**PLEN Women & International Policy**

**International Finance and Social Justice**

**Elaine Zuckerman, Presentation**

**January 11, 2012**

**Introduction**

Thank you Courtney for your generous introduction.

Thank you PLEN for inviting me and Women & Public Policy students for attending.

Courtney invited me to speak on international finance and social justice.  And Courtney underlined that you would love to hear about my experiences working in international affairs, and get career advice.

Since we have just one hour and I have lots to say, I will have to talk quickly. Then we can spend time exchanging ideas.

**A Little Background on Gender Action and the IFIs**

Gender Action is a unique advocacy campaign, the only civil society watchdog in the world dedicated to holding the IFIs, accountable for the gender impacts of their investments.

Since the IFIs are the largest public taxpayer-funded international development agencies in the world, providing assistance to the world’s poorest countries, we allmust ensure that IFIs are spending our taxes to truly assist the poor, and that IFIs keep their promises to reduce gender inequalities and empower women.

Among the IFIs, you have heard most about the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Besides the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), other prominent IFIs include the regional development banks such as the AfDB (African Development Bank), ADB (Asian Development Bank), EBRD (European Bank of Reconstruction and Development) and IDB (Inter-American Development Bank).

Background on the World Bank and IMF is that each has close to 190 member countries which they divide into creditor countries like the US, and borrower or debtor countries which are concentrated in Sub-Saharan and North Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The US has by far the largest influence in the IFIs. The US has the largest single country voice in the IFIs and is the only country holding veto power in IFI decision-making. An American has always headed the World Bank and a European has always headed the IMF. Thanks to years of civil society pressure for more democratic governance in the IFIs, we hope that in future the heads of these organizations will be selected more transparently and democratically than in the past.

IFIs mostly make loans to Least Developed Countries and Emerging Economies. IFI loans have a record of burdening poor countries with debt which significantly reduces poor countries’ public funding for health and education. Under pressure from civil society, the World Bank, IDB, ADB and AfDB recently started making some small grants in addition to their traditional large loans.

During the rest of my presentation, I will share information on some specific Gender Action projects, showing how Gender Action exposes and tries to improve the gender impacts of IFI investments, especially on women. Then I will say a few words about careers.

**Some Gender Action Activities**

**I. Haiti: Monitoring and Holding Massive IFI Spending Accountable on Gender Impacts**

Since Haiti’s devastating earthquake two years ago tomorrow, Gender Action has been analyzing massive IFI loans and grants in Haiti for gender, especially to see the extent to which they address the exploding gender based violence among women inside and outside IDP camps where women and girls are so vulnerable to GBV attacks. You can find several Gender Action publications on our Haiti initiatives on our website**.** Today I wish to highlight a few Gender Action accomplishments in our Haiti advocacy:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **IFI/Issue** | **GA Advocacy** | **Achievement** |
| **IFIs: Haiti Debt** | Through joint advocacy with the Jubilee Debt Network and through Gender Action’s own publications, Gender Action persistently fought for IFIs to cancel impoverished Haiti’s substantial IFI debt in order to free up funding for health, education and other basic needs. | In an unprecedented move, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and World Bank cancelled all past Haitian debt by mid-2010; and committed to make only grants for Haiti going forward. |
| **World Bank: Haiti and Gender-Based Violence** | For two years, Gender Action has engaged in consistent advocacy efforts, including blog posts and sign-on letters to President Obama, demonstrating that none of the World Bank’s initial investments in post-earthquake Haiti addressed the country’s growing epidemic of gender-based violence. | In 2011, the World Bank approved its first grant to explicitly address gender-based violence in Haiti. In addition, the World Bank’s 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality calls for “shifting norms regarding violence against women” as a priority for global action. |
| **World Bank: Haiti Agriculture and Food Security** | Since Haiti’s devastating earthquake in 2010, the World Bank approved almost a half billion dollars in new investments for Haiti, which Gender Action tracks and analyzes.  Gender Action’s recent publications on Haiti’s rural and food insecurity issues expose missed opportunities by the Bank to support female farmers  in agricultural development projects. | In December 2011, the World Bank approved a new gender-sensitive project, “Relaunching Agriculture: Strengthening Agriculture Public Services II,” which mandates sex-disaggregated data and quotas for women’s participation. |

To commemorate the earthquake, Gender Action and the coalition which we co-founded, called the Haiti Advocacy Working Group or (HAWG), invited almost 20 grassroots Haitian civil society activists to DC a year ago. I accompanied our Haitian guests to meetings at the World Bank, IDB, Congress and the State Department, where the Haitian activists voiced their complaints and made requests.

