



Holidays 2015

Dear Gender Action Board & Council Members,

I just returned from the Niger Delta where fisherwomen are legendary. Women's fisheries and fish selling have contributed to family and community livelihoods for generations across West Africa.

But in recent years, oil and gas pipelines have destroyed fishing grounds and family incomes. The land and sea around Niger Delta communities no longer support any life. Big oils' Kalashnikov-toting goons guarding the pipelines in the dead zones scared the daylight out of me.

Ironically, the taxpayer supported World Bank Group whose declared mission is to eliminate extreme poverty has co-financed these private pipelines. Despite constant promises to empower women, the Bank did nothing to protect the Niger Delta fisherwomen from oil and gas' hazardous effects.

The Niger Delta provides just one example of development bank projects with adverse effects on women. Gender Action analyzed World Bank and other development bank-financed pipelines' gender impacts in West African, Central Asian and Eurasian countries. We found that life for women was worse, not better, after the projects were completed. The pipelines eliminated women's farming and fishing livelihoods, employed males in pipeline construction and drove women into prostitution out of desperation. All this increased women's dependence on men, sexually-transmitted infections, trafficking in women, violence against women, and stillbirths - often caused by toxic pollution from inevitable pipeline leaks.

To end these tragic impacts Gender Action is leading a global campaign to ensure that the World Bank adopts and implements an effective mandatory gender policy, needed more than ever as the

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Bank plans to double “mega-infrastructure” spending over the next decade. A robust gender policy is a prerequisite to helping women in the Niger Delta and worldwide support their families and enjoy full rights. At the same time, Gender Action is demanding that the development banks stop financing fossil-fuel-generating investments, including pipelines, which threaten humankind’s health and earth’s sustainability.

Gender Action and our local partners’ work in the Niger Delta and elsewhere in Africa inspired women’s organizations across the continent to launch a gender and ecological justice movement. This fall I was honored to be the only non-African (among 70 participants) in movement meetings that strategized on how to guarantee safe environments for African women who produce food, steward natural resources, and care for families and communities.

At the other end of the world -- in Haiti, Gender Action has continued to monitor and hold accountable development bank investments following the 2010 earthquake. We are working to end evictions of Haitian women farmers from fertile land to make way for development bank-financed mining exploration and extremely-low-wage export industries. Gender Action’s fieldwork in Haiti demonstrated that displaced farmers’ pitiful compensation reduced household income and food security. Many evicted farmers have not been hired by export enterprises as promised. Even had they been, Haiti’s lowest wages in the western hemisphere cannot sustain livelihoods. Gender Action works actively in coalitions to attain Haitian farmers’ land tenure and workers’ living wages.

I am ending this letter with a welcome achievement. Since one in three women around the world is sexually assaulted in her lifetime, and many infrastructure investments create situations where women are subject to sexual abuse and rape, Gender Action tracked how many World Bank projects have been dedicated to combatting gender-based violence (GBV). In 2010 we found that only three Bank projects in history had been dedicated to reducing GBV. Gender Action campaigned to change that. As a result, the Bank is prioritizing ending GBV. The Bank has now financed a dozen projects devoted to combatting GBV, with more in the pipeline.

The world abounds with many wonderful women’s rights organizations. What distinguishes Gender Action is our unique role motivating development banks to uphold women’s rights.

This 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