

**Gender Action:  
Holding International Financial Institutions to Account:  
Ten Critical Achievements in Ten Years (2002-2012)  
June 2013**



Women from Badagry, Nigeria protesting West African Gas Pipeline Company (WAPCO) as a part of Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Gender Action advocacy.<sup>1</sup>

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## TEN YEARS OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

Gender Action holds International Financial Institutions (IFIs)<sup>ii</sup> to account to their rhetorical commitments to gender equality and women's rights. This is accomplished by rigorous research, feminist analysis and advocacy on IFIs' policy implications on women. Gender Action believes that sustainable gender equality must address women's rights and aims to transform underlying power structures and dynamics in domestic, regional, and international policies and practices. Gender Action is the only organization exclusively focused on tracking gender in IFIs, calling for the full integration of gender justice and women's rights in policies and programs, with a deep focus on the World Bank. This review shares the contributions and achievements of Gender Action over a ten-year period, from 2002-2012.<sup>iii</sup>

Gender Action catalyzes change through:

### ***Strategic goals that:***

- Produce rigorous feminist analysis of IFIs' policy implications on women;
- Position Gender Action as the premier advocate for gender and economic justice in IFIs, as reflected in their organizational structures, policies and investments;
- Hold IFIs to account for their claims regarding gender equality and women's empowerment (playing a watchdog role); and
- Build civil society organizations' (CSO) ability to conduct gender analyses of IFIs' programs and policies.

### ***Approaches that:***

- Offer solution-oriented, real-world recommendations to reduce and eliminate IFIs' current injustices, harm, and marginalization of women;
- Pair high-quality, rigorous research with advocacy to change the policies and practices of IFIs to be more gender just and respectful of human rights;
- Engage in advocacy strategies; within the IFIs by providing critiques and feedback on key policies, documents, and processes related to gender; outside of the IFIs by mobilizing collective pressure for reform;
- Collaborate with global, regional, and local CSOs in the Global South and North to promote collective action and ensure that research and analysis are grounded in the experiences and recommendations of women in countries where IFIs invest; and
- Prioritize issues of significance to women's rights and lives, such as addressing gender-based violence; removing user fees from life-saving, critical health, and reproductive services; and advocating for policies that strengthen women's livelihoods.

## THE UNIQUE NICHE OF GENDER ACTION

### *How is Gender Action unique?*

It is the only organization focusing exclusively on gender justice in all IFIs with the:

- Ability to spearhead collective mobilization efforts and organize allies to change policies and practices of IFIs;
- Ability to pressure IFIs into actions that strengthen economic justice and rights for women; and
- In-depth knowledge of IFIs and strong connections in Washington, D.C. to make changes happen.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### What do others have to say about Gender Action?

“Many women's groups research, work, and advocate for women internationally. They focus on specific issues such as health status, reproductive rights, education, microenterprise, etc. However, Gender Action is the only organization to grasp the big picture behind all of these specific issues: funding from international financial institutions. Nobody else is able to assess the impact of World Bank loans and IMF practices on civil society in less developed nations, particularly on "the woman on the street" in Haiti or Kenya or Guatemala.” Susan Scanlan, Chair, National Council of Women's Organizations (USA)

“In-depth knowledge of World Bank policies and developments; well-connected to Washington based networks.” Eimi Watanabe, Member, World Bank Inspection Panel (Japan)

“It is about their dedication to monitoring and exposing the ills of an agency which is generally seen as committed to promoting the welfare of the world's poor, but which, in actuality, impoverishes them the more. Their work at exposing the World Bank's gender imbalance is as unprecedented as it is effective in influencing decisions at the apex body.” Betty Abah, Gender Focal Person, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth (Nigeria)

“Gender Action is unique not only in their focus - targeting IFIs [with regard to] impact on gender justice - but also in the active, leading role they've taken in advocacy on Haiti issues despite limited staff and resources.” Alexis Erkert, Coordinator of Another Haiti is Possible program at Other Worlds (Haiti)

“No one else is doing the work they are on the World Bank.” Chad Dobson, Executive Director, Bank Information Center (USA)

“Being an institution [solely] promoting gender justice makes Gender Action very unique. The fact that Gender Action has local partners in countries where IFI investments are being implemented sets Gender Action above other organizations.” Maurice Ouma Odhiambo, Executive Director, Jamaa Resource Initiative (Kenya)

“Gender Action has helped to spearhead and enable the efforts of actors committed to gender justice to change the policies and behaviors of the IFIs.” Robert Fox, Executive Director, Oxfam (Canada)

“Gender Action is an organization that is well positioned to understand and pressure IFIs to act on behalf of women.” Gabriela Vega, Principal Social Development Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank, and former IDB Gender Unit Acting Director (Peru)

This section highlights the key achievements of Gender during 2002-2012. Most of the achievements fall within three categories: **(1) capacity and network building for women's rights organizations (WROs) and civil society organizations (CSOs); (2) practice and policy changes in the IFIs; and (3) data transparency and IFI monitoring.**