Later this month HAWG is bringing more Haitian activists to DC. Among other requests, our Haitian colleagues will seek US Congressional support for an end to GBV plaguing Haiti’s vulnerable women and girls living exposed in wretched camps.

Gender Action has mobilized the HAWG to call on the IFIs to disburse approved funding.  
According to Gender Action’s careful tracking of IDB and World Bank grants to Haiti, as of the end of 2011, the IDB has approved nearly $750 million and World Bank has approved nearly $450 million to Haiti. But Bank disbursements hover at only around 25 percent of grant approvals.

We will call on the IDB and World Bank to identify disbursal bottlenecks and design measures to address them. And we will call on the IDB and World Bank to provide progress reports on all funds they commit for Haiti’s reconstruction.

**II.Debt Cancellation**

I already mentioned that Gender Action fights for debt cancellation for poor countries like Haiti burdened by illegitimate debt owed IFIs which prevents countries from spending on essential services like education, health and water.

Women and girls are the largest losers. As I mentioned earlier, for our IFI debt cancellation advocacy, Gender Action partners with scores of groups belonging to the Jubilee Debt Network, including many southern groups. Through continuous partnership advocacy, we have achieved debt cancellation or partial debt relief for about 40 of the world’s poorest countries. We still have another 40 or more countries to help achieve debt cancellation. Each year our advocacy results in the IFIs adding a few countries to this list.

Besides canceling *financial* debt, we are also working to achieve reparations for rich country *climate debt* owed poor countries. Mentioning climate debt is a perfect segue to discussing Gender Action’s project on:

**III. Gender and Climate Change**:

Especially oil and gas pipelines. What is the connection?

Last fall, when Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors convened in Washington, D.C. for the World Bank and IMF's Annual Meetings in September 2011, Gender Action launched [Broken Promises](http://www.genderaction.org/publications/11/chad-cam-wagp-pipelines.html),[[1]](#footnote-1) exposing the less glamorous side of International Financial Institution (IFI) investments. Based on fieldwork done in partnership with Friends of the Earth member groups in Nigeria, Cameroon, Togo and Ghana, Broken Promises examines the gender impacts of the IFI-funded Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline and West African Gas Pipeline. Surveys and compelling testimonials reveal the detrimental consequences of the pipelines on women in Africa, such as deepened poverty, destroyed livelihoods, gender discrimination, increased prostitution, weakened decision-making power, health deterioration and environmental degradation. In the several communities we visited, local women stated that Gender Action and Friends of the Earth's joint project represented the first time that they could share their perspectives on these IFI investments, despite the profoundly negative impact the pipelines have had on their daily lives.

Similarly, based on fieldwork with local communities, a few years ago Gender Action exposed how a BP-led consortium, including major financing from the World Bank and EBRD, invested in oil pipelines in Central Asia and Russia. Because the IFIs neglected their own gender policies committing them to identify and address negative gender impacts of their investments, Gender Action exposed that the pipelines became conduits for trafficking in women, and dramatically increased prostitution, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, stillbirths and other health risks that did not exist before the pipelines. If you wish to learn more details, please check out our publication Boom Time Blues and Broken promises available on Gender Action’s publication page.[[2]](#footnote-2)

To underline how bad IFIs are on climate change, in stark contrast to IFIs’ environmental-friendly rhetoric, in 2010, the World Bank approved a nearly $4 B loan to South Africa for a new coal plant, one of the largest coal plants in the world. As usual, despite World Bank promises that the coal plant would reduce poverty, poor people have actually been displaced from their homes. Farmers, who are mostly women, are losing their farms and sources of livelihood. Just before the Bank approved the coal plant, South African women community activists living near the proposed mine visited DC to protest to the World Bank that their families and communities health and livelihoods will be harmed. But the World Bank, always quick to make profit over protecting health, approved the project. Since the World Bank approved the project, the harmed communities filed a case with the World Bank Inspection Panel, a panel of three judges paid by the Bank to assess and try to address complaints by harmed World Bank project “beneficiaries”.

