

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The Question of the Role of Women in the Eradication of Poverty

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Introduction

The role of women in the eradication of poverty has become a topic that often goes under the radar despite its importance. Women could play a significant role in the eradication of poverty if they would be given equal rights in LEDCs (less economically developed countries). Poor women's rights in many parts of the world pose a lot of difficulties for rural women and the difficulties are worsened by the global food and economic crisis and climate change. "About 925 million go hungry everyday"¹.

Women already play a huge role in supporting the economy and in many countries they are the majority of the workforce in agriculture. Yet they are prevented from doing more for the economy because of the fact that they have not been given equal supplies. Giving more power to women is a key factor for the eradication of poverty and for tackling any issues related to hunger. If women are denied of rights and opportunities, that also denies their children and societies a better future. Any poverty agenda must focus on women because they are 70 percent of the world's poor. Women comprise two-thirds of the global illiterate population and all women face additional hurdles to their economic and social well-being, including the pay gap and the fact that women are much more likely to hold vulnerable jobs². ³According to the research done by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) it is estimated if women farmers (43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries) have the same access as men to

¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/rural-women-food-poverty/2012>

² <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/news/2013/03/11/56097/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-are-key-to-addressing-global-poverty/>

³ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/rural-women-food-poverty/2012>

agricultural resources, this could increase production on women's farms in developing countries by 20-30 per cent, and potentially reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 100 to 150 million people.

Definition of Key Terms

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

“They are a collection of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all”⁴, adopted by the United Nations Member states on September 25th 2015, as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal outlines specific targets and standard to be achieved worldwide by 2030.



Empowerment

Also known as The granting of political, social or economic power to an individual or group and the process of supporting another person or persons to discover and claim personal power.

Eradication of poverty

Or in other words the removal of poverty, meaning trying to get rid of poverty.

Attainment

When something is attained, it is called an attainment or in other words a personal acquirement, achievement.

⁴ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

OECD

The mission of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world⁵.

Background

The role of women in the eradication of poverty has always been crucial to the economy. Never has the role of women in eradication of poverty been this important as today, since there are too many people living in poverty. Rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But gender inequality and limited access to credit, healthcare and education have always posed a number of challenges for rural women. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change⁶. Empowering them is essential, not only for the wellbeing of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

When more women work, economies grow. An increase in female labour force participation—or a reduction in the gap between women's and men's labour force participation—results in faster economic growth and lessens the amount of people living in poverty⁷. Despite some improvements over the last 50 years, in virtually every country, men spend more time on leisure each day while women spend more time doing unpaid housework, if those women in the LEDCs are allowed to work in formal jobs it would boost the economy⁸. Women's economic equality is good for business. Companies greatly benefit from increasing leadership opportunities for women, which is shown to increase organizational effectiveness. It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness⁹. Increasing women and girls' education leads to higher economic growth. Increased educational attainment accounts for about 50 per cent of the economic growth in OECD countries over the past 50 years¹⁰. These are just a few of the reasons why UN Women have decided to launch a joint program with WFP, FAO, IFAD to empower the women living in under the kinds of conditions that force them to stay in home and in informal jobs to instead

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/about/>

⁶ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/rural-women-food-poverty/2013>

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/balancingpaidworkunpaidworkandleisure.htm>

⁹ McKinsey & Company. Women Matter 2014. p. 6

¹⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf> p. 3

get formal jobs and influence the economy¹¹. All of this would be done through economic integration and food security initiatives in the hopes of the eradication of poverty and hunger.

SDG Fund programme has been developed as a separate and differentiated component of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment¹². With the help of programmes such as SDG Fund women can have access to knowledge which is a right for everyone. Day by day the critical role of women in the eradication of poverty is being acknowledged more. Still there is need for action quicker as from a global perspective, women own only 1 percent of property, earn 10 percent of all income, and yet they produce half of the world's food¹³.

“Changes are on the way for women farmers”¹⁴. In a statement for International Rural Women's Day, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stressed the importance of empowering rural women farmers as agents of change for transforming food production and consumption.

The historical record is clear: the single, most effective way to reduce world poverty is economic growth as the western countries started around 1820. For example, an economic expansion in per capita income of 8.2 percent translated into a 6.1 reduction in the poverty rate. A contraction of 1.9 percent in output led to an increase of 1.5 percent in the poverty rate¹⁵. These statistics go on to prove that women are needed to be given formal jobs and power in decision makings in the society to reduce the problems caused by poverty. Encouraging more economic and political participation by women increases financial independence from and social investment in the government, both of which are critical to pulling society out of poverty.¹⁶

¹¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/rural-women-food-poverty/2012>

¹² <http://www.sdgfund.org/current-programmes>

¹³ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/news/2013/03/11/56097/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-are-key-to-addressing-global-poverty/>

¹⁴ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/10/statement-by-the-executive-director-on-international-rural-womens-day>

¹⁵ <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/ending-mass-poverty>

¹⁶ Narayan, Deepa and Nicholas Stern. 2002. “Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook”

As mentioned earlier there are two kinds of participation that can increase financial independence from and social investment in the government:

Economic

Women's economic empowerment and the ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities to generate and manage income, is an important step to strengthen women's development within the household and in society. Women play an important economic role in addressing poverty experienced by children. By increasing female participation in the labor force, women are able to contribute more effectively to economic growth and income distribution since having a source of income elevates their financial and social status¹⁷.

