

United Nations  Nations Unies

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-third session
New York, 2 – 13 March 2009**

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

Capacity-building for mainstreaming a gender perspective into national policies and

The theme of this panel—equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS—involves efforts in primarily three areas. First, to recognize the value of un-paid labor of domestic and care-giving work and reflect the value in the national economic indicators, laws and policies; second, to introduce labor and social security policies to re-organize the current unequal division of labor, both paid and un-paid, between women and men, and to reduce the disadvantages women face; and third, to eliminate gender role stereotyping which perpetuate the unequal sharing of responsibilities. In my presentation, I will also highlight achievements as well as gaps and challenges, especially from my region, which is Asia.

Before I get into these points, however, I would like to emphasize the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in addressing the theme of equal sharing of responsibilities.

CEDAW AS A LEGALLY-BINDING INSTRUMENT TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), now ratified by 185 countries, obligates the States parties to take measures for gender equality in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. The CEDAW Convention is a comprehensive, legally-binding international instrument which provides the standards and guidelines for States parties in development, implementation and evaluation of legislative and other measures to eliminate discrimination, both direct and indirect, and bring about equality between women and men. Universal ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, withdrawal of reservations if any, and full

articles 2 (f), 5 (a) and 10 (c). The CEDAW Convention and its Optional Protocol, read together with 26 general recommendations issued by the CEDAW Committee, provide the basic frame for policies and programmes to support the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF DOMESTIC AND CARE-GIVING WORK

In addressing the unequal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, the first issue is to socially recognize the value of un-paid domestic and care-giving work, and to reflect the recognized value in the national economic indicators, laws and policies. It is necessary for policy makers and the society in general to recognize that the domestic and caring work is essential for the maintenance and reproduction of the current and next generations of labor force.

In a capitalist system, unless paid with money, work is not given proper worth and treatment it deserves. The domestic and caring-work at home, as long as not-paid, is not considered as “work.” As parts of the domestic and care-giving work become increasingly commercialized, such as hiring professional cleaning service, maid or private nurse, it is now easier to understand its value. The macro economic figures such as GDP, however, do not include the value of un-paid domestic and caring work. To fully recognize the value of women’s (and men’s) reproductive labor, estimates of unpaid domestic and care-giving work should be calculated and presented.

Even if the current economic indicators do not directly reflect the money value of domestic and caring work, there are still some indirect ways to incorporate the value of these works into laws and policies. For example, similar to men’s service in the army, period of maternal leave is counted as work period; or compensation for a woman injured in a traffic accident would reflect how her contribution as a worker or a housewife is calculated, or the system of property registration and a woman’s share at the time of divorce would reflect how the society values and acknowledges the un-paid domestic and care-giving work.

LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY POLICIES SUPPORTING EQUAL SHARING

Equal sharing of responsibilities is not possible without gender equality in the labor market. At the same time, gender equality in the labor market cannot be achieved without equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men. Woman’s primary role as care-taker and home-maker, perceived or practiced, provides excuses for gender discrimination in employment. A woman is excluded from employment, discouraged to leave the job early or relegated to insecure or low-paying job, since “she is considered to have a breadwinner.” Other forms of discrimination are: fewer opportunities for training or promotion, sexual harassment, dismissal or disadvantages due to pregnancy or childbirth, etc. The labor market is segregated by sex, both horizontally and vertically, that women are concentrated in certain categories of

SYSTEMATIC DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Discussions on today's priority theme require data, disaggregated by sex, age, region and other categories. Women's un-paid family labor or engagement in informal work is

sharing of responsibilities is still a women's issue, or at most, issue of the women's ministry, not a national agenda. Care-giving work, whether paid or un-paid, is still considered a women's job throughout the Asian region.

Comprehensive, Coordinated and Continued Efforts

Changing unequal sharing of responsibilities between men and women requires continued and concerted efforts, which would take time and money. National Policies, programmes and campaigns should be comprehensive, coordinated and continued. Comprehensive efforts would involve all ministries, government agencies and the civil society including NGOs. The national machinery on women would require adequate resources and power to coordinate with other ministries, such as education, culture, rural development, information, statistics and finance. Sporadic programmes would not bring significant results in changing the unequal sharing of responsibilities. Also, programs to reach out to ethnic minorities or other groups with strong stereotypes require additional efforts such as publication materials and services in their languages.

Effective Monitoring and Impact Assessment

National policies and programs are developed and implemented, but often times effective monitoring and evaluations are not existent, serious enough or systematically conducted. Effective monitoring and correct assessment of whether the policies and programs were implemented as planned and brought the expected impact and changes are essential so that and the measures can be subsequently adjusted and re-tried. Monitoring and impact assessment should be carried out in a way to create the interests of people and involve various groups of people.

Budget Allocation and Gender-Sensitive Budgeting

All efforts to advance the status of women and promote gender equality need budget. Budget allocation is the expression of political will. Elimination of unequal sharing of responsibilities needs continued efforts of long term plans and hence stable budget covering longer periods of time. In many developing countries, many programs depend on outside funding, which is insecure and unstable. A sizable budget should come from the general budget of the State, while outside funding should be offered in a more stable and foreseeable manner. In addition, all the ministries and government agencies need to adopt gender-sensitive budgeting. India is a good example with its Women Component Plan which set a policy for all ministries to spend 30% of the budget for women.