**Gender Action and their partners have contributed to the following achievements.**

**Achievement 1: Strengthened global women's movements' analyses of women's economic justice**

**Achievement 2: Created a groundswell of grassroots activists to hold IFIs to account**

**Achievement 3: Built local capacity for IFI gender monitoring and auditing**

**Achievement 4: Obtained women's rights language in IFI policies and reports**

**Achievement 5: Advocated successfully for gender discrimination cases to be heard by the World Bank Inspection Panel**

**Achievement 6: Played an active role in the successful campaign to cancel Haiti's IFI debt**

**Achievement 7: Contributed to effecting the World Bank's approval of a gender-based violence (GBV) grant for Haiti**

**Achievement 8: Made IFI reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS spending data transparent and widely available**

**Achievement 9: Stopped the World Bank from cutting reproductive health, family planning, and safe abortion funding**

**Achievement 10: Advocated to end IFI user fees for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS**

## **ACHIEVEMENT # 1**

### **Strengthened global women's movements' analyses of women's economic justice**

*Because of its unique position and analytical strengths, Gender Action has been called on as a resource and capacity-builder in international and local feminist spaces, strengthening movements for women's economic justice.*

- In a mapping review leading up to the [2012 Association for Women's Rights in Development \(AWID\) Forum](#), "Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Gender Justice," Gender Action ranked as "having the highest potential" to contribute training or information among different women's economic justice groups.
  - As such, AWID invited Gender Action to conduct first day core literacy training, "[Understanding IFIs and Gender](#)" at the 2012 Forum.

#### ***Impact of Gender Action's Work***

*I thought the [Gender Action AWID] session was incredibly useful: clear, concrete and relevant to a wide audience (those more familiar with the issues and those that might be newer to them) - not an easy task! This was so important to us – to have a good set of sessions at the beginning of the Forum that touch upon some of the issues related to economic power, to ground, deconstruct and challenge it.*

Natalie Raaber, AWID researcher

***Gender Action's work fills a unique gap among women's organizations – both in terms of research produced and advocacy engagement.***

- Women are often marginalized from economic and financial spheres, which the IFIs represent and inhabit. Gender Action is one of few organizations that already "inhabits" women's rights in the sphere of economic justice.
- Gender Action's role as National Council of Women's Organizations Global Task Force Chair has provided Gender Action with a platform to involve many women's groups in IFI issues for the first time.

## ACHIEVEMENT # 2

Created a groundswell of grassroots activists to hold IFIs to account

***Gender Action works at the intersection of global and local development, channeling grassroots concerns to IFIs and translating international policies and processes to local communities and CSOs.***

- Gender Action strengthens feminist network building for economic justice, for example through its [Global Gender IFI Watcher Network](#), launched in 2012 at the AWID Forum.
  - With 279 members from 85 countries, the majority from the Global South, the Network aims to unite CSOs and WROs for collaborative analysis and advocacy on IFI investments to build feminist economic justice and power.
  - Network members build capacity to: 1) find critical information on IFI projects in their country; 2) conduct gender analysis and track funding streams over time; 3) identify if IFI projects have resulted in harmful effects in local communities, specifically on women; and 4) advocate to end such harmful impacts.<sup>iv</sup>
- The Network launched its first collective project in 2013 to influence the World Bank to implement a “do-no-harm gender safeguard policy.”
  - The time is ripe for such advocacy given that, first, the Banks’ “[Operational Policy on Gender and Development](#)” is weak and Bank safeguards, which aim “to prevent and mitigate undue harm to people and their environments,” currently exclude gender. Second, the Bank initiated its first [safeguard review process in 2012-2014](#), including public consultations and discussions with CSOs and other stakeholders.

***In partnership with the BWP, Gender Action has stimulated collective analysis and collaboration among CSOs to strengthen the content and framing of the 2012 WDR.***

- Gender Action and the Bretton Woods Project (BWP) co-hosted an online forum and listserv focused on shifting language in the World Bank’s 2012 WDR. The forum provided a space for women’s rights advocates to review the WDR draft, outline recommendations, and coordinate a collaborative response and advocacy strategy.<sup>v</sup>

***In addition to working globally, Gender Action also works domestically, sharing knowledge and mobilizing advocacy on the detrimental gender impacts of IFI policies and practices with women’s organizations in the US.<sup>vi</sup>***

- Domestically Gender Action engages U.S. organizations in IFI advocacy through co-founding the Caring Economy Campaign and chairing the National Council of Women’s Organizations Global Task Force.

