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Gender Action 2017 Annual Fundraising Letter

Holidays 2016

Dear Gender Action Supporters and Would-be Supporters,

2017 is a milestone year for women standing up to sexual assaults by supervisors, colleagues, and strangers, not only in the US but worldwide. This overdue outpouring reveals sexual abuses not only recently but in decades past when it was hard for victims to come forth!

Globally, Gender Action has been pushing to end sexual assaults in taxpayer-funded World Bank and other Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) projects. Male construction workers building MDB projects have raped, impregnated and ruined the lives of young girls and women. For too long preventing and monitoring sexual abuse has been an MDB weak link. Two examples I shared last year portray the tragic consequences:

The first example was of Nigerian girls, some as young as eight old, who were sexually assaulted after bulldozers in a World Bank-financed urban development project evicted them without consultation or warning from slum homes, leaving them homeless in crowded, dangerous Lagos. In addition some women whose slum businesses were destroyed had to resort to sex work to survive.

My second example was of over 30 young girls who had to drop out of school when workers constructing a World Bank-financed highway in Uganda abducted, raped and impregnated them. Their traditional societies do not permit these child-mothers continue their schooling.

Gender Action's evidence spotlighting these sexual assaults pushed the World Bank to create a task force to recommend how to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) in Bank investments. This year the task force recommended that the Bank train all contractors to prevent GBV and blacklist those who commit it.

In 2017 Gender Action also conducted advocacy on the world's two newest MDBs whose creation reflects an international power shift from developed industrialized countries towards emerging market economies. They are the:

(1) New Development Bank (NDB), launched by the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) that contain 43% of the world's population and three of the world's largest economies measured by GDP --

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China (2nd), India (7th) and Brazil (9th). The NDB is investing in developing countries' energy, transport and other sectors.

(2) Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) founded by China that already has 80 member countries. AIIB investments range from energy to transportation to water supply and sanitation.

To promote gender equal rights and opportunities and prevent gender discrimination in NDB and AIIB investments Gender Action is pushing both to: (1) Create and implement strong mandatory gender policies; (2) Train all staff to routinely implement these policies; and (3) Hire senior gender experts to lead these processes.

This fall Gender Action and other members of BRICS Feminist Watch (BFW), an alliance promoting gender-inclusive NDB policies and operations, met with senior NDB managers and followed up with strong advocacy. We are hopeful that the Bank will implement our demands.

This year Gender Action also met with senior AIIB officials. At our first meeting AIIB managers seemed reluctant to address gender issues. After sharing Gender Action's AIIB project analysis highlighting little attention to gender impacts, and meeting AIIB officials again, the AIIB hired a social expert whose responsibilities include addressing gender issues. We will continue to press for more robust AIIB measures to promote gender justice and prevent sexual assaults.

Across the world, the Haiti Advocacy Working Group (HAWG) that Gender Action co-founded in 2010 won a modest victory. This year I participated in HAWG's delegation that visited Haitian areas devastated by Hurricane Matthew, which killed 1,500 and destroyed the livelihoods and homes of hundreds of thousands in late 2016. My focus was women who compose the majority of unpaid subsistence farmers, barely eking out a living, who were particularly vulnerable to this climate disaster. Some women who lost everything fled to cities to join the urban underclass. Some destitute women sent their children, mostly daughters, to work as *restaveks* (indentured servants) in well-off households. In late 2017 HAWG successfully convinced the Global Environment Facility and other donors to grant Haiti \$26 million to "rebuild resilient productive landscapes" and restore farming livelihoods destroyed by Hurricane Matthew.

The world increasingly abounds with many wonderful women's rights organizations. What distinguishes Gender Action is our role ensuring the powerful public MDBs uphold gender justice.

Gender Action's important work depends on your support! [Please contribute](#) by clicking [genderaction.org's "Donate Here" button](#) or mailing a check to Gender Action, 925 H Street NW, Suite 410, Washington DC 20001.

Thanks for your support and Happy Holidays!

Warm regards,



Elaine Zuckerman
President