The Gender Impact
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DRIVERS AND TRENDS

Human Rights and Protection

It is important to more assertively respect and promote the leading ideas and codified values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the human rights covenants. This Council focuses on the prevention of global conflict, the protection of human rights, and the creation of a framework of global values that would make the new norm of “the responsibility to protect” an effective and international instrument. The Council will also deal with the development of common principles and best practices in the area of business and human rights and the geographical areas of most egregious human rights violations.

The principle of non-discrimination and gender equality is a fundamental element of all human rights instruments and the cornerstone of the “women’s bill of rights,” UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A woman may be discriminated against because she is a woman, but also because of her membership in other vulnerable groups such as being an ethnic or religious minority, or a refugee. Gender inequality increases women’s vulnerability to additional human rights violations. Inequality, discrimination and a lack of legal protection are root causes of violence against women and undermine women’s ability to exercise their rights and achieve full societal participation. Women are globally more susceptible to poverty, putting them at increased risk of exploitation. Lack of access and participation in the political system may result in the continued denial of rights and an inability to claim fair representation. Lack of education, access to health services and resources also affects women’s reproductive and sexual health rights, contributing to high maternal mortality rates, an increase in HIV/AIDS rates among young women, sex trafficking, and sexual violence.

Discrimination is directly or indirectly entrenched in statutory norms. This is particularly the case in the area of family and succession law, as well as land rights. For labor law, directly or indirectly discriminatory provisions include bans on women’s night work, women’s pensionable age and maternity benefit payments by the employer. Even where the law prohibits discrimination and embodies special measures to advance women, discrimination against women remains widespread in practice. De facto discrimination encompasses for instance banking practices requiring the husband to sign their wives’ contracts, violations of labor equal-opportunity legislation, and channeling of services through the male household head. Discriminatory cultural attitudes, illiteracy, lack of legal awareness, lack of resources to enforce rights and difficulties in accessing courts located in urban areas are among the major factors accounting for de facto discrimination.

Human rights protection and promotion issues can be categorized as top-down, such as legal reforms and post-conflict accountability issues, or bottom-up, such as rights-based development efforts and the plight of female human rights defenders in particular. Legal reform efforts attempt to address the fact that though women’s rights are recognized as human rights, in many cases discriminatory policies may stem from the state regime itself. Legal equality is necessary for actual equality to be achieved. Additionally, the state’s failure to protect rights may spark conflict, and women are increasingly susceptible to human rights violations during and after conflict. Post-conflict challenges for women
include facing trauma from war-based sexual violence, discrimination due to status as a non-combatant or combatant, and retaliation for transgression of social norms, all of which may in turn feed into economic poverty and social insecurity for women.

The promotion and protection of human rights for all necessarily leads to increased rights for women. Rights-based development attempts to address root causes such as inequity or inequality, target marginalized groups such as women and encourage broad participation, empower these groups while remaining sensitive to cultural differences, and create a climate in which rights are enabled and in which they can be sustained in the long-term. Because gender violence is deeply embedded in systems of kinship, religion, warfare and nationalism, its prevention requires major social changes in communities, families and nations. Powerful local groups often resist these changes, and those who resist human rights often claim to be defending culture. For human rights to be effective, they need to be translated into local terms and situated within local contexts of power and meaning.

Most countries have now taken steps to attain gender equality, by explicitly prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex/gender. International norms must be re-conceptualized to reach issues that concerns individuals such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence, reproductive freedom, education, and the right to vote, as well as issues that pertain to states, governments and intergovernmental organizations, such as economic policies and structural adjustment programs. Societal ownership of rights is viewed as the way to achieve lasting progress and change, and direct involvement of women in the process of claiming rights has led to greater success in the long term. Education, and the access to knowledge and power that come with it, is seen as an essential vehicle for rights implementation and women’s empowerment and participation. No discussion and action on Human Rights and Protection will be adequate if women’s rights are not fully embraced.
Bibliography:


Climate Change

Climate change is a serious and urgent challenge. Studies indicate that climate change is occurring faster than expected. Delaying action will only make future action more costly. In a world where non-state actors are increasingly at the forefront of global issues, a multistakeholder, cross-disciplinary and global dialogue is needed to advance the international climate change agenda. Government and private sector leadership is urgently required to put the world economy onto a low-carbon path. To provide guidance and help the Forum realize its mission, intellectual input and insights derived from the Council will be shared for the benefit of the advancement of the Forum’s relevant industry initiatives in the field of climate change.

Climate change will have the greatest effects on the world’s poor and marginalized. Given that women comprise the majority of the poor, introducing a gender perspective to discussions about and initiatives to curb climate change will provide a more nuanced and effective response to the changing climate.

The changing environmental energy balance resulting from greenhouse gas emissions will likely have unprecedented effects worldwide, including an increase in natural disasters. Women and children are 14 times more likely to die in a disaster, for boys are more likely to be taught survival skills such as tree-climbing and swimming, and women are more likely to stay back to help children or the elderly. Simultaneously, however, women frequently have a greater understanding of their natural environments than do men due to their roles in collecting water and firewood, and therefore have the experience to help prepare their communities for future natural disasters.

In both developed and developing countries, women generally are responsible for fewer greenhouse gas emissions than men. However, women—especially in poor countries—also frequently have a lesser ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change than men. Women’s lack of access to resources and to the decision-making table hinders the implementation of participatory strategies that not only address women’s unique needs in relation to climate change, but also fail to take into account women’s and girls’ meaningful contributions to climate policy.

Changes in the climate will have far-reaching effects, including exacerbating conflicts over natural resources. Women will suffer in a different manner than men during these conflicts, including being subjected to sexual abuse and facing increased danger associated with completing daily tasks, such as getting water and firewood. Research shows, however, that gender equality—both in society and in decision-making bodies—is critical to effective post-conflict disarmament and reintegration. Including a gender perspective in conflict-related climate discussions can thus play a critical role in mitigating the social effects of climate change.


**Benchmarking Progress in Society**

Quantifying prosperity and societal progress in a rigorous way is an essential step towards helping governments and civil society prioritize actions and policies. Although economic growth and GDP-based measures are key elements in assessing societies’ well-being, it is ever-clearer that societal progress has social, political and environmental aspects. Measuring progress should go beyond economic indicators to include social, environmental and governance measures, among others. Building on the proposals elaborated for the Global Redesign Initiative, challenges to be addressed going forward include: encouraging the creation of better well-being indicators from official and non-official sources; capturing selected aspects of social, economic, political and environmental progress; promoting the collection of sounder, comparable indicators to foster data-driven policy-making; and designing quality-check mechanisms for official and non-official statistics.

Governments recognized the importance of statistics on women for development planning in 1975 at the World Conference of the International Women’s Year in Mexico, and reiterated the relevance of such data at the second world conference in Copenhagen in 1980. Gender benchmarking can help identify the gaps, ensure the realization of gender equality goals and improve compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Convention was adopted in 1979 to specifically addressing discrimination against women and aims to redress gender inequalities. Most governments have expressed commitments to improving gender equality, greater transparency and accountability. However, there is often a gap between participation and consultation in the formulation of new policies and legislation, and in the allocation of resources. The use of data disaggregation helps in combining indicators to reveal patterns, practices, and processes impacting gender inequalities. Gender disaggregation displays data separately for relevant groups, and allows comparisons in performance between genders. Sex-disaggregated data in public policy formulation ensures that macro-economic policy frameworks address women’s priorities. For example, a survey with sex disaggregated data on land titles in 1997 contributed to concrete actions and significant increase in women’s names on land titles in less than five years, explained Phothong Siliphong, national project coordinator at FAO.

To monitor progress in gender equality and the advancement of women and to guide policy, it is crucial that reliable and timely statistics be available. Yet official national data on basic demographic and social topics for gender analysis are at times deficient or unavailable. Europe has the highest reporting rates, and Africa the lowest. The situation in Africa is such that well over half of the countries provided sex-disaggregated data on population and on primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment at least once between 1995 and 2003. However, less than a third were able to provide data on births, deaths and the economic characteristics of the population by sex (UN, 2006). Often data available from national surveys does not provide sufficient and reliable information to assist local planners and policy-makers in creating gender sensitive policies and budgets. Even if such data were available, often the low frequency of the surveys and delays in analysis and reporting reduce the utility for planning and budgeting purposes. Therefore, having timely, accurate and gender disaggregated data is essential to strengthening governance and achieving gender equality. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into national statistics systems has to be systematic. Such data can provide insights and access to knowledge that would otherwise go undiscovered. Its purpose is to identify which groups do not benefit
equally from programs and policies, primarily for discriminatory purposes.

Specific policy issues facilitate the quantification of women’s positions in comparison to men’s. One of the negative implications of benchmarks relates to how they can divert away from the values developments towards a means of merely achieving targets. The case with which benchmarks can be quantified opens the door for a problem analysis and solution that avoids tackling underlying structural problems. Nevertheless, those structural problems must also be looked at if we are to achieve accurate gender benchmarking. When considering and including gender in benchmarking, it is particularly important to clarify whether the index is meant to measure gender inequality, gender inequality only in the disadvantage of women, or a combination of gender inequality with levels of achievement. Gender benchmarking and mainstreaming should not simply be used as measures to allow women access to the labor markets, health and education, but should also attempt to change and transform the economic and social structures supporting those institutions. In the case of labor markets, issues such as working time, pay, and job segregation have attracted very limited attention, yet it is arguably within these areas of policy where progress is required for there to be any chance of moving towards a more gender equal society. In fact, “it is important to remember that sex-disaggregated data alone is not enough. We also need to analyze and understand the underlying cultural, economic, social and political factors that are part of the structural reasons for why human development indicators for men and women are not equal” said Mr. Verniau, FAO Representative to Laos.

Benchmarking with gender disaggregated data helps government planning, programming and budgeting towards the overall advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of women's rights. Identifying at the outset the targets and definitions relating to gender equality will facilitate effective policy-making. Governments should therefore strengthen their national statistical systems, mainstream gender in all aspects of the production of their statistics, and develop and improve the concepts and methods to achieve gender equality. Such data can in turn help promote greater accountability for public resources to the people of a country, especially to women, who are generally more marginalized than men in decision-making processes.
Benchmarking Progress in Society

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Recent UN projections suggest that world population, currently 6.8 billion, will reach 9.2 billion by 2050; alternative UN scenarios envision a range from 8.0 to 10.5 billion. Since 1950, population has increased in virtually every country. However, population is projected to decrease in nearly one-fifth of the world’s countries - most of them wealthy industrial countries - between now and 2050.