Political

Political participation is supported by organizations such as IFAD as one pillar of gender equality and women's empowerment¹⁸. Continuous economic growth requires people living in poverty to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives, especially strengthening women's voices in the political process builds social independence and greater consideration of gender issues in policy.

Key member states and NGOs

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia rural women lag behind in access to land property, economic opportunities, and financial assets. Women farmers perform up to 75% of farm labor but hold only 18.7% of the agricultural land in the country¹⁹. The SDG-F has been working in the regions of Oromo and Afar and using a multifaceted approach to generate gender-sensitive agricultural extension services, support the creation of cooperatives, promote the expansion of women-owned agribusiness and increase rural women's participation in rural producer associations, financial cooperatives and unions²⁰.

¹⁷ UNICEF. 2007. "Equality in Employment," in The State of the World's Children

¹⁸ <http://sior.ub.edu/jspui/cris/socialimpact/socialimpact00430>

¹⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/>

²⁰ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=10476>

Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia the women were not allowed before to travel without the men of their family, but fortunately that has changed. They are to have no jobs with too much exposure and in which they interact with other men. They are to remain in their own circle of women, so still there is much to do there for gender equality²¹. Women basically have no influence on the eradication of poverty as they are not allowed to have jobs formal jobs or jobs in which they are allowed to make economic and business decisions.

Thailand

The role of women in the national development in Thailand is important.²² Women living in the rural areas are responsible for the housework, of feeding the family and the families well-being. As mothers, women raise and nurture their children.²³ Even though Thailand's higher economic growth and technological development, many women are do not have equal rights and are facing poverty. In order to eradicate poverty must be given better chances to get their education.

India

Poverty is a massive issue in India, there are many organisations across the country that are helping India proceed towards fulfilment of the SDGs. Women are nowadays empowered enough to fight for what is right. All of this naturally does not happen in a day, but such methods – education, empowerment, rural credit etc., in the hands of women, are the only real way to end poverty in India²⁴.

UN Women

UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on

²¹ <https://www.ijser.org/researchpaper/Poverty-Eradication-campaign-in-Saudi-Arabia.pdf>

²² <http://www.pattanakit.net/index.php?lay=show&ac=article&Id=538960119&Ntype=128>

²³ <http://www.artbangkok.com/?p=6280>

²⁴ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/120107/poverty-eradication-india-pradan/>

meeting their needs worldwide²⁵. UN Women strongly contributes in attempts to better the women's lives living in rural areas all around the world.

Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls. By so doing, it hopes to lift children around the world out of poverty and promote rights. Plan International strives for a just world.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1946	The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is formed ²⁶
1947	The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) first met at Lake Success, New York, in February 1947 ²⁷
1951	Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value ²⁸
1953	Convention on the Political Rights of Women ²⁹
2000	The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are developed to improve the conditions of the world's poorest countries by year 2015 ³⁰
2011	UN Women is formed out of a number of existing UN organizations ³¹
2015	UN Sustainable Development Goals ³²

²⁵ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

²⁶ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

²⁷ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>

²⁸ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>

²⁹ https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVI-1&chapter=16&lang=en

³⁰ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

³¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us>

³² <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (25 September, 2015)³³ The Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom.

Possible Solutions

As the population keeps on increasing so does amount of people living in poverty, if nothing is done to change the role of women in the eradication of poverty. It's crucial to take action in this matter to improve the quality of life for the millions living in horrible conditions in the LCDs.

It is important to have gender equality all over the world. When women have equal access to acquire their education as men and power in making business and economic decisions, they can help in the eradication of poverty, because this would mean that households' income would be increased. All of this would then translate to better possibilities and to better well-being for the children too, which would be an intelligent way reduce poverty in the future generations.

Educating girls and women can reduce poverty in LEDCs as the education of girls and women affects the rest of the societies in which these girls and women live. The more women are given the the chance to study, the less women will end up in being in informal jobs and staying and working home.

In conclusion, all of the things stated go on to show that without women, poverty eradication cannot be successfully achieved. Women and men are equally important in the community. Therefore, all member states should also offer women the same opportunities to fully participate in the community's affairs.

³³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

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