

**Introductory Remarks by Carolyn Hannan
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**Launch of the “World Survey on the Role of Women in Development:
Women's control over economic resources and
access to financial resources, including microfinance”**

UNIDO, Vienna, 30 October 2009

Moderator,

Fellow panelists

Distinguished participants

It is my pleasure to participate in the launch of the *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, here in Vienna, alongside Mr. Ole Landby from UNIDO and Ms Naoko Otobe from ILO who directly contributed to the development of the World Survey over the past year.

I would like to express the deep appreciation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) for the leadership of the Director General of UNIDO, Mr Kandeh Yumkella, for the initiative to launch the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* here in Vienna.

The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development

World Survey illustrates the importance of examining women's access to economic and financial resources in a broad sense, including resources generated at national level through budgets, trade, and development assistance; financial services such as savings, credit, remittance transfers and insurance; employment and social protection; and land, property and other productive resources. It also points to the interlinkages between different types of resources. The *World Survey* makes clear that the approach to women's economic empowerment has to be context-specific and that attention to any one single issues, such as employment or credit or social protection will not be sufficient. There is a need for a comprehensive multisectoral approach.

The *World Survey* builds on a number of important policy mandates on increasing women's access to and control over resources, including from the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (2000), as well as other intergovernmental processes, including the Millennium Summit in 2000, the 2005 World Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in 2008. These mandates built on the recognition that the economic empowerment of women is critical for the eradication of poverty, for economic growth and development, and for the wellbeing of families and communities.

Despite these strong, comprehensive mandates, progress on women's economic empowerment, and on increasing women's access to and control over economic and financial resources, has been slow and uneven across regions. Long-standing inequalities in the gender distribution of these resources have placed women at a significant disadvantage in relation to men in the ability to participate in and benefit from economic development.

Although women have increased their share of employment globally, in many parts of the world they are disproportionately represented in informal work which is generally vulnerable, poorly-paid, and uncovered by labour legislation or social

protection. Occupational segregation and wage gaps persist in all regions of the world. Women's wages, according to the International Trade Union Confederation, are 16.5 per cent less than men's. The persistent unequal sharing of unpaid work between women and men, including care-giving, hinders women's choices in the labour market.

Women's livelihood strategies also require access to a range of productive resources. In many parts of the world, however, women continue to face discrimination in access to land, housing, property and other productive resources, as well as the infrastructure, services and technologies needed to facilitate their effective use of these resources. Women's access to financial services, including savings, insurance, remittance transfers and credit, which is essential to allow them to fully benefit from economic opportunities, is often limited. Microfinance institutions, while successful in reaching out to women, have not always reached poorer groups of women. And microfinance has not necessarily always empowered women; in particular, it has failed to meet the needs of successful women entrepreneurs wishing to expand their businesses. In addition, without access to the economic resources provided through social protection, many women are unable to insure themselves against contingencies arising from old age, ill-health, disability, unemployment and other life-crises.

Even when economic rights for women exist, they may not be enforced or women may not be able to claim these rights because of socio-cultural norms and practices. Efforts are needed to make the judicial systems more accessible and responsive to women and to provide legal aid to women seeking to claim their rights.

These gaps in implementation of the mandates on increasing women's access to and control over critical resources need to be urgently addressed. Let me raise a few of the overarching findings which emerge from the different chapters of the *World Survey* which I find of particular importance. Firstly, at the very basis of the discussion in the *World Survey* is the recognition that gender equality in access to and control over resources contributes to economic growth and development – with strong multiplier effects for a range of development goals, including in particular in relation to poverty

reduction. In addition, the *World Survey* recognizes that increasing women's access to and control over resources has strong intergenerational imp

world, as well as on the boards of major companies. They are also absent from top management positions in the banking sector in both developed and developing countries. This situation exists, despite the fact that already almost 15 years ago, in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action identified the participation of women in decision-making as a

The *World Survey* notes that gender-responsive budget processes at all levels are even more critical in the context of economic crises because they provide the opportunity to analyze planned expenditure and ensure the coherence between policies on gender equality and empowerment of women and allocation of resources. It also calls for the improvement of sex-disaggregated data in all areas, including in economic decision-making.

The *World Survey* illustrates that the inequality between women and men in access to economic and financial resources represents a global challenge with implications at individual, family, community and national level. The inequitable distribution of resources not only leaves half of the world's population at risk, but it also involves a significant economic and development cost which affects the wellbeing of us all, given the strong correlation between the gender distribution of essential resources and growth and development.

At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government reiterated that “progress for women is progress for all”. It is increasingly recognized that investing in women is not only a matter of rights and justice but also makes good economic sense. The United Nations must demonstrate leadership in identifying and systematically and effectively addressing discrimination against women in relation to economic and financial resources. Appropriate responses to the existing inequalities in this area will facilitate both the accelerated achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women as well as

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