

2012 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review

Written Statement

Why Human Rights is Important for Achieving the MDGs

The Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University notes that it is critical for Member States to address the enabling environment that result in poverty, as a means of achieving MDGs. CWGL recognizes the human rights framework as a central component in assessing macroeconomic policies. Macroeconomic policies can either serve to enhance or erode people's enjoyment of basic human rights. A human rights framework offers a method through which macroeconomic policies can be assessed to better ensure that governments achieve human rights, particularly the right to work and adequate standard of living delineated in the UDHR and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

In this current economic climate policies are focused on austerity while populations are experiencing increased levels of unemployment and inequality. The implementation of macroeconomic policies focused on employment generation through a human rights lens is an effective way to facilitate job creation and decent work in order to erode poverty. A fundamental aspect of states' human rights obligations is that of non-discrimination and equality. CEDAW prohibits discrimination against women in all its forms and obligates States to condemn this discrimination and take steps by all, "appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights (Article 11)." Similarly Article 2 of the UDHR and the ICESCR articulate a similar principle regarding discrimination and equality.

As evidence shows, women and men experience poverty and vulnerability differently however, little attention has been given to the material realities and roles of women and men in measuring compliance with the MDGs. Additionally, given women's responsibility in the care economy, macroeconomic policies and institutions, including the market, concretely affect women's opportunities and capabilities. Specific austerity policies can have the effect of either reducing or increasing the burden of unpaid care work. As a result of the gendered division of labor, women have a greater responsibility for unpaid work, which decreases their ability to experience Article 24 of the UDHR, which states that, "everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay."

Human rights provide a clear and universally-recognized framework for guidance in the design, implementation and monitoring of economic policies and programs. To better ensure the promotion of productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty, CWGL recommends the following to Member States:

- Develop macroeconomic policies that facilitate the right to work and an adequate standard of living,

- Enact decent work in employment that leaves enough time for leisure, and the unpaid work of taking care of families and community activities,
- Cultivate jobs that are of decent quality and employment opportunities that are equitably distributed to include women and marginalized populations,
- Create an appropriate mechanism through which economic and finance ministries and departments at the national level can better understand and formulate policies that accurately reflect the linkages between the achievement of human rights and macroeconomic policies.