### ***Impact of Gender Action’s Work***

*Gender Action's reputation rests on its excellent assessments of IFI practices in specific countries and/or regions. No other group can explain just what isn't working in Haitian earthquake relief or why food sustainability is now an issue in Africa. Gender Action's body of work represents an indictment of the 'business as usual' attitudes of global banking, international financial aid, and governments everywhere that undermines civil society in the developing world. Because their reports are irrefutable, Gender Action has embarrassed IFIs into reforming their most egregious practices.*

Susan Scanlan (USA), Chair of National Council of Women’s Organizations

### ACHIEVEMENT # 3

#### Built local capacity for IFI gender monitoring and auditing

***Gender Action's capacity-building work in 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia<sup>vii</sup> strengthens the advocacy and gender analysis capacity of local WROs and civil society groups more broadly.***

- Tailored capacity-building workshops<sup>viii</sup> aim to strengthen participants' ability to hold IFIs to account for investments on family planning, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and HIV/AIDS, integrate gender dimensions into poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), and explore the gender impacts of extractive industry (pipelines, coal) investments.<sup>ix</sup>
  - Gender Action's "[Gender Toolkit for IFI Watchers](#)" is in high demand, reaching 50,000 downloads (4/5 in English and 1/5 in Spanish) from April 2012 to January 2013.

***Gender Action not only tracks spending on gender equality and women's rights in IFIs, but also conducts gender audits and training within organizations.<sup>x</sup>***

- By request, Gender Action conducted gender audits for Central and Eastern Europe BankWatch, Bank Information Center (BIC), and the BWP.
  - Audits assessed the extent to which IFI watchdog partners routinely and systematically integrated gender dimensions into their organizational activities, policies, programs, and processes. Gender Action followed up with gender sensitivity and equality training plus two years of technical assistance.<sup>xi</sup>
- Gender Action also trains CSO staff in gender monitoring of specific IFI issues.
  - For example, in 2009 Gender Action led a workshop for BIC on gender, transparency, access to information, and the World Bank Disclosure Policy. The workshop underlined the importance of integrating gender to ensure both men and women benefit equally from information provisions and outreach practices.

#### ***Impact of Gender Action's Work***

*Gender Action is one of the few gender-focused organizations still around today whose works and words reverberate in the 'high places' of economic saboteurs disguising as saviors. Gender Action's work in looking the powerful (World Bank, IMF, etc.) in the face and telling them about the injustices they perpetrate directly or otherwise, in the remotest regions of the world, and get these wrongs righted several times, is simply awesome.*

Betty Abah (Nigeria) Gender Focal Person at Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria



## ACHIEVEMENT # 4

### Obtained women's rights language in IFI policies and reports

***Throughout its decade of existence, Gender Action has advocated strongly that the IFIs include the equal rights of men, women, boys and girls as a core development priority.***

- In 2007, Gender Action produced the first comprehensive [feminist critique](#) of [“Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) \(2007-2010\)”](#).<sup>xii</sup>
  - Gender Action drew attention to the lack of a human and women's rights framework, the embrace of conditions and policy based loans that increase the feminization of poverty, little linkage to the MDGs, and the use of failed gender mainstreaming policies as a key economic strategy. The critique was shared across CSO communities.<sup>xiii</sup>
- A few years later, Gender Action prepared a response to the World Bank's review of GAP progress and plan to integrate gender mainstreaming—[“Critique of the World Bank's Applying Gender Action Plan Lessons: A Three-Year Road Map for Gender Mainstreaming \(2011-2013\).”](#)
  - Gender Action again criticized the Bank for failing to address women's empowerment from a human rights perspective, instead continuing a singular business model approach to development with often devastating impacts on women's lives.
- Gender Action and partners<sup>xiv</sup> pressured the World Bank to integrate a rights perspective in its flagship [2012 World Development Report on gender](#).
  - In the 2012 WDR, for the first time, the Bank promoted women's rights as a "core objective in itself."

***Gender Action contributed to the creation of stronger policies on women's rights within some of the IFIs, which has broad-reaching impacts on women's daily lives.***

- Gender Action made human rights a key objective during 2009-2010 civil society consultations on the IDB's new gender policy, pushed for strong evaluation measures and a do-no-harm gender safeguard.
  - The IDB's new 2011 Operational Policy on Gender Equality in Development promotes women's/human rights, includes specific indicators to ensure the policy's effective implementation and evaluation, and contains the first IFI do-no-harm gender safeguard to prevent negative impacts on men, women, boys and girls.

### ***Impact of Gender Action's Work***

*From inception, Gender Action has led advocacy, pushing IFIs, which lack human rights policies, to uphold women's rights. We pressed the World Bank to advance women's and men's equal human rights in addition to its single approach that promoted women's empowerment as an instrument to achieve economic development. The Bank called this instrumental strategy, 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics'. But the Bank's smart economic framework downsized public budgets and privatized public services. These economic measures squeezed poor women's, men, girls' and boys' access to health and other essential services while failing to protect women's rights. We are pleased that the Bank now rhetorically supports women's rights and the IDB's gender policy promotes women's rights. These steps signify important initial progress.*