Gender Action is also trying to address food insecurity exacerbated by IFI policies and investments. During the last year, we launched our series on [Gender, IFIs and Food Insecurity](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=s4flrwdab&et=1108582006781&s=193&e=001EZJYG4M6giKRwUMgKX3Ed_aWEdIB71-7HBVhOXEWZdMeruvCnRkdleiXQdiEpIdhxfm0n3XOn3jF7F-0kWb_XP_J7nwLunggGfuO4yMmUl3wBTmB_5cok1-3XZlBfQkzMIBe7TwR8pBni0t2O-dz-Cw_7hitPVwb) with a food insecurity [Primer](http://www.genderaction.org/program/food/primer.html) and two country cases so far: an [Ethiopia case-study](http://www.genderaction.org/program/food/case/ethiopia.html), and a [Haiti case-study](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=s4flrwdab&et=1108582006781&s=193&e=001EZJYG4M6giI6CJoqTIoHqkB5pJuSE24NWgZK6KBzfkSkDusYwtSBhofqKdWqM_k4wZfUi8xgoUgOLiYpTZPTAKd0R22YGPrrQ_6snnKHT25n_QCF4FLzvDv10FqjbabtM8mxrMIyjqId-YHQaQvKmflIAe9NAnAQ), showing that IFI agriculture and rural development investments contribute to increasing food insecurity in Ethiopia and Haiti, especially  among poor rural women who face significant gender discrimination in the agricultural sector.

1. **Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Spending**

**Gender Action has been Mapping IFI Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Spending.** We began this project five years ago with an introductory report based on a desk study entitled Mapping Multilateral Development Banks’ Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Spending. Mapping demonstrated a decline in World Bank funding for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS during 2000-2007 and very little spending by the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank on RH and H/A. Despite the IFIs’ strong verbal commitments to achieving the reproductive health and HIV/AIDS MDGs, we found that IFI RH and H/A spending declined and IFI investments basically ignored gender roles.

Today, Gender Action is more deeply monitoring World Bank and African Development Bank Spending on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa in the hope of improving IFI spending in these areas.

Our qualitative analysis of every active WB and AfDB-funded SRH and HIV project in SSA shows that the vast majority do not involve beneficiaries in planning, implementation and evaluation processes; fail to consider gender impacts; and lack a gender rights perspective, ignoring whether men and women, girls and boys have equal rights and access to projects’ intended benefits.

To assess real impacts on WB and AfDB “beneficiaries”, Gender Action is partnering with civil society organizations in one Anglophone and one Francophone country, Uganda and Cameroon. We selected these countries because they each had several active WB and AfDB HIV/RH investments which impose health care user fees on poor patients, making health services too expensive for poor women and men to be able to access them.

In Uganda, we are partnering with the National Association for Women’s Action in Development (NAWAD) and in Cameroon with the Martin Luther King Fdn (! LUKMEF). In both countries we we provided initial training on gender analysis of IFI health investments. Following our training, our CSO partners are gathering data examining the impact of WB and AfDB RH/HIV investments among beneficiaries “on the ground” in their countries. Then, Gender Action and our local partners will jointly analyze the data which our partners collect and write up our findings in a report for advocacy. This year we will conduct joint advocacy to improve the quality and quantity of WB and AfDB investments in HIV and RH. Our partners will also offer IFI gender advocacy trainings to other CSOs in Uganda and Cameroon. So we expect a positive multiplier effect in reaching communities on the ground.

On World AIDS Day last month, based on Gender Action’s tracking World Bank spending on RH and HIV, Gender Action drafted and sent a sign on letter to World Bank President Zoellick, containing over 100 signatories, complaining that the World Bank spent a mere ½ of one percent of its total funding over a decade on preventing and treating HIV. We await a response.

