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Feminist Alliance for
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L'alliance féministe pour
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Women and ESCR Group



feminist task force



Call for UN Women to Design its Policy and Program on Women's Economic Empowerment from an Economic, Cultural and Social Rights Framework

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We welcome the inauguration of UN Women and look forward to productive collaboration with UN Women in adopting a human rights' framework for your program work. To this end, we call upon UN Women to mainstream human rights in its policy and program design as these are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on Racial Discrimination; the Declaration on the Right to Development and other human rights standards and treaties. UN Women is poised to become the premiere world body for the advancement of women's substantive equality and human rights and we call upon UN Women to build its internal capacity particularly in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights.

Below is a list of recommendations that will assist UN Women in incorporating a human rights framework for policy and program design within UN Women's economic, social and cultural rights work:

1. **UN Women must uphold and institutionalize the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) recognizing and reaffirming the synergetic relationship to CEDAW.** UN Women's programming should be based on the principle that CEDAW sets out legally binding obligations while the BPFA and its 12 critical areas of concern provide a policy and programmatic agenda for implementation of the Convention.
2. **UN Women should work to ensure alignment between its programs and build strong and powerful partnerships with Civil Society Organizations** particularly those working on social, economic and cultural rights with a view to ensuring systematic, periodical, and substantive engagement with these groups and not limited to the proposed Civil Society Regional Advisory Groups. This approach should reflect the principles of inclusiveness and diversity ensuring a place at the table for voices that are not normally taken into account in economic policy making– especially voices of women from the grassroots, women of color, women living in poverty, disabled women, young women, elderly women, lesbian women, rural women, indigenous women, and other often marginalized groups of women.
3. **The UN, with the leadership of UN Women should strive for coherence in its programming** – between economic policies at national, regional and international level - and policies promoted by different actors (UN agencies, government, IFIs, G20 etc.) and ensuring these policies are in keeping with human rights obligations. In this way UN Women can move beyond the

practice of carrying out project-based policy and program design and create a concerted pattern of change within the UN system and other relevant institutions by acting as a catalyst for change, promoting a Human Rights-based approach, building capacity and monitoring progress.

4. **UN Women should make use of the work of relevant UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures** as both accountability mechanisms on human rights in the implementation of policies, programs, and national development plans; as well as key sources of information for policy design and programming from a human rights framework at different levels.
5. **UN Women must exercise a role of a women's rights ombudsman with the Bretton Woods Institutions, including the World Trade Organization, rather than simply partnering with them.** These institutions continue to exert pressure on the United Nations System in promoting neo-liberal macroeconomic policies and a model of development in which human rights and gender equality remain marginalized and segregated by efficiency considerations in support of profit accumulation.
6. **UN Women must promote Gender Participatory Budgets and Gender Responsive Budgets that recognize and value women's paid and unpaid work.** To this end, UN Women should support the collection and utilization of gender disaggregated data, including time use surveys that measure women's unpaid work and make visible women's contributions to the economy in the National Accounts System.
7. **A response from UN Women to the current economic and climate crises must be reflected in their program work.** This response must be harmonized with international standards and commitments to gender equality, women's human rights and empowerment. And it must ensure concrete recommendations on new foundational and structural agreements on global development and economic and financial governance that fully integrate gender equality and women's human rights based on internationally agreed goals, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and International Labour Organization Conventions.ⁱ
8. **UN Women should establish a multi-stakeholder Group of Experts on human rights responses to economic crises.** This group should have the mandate to monitor economic policies and formulate recommendations on policy measures that could mitigate the impacts of the global financial crisis to ensure that ensure minimal violations of women's rights in the event of future crises.ⁱⁱ
9. **UN Women must promote the strengthening of national commitments to, and enforcement of decent work, women's access to livelihood and women's right to an adequate standard of living.** It must do so by giving special attention in their programming, research and advocacy to:
 - the need for quality jobs with adequate benefits for women workers;
 - understand and address the economic, social and cultural barriers to women's full and equal enjoyment of their rights including rights to adequate housing, water, sanitation and food.
 - skills training that improves women's options across different sectors of the labor market;
 - access to finance and credit for women entrepreneurs, especially in small and medium enterprises;
 - strengthen social protection policies including provision of health insurance, inclusion in the social security system, access to reproductive health care services, and provision of maternity benefits and access to affordable child care;
 - addressing gender stereotypes which restrict women's ability to exercise their economic, social and cultural rights;
 - and protecting the rights of women workers and women's rights defenders to self-organization, freedom of speech and self-representation.
10. **UN Women should provide technical expertise and capacity building** to national field presences and States, regional commissions, Women's Machineries, human rights and women's organizations in conjunction with OHCHR to advance women's economic, social and cultural rights, the implementation of CEDAW and the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of governance.

UN Women is uniquely placed to ensure that the links between economic policy and human rights, and their importance for gender equality and women's economic empowerment, are well-understood. Building the kinds of capacities we have outlined would be an important and original contribution to coherence in the UN system, and to gender equality, women's human rights and women's empowerment.

UN women should strengthen its capacity to link with issues and areas not traditionally identified with gender equality, including economic, social and cultural rights. Efforts should be consistent and reinforcing. This will lead to new thinking and strategies to promote gender equality, human rights, and women's empowerment in the context of building new consensus on development and global governance within the United Nations System.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ <http://blog.choike.org/eng/news/559>

ⁱⁱ http://www.escri-net.org/usr_doc/HRResponsestoEconCrisis_Final.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.ffdnngo.org/sites/default/files/WWG%20on%20FFD_Doc%202_Declaration_Jun%2008.pdf