Elaine Zuckerman (Canada), Gender Action President

## ACHIEVEMENT # 5

### Advocated successfully for gender discrimination cases to be heard by the World Bank Inspection Panel

#### ***Gender Action exposed egregious and harmful outcomes of IFI practices due to gender-blind investments.***

- Gender Action’s research exposed gender discrimination and other harmful impacts on women of several West African, Central Asian and Russian World Bank financed oil and gas pipeline projects.
  - In 2006, Gender Action partnered with CEE Bankwatch Network to publish [“Boom Time Blues: Big Oil’s Impacts on Women in Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Sakhalin”](#). The fieldwork-based report exposed how the IFI-financed pipelines employed males almost exclusively, eliminated women’s farmland and livelihoods, raised women’s dependence on men, drove women into sex work out of desperation, and increased sexually-transmitted infections, trafficking in women, violence against women, and stillbirths).<sup>xv</sup>
  - The critical public reaction resulting from the launch of [“Boom Time Blues”](#) in the media positioned Gender Action as a key stakeholder and gender equality advocate in IFI spaces.<sup>xvi</sup> The World Bank and other IFI officials have actively solicited Gender Action’s feedback.<sup>xvii</sup> Various allies approached Gender Action to conduct similar research studies in West Africa.
  - In 2011, Gender Action partnered with Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) to produce a gendered analysis of two pipeline investments in West Africa. The findings in [“Broken Promises: Gender Impacts of the World Bank Financed West-African and Chad-Cameroon Pipelines”](#) demonstrated how gender-blind investments in oil pipelines had devastating effects on communities across Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo, and Ghana.<sup>xviii</sup>

#### ***Gender Action leveraged results from the gender-blind impacts of these infrastructure projects to lobby for integrating gender discrimination cases through IFI accountability mechanisms.***<sup>xix</sup>

- In 2010 Gender Action produced [“Speaking Up for Gender: A Step-by-Step Guide to Holding IFIs Accountable”](#)<sup>xx</sup> to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to take gender complaints for redress to IFI accountability mechanisms.<sup>xxi</sup>
  - The guide has been downloaded over 5,000 times, highlighting demand for capacity building in redressing gender rights violations.
- In 2011, Gender Action and FoEI invited members of the World Bank Inspection Panel<sup>xxii</sup> to participate in the launch of [“Broken Promises”](#). This opened the Panel to agree to review gender-related issues.<sup>xxiii</sup>

#### ***Impact of Gender Action’s Work***

IFIs responded to Gender Action’s exposure of the tragic gender impacts of its pipeline projects by: the World Bank creating and staffing a gender and extractive industries unit and webpage; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development launching its first Gender Action Plan; and the Inter-American Development Bank instituting Gender Safeguards. In response to "Broken Promises," the World Bank's Inspection Panel indicated that it would be willing to consider a first-ever gender discrimination case.

*Gender Action has played an important role in spreading the information about the Inspection Panel and its function to potential requesters; this outreach and advocacy role is vital in the functioning of the Panel. The Panel greatly appreciates Gender Action’s role in this regard.*

Eimi Watanabe (Japan) member of the World Bank Inspection Panel

## ACHIEVEMENT # 6

### Played an active role in the successful campaign to cancel Haiti's IFI debt

***Gender Action drew attention to the gendered impact of debt in Haiti and the often violent and harsh realities that women faced after the earthquake.***

- Gender Action, in collaboration with other organizations, played a key role in campaigning to end Haiti's crippling nearly \$1.8 billion USD debt in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake. Following the earthquake, a civil society campaign emerged calling for the forgiveness of Haiti's debt.
  - Gender Action tracked IFI funding in Haiti. Results estimated that over half (56%) of the relief given to Haiti by IFIs at the time was in the form of World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and IDB loans. Loans that deepened the country's debt burden disproportionately affected women, widened poverty and diluted spending on health, education and protective services.
  - Gender Action called on the US government, as the largest IFI shareholder, to commit IFIs to providing grants, not loans, to Haiti.<sup>xxiv</sup>

#### ***Impact of Gender Action's Work***

In 2010 after considerable protest from debt relief groups and coalitions, including Gender Action, the IMF cancelled Haiti's \$279.1 million dollar debt while the World Bank and IDB forgave all past loans and agreed that all future investments would be in the form of grants. This commitment to Haiti is unique in the world: while other countries have received some World Bank and IDB debt relief, none have received total debt cancellation and a promise of grants only for the future. However, as [Gender Action](#) (2011d, p.3) notes, "in a twist of irony... the IMF then loaned \$60 million to Haiti for relief and reconstruction efforts, in the form of a three-year credit that would begin to accrue interest at the end of 2011." Moving forward, the Jubilee Network and Gender Action, as part of the Coalition, will continue to work to cancel this debt.

*Together with Jubilee, Gender Action was active in calling for debt cancellation for Haiti. In working with other members of the Haiti Advocacy Working Group on direct advocacy, as well as publishing their own research and writing, engaging the media and speaking publicly, Gender Action has been visibly at the forefront of examining how World Bank funding impacted gender-based violence in post-earthquake Haiti.*

Alexis Erkert (based in Haiti), Coordinator, Others World

## ACHIEVEMENT # 7

Contributed to effecting the World Bank's approval of a gender-based violence (GBV) grant for Haiti

*Gender Action has been at the forefront of efforts to highlight the high rates of GBV and rape in Haiti after the earthquake and pressure the IFIs to address this grave reality.*

From January 2010 through May 2011, the World Bank and IDB [granted almost \\$500 million](#) for relief and rebuilding projects in Haiti. However, IFI grants largely ignored GBV, which increased in prevalence after the earthquake. Prior to 2011, no World Bank projects focusing on GBV in Haiti existed.

