

Center for Women's Global Leadership



Facilitating Gender Equality and Social Protection for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals Geneva, June 1-2, 2010

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

From June 1-2, 2010, the Center for Women's Global Leadership in collaboration with the United Nations Independent Expert on the Question of Human Rights and Extreme Poverty organized a two-day consultation on integrating gender aware analyses into social protection schemes. The meeting brought together human rights and women's rights activists, government and intergovernmental representatives, experts and academics to develop clear gendered analysis of social protection systems and how they have helped achieve the MDGs and their relationship with human rights obligations and social policy in general. Input from this meeting will assist the Independent Expert in preparing her report to be presented at the General Assembly in September 2010.



The meeting was composed of four sessions focusing on gender equality and social protection, state-run social protection programs (SPPs), human rights and social protection, and gender-aware social protection contributions to MDGs 1 & 3. Throughout the sessions facilitators and discussants were asked to make recommendations that would contribute to the report. Comments addressed topics pertaining to how social protection programs are implemented and designed to increase gender equality; the impacts of social protection



programs that target women and girls; the level of gender awareness in state-run social protection programs; and the human rights approach in SPPs. Participants also identified how social protections can contribute to MDGs 1, 3 & 8 and communicated that gender is not a residue but part of the real economy. Finally, meeting attendees ascertained ways in which international cooperation can advance social protection and the achievement of the MDGs.

There were several challenges identified over the two day period. Participants were concerned with how the structures of oppression are perpetuated in certain cash transfer programs or that there is a lack of women's access to financial and economic practices in the labor market once services are provided which counterintuitively spread cultural gaps.



Individuals in the meeting observed the significant gaps in data monitoring and evaluation of these programs and that there is minimal data about the individual experiences of state organized social protections schemes. Women are usually grouped within the distribution of wealth within a household. Thus women and children are seen as dependents and ration cards usually only have the male name listed. Furthermore, women's participation in these programs often relies heavily on their unpaid care work. Therefore the use of the household as a unit of analysis is highly problematic as women and children become invisible. Other challenges were focused on the beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers and targeting of social protection schemes.

Some of the critical issues discussed at this meeting include:

- Looking at social protections as a tool for collective empowerment and the progressive realization of human rights and that the universal, non-contributional minimum floor is an essential part of gender equality.
- Developing a bill of rights for beneficiaries so that individuals can have specific rights with regard to social protection and that individual women advocating for their rights can have access to housing and land.
- Creating specific budget allocations that are dedicated to gender sensitive programming for program implementers and policy makers who create social protection programs.
- Guaranteeing that donors funding social protection schemes have long term commitments to the programs and that they do not perpetuate cultural, racial, class, or gendered divides when developing programs with the host country.
- Identifying the differences between social protection instruments and social protection policy in the context of macroeconomic policy. Broader frameworks of social policy such as the production side should invest in creating a care economy.
- Envisioning what the economy would look like without women's reproductive roles and using this opportunity to bring in key work on the care economy.
- Attaining more qualitative and quantitative data on the gender awareness of social protection programs.
- Ensuring that the design of social protection schemes includes a transformative gender component and looks at how the care economy is impacted.
- Using social protection schemes to not only address the impoverished, but also confront structural economic inequalities.