

Negotiation Kit for Beijing + 10 Women and Poverty

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OVERARCHING CONCERN

Women's poverty in the Asia Pacific region remains a major challenge. The macroeconomic environment of trade and financial liberalization, the privatization of basic services, and fiscal constraints linked to external debt have all contributed in marginalizing the livelihoods and informal sector work of rural and urban poor women and men. This has also contributed to the rise of the new poor in industrialized countries of East Asia. In several countries, short-term adjustment-related safety net packages have replaced long-term poverty alleviation programs as governments shifted the burden of poverty reduction on poor people's capacity to engage in the market. Manufacturing industries, once touted as the panacea for unemployment and poverty, have actively circulated within the region in search of lower wages. In some cases, e.g. Cambodia and China, these have created temporary but socially costly jobs for young poor women. In other countries, these industries have left behind a mass of unemployed women who could not be integrated into the local economy. At the same time, the much celebrated women's micro credit and financial programs of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have elicited mixed results with regard to fighting women's poverty. Contrary to initial expectations, these schemes have exacerbated the vulnerability of many poor women who are caught in the cycle of micro debt bondage. Moreover, an increasingly marketized and militarized type of governance in the region has created adverse impacts on the lives of poor women, their households and communities.

GAINS

- A few best practices in micro credit and financial schemes for rural and urban poor women were noted but these still need to be assessed in terms of impact on women's overall empowerment.
- Temporary measures arising from government interventions, such as emergency food distribution systems in Indonesia and India, have been a big factor in enabling poor women and their households to survive crisis situations during the Asian Financial Crisis and in the aftermath of natural disasters.

GAPS

- Constraints to clear and effective BPFA action resulting from the marketization of governance.
- Weak regulation and monitoring of transnational corporations that have resulted in exploitation of women where there exists inadequate labor protection.

EMERGING ISSUES

- The deepening of global economic integration through regulatory frameworks and modalities being put up in the WTO, financial institutions, OECD, and regional free trade agreements are moving governments farther away from commitments made to the eradication of poverty among women.
- v The rise of the new poor and an increase in homeless people in industrialized countries.
- Increased militarization linked to anti-terrorist programs has led to increased defense budgets and decreased resources for poverty alleviation, as well as to the disruption of community self-help programs allegedly linked to “terrorists”.

RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE

Reference: in BPFA Document
Strategic Objective A.1 Action 58 a, j, l, g

By Governments, the UN system, and Civil Society:

- Accelerate implementation of the strategic objectives contained in the BPFA and BPFA Outcomes Document and treat these objectives as essential to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Increase awareness and visibility of vulnerable groups, and provide them with more economic and social. Support.

By WTO and International Financial Institutions:

- Accelerate implementation of the BPFA and BPFA Outcomes document.
- Conduct a comprehensive in-depth review assessment of existing policies of WTO and other international financial institutions to address their impact on marginalised communities, development, democracy, environment, health, human rights, labour rights and the rights of women and children. The review must be conducted with civil society’s full participation and aimed at a major institutional reform.

By Governments and the UN:

- Make the WTO, World Bank, International Monetary Fund accountable to the United Nations.
- Harmonize economic laws, policies and practices to ensure human rights, sustainable development and human security and within them, women’s empowerment and rights.
- Implement affirmative action measures to protect the livelihoods of women made vulnerable by the processes of globalisation.

By Governments, NGOs, and Civil Society:

- Oppose the privatisation of essential services.
- Object to harmful gender mainstreaming mechanisms and strategies.

Strategic Objective A.1 Action 58 b, c; 59, e, f; 60 b; 67 a, b; 68 a.

By Governments and the UN:

- Uphold food security and eradicate rural poverty through the protection of small farmers and fisher-folk and the eradication of trade distorting subsidies to corporate farms.

By Governments, particularly creditor nations, and International Financial Institutions:

- Undertake global action to resolve the debt burden and other systematic issues that perpetuate the poverty of women, their families and their communities.

By Governments and corporations:

- Ensure compliance by foreign corporations and investors with national laws and codes, social security regulations, applicable international agreements, instruments and conventions including those related to the environment and other relevant laws.
- Develop gender-specific regulatory mechanisms that address the needs of women workers in international production networks.

Thematic Focal Point for Women and Poverty
Development Alternatives for a New Era
(DAWN - Southeast Asia)