From 2005 to 2010, the world population has been increasing by about 78 million people per year (UNFPA). Nearly all of the increase is in urban areas of the developing world, aggravating political, social, economic, environmental and humanitarian consequences. On the other hand, the population growth in some of the industrialized economies is decreasing, leading to concerns over negative population replacement ratios. The 49 least developed countries have the fastest growth rates, averaging 2.3 percent per year. In 1986, 24 percent of the least developed countries considered their own population growth to be too high. By 2007, the figure had risen to 78 per cent (World Population Policies, 2007). A smaller world, stabilized at the lower end of the spectrum, such as at 8 billion rather than 11 billion mark, will not solve all the present problems, but it will lower the hurdles to leap. Rapid growth in poor countries thwarts efforts to reduce poverty, expand access to education and health and attain other development goals. Limiting population growth can spur development in low-income countries by enabling families and governments to make essential investments in development and social services, as well as help limit the environmental damage that development brings.

One of the best ways to slow population growth is by ensuring that women have the means and the power to make real choices about childbearing, including access to voluntary family planning as part of comprehensive reproductive health services. More women and couples are choosing to plan their families, space their pregnancies and limit the number of their children, but funding for family planning is declining, and has been doing so for more than a decade (UNFPA). The use of modern contraceptives has increased worldwide, yet the rates vary widely by region: for example, less than one quarter of married or in-union women in sub-Saharan Africa use any form of contraception. Globally, more than 200 million women have an unmet need for contraception, and contraceptive use remains low in countries with high fertility. The most common reasons women do not use contraception when they want to delay a pregnancy are inadequate knowledge about contraceptive methods, fear of social disapproval, concern about potential side effects, and a belief that their husbands would oppose it. Because of continued rapid population growth in countries with the greatest unmet needs, the number of women facing unwanted pregnancies has steadily increased. Unmet need for contraceptives is higher among women who are younger, have less education and who live in rural areas.

To tackle inequities that are associated with rapid population growth, governments should promote education and employment opportunities for women. For example, better educated girls have fewer, healthier children and attain higher earnings. It was shown that when the proportion of women with secondary schooling doubles, the fertility rate is reduced from 5.3 to 3.9 (World Bank, 2008). Keeping girls enrolled in school through the secondary level reduces vulnerability and furthers their economic and social development. This is particularly important since adolescence is a period of
vulnerability to life-changing events, from child marriage or coerced sex to unplanned pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. It is believed that approximately 700,000 cases of HIV in young adults could be prevented annually if all children received a complete primary education (Global Campaign for Education, 2004). Slower population growth, and hence smaller families, also improve economic prospects for the household and enable more women to join the labor force or engage in other entrepreneurial activities, thus benefiting the overall economy. In turn, economically active women have higher opportunity costs of marriage and child bearing, which leads them to postpone marriage, schedule births later in life and have fewer children on average compared to non-economically active women.

More interventions directed at women should be included when considering the environmental impact of large population growth. Women make up two thirds of the world's poorest people, and in developing nations women are the first to encounter the effects of ecological stress: women must walk farther to get wood for cooking and heating, to search for clean water and to find new sources of food. In addition, because mothers tend to be responsible for rearing children and ensuring sufficient resources to meet their needs for nutrition, health care and schooling, women's lives are often inextricably linked to natural resource use. Population growth and the pollution of water, air, and soil are contributing to the increasing number of human diseases worldwide. Currently, an estimated 40 percent of world deaths are due to environmental degradation. Specifically targeting initiatives to limit population growth will help ease increases in water shortages, slow the loss of forests, fisheries and biodiversity, help to stop the rise of greenhouse-gas emissions and help build the resilience of countries as they adapt to climate change.

Population growth and poverty go hand in hand, and interventions should attempt to address both issues simultaneously. In the case of developing countries, lower population growth may also reduce the pressures on national resources and the need for social investments. In the interests of long-term environmental sustainability, some argue that zero population growth is the ideal. It varies from around 2.1 in developed countries to over 3.0 in some developing countries. Few achieve such balance, and in the case of some industrialized economies, women’s education and economic participation engender negative population growth rates which raise concern for competing in the global economy.
Population Growth

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Poverty and Economic Growth

Sixty years of combating poverty have produced very mixed results. A quarter of humanity still lives on less than US$ 1.25 a day. In sub-Saharan Africa, half the population (the same share as in 1981) lives on that amount. Recognizing that economic growth represents the best answer to poverty, developing countries and the development community are increasingly focusing on creating the conditions for growth. Yet growth at all costs is not desirable. Successful strategies must pursue “quality growth”, strong, sustained, shared and clean growth that narrows structural inequalities, protects the environment and sustains the growth process itself, while reducing extreme poverty. This quality imperative makes the challenge even more formidable, but if successfully addressed the benefits promise to be huge and durable.

A growing body of evidence is demonstrating that investing in women and girls is crucial to development effectiveness. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are fundamental cornerstones for achieving development results and increasing the impact of aid on reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity and accelerating achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Moreover, gender inequalities are costly and undermine development effectiveness. The evidence suggests gender equality is desirable from an efficiency perspective: increases in opportunities for women lead to improvements in human development outcomes, poverty reduction, and potentially accelerated rates of economic growth.

According to the World Bank’s “Gender Action Plan,” expanding women’s and girls’ economic opportunities is smart economics. While women’s and girls’ education and health levels have improved in most poor countries, progress is lagging on improving their economic opportunities. This is inefficient, since increased women’s labor force participation and earnings are associated with reduced poverty and faster growth. This is also why the GAP concentrates on facilitating girls’ transition from school to work. Women will benefit from their economic empowerment, and so will men, children and society as a whole. In its agreed conclusions on “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” adopted at its fifty-second session in 2008, the UN Commission on the Status of Women noted the growing body of evidence which demonstrated that investing in women and girls had a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth, and that increasing women’s economic empowerment was central to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to poverty eradication.

Women’s entrepreneurship is expanding around the world, both in emerging and developed economies. Women entrepreneurs constitute a growing share of SME owners and are creating new niches for entrepreneurial activity, but are often confronted with special barriers to business creation and development. Fostering the growth of women’s entrepreneurship is an effective strategy to create jobs, catalyze economic development, empower women and foster social cohesion. Research has shown that women face a number of difficulties in establishing and maintaining businesses. Although most of these difficulties are common to both genders, in many cases they tend to be more significant for women entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs. This is due to factors such as a poor business environment, the choice of business types and sectors, information gaps, lack of contacts and access to networking, gender discrimination and stereotypes, weak and inflexible supply of childcare facilities, difficulties in reconciling business and family
obligations or differences in the way women and men approach entrepreneurship. However, research has also shown that women in general create smaller but relatively more viable enterprises.

This time of economic crisis poses particular risks for women and girls: when economies start to crumble, women are the first to suffer. The jobs and incomes lost disproportionately affect women; mothers can no longer find credit through micro-finance institutions and are pushed from the informal sector into subsistence work; girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school to lend a hand at finding more resources for the household; and when families have to tighten their belts, girls are more likely to become malnourished. It is crucial to ensure that policy responses to the financial and economic crisis take into account the differential priorities and needs of women, men, girls and boys and do not undermine the policies and plans that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Long-term solutions can begin with the educational system, with entrepreneurial education starting as early as possible in the education process. School-sponsored business games support entrepreneurial ways of thinking and acting, promote personality development and help to reduce gender related problems. When preparing for the actual start-up, women require specific training. Training activities should be based on an interdisciplinary approach and involve successful women entrepreneurs. In this context imparting theoretical knowledge and sharing hands-on experience is equally important. Role models who draw a realistic picture of female entrepreneurship can encourage women to take the chance of being self-employed.
Bibliography:


Employment and Social Protection

The financial and economic crisis is now a crisis of unemployment. Today 34 million more people are unemployed than in 2007. An estimated 200 million more workers now live on US$ 2 per day, bringing the total to over 40% of the global workforce. As workers see their purchasing power fall, the cycle of decline continues, undermining the first signs of economic recovery. Therefore, a job-rich recovery is needed. Social protection, the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, is limited or non-existent in many countries. Unless swift measures are taken, social unrest and political instability will rise, and unless the right policies are put in place for employment and social protection, the current crisis threatens future global growth.

Social protection programs directly reduce poverty through improved health outcomes, increased school attendance, hunger reduction and livelihood promotion. They help reduce gender disparities in human development outcomes, and promote efficient labor markets, addressing social hardship and helping maintain and promote employment. In developing countries, social protection systems can also enhance national economic and societal development, and help to raise women’s opportunities. Most of the vulnerable women’s livelihood strategies, including work and remittances from international migration, have been impacted by the recent financial crisis. When women struggle to cope, there is an increased need to support them more formally through national state run social protection programs.

The most significant factor explaining women’s exclusion from existing forms of social protection is their over-representation in the informal sector in most countries. Two-thirds of the active female population in developing countries works in the informal economy, and the proportion is as high as 84 percent in sub-Saharan Africa compared to 63 percent of men (World Bank, 2002). Areas with strict norms of female seclusion are most likely to report women in the unpaid-family economy and in various kinds of home-based self-employment. These regions are least likely to see women active in those segments of the labor force which lead to mobility in the public domain. Since women represent the bulk of the informal sector workforce in developing countries, social security programs cover a relatively small percentage of women. In these countries, because the informal economy does not necessarily fluctuate in style with economic growth, policies aimed at increasing employment and reducing poverty will be more effective when they take into account the informal economy and hence gender. This means that measures, such as skills development, the promotion of entrepreneurship, and improving working conditions must be designed for delivery and impact in the informal economy.

Women face particular barriers and biases concerning their access and participation in economic growth. Their employability can be enhanced through measures that specifically address their respective constraints and potentials, and by paying particular attention to activities where women have high labor market participation, such as the productivity and employability of poor women can be increased with well-tailored vocational training, building on basic education and life skills. These programs must be demand-driven, apply to the informal economy and become an integral part of education and employment strategies. Such initiatives relate to developing micro-finance programs which enable women to earn an income and initiate a series of ‘virtuous spirals’ of
economic empowerment; and engaging the private sector to adopt adequate vocational training programs and the protection of the more precarious side of employment.

Women’s unemployment, and employment in the informal economy, can be redressed by enhancing women’s perceptions of sex-roles, improving their potential to encompass technology and entrepreneurial skills, and through promoting their access to the green economy. These strategies have the potential to move low-wage women into jobs with living wages, benefits, access to training, and to drive down unemployment. Women have typically been excluded from access to technology since they have less disposable income and thus less able to afford the costs of technology tools, less access to formal education including formal computer education and have greater time constraints restricting their access to training and workshops. Policymakers should therefore promote trainings and technology distribution among women by developing awareness campaigns, dispel sex-roles in education and promote the awareness of non-gendered employment opportunities. In relation to the green economy, which is targeted by governments as a means to overcome unemployment, women in both developing and industrialized economies face several obstacles to entering the green workforce, especially in the construction and manufacturing industries. Some challenges are cultural, whereby girls are raised to believe that construction-related jobs are too strenuous and, as a result, will choose a “traditional” career, which frequently pays far less than a job as a skilled laborer. Other challenges relate to speeding up efforts to make women aware that alternatives to labor-intensive construction positions exist, including information technology, purchasing and administrative areas.