- Concerned with this reality, Gender Action urged IFIs to take action. For example, Gender Action uniquely monitored all IFI investments, prepared research briefs and cases, campaigned for debt relief, and worked in partnership with other coalitions—such as the Haiti Advocacy Working Group (HAWG),<sup>xxv</sup> and the Haitian Women and Girls Allies (HWGA).
  - Challenging the government's completely gender-blind World Bank-supported Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, a group of women's rights groups coalesced in the Haiti Equality Collective (HEC)<sup>xxvi</sup> to write "[The Haiti Gender Shadow Report: Ensuring Haitian Women's Participation and Leadership in All Stages of National Relief and Reconstruction.](#)" The report pushed for protection against GBV and other women's rights. Gender Action was the report's lead editor.
- Gender Action also called attention to the high level of GBV and rape that proliferated in the aftermath of the earthquake especially in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.<sup>xxvii</sup>
  - [Gender Action](#) (2010c, p.1) recommended that the US integrate gender assessments and address gender-based violence in IFI investments. Gender Action promoted the inclusion of data from local women's organizations involved in participant-driven evaluations of temporary camps, housing, security, police training, education, agricultural development, water, sanitation, healthcare, and job creation.
- Gender Action continues to track IFI spending in Haiti to expose the truth about the post-earthquake investments' impact on women. See Gender Action's (2012b) "[IFIs & Gender-based violence. Case Study: Haiti.](#)"

### **Impact of Gender Action's Work**

- The "[Gender Shadow Report](#)" received considerable attention. In fact, the World Bank's "[Interim Strategy Note for the Republic of Haiti for FY13-14](#)" cited findings from the report including the high rates of GBV and the need for greater safety precautions, infrastructure, reproductive and sexual health services, and pre- and post-natal care.
- In response to Gender Action's critiques, the World Bank designated a \$500,000 grant to finance a GBV program in IDP camps in Haiti.<sup>xxviii</sup>

*Gender Action plays a unique role in ensuring the fundamental impacts IFIs have in Haiti are given the attention they deserve. Many organizations primarily focus on the US Government, so having Gender Action's voice and expertise at the table gives the HAWG a more comprehensive and broad based approach to improving development outcomes for Haiti.*

Ian Schwab (USA), Associate Director of Advocacy, American Jewish World Service

## ACHIEVEMENT # 8

**Made IFI reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS spending data transparent and widely available**

***Gender Action developed a signature research and advocacy strategy.***

- Gender Action designed the first-ever mapping of spending by IFIs on SRHR and HIV/AIDS from a gender perspective in, [“Mapping Multilateral Development Banks’ Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS spending”](#).
- The findings were surprising. From 2003 to 2006, reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS investments were incredibly low, from less than one to six percent across IFIs. The report also found that many investments lacked attention to gender roles and gender analysis.<sup>xxix</sup>

***Gender Action analyzed not only the quantity but also the quality of funding, exploring how projects are delivered.***

- Gender Action developed a [Gender Analysis Framework](#) applicable to all IFI and other development projects to assess the quality of funding, e.g. exploring if it respects human rights, actual impacts on men and women, and benefits or deficits created.<sup>xxx</sup>
- This quality analysis, in combination with tracking funding amounts, offers a strong base of evidence to fuel advocacy and hold IFIs to account to gender funding and equality commitments on SRHR, HIV/AIDS and other issues.

***Working with partners, Gender Action empowered CSOs to build evidence and collect quality research to advance targeted advocacy on IFI and government officials.***

- Gender Action shared with partner<sup>xxxii</sup> CSOs techniques for monitoring government spending on HIV/AIDS and SRHR in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. Partners assessed the impacts of IFI-sponsored projects and Gender Action developed a report and database, called [“Banking on Health”](#).<sup>xxxii</sup>
  - The results underscored the “poor quality” and quantity of investments. The World Bank and AfDB often ignored their own policies mandating the integration of gender into projects.
- Partners conducted capacity-building workshops and launched advocacy campaigns to pressure government health officials to invest more in health projects that respect women’s rights.

