on women and poverty was cited as a constraint in the available country responses to the "Questionnaire."

⁵These actions reflect those recommended by the Beijing PFA but in a different form to emphasize the authors' priorities, as noted in the Preface.

⁶UNIFEM, *Targets and Indicators: Selections from Progress of the World's Women* (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2000), highlights the importance of setting specific targets against which to measure progress in implementing the PFA.

⁷Questionnaire, note iii.

⁸I. Jazairy, M. Alamgir, and T. Panuccio, *The State of Rural Poverty. An Inquiry into its Causes and Consequence* (NY: New York University Press/IFAD, 1992).

⁹International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), *Domestic Violence in India 1: A Summary Report of Three Studies* (Washington, D.C.: ICRW, 1999).

¹⁰Geeta Rao Gupta and Ellen Weiss, *Women and AIDS: Developing a New Health Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: ICRW, 1993).

¹¹WISTAT Database, version 3, UN 1999.

¹²M. Buvinic, *Investing in Women*, ICRW Policy Series, No.2 (Washington, D.C.: ICRW, 1995).

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Alain Marcoux, "The Feminization of poverty: Facts, hypotheses and the art of advocacy." *SD Dimensions* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Women and Population Division, 1997). Posted 18 June 1997, www.fao.org/sd/wpdirect/wpan0015.htm and United Nations, 2000, note 2.

¹⁵UNIFEM 2000 and www.oecd.org/dac/Indicators/index.htm.

¹⁶UNIFEM 2000 and United Nations 2000.

¹⁷R. Mehra and S. Gammage, "Trends, countertrends, and gaps in women's employment," *World Development* 27:3 (1999): 533-550.

¹⁸For a related and more comprehensive review of the role of employment in poverty reduction, see United Nations, "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women," Report of the Secretary-General, 18 May 1999. www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/doc99-53.htm.

¹⁹The labor force consists of all those available for work, who may be employed or partially employed or looking for work.

²⁰Mehra and Gammage, note 18.

²¹UNIFEM 2000.

²²International Labor Organization, "Youth and Employment. Report prepared for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth," Lisbon, Portugal, 8-12 August 1998.

²³FAO, *Youth against Hunger* (Rome: FAO, 1999).

²⁴Shireen Jejeebhoy, *Adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior: A review of the evidence from India*, ICRW Working Paper No. 3 (Washington, D.C., 1996); and Kathleen Kurz, *Health Consequences of Adolescent Childbearing in Developing Countries*, ICRW Working Paper No. 4 (Washington, D.C., October 1997).

²⁵Simel Esim, Nisha Varia, and Guadalupe Durón, "Adolescent Livelihoods: A Literature and Program Review," A background paper prepared for the Essential Questions, Essential Tools Workshop on Adolescent Girls' Livelihoods (Cairo, Egypt, July 1999). <http://www.icrw.org/adollivelihoods.html>

²⁶United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Statistical Database* (New York: UNDP, 1999).

²⁷United Nations, *World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond* (New York: United Nations, 1995). <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>



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