The rise in informality of the global economy and the over-representation of women in informal employment underlines the need to consider how to extend social protection to this group of workers, predominantly composed of women. Providing productive and decent employment for both men and women is fundamental for social protection to exist. Policy-makers should address the micro-entrepreneur’s potential, reform the training policies and systems, enhance the informal sector’s employment and income-generating capacity, and improve the organization of informal sector producers and workers.
**Bibliography:**


Migration is a key driver in international affairs. Three out of every 100 people are migrants. The breadth and depth of migration have increased significantly in the last decade and its social, cultural and economic implications have become more complex. Bleak perspectives at home, job prospects in destination countries, the existence of transnational social networks, conflict and persecution are cited as the principal driving forces of migration. Increasingly the effects of climate change are pushing people to migrate. Some key actors, including parts of the business community, advocate for policies facilitating migration. Others oppose migration, asserting harmful impacts on wages, social welfare, but also on local cultures. What are the responsibilities of government, business and international organizations in steering migration flows and fostering the integration of migrants?

Climate change and conflict have considerably increased the number of migrants globally, but only recently has the effect of migration on women begun to be considered. Women migrants cannot be ignored, however, as of 2000, women accounted for 49-51% of international migration worldwide. Introducing a gender perspective will aid in determining the specific forms of exploitation to which migrant women are vulnerable, and in acknowledging the manifold and highly desirable skills they have to offer to their new host countries.

Migrant women play a part in the economic development of both their country of destination and their country of origin through financial contributions from remittances, the improvement of their own skills or their contribution to the improvement of the education and skills of the next generation. Individual remittance transfers continue to be an important source of income for many families in developing countries. Migrant women may also influence the societies of origin by disseminating new values about the rights and opportunities for women.

Refugee women and girls face particular problems regarding their legal and physical protection. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has issued guidelines on gender-related persecution that recognize that gender perspectives can influence the reasons behind and type of persecution or harm suffered by women. Many factors contribute to the vulnerability of refugee and displaced women and girls to sexual violence and exploitation. The traditional communal support systems for protection of widows, single women and unaccompanied minors may no longer exist in camp situations. Power relations in situations where women and children are dependent on aid may increase vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Equal access to food and other essential items is a key issue for refugee and displaced women and children, as is their participation in decisions regarding their future and that of their families.

Migration can profoundly affect the health and well being of both migrating women and women staying behind when their spouses migrate. The impact on women’s health is complex, involving an interaction of broader determinants of health (including access to health care services) as well as the types of illnesses to which they are exposed. Women migrants who work in hazardous jobs face occupational health problems. Women both affect migratory patterns and are affected by migration in a variety of ways, and acknowledging their needs is critical to moving toward gender equality.
Migration

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Education plays a critical role in reducing world poverty and inequality, in fuelling innovation and productivity gains and in accelerating economic and health-focused advances. However, the Millennium Development Goals for Education will not be achieved without strong leadership and heightened commitment, coupled with bold actions within the next five years. The case for renewing and revitalizing the global commitment to education should not only appeal to but also compel a broad range of stakeholders to engage in an approach to redesign and enhance the quality of education systems worldwide. This Council continues to focus on advancing solutions to the most critical issues affecting the delivery of accessible, relevant and quality education, building on the recommended actions it has highlighted.

Education is the engine that fuels innovation and economic growth, a critical driver in national competitiveness and the most powerful mechanism to reduce world poverty and inequality. Notwithstanding significant progress, the challenges in education remain significant: 72 million children lack primary education, 130 million young people remain illiterate and the gap between higher education output, employability and entrepreneurialism is widening. The world needs to develop stronger, higher quality education systems supported by sustainable funding and delivered by integrated cooperation between multiple stakeholders. Failure to rethink education systems now will translate into a dearth of leaders and socially responsible individuals capable of addressing the 21st century’s complex challenges.

National economic competitiveness and the intergenerational poverty cycle can be improved by addressing gender disparities in educational access. Long-term growth can be increased and poverty reduced by enabling women to move successfully through education to productive employment. There is much evidence that levels of schooling amongst the population are highly correlated with levels of economic development. Past research shows that as average education levels increase, average income levels and income growth rates also rise. Nevertheless, more recent research has left the position much less certain, particularly for developing countries. For example, as education levels increased from the 1960s to the 1990s, growth rates moved in the opposite direction for many countries, especially in Africa (Kanbur, 2002). Perhaps one reason for the lack of a relationship between levels of education and growth is that gender inequality in education was increasing during this period.

Women are the majority of the world’s population and potential workforce, yet have relatively less access to education than men. The 2010 Global Gender Gap report shows that whilst the education gaps are closing (out of 134 countries analyzed, 22 countries have achieved complete parity for gender education and only 24 countries have a score below 0.9), there remain disparities in terms of levels and quality of education. According to the 2006 United Nations Girls’ Education fact sheet, two-thirds of all illiterate adults worldwide are women. Around the world, there are still over 77 million children out of school of which 44 million of them are girls. A mother’s education level is correlated to that of her children; hence providing women with access to education creates a positive feedback loop. In developing countries, 75 percent of the children not enrolled in primary school have uneducated mothers. Also, educational improvements have been associated with declining fertility rates: a year of schooling for girls reduces infant mortality by 5 to 10 percent (World Bank, 2008). It was shown that the greatest impact of
Education

education on fertility occurs when levels of education are at secondary level: when the proportion of women with secondary schooling doubles, the fertility rate is reduced from 5.3 to 3.9 (World Bank, 2008). In relation to HIV/AIDS, higher education levels for girls are associated with a reduced risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. It is believed that approximately 700,000 cases of HIV in young adults could be prevented annually if all children received a complete primary education (Global Campaign for Education, 2004). Overall, education has been found to increase women's levels of autonomy in decision-making, in acquiring knowledge, in gaining access to economic resources, and in interacting with a wider social circle.

Some countries still struggle to get girls through school: 20 percent of eligible girls worldwide do not go to school compared to 16 percent of boys (UNESCO, 2005). Women face many barriers to educational access and attendance, including household chores, care of family members and lack of safety. Girls in poor households are particularly likely to miss out on schooling because of the perceived and actual costs to households of girls’ schooling. These costs are both direct, such as fees, books, pencils, paper, required clothing and transport, and opportunity costs such as lost chore time and foregone earnings. Poor households sometimes see investing in girls’ education as not worthwhile as they expect daughters to leave the household upon marriage, or women’s responsibilities remaining within the home. Son preference in Asia and developing economies also affects gender differences in literacy and educational attainment. The current earning capacity of women influences expectations of how much a girl in education can expect to earn in later life. Research shows that in terms of wages, women receive higher returns to their schooling investment (ie wage gain on their initial investment): in girls’ return on average is 9.8 percent, compared with 8.7 percent for men (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004). In some countries, more girls than men get through tertiary education but often countries do not get a good return on those investments since women are not fully integrated into the production economy. Barriers affecting women’s inclusion in the formal labor markets render the benefits of their education difficult to exploit and to translate into economic gains. Overall, parents see the benefits of educating boys as more tangible.

The best practices and policy recommendations, incentives to remedy the gender disparities in education can broadly be classified into two groups: those offering financial inducements to parents, schools or the students themselves to stay in school, and programs making schools more ‘female-friendly’ by employing more women teachers, or providing separate sanitation facilities and additional support. There is now considerable evidence that scholarships can significantly increase girls’ enrollment. For example, in Bangladesh a scholarship program contributed to reversing the gender gap in school enrollment; today, more girls than boys attend school (World Bank 2001). In addition, the need for government intervention is great since the costs may seem higher to parents and the benefits more distant and harder to capture. The most effective way for governments to increase girls’ education is to make universal education (primary as step one, but also secondary) free and mandatory, while undertaking reforms to improve the quality and benefits of education. For example, by cutting school fees in Uganda, the total of girls’ enrollment went from 63 percent to 83 percent, and the enrollment among the poorest
fifth of girls went from 46 percent to 82 percent (Bruns et al. 2003). Research also demonstrates that building local schools with community support and flexible schedule or making the schools more girl-friendly are important to keep girls in education for longer. For example, in Malaysia, the absence of a secondary school in the community lowers the probability of girls’ attendance by 17 percent and boys’ by 13 percent (World Bank 2001).

Research demonstrates that investing in girls delivers high returns for economic growth and broad benefits ranging from smaller families, to disease prevention, to women’s health. To maximize the possibilities of increasing girls’ education levels, there must be increasing leadership and political will at the individual country level, development of comprehensive national education strategies and adequate mobilizing of internal and external resources targeted at girls’ education. Any comprehensive education strategy must differentiate between how girls get to education parity and how boys react to this.
Education

Bibliography:


This Council has two major objectives: 1) to serve the leaders of global society by framing key challenges and issues in terms that help foster deeper understanding and appreciation for the broad overall impact of information and communications technology and the specific value as a point of leverage to address challenges in the areas of financial inclusion, healthcare delivery, education and eco-sustainability, and 2) to help the Forum realize its mission of shaping global, regional and industry agendas by monitoring key developments and to provide new ideas and angles to help frame the agenda for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting and other activities throughout the year.

Although all people stand to benefit from access to telecommunications, rural women have the most to gain because of the many disadvantages they face (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2010). Women disproportionately encounter inequality in terms of access to education and participation in the economy, as well as access to the technological advancements that have created the globalized world of today. As the rest of the world enjoys mobile and online services, women - particularly poor and rural women - are routinely excluded (Ramilo et al, 2005). Increased access to technology for women will benefit all involved; providers will augment their profits, and women will gain financial empowerment and access to technology, which has been shown to promote economic growth in the community as a whole (Gill et al, 2010). Existing technologies have the ability to facilitate this process, and it is crucial that poor and rural women have fair and equal access to these services.

Technologies in the telecommunications industry have improved the lives of millions of people around the world, but they have yet to reach many more. Few statistics document the gender divide in technology adequately, but it is estimated that that in Latin America, women only make up 38 percent of internet users, 25 percent in Africa, 22 percent in Asia, and a mere six percent in the Middle East (ibid). There are several key reasons that women do not have the widespread access to the internet, mobile phones, radios, and other forms of telecommunications. In many under-developed rural areas, the basic infrastructure for these amenities is not in place; essential components like electricity and telephone wires are not present (ibid). The main barriers to access, however, are directly related to lifestyles; women are not only burdened with food production, child care, and maintaining community infrastructure, but are also restricted by conservative ideologies that prevent them from taking advantage of technological developments that contribute to social development (Huyer and Mitter, 2003). In many societies, it is considered improper for women to engage in public life.

Women comprise the majority of the world’s poor; likewise, two thirds of the world’s illiterate population is female (UNFPA). Therefore, using modern technologies, most of which are written in English, is beyond the capacity of many women (Huyer and Mitter, 2003). To make technologies more accessible, companies should work to ensure that their software is made available in the local language. This would not only increase utility, but also use and sales. Finally, access to technologies can be cost-prohibitive, ultimately excluding women from the market. This sets off a vicious cycle of poverty in which they cannot develop technical skills, so they cannot find jobs that earn enough income to afford the technologies that are essential to reaching a higher economic status (Gill et al, 2010). Telecommunications firms and their partners can collaborate to make technologies
Telecom Industry

affordable, user-friendly, and accessible in order to bring services equitably to all interested communities.