### ***Impact of Gender Action’s Work***

*Our [Banking on Health] project [with Gender Action] is proving far more important, informative, empowering than we originally thought...revealing a lot of information and community participative tools. No such in-country and intensive site visits and research has been done [previously] outside the government's own commissioned evaluations. Whoever would want to help Africa should invest money to keep governments and these funders open and transparent.*

*Christian Tanyi (Cameroon), Executive Director, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF)*

## ACHIEVEMENT # 9

**Stopped the World Bank from cutting critical reproductive health, family planning, and safe abortion funding**

***Gender Action organized CSOs to collectively refuse to accept the World Bank's 2007-2017 Health, Nutrition, and Population (HNP) strategy<sup>xxxiii</sup>, thereby ensuring an estimated USD\$6.7 billion<sup>xxxiv</sup> of continued to aid women's health around the world.***

- When Gender Action heard that the World Bank would cut funding for SRHR, safe abortion, and family planning from the HNP strategy, the organization initiated an emergency advocacy campaign to prevent it from happening. No World Bank SRHR funding would mean lower prioritization of SRHR in development interventions around the world, undoubtedly negatively impacting women's livelihoods and right to reproductive choice. Gender Action mobilized with women's rights networks and advocates<sup>xxxv</sup> to pressure the Executive Directors of the World Bank to refuse the new strategy via the following strategies.
  - A letter writing campaign to World Bank Executive Directors.
  - Advocacy activities based on data from Gender Action's ["Mapping Multilateral Development Banks' Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Spending"](#) to prevent proposed SRHR funding cuts. The research aimed to raise World Bank staff's awareness of the significant need for SRHR and family planning funding across different regions and the impact of losing that funding.
  - Public critiques of the HNP strategy on public radio shows in Austin, Chicago, and Denver.

### ***Impact of Gender Action's Work***

Ultimately, in 2007, the World Bank preserved women's rights in reproductive matters within its new HNP strategy and investments and did not cut the health budget dedicated to SRHR worldwide.

*Gender Action's early action, compelling evidence, targeted advocacy, and consistent follow up were key.*

Robert Fox (Canada), Executive Director, Oxfam Canada

## ACHIEVEMENT # 10

### Advocated to end IFI user fees for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

***Gender Action has produced research and analysis, boldly calling for the end of user fees in order to uphold the World Bank's and AfDB's commitments to decreasing poverty, achieving universal health care, and progressing toward the MDGs.***

IFI-promoted country user fees placed on services in the health sector – often result in making health services unaffordable for the poorest of the poor. Many research studies have demonstrated the harmful effects of user fees.<sup>xxxvi</sup> For example, the imposition of user fees for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS services often leads to the exclusion of poor women and girls from essential services like prenatal and antenatal care, antiretroviral medicines, and contraceptive and abortion resources, thus leading to higher maternal mortality and HIV rates. In 2001 the US Congress [passed the Foreign Operations Bill \(H.R. 5526\)](#) that required the IMF and World Bank to end user fees for health and primary education. Yet, the user-fee “ban” has been inconsistent and often not followed.

- Together with other CSOs, Gender Action pressured the World Bank and AfDB to end their promotion of user fees for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS services.<sup>xxxvii</sup>
  - Gender Action collected data on the presence of user fees in SRHR and HIV/AIDS projects in Sub-Saharan Africa in its [“Banking on Health”](#) research. The findings indicated that the World Bank and AfDB tended to impose user fees on the poorest countries in Africa for even the most basic of services, such as access to antiretroviral drugs (ARVs).
- To further demand action from the IFIs on user fees, Gender Action initiated multiple letter writing and public awareness campaigns.
  - In 2009 Gender Action launched a letter writing campaign to [Robert Zoellick](#), then president of the World Bank. In 2012, Gender Action signed on to an Oxfam Novib letter to the president of the World Bank, and launched its report, [“Banking on Health”](#) at WB meetings in Tokyo.
  - A 2012 Gender Action (2012c) [media article](#) highlighted the human toll that user fees have on poor women in Africa.

### ***Impact of Gender Action's Work***

Responding to Gender Action's calls, the World Bank recently began calling for universal health.

*The responsibility of user fees on primary care services is daunting on women. This remarkable Gender Action initiative will go a long way in taking off the sick from the hands of women to trained health practitioners. I have seen women detained in hospitals after giving birth and sleeping on the hospital floors while they wait for their families to raise enough money to pay for the fees. The inability to pay user fees also contributes to seeking delayed treatment in HIV/AIDS cases, which becomes more costly in the end.*

Regina Dumba (Zimbabwe), Gender Action Board Member

**All of these achievements, and many more, were catalyzed with only \$2.5 million over 10 years. IMAGINE what Gender Action could do with five times this amount over the next 10 years.**

**Gender Action's key funders during our first decade included:**

- An anonymous supporter
- The Compton Foundation
- The Dutch Cooperation Agency
- The Hewlett Foundation
- The Fund for Innovation in Public Service
- The Libra Foundation
- The Moriah Fund
- Oxfam Novib
- UN Development Fund for Women
- Many wonderful individual contributors



For more information on Gender Action's work, collaboration partners and achievements, see [www.genderaction.org](http://www.genderaction.org)

*Gender Action is the only organization dedicated to promoting gender justice and women's rights in all International Financial Institution (IFI) investments such as those of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund - two of the largest public sources of development financing in the world. Gender Action's goal is to ensure that women and men equally participate in and benefit from all IFI investments.*



## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Gender Action’s gender analysis of the WAPCO pipeline resulted in [“Broken Promises: Gender Impacts of the World Bank Financed West-African and Chad-Cameroon Pipelines”](#).

