

DRAFT WRITTEN JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 53RD SESSION OF THE

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 2-13 MARCH 2009 TO THE PRIORITY THEME ON THE EQUAL SHARING OF FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDING CAREGIVING IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS

Submitted by Conchita Poncini (IFUW) – Deadline for submission as a written statement is 27 November. Kindly give your comments or signature to the statement.

Balancing work and family life has been the biggest challenge to women in terms of inequalities and forms of discrimination against them. Women are perceived to be incapable of achieving adequate and equal performance in employment.. This stereotype concept is unfounded and obsolete, for women are participating longer in economic activities and represent 50% (and even more in some countries) of the global labour force. Women continue to work even after childbearing age contributing to family income or as sole breadwinners in single-headed households or simply exercising their right to personal development. Women are also creating micro enterprises in great numbers, creating jobs for themselves and others.

Women are contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unpaid work at home, in the community and at the workplace. Valuation of unpaid work of women and men in household satellite accounts is, however, resource intensive which inhibits developing countries and even some developed countries from setting up HNSA. It could be widely accepted if used in child labour law in the first instance: many children who are neither in school or in paid work are not afforded child labour protection for doing unpaid household work. Efforts to introduce such work in child labour oversight and protection including in education, could lead to the inclusion in labour laws of unpaid household work done by adults. This would then necessitate statistical measurement such as on Household Satellite Accounts. Moreover, unpaid work is a significant element in financing gender equality and improving the status of women in society.

Measuring unpaid work is an important indicator of gender economics and social disparities. Valuing unpaid work is a first step in modifying and widening the concept of labour. As ILO Director General Juan Somavia indicated, what we call economic productivity is in fact indirectly subsidized by the social productivity of unpaid work. Consequently, the statistical invisibility of unpaid work and the informal economy has caused women's major activities to be unrecognized and unvalued in macroeconomic policy and planning at national levels. It has also hampered the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO on gender equality and the enjoyment of equal human rights and rights to development of women.

As an illustration, one factor of production output and efficiency which we and some other NGOS raised at the High Level session of UNCTAD in 2008 on Creative Industries, are the intangibles in the households and the informal sector, which values and measurements are largely invisible. Many of these unremunerated activities are in creative industries such as the arts, handicrafts and entrepreneurship. Other unremunerated work that is unvalued but has a significant contribution to economic growth and development are those that parents notably mothers provide to the education of their children in encouraging and guiding the future generation in creative work. Countries in Asia such as India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Vietnam have developed their creative industries in technological innovations, flower growing and other food production, home service industries, etc. Most of these activities are either in household and micro entrepreneurship or within the definition of decent work. These creative trades and services have not been given priority in research and development on the economics of gender. They have been ignored when analysing the causes of energy and food crises and natural disasters. Macro economic policies have not focused either on the importance of strengthening the capacity through education, training and technical cooperation and empowering women's entrepreneurship through micro and venture capital credits and guarding against the exploitation of property and absence of women's land rights in agriculture.

It is therefore necessary to develop sex and age disaggregated statistics that would show where women and men are located in trade relations and human development and how such economic asymmetries are affecting the sharing of family responsibilities and caring roles in the case of HIV/AIDS and other health-caring and health giving activities.

Unfortunately, when we look at different systems of analysing economic development, we see glaring gender gaps. We see a continuing use of failed methods especially in traditional measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which fails to represent the whole economy of a region or a country, notably work done by women in the home as being "productive." to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This oversight penalises women not only in the home, but also in the workplace as their labour is consistently undervalued all over the world. However, since the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 there have been greater efforts to correct this shortcoming by including unpaid household work in the System of National Accounts (SNA) (used to calculate the GDP), especially in developed countries. One approach to addressing this issue is precisely the use of household satellite accounts (HESA), which economists and policymakers would use in tandem with the GDP.

While HNSA will increase the perceived value of work done by women whether in the home or in the workplace, various problems hamper its effectiveness. As such, the Working Group on Women's Employment and Economic of Gender Development (WGWEED) under the aegis of the Geneva NGO Committee on the Status of Women had begun to study HNSA methodologies in order to identify discrepancies and deficiencies in gender sensitivity factors that could value unpaid work, estimated by UNDP at \$16 trillion, which is worth 70% of the world GDP - and more than two-thirds of that work being done by women. Indeed, HNSA is an essential measurement in promoting both sustainable economic development and gender equality.

The challenge therefore today is to shift the role of men towards advancing women's economic, social and cultural rights and promoting gender equality through a better understanding and assessment of gender roles and related structural inequalities. This entails commitment, vigilance and action in promoting men's parenting role and their active involvement in harmonizing and reconciling work and family responsibilities on a shared basis, with a view to relieving the disproportionate burden affecting women's ability to access and retain work and girls being forced to drop out of school; to give increased attention to the role of men in preventing violence against women and HIV/AIDS infection among women and girls, especially given the asymmetric power relations and women's subordination and vulnerability to discrimination; to discourage adherence to ideas of inferiority or superiority between sexes brought about by peer pressures, socialization processes and belief systems which perpetuate stereotyping that exacerbate inequalities; to dismantle the traditional division of labour and provide women's equal access to information and communication technologies which, because of language, educational and skills deficits and lack of economic power, have generally excluded them.

We call attention to the Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objective A1 to "Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty; Strategic Objective A.2 "Review laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources; Strategic Objective A4 to "Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminisation of poverty; Strategic Objective F6 "Promote Harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men; Strategic Objective H3 "Generate and Disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation and Strategic Objective 12 "Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice. In this regard, we therefore call on the CSW to pass a resolution recalling these Beijing Commitments and ask governments to implement their commitments to introduce the measurement of unpaid

work in national satellite accounts as a vital tool in valuing the unpaid work of women and men which would provide the promotion and protection of equal economic and social rights of women including their sustainable human development.. It is a delayed time bomb to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goal Number 1 by the worsening of the feminisation of poverty and of Goal Number 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment, if their unremunerated work remains unrecognised as an economic and social value that needs compensation and legal protection. . We should expect that sooner rather than later, this anomalous situation will explode into an untenable disproportion as poverty becomes increasingly feminized and within an ageing population. We may not see them in stock market indices but we would feel the effects in our plates, in our household relations, in children's education and in maternal and infant mortality, in general health and well-being of children and elderly, in deteriorating family unity and increasing violence in the community and in society as a whole. We cannot afford to wait and see and be complacent. We are therefore forwarding this written proposal as our contribution to an early warning system and to ensuring the fulfilment of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

SUBMITTED ON 23 NOVEMBER 2008