The internet is the iconic product of transformative innovation in the field of telecommunications. General benefits for low-income and rural people are similar to the ones that most other people enjoy: access to and exchange of information, the ability to search current market prices, farming techniques, and information on health care, education, and politics (Ramilo et al., 2005). Up-to-date knowledge of these subjects is essential for informing and empowering women and their communities. One program, developed in Bangladesh to combat the exclusive nature of the internet known as Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, has turned a fleet of solar-powered indigenous-style boats into mobile education units that bring the internet to remote villages and educate the residents in literacy, microenterprise, sustainable farming, and conservation (Packman, 2005). The internet is also used to look up market prices in order to ensure that farmers sell their goods for competitive prices (ibid). The students—over 70 percent of whom are women—are enthusiastic about learning technological skills that equip for new careers and improve their economic status (ibid). Societies cannot maximize their potential when significant portions of their talent pool do not have access to all educational resources available (Huyer and Mitter, 2003).

Radio broadcasting has also been an important telecommunications tool for the promotion of women’s equality. Radio communication has the advantages that listeners do have to be literate in order to understand information and broadcasting is largely available in local languages. In addition, radios are significantly cheaper and enjoy more widespread use than other technologies, making it easier to transmit information to women who may be tied to their domestic responsibilities. Somalia’s Macallinka Raddiyaha [Radio Teacher], was launched in 2002 to increase the country’s low literacy rate, largely due to the conflict situation that prevented entire generations from going to school (World Bank, 2008). UN agencies and other entities have been able to capitalize on Somali enthusiasm for radio programs as a mechanism to teach them literacy and basic life skills ( BROPHY AND PAGE, 2007). Radio is the dominant form of information distribution in Somalia; there are only 102,000 internet users out of a total population of 9.3 million (BBC News). Macallinka Raddiyaha has benefited all Somalis, especially women. Broadcasts in Somali cover subjects of interest to the population, including human rights, health care, and the environment (World Bank, 2008). Topics targeted at women range from breastfeeding and birth spacing, to women’s and children’s rights (BROPHY AND PAGE, 2007). Many Somalis have gained from the distance learning in their familial and economic lives—notably, one study found that 70 percent of learners were female (ibid). The adaptability of radio programs to suit women’s schedules and interests make it a powerful instrument for their education.

Many companies and social entrepreneurs have come to realize the power that mobile phones have to create access to information and services for underprivileged people. However, the distribution of cell phones is far from equal along gender lines due to many of the same constraints that limit women’s access to the internet (Ramilo et al, 2005). Globally, women are 21 percent less likely to own a mobile phone than their male
counterparts, and the statistic is even higher depending on the region (GSM Association Development Fund, 2010). This gender gap poses a problem because the benefits of mobile telephony are hard to ignore. For example, Project Zumbido in Mexico sought to bring social networking to a more meaningful level by connecting groups of HIV patients with doctors, psychologists, and each other by giving them cell phones with unlimited text messaging (ibid). Many patients that had suffered from anxiety or depression due to the stigma associated with HIV—which was particularly harsh for women—had become so discouraged that they discontinued their medical regimen (The SHM Foundation). However, when organized into these groups, participants were able to discuss their experiences and sentiments more easily and at a lower cost than if they were attending in-person support groups, thereby reducing their physical and social isolation (GSM Association Development Fund, 2010). They also were able to remind each other about taking medication and consequently witnessed improvements in physical and emotional health (The SHM Foundation). These kinds of advantages are important for women in poor and rural settings because they are often the least empowered members of societies. A venue for personal expression can provide women the confidence to take on economic, political and social leadership roles.

Mobile financial services (MFS) are a new frontier for technology and social entrepreneurship. One billion people in the world own mobile phones but lack bank accounts; it is expected that this number will nearly double by 2012 (CGAP, 2009). Many of the unbanked keep their cash in their homes or with friends, which is problematic because it can be unsafe and prevent money from entering local economies (ibid). It is important to engage women in mobile financial services because collectively, they manage millions of dollars that are unaccounted for as part of the in the informal sector. In Kenya, mobile financial services have significantly increased women’s participation in the economy through an MFS program called M-PESA (Gencer, 2011). Three years after its launch, 57 percent of adult Kenyan population was using M-PESA and the volume of money being transacted amounted to $400 million dollars, 21 percent of Kenya’s GDP (ibid). The effect was profound; rural women were one of the primary constituents of this service, largely because they could receive remittance payments from urban centers much more conveniently (Morawczynski and Pickens, 2009). Mobile transactions on M-PESA cost users a few cents, which can be 27 to 68 percent cheaper than using traditional methods, depending on the transaction. Women were financially empowered by having the ability to receive remittance payments instantly, rather than taking a week long trip to a city center to deposit or withdraw cash (ibid). Furthermore, they could acquire cash from other sources if their husbands decided not to pay (ibid). This exemplifies the best of MFS’ potential effects: greater financial autonomy for participating women, stimulation of their local economies, and a greater sense of security, connectedness, and independence (GSM Association Development Fund, 2010).

Radio, mobile phones, and the internet all been used to engage marginalized peoples in social and economic development projects. This has had significant impacts on women largely because of their traditionally limited responsibilities in formal spheres. The examples from Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha in Bangladesh, Macallinka Raddiyaba in Somalia, Project Zumbido in Mexico, and M-PESA in Kenya all demonstrate the value of having technology that works for women. These projects demonstrate connections
between interconnectedness, participation in social and economic life, and empowerment. These networks are primarily used to provide basic services like education, banking, and healthcare. However, as poor and rural women gain access to these services and increase their technical literacy, the world can anticipate more sophisticated use of telecommunications technologies. In industrialized nations, social networking is widely used to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances; however, in low-income and rural contexts, this process can be adapted to forge sustainable political, social, and economic alliances. Currently, political mobilization and strategizing among women is difficult to orchestrate because there are few feasible ways to distribute information among them. Alliances maintained through social networking tools will be important for campaigns. Electronic connections have the advantages that they do not require physical contact and can be sustained more easily. This is more realistic for women that cannot be away from home for domestic or economic obligations. These constraints notwithstanding, telecommunications can ensure that their voice is heard. Likewise, crowdfunding –the pooling of funds to make generate money for start-ups and projects– can be used by poor and rural women to purchase tools and other resources that can help them to generate their own income (Koren, 2010).

Governments and activists can take action to get the proper technologies into the hands of the disadvantaged; once women have this access, they will develop the skills to empower themselves. Telecommunications can empower them to move upward, but it must be accessible to all people in a way that is fair, functional, user-friendly, and sustainable. Given the mutual benefits for users and providers, gender parity in telecommunications-related services should become a global priority. Businesses and activists must continue to cooperate and continue to develop innovative solutions that use technology to address other pressing, global crises. A comprehensive and innovative solution that involves women helping each other and themselves is the best chance for improving the quality of life for women around the world and make economies more robust.
**Bibliography:**


**Mobile Financial Services**

Mobile Financial Services are increasingly popular due to the advantages that they offer to low-income and rural people who generally do not have bank accounts because they are too poor or remote; this population is overwhelmingly comprised of women. Mobile Financial Services reduce the costs and distances that are associated with banking by capitalizing on mobile technology that many of the unbanked already possess. Mobile banking has enormous potential to improve the lives of people worldwide, but many barriers impede poor and rural women from having access to these services. Gender parity in Mobile Financial Services benefits people in different sectors and income levels and should, therefore, be actively pursued has the potential to significantly improve the economic status of millions of women.

The current popularity of social entrepreneurship has yielded unprecedented innovation in both new technologies and the application of existing ones to alleviate environmental, health, and other social ills. Telecommunications have been a fundamental component of the movement to harness the power of technology for the benefit of humanity; however, progress in this field has not affected all people evenly. It is well known that women disproportionately encounter inequality not only in terms of education and participation in the economy, but also from the technological advancements that have increased the interconnectedness of today’s world. As the rest of the world enjoys mobile and online services, women—particularly poor and rural women—are routinely excluded due to entrenched constraints including cultural norms, limited technical literacy, domestic responsibilities, isolation, and poverty (Ramilo et al., 2005). Nevertheless, research shows that it is in the best interest of businesses, governments, and activists to continue to cultivate the extraordinary potential of telecommunications in ways that explicitly benefit these populations; doing so will lift them from poverty and strengthen their communities at large.

Many companies and activists have come to realize the power that mobile phones have to grant access to information and services to underprivileged people. Banks both in industrialized and emerging economies are increasingly turning to mobile financial services (MFS) as the next frontier for technology and social entrepreneurship. Mobile banking is increasingly popular among microfinance institutions as an effective way to conduct business with people in rural locations (Mayoux and Hartl, 2009). One billion people in the world have mobile phones but lack bank accounts, and it is expected that this number will nearly double by 2012 (CGAP, 2009). Many of the unbanked keep their cash in their homes or with friends, which is problematic because it can be unsafe and prevent that money from entering local economies (ibid). Mobile banking presents a viable solution for both banks and customers because it reduces transaction costs and prevents people from having to make costly or unsafe journeys to far-away banks (ibid). Huge possibilities exist for implementation.

Although all low-income people stand to benefit from MFS, rural women have the most to gain because of the many disadvantages they face (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2010). These women are frequently burdened with food production, child care, and maintaining community infrastructure, among other duties that prevent them from participating in market activities (Huyer and Mitter, 2003). In addition, conservative gender ideologies may discourage or prohibit women from engaging in formal economic sectors. Providers of telecommunications should consider gender disparities as they
increase their geographical scope and devise ways to ensure fair access to women through MFS. For example, cash withdrawals and deposits must be made in-person with local merchants that serve as outposts for banks (Mas and Kumar, 2008). This can pose real and perceived threats to the accessibility of the transactions for women, particularly in small, conservative towns in which all the residents know one another. It is often the case that women are discouraged from seeking any kind of autonomy, and men in the communities may take on the role of enforcers of cultural norms. Women making bank transactions run the risk of being harassed, denied service, or even attacked and robbed by their male counterparts. Women can bank more discreetly with the distance reduced by a local outpost of a bank. However, in some cases, male vendors might disclose the transactions to the women’s families, thereby eliminating the privacy of the service. In order for MFS programs to be successful, companies need to have vendors that women know and trust to maintain their privacy; many women do not feel comfortable submitting their money, bank information, or even phone number to strangers, particularly if they are male. The solution to these possible challenges can be as simple as having female banking representatives who also conduct cultural and gender sensitive outreach that educates communities about the benefits of mobile banking.