<sup>ii</sup> IFIs include the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

<sup>iii</sup> This project is not a full-fledged evaluation, but rather a review of key achievements. A diverse range of methods were employed including desk research and analysis of past assessment reports to donors, project proposals, case studies, IFI audits, outreach, and publicity (over 90 documents in all); an online survey of key external stakeholders, such as IFI staff and partners; interviews with Gender Action leadership and staff. The ten core achievements shared in this review were highlighted by Gender Action’s staff and then sent to external stakeholders for comment. Stakeholders assessed the degree to which they agreed with the achievements shared. Out of the 20 people contacted for the survey, 14 responded, a 70% response rate. Throughout this report, we use the term “contribution” to describe Gender Action’s achievements. This is due to the complex nature of policy change, advocacy, and capacity building that requires a variety of partners to affect a change. Attribution thus remains difficult and is, at times, implausible or irrelevant.

<sup>iv</sup> The [“Gender Toolkit for IFI Watchers”](#) provides women’s rights advocates with a useful step-by-step guide for monitoring IFIs.

<sup>v</sup> Op-eds, such as [Rachel Moussie’s op-ed, Action Aid](#), and critiques were also distributed for comment and review.

<sup>vi</sup> Gender Action has shared its analysis on the IFIs in its role as chair of the Global Women’s Task Force at the National Council of Women’s Organizations.

<sup>vii</sup> Workshops were held with partner organizations in Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, China, El Salvador, Eritrea, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Rwanda, Togo, and Uganda.

<sup>viii</sup> For example, Gender Action’s capacity-building training typically includes the following elements: (1) An overview of IFIs’ websites, highlighting key places to access information and to source data; (2) Detailed information on how to conduct gender audits through learning activities introducing gender and auditing concepts, identifying strategic and practical needs, and sharing Gender Action’s gender audit scorecard, methodology, and tools; (3) Sharing different IFI accountability mechanisms and processes, including examining existing mechanisms and how participants/organizations can bring forward gender discrimination cases for investigation; (4) The creation of local action plans. Two plans are created during the training; one plan to increase community awareness of negative IFI impacts and another plan to hold IFIs accountable for negative impacts.

<sup>ix</sup> Workshops to help develop participants’ skills to audit their government took place with NAWAD in Uganda and LUKMEF in Cameroon and Jamaa Resource Initiatives in Naivasha, Kenya.

<sup>x</sup> The audits assessed each organization at two levels, exploring (1) staff awareness of gender issues and the ability to integrate gender analysis into the work, and (2) gender sensitivity in programs. It also examined the extent to which all staff considered gender issues in their work, analyzing program processes and outputs including internal policies, strategies, research, publications, advocacy, media, website, other materials, plus network and campaign work from a gender perspective.

<sup>xi</sup> For example, BIC or BWP would contact Gender Action for assistance with conducting a gender analysis..

<sup>xii</sup> As Elaine Zuckerman notes, “Calling itself the ‘business case’, GAP promotes increasing women’s roles in the economic sectors as good for business and economic growth. GAP concludes that ‘the business case for expanding women’s economic opportunities is becoming increasingly evident; this is nothing more than smart economics.’ GAP’s objective to make ‘markets work for women’ is critically important but this business case ignores the moral imperative of empowering women to achieve women’s human rights and full equal rights with men,” (Gender Action 2007b, p.1).

<sup>xiii</sup> Copies of the critique were shared at a World Bank event focusing on African women’s entrepreneurship and “gender equality as smart economics.” Given its relevance across the field, shorter versions of the critique were also published on the BWP and BIC websites.

<sup>xiv</sup> BWP, ActionAid, and other partners.

<sup>xv</sup> Diverse impacts were documented including increased women’s unemployment (particularly for women smallholder farmers since land expropriation occurred where pipes were built), poverty, violence against women, prostitution, and HIV/AIDS. Dramatic increases in stillbirths and other negative health effects increased due to pollution in local communities, leaks in pipelines, and environmental spills.

<sup>xvi</sup> The IDB and the EBRD, for example, began requesting that Gender Action provide feedback and input on their gender policy. Gender Action, in collaboration with other CSOs, participated in consultations with the IDB and provided written comments on drafts. The resulting IDB Gender Policy is one of the strongest—the first to have “do-no-harm” safeguards and require a human rights perspective in projects.

<sup>xvii</sup> In 2009, Elaine Zuckerman presented on the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group’s (IEG) consultation session on the Bank’s gender policies. Gender Action urged the Bank to, not simply promote women as instruments of economic growth, but rather to approach economic empowerment from a holistic women’s human rights perspective.

<sup>xviii</sup> These effects included destroying women’s agriculture and fishing livelihoods, creating ecological disasters that diminished women’s livelihoods, increasing women’s poverty, excluding women from processes of consultation and inclusion in the project, discriminating against women in employment processes, and increasing prostitution.

<sup>xix</sup> Each IFI has an accountability process to hear cases regarding violations of their own policies or other alleged rights violations.

