

Gender Action Update #6

Spring 2009

Gender Action has been hard at work over the past six months developing advocacy campaigns, tools and research publications to hold the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) accountable on their promises to promote gender equality and empower women. Our sixth biannual Update looks back six months at the exciting work we've done and great strides we've made toward achieving this goal!

New Gender and Climate Change Program!

Last year, Gender Action produced its first paper on gender, climate change and the IFIs in April 2009: ***Doubling the Damage: World Bank Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) Undermine Climate and Gender Justice***. This introductory paper, published with support from the Heinrich Boell Foundation, explores the linkages between climate change, gender justice and the World Bank's new Climate Investment Funds. The paper outlines how the new Funds entirely ignore gender considerations, thus undermining gender justice and disproportionately harming poor women. Doubling forms the basis for civil society advocacy urging CIFs to address gender issues and monitoring CIF implementation for gender sensitivity in future.

Then on April 30 – May 1, 2009, Gender Action co-sponsored a climate change conference in Washington, DC: ***Ready or not? Issues and Solutions for Adapting to Climate Change***. Several conference sessions addressed the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women.

Gender, Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Gender Action recently launched a new advocacy campaign called ***Leveraging IFI Funds for Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS***, which will pressure IFIs to increase and improve their spending on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, as well as remove their loan conditionalities which impede progress toward achieving the reproductive health and HIV/AIDS Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The campaign's long-term goal is to increase the number of poor women, men, boys and girls with access to high-quality family planning, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS services in the global South. As of June 2009, 27 global and local organizations have joined the campaign!

To build the capacity of campaign members to pressure IFIs to increase and improve spending, Gender Action just produced ***Increasing and Improving Multilateral Development Banks' Funding for Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS: A Toolkit for Advocacy*** (2009). This new, user-friendly advocacy publication provides tools for monitoring and conducting advocacy on the IFIs.

Linking IFI-Watchers and Gender Justice Groups

Gender Action is bringing gender into the agendas of many existing IFI-watcher groups, which traditionally focused on the environment, transparency and accountability issues but neglected gender dimensions. We are also bringing IFIs into the work of gender justice and women's rights groups, which have not yet addressed the IFIs. By strengthening our partners' attention to IFIs, women's rights and gender justice, we expect to multiply Gender Action's effectiveness in ensuring IFI investments benefit and do not harm poor men and women.

In January 2009, Gender Action completed the first year of its three-year 'Gender Capacity Building Project' sponsored by Oxfam Novib to increase the gender sensitivity of six IFI-watcher organizations.

After completing gender audits of three IFI-watcher counterparts during this first project phase, Gender Action has now begun individual training and capacity building with each partner. As part of this second project phase, Gender Action delivered a workshop in April, 2009, to staff at the Bank Information Center (BIC) in Washington, DC, entitled ***Gender, Transparency and the World Bank***. This workshop aimed to help BIC staff 'engender' their advocacy on the World Bank Disclosure Policy review process. Also in April, 2009, Gender Action delivered an open workshop entitled ***Gender Tools for IFI Watchers*** during the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings. This workshop launched Gender Action's new ***Gender Toolkit for International-Finance Watchers***, which contains useful tools, information and resources on gender and IFI-related topics like extractive industries, climate change, indigenous rights and accountability measures for both IFI-watchers and non-IFI watchers alike.

Gender Action also launched a new series of ***Gender Action Links*** – short, accessible, issue briefs on topics related to gender and the IFIs. The ***Gender Action Links*** aim to 'link' IFI-watcher and gender justice groups in gender-focused advocacy on the IFIs. The latest ***Link*** in the series is ***Gender, IFIs and Extractive Industries***.

Gender Action also completed a year-long (2008) capacity building project with the Women's Law Studies and Legal Aid Center (WLSLAC) in Beijing, China, to assist them in conducting advocacy on the IFIs, gender and climate change. The project entailed literacy training on the IFIs for WLSLAC, followed by a joint gender audit of IFI investments in China. Based on the audit, Gender Action developed and published the capacity building toolkit ***IFI Gender Audit and Advocacy: A Toolkit for Chinese Civil Society Organizations***. Using the toolkit and Gender Action's capacity-building assistance, WLSLAC is independently conducting field assessments of the gender impacts of IFI investments in China. This toolkit will enable Gender Action and WLSLAC to provide IFI literacy training and capacity building to a larger number of Chinese civil society groups in order to hold the IFIs accountable on their gender equality commitments in China.

Finally, in early 2009 Gender Action launched an electronic ***Gender Forum for International Finance Watchers*** in order to link our IFI-watcher and gender justice partners in joint discussion and advocacy on gender and the IFIs, as well as strengthen and multiply Gender Action's efforts to ensure all IFI investments promote gender equality and women's rights.

Gender and Post-Conflict Reconstruction

In early 2009, Gender Action published ***The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Challenges in Development Aid*** (Elaine Zuckerman and Marcia E. Greenberg) as a chapter in ***Making Peace Work: The Challenges of Social and Economic Reconstruction***

(Palgrave MacMillan, UNU-WIDER). The chapter concludes that few World Bank or other post-conflict reconstruction loans and grants identify or address gender discrimination issues. The authors strongly recommend that reconstruction donors keep their promises to promote gender equality to make peace work.

Coalition Work

As a small organization, Gender Action builds strength in numbers to achieve our mission and goals. Over the past six months, Gender Action has contributed to the work of several coalitions and campaigns.

Gender Action participates in the ***International Monetary Fund (IMF) Working Group*** to educate the US Congress to persuade the IMF to end harmful conditionalities, like requiring poor countries to impose public sector pay ceilings, which reduces numbers of teachers and medical workers. "Unaffordable" teachers and medical workers is a key reason why least developed countries suffer from inadequate education and health services. Gender Action also contributes to the ***International***

Development Association (IDA)-15 Coalition, a civil society advocacy group that works to hold IDA – the World Bank’s concessional lending arm for poor countries – accountable to and improve its social and environmental standards during the fund’s replenishment cycle every three years. The coalition is currently achieving success in getting the US government to stop approving World Bank loans with harmful conditions that impede poor people’s access to health care, water and other essential services.

Finally, Gender Action remains an active member of the ***Jubilee USA Network Council*** fighting to eliminate poor countries’ illegitimate debt owed to the IFIs, as well as to ensure that IFI debt relief does not contain harmful economic reform conditions. The Council, consisting of about 60 member groups, plays a strategic role in pushing for poor country debt relief. Jubilee has been instrumental in obtaining debt relief for over 20 countries to date.

Events

On March 19th, Gender Action President, Elaine Zuckerman, spoke as a panelist at the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) consultation session on the Bank’s Gender Policies. Elaine presented on ‘Problems in the World Bank’s Gender Action Plan and Gender Policy.’ Earlier on February 18th, Elaine presented on ‘Women in the Global South and the Financial Crisis’ during a Global Citizens for Change Telephone Conference. And finally on January 23rd, Elaine presented on the role of IFIs in the financial crisis and the role of women for International Honor Students in a Health and Community Program.

Your Help!

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With continued appreciation for your support,

Elaine Zuckerman, President
Mande Limbu, Programs Director
Anna Rooke, Programs Coordinator

1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20009
202-939-5463
info@genderaction.org
www.genderaction.org