It is important to engage women in mobile financial services because collectively, they manage millions of dollars that are unaccounted for as part of the informal sector (ibid). Experts see remittance payments—money that migrant workers send home—as the most relevant type of MFS transactions for women. Women comprise half of the world’s migrant population, though the statistics may be much higher when disaggregated by country (Mayoux and Hartl, 2009). For example, 80 to 90 percent of migrants from the Philippines are female (ibid). The Philippines is one of the first places where mobile banking was introduced and has enjoyed enormous success in terms of revenues generated and customer satisfaction since its inception. Half of the mobile users in the Philippines do not have bank accounts and a quarter of mobile users live on less than five USD per day (CGAP, 2009). Nonetheless, one study found that poor people in the country actively manage money, handling $450 million dollars informally—namely in savings and remittance payments. People with mobile banking were found to transfer greater amounts of money with more frequency because the transfers became more inexpensive and safe than before (ibid). These factors overwhelmingly benefit women, given the gendered nature of remittance payments.

The 2001 World Bank report, “Engendering Development- Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice” details several studies evidencing that women are more likely to spend money on basic family needs like education and healthcare, whereas men have been found to use money for personal expenses (Mayoux and Hartl, 2009). A well-known study conducted in Brazil found that women’s resources are 20 times more likely to positively impact children’s health; another from Cote D’Ivoire showed that when women control family spending, money spent on food increases while the amount spent on tobacco decreases (Herz and Sperling, 2004). The vast majority of microfinance literature supports these findings, which explains why many microfinance organizations target women. Children and communities are the first to gain when women have some degree of financial control, and MFS is becoming one of the most effective ways to grant
women this control.

In Kenya, mobile financial services have significantly increased women’s participation in the economy through a program called M-PESA (Gencer, 2011). Three years after its launch, 57 percent of the adult Kenyan population was using M-PESA and the volume of money being transacted annually amounted to $400 million dollars, 21 percent of Kenya’s GDP (ibid). The effect was profound; rural women were one of the primary constituents of this service, largely because they could receive remittance payments from urban centers more conveniently (Morawczynski and Pickens, 2009). Mobile transactions on M-PESA cost users a few cents, which can be 27 to 68 percent cheaper than using traditional methods, depending on the transaction. Kenyan women were financially empowered much in the same way that the Philippine women were, having the ability to obtain remittance payments instantly, rather than taking a week long trip to a city center to withdraw or deposit cash (ibid). Women also face an increased risk of robbery; many users felt that this threat was reduced by not having to carry cash around or at home (ibid). Furthermore, they could acquire cash from other sources if their husbands decided not to pay (ibid). This exemplifies the best of MFS’ potential effects: increased financial autonomy for participating women, stimulation of local economies, and a greater sense of security, connectedness, and independence (GSM Association Development Fund, 2010).

Whether it involves sending or receiving remittance payments, developing small and medium enterprises, or a need for secure money handling, women manage large amounts of money in a process that can be greatly improved by MFS (Mayoux and Hartl, 2009). The ability for women to conduct business from home is convenient; it not only saves them money, but also empowers them by giving them important decision-making and management opportunities in spite of social or physical isolation (Ramilo et al, 2005). This is imperative in light of international studies that show that women’s specific needs must be met in order to successfully eradicate poverty (Huyer and Mitter, 2003). Businesses need to make sure that the implementation of MFS is done in a way that is accessible and beneficial to women; ideally, providing inexpensive and user friendly service in the local language (ibid). Currently, there is a significant risk that MFS customers take with the use of electronic money; this type of banking is not subject to the same regulation that protects customers’ funds in regular banks in cases of bank failure (Tarazi and Breloff, 2010). However, governments in the Philippines, Kenya, and other countries where mobile banking occurs have implemented some regulatory requirements for providers of these services; overall, the benefits for women outweigh the risks (ibid). The benefits are universal: although no studies have formally measured the effects of MFS on gross domestic product, experts anticipate an increase in GDP due to the increased productivity, job creation, and bolstering of adjacent economies (Gencer, 2011). Researchers have also identified a thirteen billion dollar potential for companies that increase mobile services to women worldwide (GSM Association Development Fund, 2010). Companies providing these services could also expand their corporate social responsibility objectives by investing some of the profits generated by MFS programs in rural communities, particularly in women’s empowerment programs. Given the mutual benefits for users and providers, gender parity in mobile banking and other telecommunications-related services should become a global priority.
The development of mobile financial services is merely one example of a point where telecommunications and social development intersect, but innovation must not stop there. Activists should draw lessons about the ability to distribute information and resources on a mass scale for the benefit of women and other underprivileged people. This kind of technology could be used to pool women’s funds together to make community investments in supplies or resources, a practice sometimes known as “crowdfunding” (Koren, 2010). Crowdfunding has primarily been used to generate monies over the internet for start-ups and creative projects in industrialized nations, but in a rural setting, this could be done through text messaging to pay for seeds or an irrigation system that could help women cultivate crops to sell (ibid). Alternatively, women could engage in a modified version of peer-to-peer transfers—a function already available through MFS—called peer-to-peer lending, in which acquaintances borrow money from one another with interest (ibid). This practice tends to be more lucrative and the money generally comes from wealthy “peers” as opposed to banks, but can be modified to suit low-income and rural contexts (ibid). The relationships between peer-to-peer lending, microfinance, and crowdfunding are only beginning to be explored; the next step is to integrate the technological component. A comprehensive and innovative solution that involves women helping each other and themselves is the best chance for improving the quality of life for women around the world and make economies more robust.
Mobile Financial Services

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Health is valued both in its own right, and as a major contribution to human capital and productivity. The health system comprises all the actions undertaken with the prime intention of maintaining and improving a nation’s health. It can therefore embrace many actions beyond conventional healthcare, including health promotion, prevention and preparedness for health emergencies. It also includes coordinating and influencing cross-sectoral actions to improve health. The governance of a health system has a crucial impact on its performance, measured in terms of its outcomes, in terms of length and quality of life, health equality, efficiency and financial protection for citizens from healthcare expenditure. Good governance is needed at every level, including national and local government, the institutions of healthcare, the medical professions, private providers and civil society.

Policies to improve the health status of the poor have been an important focus of development policy, justified by the recognition that good health is a basic right as well as a critical determinant of economic productivity. Today poor reproductive health is a leading killer and disabler of women in the developing world. This is causing a tremendous amount of needless death and suffering, as well as dragging down economic growth and undermining efforts to reduce poverty. Every year, more than half a million women die during pregnancy and childbirth, largely from problems that can be prevented. And for every woman who dies, 20 other women suffer injuries and disabilities that can last a lifetime and rob them of energy and productivity. Of all regions, Africa has the world’s highest rates of maternal mortality — at least 100 times those in developed countries. In developing regions there were 480 maternal deaths per 100,000 births in 1990 compared to 450 deaths in 2005 (DFID). Thus, despite greater attention by governments and the international community, there is minimal progress being made toward alleviating the burdens surrounding women and health.

Maternal health is crucial for the welfare of the whole household, especially children who are dependent on their mothers to provide food, care, and emotional support. The death or chronic ill-health of a mother increases the probability of death and poor growth and development of her children. In fact, women’s health during the reproductive or fertile years (between the ages of 15 and 49 years) is relevant not only to women themselves, but also has an impact on the health and development of the next generation. Complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in young women aged between 15 and 19 years old in developing countries (WHO, 2009). Pregnant women can be subjected to stigma and violence associated with their position in society, in particular if they are single. Women in many developing countries have less freedom to act, less personal autonomy, and less access to information than their male partners or husbands. This lower social autonomy exacerbates women’s biological vulnerabilities to infections such as HIV and malaria. Over 30 million adults in the world are HIV positive, 70 percent of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa and more than half are women (Seager, 2009). During pregnancy, women are more susceptible to malaria and outcomes for the mother and unborn child are more severe. For example, malaria in women leads to low birth weight either by premature delivery or impaired growth in utero. Progress in maternal and child health is to a large extent dependent on the AIDS response. According to the study there were an estimated 343 000 maternal deaths in 2008. An additional 60 000 lives could be saved each year if women received appropriate HIV diagnosis and treatment, researchers reported (The Global Fund, 2010). The deaths of women leave entire
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households without support, and girls who are orphaned are particularly vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation and thus in turn to HIV infection.

The wide acceptance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the international community confirms the central role of human development, including health and nutrition, in combating poverty. People become poorer as a result of bad health or health crises, but being poor also makes people less more exposed to health risks with less access to adequate treatments. Nutrition is a key area where the combined effects of gender inequality and poverty produce ill-health for women and girls, and inter-generational transmission of poverty may occur through the undernourishment/overwork of pregnant or lactating women. Poor households place good health as one of their highest priorities and ill health as one of the main reasons why they fall into the cycle of poverty (World Bank, 2010). The health impact of the linkages between gender concerns and poverty are most clearly seen in terms of reproduction, overwork, hazardous work, and poor nutrition. Poverty and gender also have significant linkages in relation to vulnerability to violence, and stigmatization due to health problems. Certain conditions of ill-health may lead to women’s social exclusion and subsequent poverty, pointing to the importance of recognizing a cycle of ill health and poverty. However, it is important to recognize that women’s health problems and access to health care are affected not only by poverty, but also by gender inequality.

Governments and the international community should help strengthen health systems so that they are better geared to meet women’s needs in terms of access, comprehensiveness and responsiveness. The regions with the highest mortality burden—sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia—face massive deprivation in access to such care and the sheer scarcity of staff and the excessive costs of care to mothers are substantial barriers to progress. To achieve rapid coverage requires training, deployment, and retention of midwives, preferably in teams in small facilities. Financial barriers to care, such as user fees, must also be removed. In fact, women face higher health costs than men due to their greater use of health care yet they are more likely than their male counterparts to be poor, unemployed or else engaged in part-time work or work in the informal sector that offers no health benefits. Overcoming health system constraints to provide such interventions at scale is possible, but donors will need to increase financial contributions for maternal health in low-income countries to help overcome the resource gap.

The long-term effect of securing adequate levels of women’s health is likely to be substantial on economic growth, gender equality and women’s empowerment. Improvement in the financial and geographical access to good quality care based in health centers, and a gendered approach to health, is therefore important in any poverty eradication strategy, as well as a means of reaching the MDGs.
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Humanitarian Assistance

Many millions are immediately affected by humanitarian crises, and the number is sure to rise. The UN estimates 37 armed conflicts took place in 2007, and 414 natural disasters affected 211 million people. Overall, there were 16 million refugees, 51 million internally displaced people and 90 million in need of food aid. Although the international community has significantly improved its humanitarian response capabilities through actions such as the development of best practices, standards and codes, and the creation of coordinated institutional structures, the humanitarian caseload is becoming increasingly complex. Both conventional and new drivers of humanitarian crises are connected in some manner to other parts of the global governance system – whether through policies on fragile states, agricultural development or the international climate change regime. This Council focuses its work on the key structural gaps in international cooperation (whether institutional, legal or other) related to humanitarian assistance, and the means to tackle them through concrete recommendations.