<sup>xx</sup> A toolkit was developed in 2007 by Gender Action, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), and the Heinrich Böll Foundation to support CSOs and local communities in seeking redress for rights and health violations.<sup>xx</sup> See [“Gender Justice: A Citizen’s Guide to Gender Accountability at IFIs.”](#)

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<sup>xxi</sup> The user-friendly and step-by-step guide provides sample language, relevant policies, and other resources to help prepare claims. The guide includes three case studies (the BTC pipeline, Sri Lanka Southern Transport Development Project, and Bujagali Hydroelectric Project in Uganda) detailing prior gender rights violations and discussing the types of incidences on which groups could submit claims.

<sup>xxii</sup> The [World Bank Inspection Panel](#) is a semi-independent accountability mechanism that investigates potential violations of its Environmental and Social Safeguard policies resulting in potential or realized harm as a result of Bank financed projects. Prior to 2011, submitted claims focused primarily on environmental issues.

<sup>xxiii</sup> At the event, Eimi Watanabe, member of the World Bank's Inspection Panel, stated that the Panel would be willing and able to review gender-related issues, provided a request was received that met the eligibility conditions.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Strengthening Jubilee's efforts at debt cancellation and the elimination of loans and instead in support of grants to Haiti, Elaine Zuckerman [sent a letter to President Obama in relation to the World Bank](#). The letter called attention to the high level of GBV and rape that proliferated in the aftermath of the earthquake and in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

<sup>xxv</sup> Gender Action cofounded the HAWG and takes the lead on the Aid Accountability and the Gender and GBV subgroups. Partners in the HAWG include: ActionAid USA, American Friends Service Committee, American Jewish World Service, Bread for the World, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of Law, Church World Service, Environmental Justice Initiative for Haiti, Fonkoze USA, Foreign Policy in Focus, Gender Action, Grassroots International, Groundswell International, Habitat for Humanity, Haiti Reborn/Quixote Center, Haiti Support Group, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, Institute for Research in Socioeconomic and Public Policy, International Rescue Committee, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, Jubilee USA Network, Lambi Fund of Haiti, Latin American and Caribbean Community Center, Latin America Working Group, Lutheran World Relief, MADRE, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. - Washington Office National Lawyers Guild - Environmental Justice Center, Outreach International, Oxfam America, Partners in Health, Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, TransAfrica Forum, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and Washington Office on Latin America.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Partners in the HEC include: Equality Now, Gender Action, Gender and Disaster Network, Groots International, Huairou Commission, Lambi Fund of Haiti, MADRE, ORÉGAND (Observatoire sur le développement régional et l'analyse différenciée selon les sexes), PotoFanm + Fi: Rebuilding Haiti Initiative, Sophie Toupin, independent researcher, and Women's International Network of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Keeping GBV in Haiti in the spotlight among policymakers, Gender Action and the HAWG sponsored visits to the IDB, World Bank, US Congress and State Departments by Haitian anti-GBV activists and consistently shared with them research, and analysis on Haiti post-earthquake.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The grant however did not go to a local Haitian group, but rather an international contractor. While the World Bank recognized GBV as an important issue to include in their Haiti portfolio, the funding is very modest and deeper financial commitments remain elusive.

<sup>xxix</sup> For example, projects on HIV/AIDS that received grants did not have a design that addressed gender differences, despite higher rates of HIV among women than men around the world.

<sup>xxx</sup> This signature methodology reveals the quality of funding by assessing the following dimensions: gender in/equality, sex-disaggregated data, gender in context, gender inputs, gender access, gender outputs, gender impact, gender norms, plus, from a human rights perspective, whether projects address gender. See [Gender Action's Gender Analysis Framework](#).

<sup>xxxi</sup> Partners included the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF) in Cameroon and National Association for Women's Action in Development (NAWAD) in Uganda.

<sup>xxxii</sup> The resulting database focused on Sub-Saharan Africa and included loan and grant commitments for SRHR and HIV/AIDS projects funded by the World Bank and the AfDB from 2000-2012.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Every ten years the World Bank creates a new strategy for health, nutrition, and population.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Note: This calculation is an estimate. The total amount the World Bank spent on multi-sector and health projects with population and reproductive health (PRH) and HIV/AIDS components from 2008-2012 was \$27 billion. We generously estimated that 25% of the \$27 billion committed went to PRH and HIV/AIDS, totaling \$6.7 billion USD.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Partners included CHANGE, Planned Parenthood, the Bretton Woods Project (BWP), CARE International UK, and ActionAid

<sup>xxxvi</sup> See, for example, articles published in the Lancet (Summer 2012) on alternative healthcare financing in Kenya and the September 2012 issue on user fees, e.g. Davidson Gwatkin's 2012 article, "Paying for health care: moving beyond the user-fee debate" on user fees across Tanzania, Ghana, and South Africa."

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Through the ["Banking on Health"](#) data and workshops held in Uganda, Kenya, and Cameroon, Gender Action raised awareness among diverse CSOs on the importance of ending user fees as a core advocacy demand.

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