Gender Action also continually publishes resources on topics critical to RH, gender rights and IFIs. Last year, we initiated a series on [Gender, IFIs and Gender-Based Violence](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=s4flrwdab&et=1108582006781&s=193&e=001EZJYG4M6giLVtL0x84h1-FADTcdelj3mruQmSEE7y0ZjrUKL2oPXiq9NYszIRkkibqwi4MXRZ0uPSJOyAGnD9Iwr-lEkgoYf6cdCiRJ-cIvHx9rIKAKmCitlG--XQ0e9k0ra___4rD-KmDkk63iAgg==) (GBV), which includes a  [Link](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=s4flrwdab&et=1108582006781&s=193&e=001EZJYG4M6giJaojnG-lKM9tQK9iq8fEKOx_GefAF7pLb2tUBNgNeOsszjFyrugvm-6cvz092s1pDkyy4sq0gQLhpsLkC2i9rLdWToukClVO5DZo6riyaABbPLkudWblvVNr6DP5wM7mti5714GKzXOhLcFOWODWfQ), a [Primer](http://www.genderaction.org/program/gbv/primer.html), and a Democratic Republic of Congo Case-Study launched on November 25 - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Our research demonstrates that IFI policies and investments rarely address or monitor GBV affecting women and girls and ignore GBV affecting men and boys.

**Career: Why I Established Gender Action**

With this background on the IFIs, let me explain why I established Gender Action.

During my career in the IFIs (which you heard about in the introduction?), I was impressed by the vitality of multiplying civil society organizations addressing development issues. When I joined the WBk in 1980, I had never heard of a CSO or NGO because so few existed. They multiplied like crazing starting in the 1980s. At that time, environmental CSOs established the environmental campaign on the World Bank to try to stop the harmful environmental impacts of World Bank loans. While women’s groups also proliferated, I noticed that women’s groups hardly focused on the IFIs. When I reviewed World Bank loans while working in the World Bank’s gender unit in the late 1990s, I saw a disconnect between the Bank’s promise to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality, and the fact that so many World Bank investments across sectors around the world neglected gender issues and even had harmful impacts on women. This disconnect impassioned me to create Gender Action in early 2002.

Having worked inside the official multilateral IFIs for two decades, and outside them for over a decade because of the power of CSOs, my strong advice is for you to seek careers in civil society which has the most responsive and dynamic solutions to development problems. In contrast, IFIs are old colonial era bureaucracies that promote corporate interests through their procurement systems.

The last year Gender Action received wonderful unsolicited feedback from partners in the field. I would like to end by sharing a few lines from Betty Abah of FOE Nigeria, who wrote:

*"Working with Gender Action...has been enriching, inspiring and even exhilarating. Gender Action is one of the few gender-focused organizations still around today whose works and words reverberate in the 'high places' (World Bank, IMF, etc.) telling them about injustices they perpetrate directly or otherwise, in the remotest regions of the world, and get these wrongs righted several times. What other cause can be more impactful than bringing relief to several thousands of people - men, women, children, in far away regions? Gender Action has worked over the years to ensure environmental, human and health rights for some of the most oppressed and discriminated people from Asia to the most remote communities in Africa, ensuing gender equity, speaking up for silenced women. Their gender-specific work has been monumental."*

*- Betty Abah, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria*

I will gladly discuss these ideas further in the Q&As.

Let me close by suggesting you sign up on our website for Gender Action’s listserv to receive announcement of Gender Action’s advocacy initiatives.

Thanks so much for listening!

1. See Gender Action. 2011. [Broken Promises: Gender Impacts of the World Bank-Financed West African and Chad-Cameroon Pipelines](http://genderaction.org/publications/11/chad-cam-wagp-pipelines.pdf). Both reports are available at www.genderaction.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Gender Action and CEE Bankwatch Network. 2006. Boom Time Blues: Big Oil’s gender impacts in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Sakhalin. Available at: www.genderaction.org/images/boomtimeblues.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)