“Disasters are not gender neutral,” according to Ms. Carolyn McAskie, previously Acting Head of the United Nation’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Red Cross states that between 2000 and 2004, the number of natural disasters in the world more than doubled the number of disasters recorded in the ten years previous. Catastrophic disasters and conflict impact women differently than men, and policies and development plans often ignore women’s unique needs. The World Health Organization confirm that “available data suggests that there is a pattern of gender differentiation at all stages of a disaster exposure to risk, risk perception, preparedness, response, physical impact, psychological impact, recovery and reconstruction”.

Relief programs have tended to overlook women’s crucial roles in both the production and distribution processes. In fact, there is often little understanding of the gender relations underlying household livelihoods. In many societies, assistance whether it is food aid, tools and seeds or training were distributed directly to male heads of households. However, worldwide the majority of refugees and internally displaced persons are women. Therefore, the displaced family depends heavily on the ability of women to adapt, to continue to be able to cook, clean, fetch water and care for children even though resources are scarce. Women continue to care for their children, the elderly and injured combatants despite the chaos of disaster or flight, and the social disruption which follows. In addition, when a woman becomes the head of a household, she and her family become more vulnerable to poverty. Women are forced to assume men’s chores without having the same access to financial, technical, and social resources. The lack of access is due to several factors, including illiteracy, cultural restrictions and gender biases in institutions, all of which render improvements in women’s living conditions extremely difficult.

Where most relief organizations have indicated that they mainstream gender into their policy, there is still a lack of specific gender practices in their programs. Time and budget constraints are among the most mentioned reasons for not incorporating gender in relief aid programs, yet inserting gender practices in relief programs are crucial for the success of the humanitarian relief operations. Introducing a gender approach into relief programs need not always slow down the delivery of relief, and it can actually render assistance more effective. Mistakes made in the early phase of relief operations, such as inappropriate sanitation facilities can prove damaging and be costly to remedy later.
consultation of women requires pro-active and creative measures. For example, such measures include the use of female field officers who speak the same language as beneficiaries, attention to the timing and location of consultations, and cultural sensitivity. Measures are required to protect women, including consultation in camp planning and design, increased camp security, professional counseling and support for victims of violence, raising awareness about their rights, and increased representation of female staff. In addition, simple measures, such as providing adequate-weight food bags so that they can be adequately handled by women, and compiling food packets so that milk powder is included and considered essential for women who are not able to breastfeed their children due to malnourishment. And finally, gender-conscious latrines, food distribution sites, washing areas and fuel collection sites also need to be designed according to women’s safety criterion.

Women who have suffered from natural disasters or armed conflicts display strength, endurance and resourcefulness. Humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and resettlement programs need to ensure that women are fully involved in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all short-term and long-term assistance provided. There is urgent need for international data sets to provide sex-disaggregated data on disaster-related mortality, morbidity and long-term health consequences. Data should also focus on the socio-cultural constraints faced by women, which restrict their behavior and mobility and thus their capacity to respond to emergencies. It is not enough to dispense humanitarian aid to women and children; women must be active participants in the development of aid policy to ensure that their short and long-term needs are met.

Therefore humanitarian agencies must take gender into consideration when creating emergency policy. A gender approach is important to identify men’s and women’s differing vulnerabilities to crises as well as their different capacities and coping strategies. Registration of women separately from men is required to ease problems they may face in seeking asylum. In refugee and “IDP” camps, camp layout, facilities and administration need to be designed with women and children’s security needs in mind, to reduce women’s vulnerability to harassment and attack from others in the camp or with access to it.

It is important to include gender in the humanitarian assistance discourse, which means focusing on women’s strategic as well as practical interests. Crisis situations can lead to changes in what is considered acceptable behavior for both genders, with changes in the range of activities permissible and shifts in the gender division of labor. Some of these changes can lead to women gaining new skills and increased autonomy. In other cases, however, individuals may be forced into strategies which transgress social norms and women particularly risk losing social approval and support not just temporarily. Liberation struggles can promote new roles and opportunities for women as part of wider social revolution, however, conflict is more likely to reinforce, than to challenge, traditional views of men and women. In the case of violent conflict, it dramatically increases women’s vulnerability to sexual violence and rape. Rape increases the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and results in unwanted pregnancies. Either condition may result in women being banished from or marginalized in their communities. Domestic violence is also exacerbated in time of crisis and emergencies.
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Social Innovation

The Social Entrepreneurship Council has taken up the challenge of overcoming obstacles to social entrepreneurship such as loan and funding limitations, inadequate organizational capacity for maintaining existing initiatives, and insufficient governmental support for expanding useful policies and resources.

Social enterprises are businesses which bridge the gap between public assistance and private business. They use the power of private enterprise to promote public good by enabling the disadvantaged to earn an income rather than rely solely on public assistance. This is accomplished by the creation of innovative solutions to a variety of social problems addressing the environment, education, health, and governmental policies. Social entrepreneurs assess their success by considering a blend of both social and financial returns, rather than simply focusing on the latter.

Women’s entrepreneurship is expanding around the world, both in emerging and developed economies. Women entrepreneurs constitute a growing share of small and medium enterprise (SME) owners and are creating new niches for entrepreneurial activity, but are often confronted with special barriers to business creation and development. Fostering the growth of women’s entrepreneurship is an effective strategy to create jobs, catalyze economic development, empower women and foster social cohesion.

Long-term solutions can begin with the educational system, with entrepreneurial education starting as early as possible in the education process. School-sponsored business games support entrepreneurial ways of thinking and acting, promote personality development and help to reduce gender related problems. When preparing for the actual start-up, women require specific training. Training activities should be based on an interdisciplinary approach and involve successful women entrepreneurs. In this context imparting theoretical knowledge and sharing hands-on experience is equally important. Role models who draw a realistic picture of female entrepreneurship can encourage women to take the chance of being self-employed.

Social enterprises are proving greatly beneficial to women because globally women are more likely to hold low-paid and unstable jobs in the so-called informal economy. Accordingly, many women have a greater need than men for assistance in obtaining shelter, security, safety, legal aid and rights, justice, information, maternal health, and even such basics as food and nutrition. Women may also require more help in developing marketable skills, attaining an education, or gaining access to credit sources necessary in starting a business.

Further, women (especially those in underdeveloped or traditional societies) are more likely to work at home providing indispensable but unpaid labor in raising children, caring for the elderly, growing food and hauling water and firewood. Often physically difficult and time consuming, such labor can also be debilitating to health as well as eliminating the time necessary for intellectual development and the acquisition of marketable skills. Moreover, women who work at home - even when society compels this choice - are often afforded low social standing, making their economic situation all the more precarious.
**Social Innovation**

Extending opportunities and protection to women who remain at home is crucial to societal stability, and, for this reason, social entrepreneurs are providing essential support. Some social enterprises, for example, are creating home-based industries such as textile operations or small farming cooperatives.

Women must have the option of joining the workforce or caring for home and family full time; neither decision, however, should lead to a life sentence of poverty and abuse. As US President Obama stated in his "Address to the Muslim World," "I do not believe that women must make the same choices as men in order to be equal, and I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles. But it should be their choice..."

Unfortunately, however, women - especially poor women - are often unable to join the formal workforce because of educational deficiencies, low social status, household obligations, or a combination of one or more of these. Social enterprises should expand assistance to those women seeking employment outside the home by offering creative opportunities in the formal job market, including helping disadvantaged women start a small business by means of micro-financing and other innovative credit schemes, or by employing persons new to - or long disconnected from - the traditional work force.
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Anti-Corruption

Corruption, the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, is the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development around the world. It distorts markets, stifles economic growth and sustainable development, debases democracy and undermines the rule of law. It robs local populations, particularly in developing countries, of critically needed resources. Estimates show that the cost of corruption equals more than 5% of global GDP (US$ 2.6 trillion) with over US$ 1 trillion paid in bribes each year.

The persistence of corruption in the developing and the developed world alike has led to the search for new methods of combating corruption. The introduction of a gender perspective has led to an appreciation of women’s role in government and relationship between women’s representation and a reduction in corruption. Corruption is especially detrimental to poor segments of the population, the majority of which are comprised of women. Women are further particularly vulnerable to certain aspects of corruption, such as corruption of health and education.

Women’s role in fighting corruption is usually regarded as positive and effective. They set different priorities than men and offer a diversity of experiences, reducing susceptibility to bribery and other forms of corruption. At least in the short and medium term, greater numbers of women in public office can be seen to reduce levels of corruption. Both by accepting fewer bribes and by promoting the passage of legislation that deters corruption, women’s participation in parliament works to impact the frequency of corrupt activities at the highest levels of government. Simultaneously, women’s individual responses to questions about corruption indicate that they are less prone to corruption than men.

While there is a lack of evidence on how many lower-level government positions are held by women, the percentage of women in the labor force also shows a correlation to corruption levels. World Bank research shows that this may result from the fact that women are less likely to sacrifice the public good for personal, material gain. It is important to stress, however, that increasing the number of women in positions of power by itself is not enough; increased female representation must be coupled with other strategies to curb corruption.

Corruption has far-reaching economic, social, and political effects, but efforts to reduce corruption can also provide a window of opportunity for women. They can function to promote gender equality and increase the number and visibility of women in power and society in general. Introducing a gender perspective to measures combating corruption will result both in a reduction in corruption levels as well as in increased opportunities for women, establishing gender equality as a societal norm.
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RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Food Security

In 2009, the global food and economic crises drove millions of additional people into food insecurity, raising the total number of hungry people to over 1 billion. The number has since declined slightly to an estimated 925 million, but it remains high and a substantial risk of repeated crises remains. Shortfalls and volatility in global food supplies and prices will likely continue and potentially intensify due to rising demand for food, the increased costs of production, and intensified climate change. Risk and volatility have become “the new normal” in the food security arena. The global community must adapt its prevention and response actions accordingly. Yet food insecurity can be mitigated. This Council seeks to help raise awareness and leverage support for priority actions to strengthen the global response to this challenge.

Women’s role in food production and agriculture has traditionally been overlooked; only recently has their critical role in attaining food security begun to receive increased attention. Introducing a gender perspective to food security will help to acknowledge more fully the extent of women’s contributions to household food security, as well as identify men’s and women’s specific needs to make food production more efficient and effective.

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.” Worldwide, women play a crucial role in food security and agricultural development. They make up the majority of farmers and agriculture workers. According to PAN Asia-Pacific, women are responsible for half of the world’s food production. In most developing countries, women are the mainstay of food production; they produce between 60 and 80 percent of all food. In Southeast Asia, 90 percent of rice is produced by women. In Pakistan, women raise 80 percent of the livestock.

Women contribute substantially to ensuring food security by collecting and harvesting food to feed their families and employing environmentally sound and sustainable farming practices to maximize future crop production. Less frequently recognized is women’s role in increasing overall agricultural outputs and growing agricultural businesses. On average, women achieve a much higher agricultural output per plot than do men. The Asian Development Bank has also found that giving micro loans to women entrepreneurs interested in developing new agricultural products and services increases their income and employment from raising and marketing livestock. Increasing women’s income is critical, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, for research in Latin America, Asia, and Africa shows that women’s access to income and their decision-making power in household expenditures are associated with household food security and better nutrition.

Nonetheless, gender norms and gender differences in property rights continue to restrict women’s access to the resources and technology necessary for food production while hindering women’s legal rights to land. Property rights significantly influence land care thus land owners have a greater incentive to develop ways of preserving regenerating the land. In Cameroon, for example, women own less than 10% of all land, while they do more than 75% of the agricultural work. Land rights reform is essential to ensuring food security.
In addition, women have less access to extension services (frequently due to the fact that men agents work with male farmers, working on the false assumption that the information will “trickle down” to the women), decreasing their access to new education and farming techniques that would help improve their agricultural output. Through Human Rights Resolution 2005/18, the United Nations has acknowledged that women are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, and that it is critically necessary to continue mainstreaming gender in efforts to increase food security. Introducing a gender perspective to food security acknowledges and raises the value of women’s contributions to household food production and promotes gender equality as an institutionalized norm.
Food Security

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Fragile States

States suffering fragility are those states where the national public authority is not providing the basic public goods that allow their societies to live in peace and improve their prospects for the future. These are states that do not provide accountable and effective security and social protection; predictable and enforced laws that are generally accepted as legitimate; revenue collection and management of external aid to ensure the delivery of basic social and economic services to society; and mechanisms of accountability of state authorities to society. These states are vulnerable to both internal and external shocks and thus their populations are likely to suffer the most from the vagaries of climate change and the impact of droughts and flooding, regional insecurity, and regional and international economic crises.

Fragility refers to certain state’s inability and/or unwillingness to provide essential public goods like protection from external threats, rule of law and basic social services to most of their citizens. The impact of state fragility on vulnerable populations, especially poor people on the ground as well as women and girls within these populations, is of great concern. A generation of learning about gender and development suggests that there are two basic ways in which gender considerations are important in fragile states. Men and women are affected differently by the widespread human rights violations, pervasive poverty and physical insecurity that often characterize fragile states. At the same time, men and women -- and prevailing gender relations -- can contribute to or undermine positive change in fragile states.

First, men and women are affected differently by state fragility and human rights violations in fragile states. In some situations women and girls are vulnerable to rape and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as to forced displacement. In others men and boys are targeted by campaigns to recruit or eliminate potential combatants. Limited access to justice also affects men and women differently. For example weak legal protection against domestic violence, and weak protection for women’s property claims, profoundly affect women’s ability to exercise their rights. Extreme poverty is another prevailing feature of most fragile and failing states. Women are hard hit by poverty where they are excluded from full participation in the labor force or in credit markets, by law or by practice. Women and children can also have less access to already weak social services like health and primary education in fragile states. Women and girls take on greater work burdens when basic services are limited and when men are drafted into war. Authoritarian and discriminatory politics in some fragile states can also limit opportunities for women’s participation in policy-making and implementation.

Second, gender roles and relations are crucial to understanding opportunities and obstacles to state building. Just as men and women are affected differently by fragility, they can be obstacles to or agents of positive change in fragile states. For example some women and their organizations might be champions of democratic participation and accountability. Others may encourage large-scale violence, as was seen in the Balkans, Rwanda and Uganda during the 1990s. Men can also be champions of reform. Some men have been at the forefront of struggles for democracy, economic equity and even gender equality. Yet history suggests that, in some circumstances, some men and the organizations they lead are drivers behind aspects of state fragility such as discrimination, violence, misogyny and the maintenance of elite privileges. Women and men, girls and boys, have much to contribute to transforming the dynamics of state fragility. They can
Fragile States

contribute to building alternatives at the community level, to challenging state fragility at the national level, and to linking with efforts in neighboring states, since fragility often spills across borders. The specific roles of men and women, and their potential as change agents, should be examined and reinforced in a context-specific manner.
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The Council on Pandemics warns that while any serious, global pandemic will cause considerable harm, pandemic influenza poses a particularly acute threat because the flu virus can lead to serious illness and spread very quickly. The rapid, global transmission of a virulent influenza would be especially difficult for developing nations to manage; a severe outbreak could overwhelm scarce medical resources, hinder outside aid efforts and disrupt the supply of food, electricity, water and essential medicines. Rich nations would likely experience social and economic turmoil including school closures, transportation shut-downs and numerous other service disruptions which could, in turn, trigger a significant, economic downturn. State and local governments will be hard-pressed to handle the surge of patients and to distribute vaccine and antiviral medication quickly and efficiently.

Public health experts recognize that women would be especially vulnerable during a severe influenza outbreak for two reasons: biological (child-bearing) and cultural (child-rearing). The cultural component is more pronounced in traditional societies where mothers and daughters are the primary (if not the sole) caretakers of young children and ailing family members. During an influenza pandemic, girls and women will be in direct, constant contact with flu sufferers. The closer and more prolonged the contact, the greater the risk of contracting the virus.

Girls living in poor, rural societies are at special risk given that the malnutrition rate among female children is significantly higher than among male children. Due to the so-called “son bias,” male children in developing nations consistently consume more calories and proteins than daughters, leaving girls weaker and more vulnerable to infection. Moreover, boys often consume a significantly larger share of health care resources in general and medicines in particular. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations have found that parents in rural societies are more willing to travel farther to seek medical treatment for sons than for daughters even after adjusting for severity of illness, parent's income, occupation and education, and the birth order of the child. These attitudes will increase the mortality rate of girls during a pandemic.

Pregnant women with the flu are at risk of developing serious complications which can trigger early labor and cause severe respiratory ailments such as pneumonia. As a result, otherwise healthy pregnant women who contract the flu are far more likely to be hospitalized.

In recognition of the special challenges presented by pregnant women, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends immunizing pregnant women against the flu and giving them the highest priority access to the H1N1 vaccine in the event of a shortage. If past is prologue, however, many pregnant women will not get immunized. Despite the well-known risk of the virus to both mother and baby, the flu vaccination rate for expectant women is very low. In fact, the CDC cautions that pregnant women may simply “opt out” due to potential side-effects (real or imagined) of new medicines such as the H1N1 vaccine that were developed relatively quickly and approved without the usual testing protocol.

Many pregnant women also refuse to take antiviral drugs to reduce flu symptoms and severity. Untreated pregnant women with the flu are at greater risk (than those taking
antiviral medicine) of becoming seriously ill and/or infecting family members, co-workers and the general public. For this reason, pandemic influenza planners are stressing “non-pharmaceutical” precautions for pregnant women, directing them to stay at home, avoid crowded settings, and limit their exposure to people and public places.
Bibliography:


Energy security is the reliable, stable and sustainable supply of energy at affordable prices and social cost. For many years governments have struggled to provide energy security through a mix of policies that have tempered demand and increased supply. There is growing evidence that these policies are falling far short of the effort needed. Energy exporters and importers are interdependent and increasingly anxious about the reliability of energy supplies. Additionally, a number of interlinked issues and challenges have appeared in recent years. The Council on Energy Security aims to identify and discuss these challenges.

In developed nations, energy security is defined as the sustained availability of adequate fuel supplies at an affordable cost. A nation which has attained energy security has sufficient energy to support economic growth and to protect against energy shortfalls that could dampen economic expansion and potentially trigger social and political unrest. Energy security in developing nations is often defined in the negative. The United Nations Development Programme, for example, defines energy insecurity or so-called “energy poverty” as “the inability to cook with modern cooking fuels and the lack of a bare minimum of electric lighting to read or for other household and productive activities at sunset.”

In developing countries, a significant percentage of rural, poor households lack access to basic electrical services. Energy-poor households must use firewood or other biomass fuels for cooking and for lighting. Without electrical pumps, water for drinking, washing, cooking and sanitation must be carried home, sometimes at great distance.

In such households, the absence of basic energy services puts a greater burden on women than on men simply because the chore of gathering adequate fuel supplies and water typically falls to women. Mothers and daughters shoulder a disproportionate responsibility to fulfill household energy demands, and spend much of their time and physical strength carrying water and collecting fuel. Although essential to the family’s wellbeing, such labor is considered less valuable than the duties traditionally performed by men.

The long hours and considerable effort required to gather fuel and water day after day leaves women physically sapped and lacking the time to pursue their education or to obtain gainful employment outside the home. Women cannot advance in any society without education or the means to generate income. Thus, gender inequality in traditional rural societies is perpetuated, reinforcing female illiteracy and poverty.

In order to prosper, many rural families, especially impoverished women, need secure access to modern cooking fuels and running water. For this reason, energy experts believe that emerging nations must consider issues surrounding gender and poverty when developing new energy policies. In fact, such experts contend that an enlightened energy policy should do more than simply provide disadvantaged women with basic energy needs; a progressive policy should also increase income-generating opportunities for women in the production and distribution of energy through targeted training programs and creative financing options.
**Energy Security**

**Bibliography:**


Our wealthier, more populous, more climate-variable world is fast becoming a more water insecure world. Water insecurity poses a real threat to the economic development and security of numerous countries. The fundamental rethink of how water is managed will simultaneously focus on supply, investment, allocation, regulation and conservation issues. The world must manage the resource better; however, water management is approached with trepidation, if it even appears on the political agenda. Although effective bilateral and regional arrangements exist, global institutions are not configured to provide the multidisciplinary, multistakeholder platforms required to discuss, highlight and collectively take action on shared water challenges. Thus there is a clear need to establish such coalitions and to make them “ACT”, or move from analysis to actions to transformations, in order to prevent major water crises.

Within the next 20 years freshwater will become the most important strategic resource, essential for sustaining life and achieving sustainable development. Its control will be a source of power and the key to economic development, and it will be one of the root causes of socio-political stress. The global commitments made in the areas of water and sanitation do not specifically address the equitable division of power, work, access to and control of resources between women and men. It will be critical to mainstream gender perspectives into the planning process to ensure that the specific needs and concerns of women and men from all social groups are taken into account in development, use and management of water resources and sanitation.

The importance of involving both women and men in the management of water and sanitation has been recognized at the global level, starting with the 1977 United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata, the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade (1981-90) and the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin (January 1992), which explicitly recognizes the central role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. Moreover, the resolution establishing the International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Life’ (2005-2015), calls for women’s participation and involvement in water-related development efforts.

In most cultures, women and men have different roles and responsibilities in the use and management of water. Water is often at the core of women’s traditional responsibilities: collecting water for cooking, cleaning, health and hygiene, and if they have access to land, growing food. These tasks often represent a whole day of work; in some regions, women spend up to five hours a day collecting fuel wood and water and up to four hours preparing food. In Africa, 90% of the work of gathering water and wood, for the household and for food preparation, is done by women. The inordinate burden of fetching water inhibits women’s and girl’s involvement in other activities such as education, income generation, cultural and political involvement, and rest and recreation.

Technological innovations are beginning to ease this burden. The invention in recent years of a low-cost irrigation pump operated by a foot pedal, for example, has reduced the time women spend gathering drinking water and water for irrigating crops. Water filtration systems that are easy to construct and operate and inexpensive to maintain are now available in some of the poorest nations. Because contaminated drinking water sickens or kills millions of people every year in developing countries, such innovation must be properly encouraged and funded.
Water Security

Ensuring women’s use and control of land - and irrigation water - is fundamental. Studies have shown a direct correlation between independent land and irrigation rights for women and a higher productivity of land and labor. Thus, land allocation under irrigation schemes should be to individual farmers rather than to households—currently, women hold title to less than 2 per cent of the world’s private land. Moreover, even where women do have a legal right to land, customs often prevent them from taking de facto control of land and natural resources, such as in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Zimbabwe.

Women are also under-represented in the ‘water world’, with careers and training in water management dominated by men. If water management is to be democratic and transparent – and represent the needs of the people – both men and women must have an equal say. A start has been made through the increase in the number of women serving as ministers of water and environment, but the empowerment of women as water managers must also be felt at the grassroots level.

Lessons from Africa and the rest of the world have demonstrated that increased participation by women in decision-making leads to better operation and maintenance of water facilities, better health for the community, greater privacy and dignity for women, more girls attending school and increased income opportunities for women. It has increasingly been recognized that the exclusion of women from the planning of water supply and sanitation schemes is a major cause of their high rate of failure. Gender considerations are at the heart of providing, managing and conserving our finite water resources and safeguarding health through proper sanitation and hygiene.
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The Council on the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) will focus its work on three critical issues for the future of the region, namely addressing the gender gap, ensuring quality education and fostering economic competitiveness. This Council will bring leaders of business, government and civil society a fresh perspective and a sense of urgency in addressing the three issues. Council Members will also provide the MENA perspective on key global challenges that will be explored by the Network of Global Agenda Councils.

The Middle East and Northern Africa region (MENA) occupies the last place of the 2010 Global Gender Gap Report, having closed a little over 58 percent of its overall gender gap. In MENA, Israel holds the top position; in the Arab world, the United Arab Emirates leads the way, followed by Kuwait, Tunisia and Bahrain. Arab societies are characterized by higher than average fertility, higher than average mortality, and rapid rates of population growth. In addition, women in MENA are living longer and healthier lives. Since 1980 their life expectancy has increased by some 10 years, mainly because of improved health care and reduced maternal mortality.

Women are perceived as wives and mothers, not as active participants in the economy, and gender segregation is customary, and in some countries legally required. The prescribed role of women in Islamic theology and law is often argued to be a major determinant of women's status. Islam dictates the legal and institutional safeguards of honor, thereby justifying and reinforcing the segregation of society according to sex. Religious norms affecting women's reproductive function have been used to justify their segregation in public, their restriction to the home, and their lack of civil and legal rights. Gender asymmetry and the status of women in the Arab world cannot be solely attributed to Islam, because adherence to Islamic precepts and the applications of Islamic legal codes differ throughout the Arab world.

In the last decade, MENA governments spent an average of 5.3 percent of GDP on education—the highest in the world—and 2.9 percent on health care in the last decade. In light of this, the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education is 0.96, which compares favorably to that in Low and Middle Income Countries worldwide (World Bank, 2010). In 11 of 18 Middle East countries, women outnumber men at universities. Women now have greater access to education and new communications technologies allow women to study subjects previously unavailable to them. For example, it allows male teachers to teach women remotely, by using video conferencing and adhering to segregation norms. Such technologies are making it possible for women to pursue advanced degrees in medicine, law, chemistry, the humanities, and the social sciences.

Women are severely underrepresented in politics, holding less than 10 percent of the seats in parliament (World Bank, 2010). Nevertheless, progress has been achieved since, except for Saudi Arabia, women have the right to vote and to be elected to parliament or to local councils in all the countries in the region. In most countries in the region, a handful of women also serve as ministers, ambassadors, deputy ministers, and even judges. In 2005, the number of women parliamentarians varied from one in Yemen to 13
in Iran, and 87 in the Iraqi parliament. A handful of women served as ministers, ambassadors, deputy ministers and even judges. For example, Iraq had six women ministers, Jordan three, Bahrain two, Kuwait one, and Iran none (OOO, 2005).

The region’s female labor force participation rate of 26 percent is well below the 39 percent rate in Low and Middle Income countries (World Bank, 2010). Due to religious norms around segregation and women’s roles as caretakers, women’s opportunities for work are far fewer than those of men. This is also evident in the high unemployment among the relatively low share of women in the labor marker, and even more in the concentration of educated women among those unemployed. Women’s employment rates in MENA are the lowest in the world, although female labor force participation in MENA is increasing faster than in other regions. Agriculture remains the largest employer of women in MENA, even though female employment in the service industry is on the rise. On the one hand, working women are heavily concentrated in lower-level white-collar jobs, and underrepresented in managerial and professional positions. On the other hand, many women choose self-employment, often out of necessity and frequently do so by starting their business in the informal sector. For those women, their activities are far more knowledge-based and far more plugged into global markets through information and communications technologies. Therefore, policy reforms in the business sphere should include reforms to reduce barriers to opening and closing firms since investment climate barriers to opening and closing a business can discourage women more if investments are more costly and time consuming to reverse.

Social norms continue to impact women’s empowerment in the MENA region, which translate into an ineffective use of the region’s resources including women’s entrepreneurship potential, and women’s return on education. This means addressing social norms about working women and promoting an environment where women can balance work and family. Governments should consider eliminating requirements that dictate that their interactions with the state be mediated through a male relative. Policy makers should also look at whether economic goals are undermined by laws and regulations based on traditional gender roles. For example, a woman may find foreign buyers for her firm output, but she cannot board the plane to close the deal if her husband has not given her written permission to obtain a passport and travel. Also, policy makers need to overcome legal opaqueness which can create additional risks and potentially hinder women’s entrepreneurs’ access to justice, conflict resolution, and contract enforcement. For example, female-owned firms in Egypt report needing 86 weeks on average to resolve a conflict through the legal system, compared to 54 weeks for male-owned firms (World Bank, 2010).

The MENA region has made significant progress in reducing gender gaps in human development. However, this progress has not translated into improvements in economic and political inclusion. Social and cultural factors remain pertinent to understanding female participation in the labor force. Given such barriers, decisive reforms to create job opportunities, and including women through an improved policy environment—especially to propel private sector employment—have the potential to make a big difference to overcoming the financial crisis.
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In 2009, the global food and economic crises drove millions of additional people into food insecurity, raising the total number of hungry people to over 1 billion. The number has since declined slightly to an estimated 925 million, but it remains high and a substantial risk of repeated crises remains. Shortfalls and volatility in global food supplies and prices will likely continue and potentially intensify due to rising demand for food, the increased costs of production, and intensified climate change. Risk and volatility have become “the new normal” in the food security arena. The global community must adapt its prevention and response actions accordingly. Yet food insecurity can be mitigated. This Council seeks to help raise awareness and leverage support for priority actions to strengthen the global response to this challenge.

Agricultural output constitutes 10% of the GDP of developing countries. It accounts for the livelihood of a vast majority of the population in those countries (World Resources Institute, 2007). Furthermore, agriculture is a key engine to economic growth and industrialization (USAID, 2010). While women worldwide are responsible for the production of over half of the world's foodstuffs, they have limited access to inputs and training, assets and land, and financial capital, which results in lost productivity and output, and deflated economic growth (Barret, 2009).

The inefficiencies of sex-segregated labor markets have similar repercussions. According to the USAID Greater Access to Trade Expansion program, “developing value chains and supporting gender equity are mutually supportive goals. Value chain programs, when designed with gender equitable principles can foster both competitiveness and gender equity goals to enhance poverty-reduction impacts” (Barret, 2009). Given the importance of agriculture to the people and economies of developing countries, and the economically detrimental results of gender inequality in agriculture, addressing these inequalities is crucial to the success of public and private agricultural investment.

**Access to inputs and training:** Access to inputs such as labor, improved seeds, fertilizers, and physical capital is crucial to agricultural productivity. Social customs often inhibit women’s freedom to make decisions regarding their own labor commitments and the procurement of additional labor (Barret, 2009). A study of farmers in Burkina Faso in the 1980s showed women’s yields were less than men’s due to relatively limited access to labor and fertilizer. Models showed that a more equitable allocation of inputs within households could increase total yields by 10 to 20% (Barret, 2009). Another study of Kenyan farmers showed that yields would increase by more than 20% if agriculture inputs and education were equally distributed between men and women (Barret, 2009). Finally, women worldwide receive only 5% of all agricultural extension services according to a recent FAO survey (FAO, N.D.), despite being responsible for the majority of global foodstuff production (Barret, 2009).

**Assets and Land Ownership:** One common barrier to land ownership is customary legal systems and cultural norms. While such systems vary widely, they often limit women’s right to inherit and access land, only affording them the right to land use through husbands and male relatives (FAO, 2002).

**Financial Capital:** Women in the agricultural sector have less access to financial capital relative to men. In Africa, for example, women get only 1% of all credit for agriculture,
**Agriculture**

while they grow 80% and process 90% of Africa’s food (Meinzen-Dick, 2009). Given barriers to land and physical capital ownership, women are less able to provide the collateral often required to obtain credit. Improving access to financial capital can increase women’s ability to purchase inputs, thereby increasing productivity (WB, 2010).

**Long term economic growth:** Gender equality and competitiveness are correlated. Women, unlike men, reinvest almost all profits into future inputs and household needs (WB, 2010). A study testing the effects of fertilizer credits on maize yields in Kenya found that women’s groups that received the credit increased their yields and income significantly, and reinvested that profit in fertilizer (Barret, 2009). Given that women spend a higher percentage of their income on family health and education, income in the hands of women shows a larger return on investment in terms of human capital, which propels economic growth. This cycle is described by the USAID: “as people become better nourished and educated, they contribute more to economic growth—particularly the composition and volume of outputs and exports— and are more able to adopt foreign technology and innovate upon it” (Barret, 2009). More money in the hands of women leads to improved human capital, resulting in stronger economies and increased investment opportunities over the long run.

**Sex-segregated Labor Markets and Competitiveness:** In many countries, women hold primary responsibility for domestic labor, restricting them from partaking in wage-earning activities (FAO, 2009). Labor markets segregated by gender misallocate labor and are less efficient and responsive. This limits firms’ ability to adapt to the rapid changes in today’s global economic environment and hinders their competitiveness (Barret, 2009). Women worldwide face limited access to agricultural inputs and capital relative to men. Public programs, private investment, and public-private partnerships that include a gender dimension have greater returns on investment in the form of increased productivity and output, and improved competitiveness, the benefits of which accrue not only to individual families, but across the entire value chain.
Bibliography:


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