



HDR 2010: Regional Consultation on Gender and Human Development

Istanbul, Turkey. January 21-22, 2010
SUMMARY NOTES

The consultation included almost a dozen invited participants interested in gender issues, mainly from Turkey, transition and conflict-affected countries (see Annex 1). The agenda consisted of discussion sessions on five themes: empowerment, women's economic participation, measurement, women's knowledge, autonomy of the body, and conflict and violence. Many of the themes crossed over between sessions.

There was a lively discussion and a range of views expressed. This summary highlights key aspects raised, without any implications as to what may or may not be presented in the HDR2010. More detail can be found in the document "Detailed Notes from the Gender Consultation, 2010 HDR."

I. EMPOWERMENT

There was support for a definition of **empowerment as the enlargement of the responsibility field of individuals**. That is, first people feel responsible for their own households, then their communities and social groups, then their nations. For women to increase their responsibility field, sometimes a change in laws is needed to allow women to have responsibilities outside of the home. That is, in some countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Islamic countries) laws are needed to protect, benefit, and at times, prefer women. It was argued that when people are empowered, democracy follows.

Many participants believe that practically and pragmatically, HDRO should **keep the GEM**, since it has developed a constituency. The GDI was believed to be less useful.

Participants thought that measuring empowerment through participation in NGOs was risky since such participation rates are premised on NGOs being present and their presence is often based on the availability of funding. Although there has been an increase in NGOs and participation in NGOs, it has been caused by an increased in funding for NGOs. Once the funding goes away, the participation will go away.

There were issues of measurement when there are quotas for women's participation. When we see women in institutions of political power because of quotas, then this doesn't necessarily reflect empowerment. Empowerment is particularly difficult to measure because it is **a quality of attitude**.

All participants believed that any measure of empowerment **must consider both social and legal participation, and the institutional and cultural components of participation. Being empowered in one area and not another is a reality.** Any measure developed should seek to

reflect the whole picture. Comparability across countries (?) is an essential consideration. Female shares in parliament should be complemented with other measures.

One should not put much emphasis on empowerment in the family or home-- these are areas where women traditionally excel. Many of the DHS questions ask about empowerment within the family, but this is not really empowerment. If HDR limits its definition to those questions, then HDR would overestimate the level of empowerment.

II. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

The discussion focussed on barriers to participation and policies that promote participation, which were both regarded as important for the HDR. The 2010 HDR Concept note was criticized by the discussant on several fronts: neglect of globalization (viewed as driven by the availability of cheap women's labor) and neo-liberalism, while "New Human Development Deal" was also criticized as being too closely linked to USA's President Roosevelt's "New Deal."

Neo-liberal policies are evident in the over-emphasis on microcredit as a solution, and the bailout of the banking industry. The HDR should not assume that the Washington Consensus is actually dead. With respect to globalization, the global care chain is reinforcing women's traditional gender role as care givers.

Among the suggested issues of importance were **discrimination** against hiring women that persists; the availability, rights, and forms of **parental leave** (which should be viewed through a gender-neutral lens); and the **overall policy framework that en/discourages female employment**. **Gender segregation of the labor market** is important, with examples plentiful. For example, in Tajikistan, 75% of women work in agricultural sector; Uzbekistan encourages women to work in home-based jobs which allow women to fulfill their domestic responsibilities; women in banking sector occupations; changes in gender segregation; gender pay gaps.

The HDR should examine new initiatives in the private sector, such as **corporate social responsibility** (how CSR impacts women), and **Principles for Responsibility in Investing** (should examine how PRI, which is a UN initiative, is working).

Issues of women's control over resources were discussed, specifically, control over spending their earnings, and **property rights, including over land** (e.g., in Serbia, there is a tradition of leaving property to males, even if it is a son-in-law. Parents compensate for this by giving daughters high levels of education, but no property.)

The mixed evidence on the efficacy of **micro-credit initiatives was also discussed (e.g., when women aren't owners and micro-credit programs encourage women to take out loans, women end up with debt without ownership.)** Finally, **female entrepreneurship is important, in terms of resources devoted to and barriers to women owning businesses.** But, female entrepreneurship could reflect that women do not have access to the formal labor market.

Demographic structure interacts with women's labor force participation. There are different dynamics in positive growth countries versus aging societies where increases in FLFP are being experienced. This also relates to the gendered nature of migration. The HDR could discuss this interaction.

Access to publicly financed childcare represents societal support for women participating in the formal labor market. Participants from CIS noted that **when the USSR broke up, so did state support for childcare.**

Work should be thought of in terms of the use of time by women, and the HDR could examine **time use surveys** and differentials between genders in the availability of leisure time.

Issues such as **trafficking, women in politics** (the role model effect) and **domestic violence** (being a barrier to labor force participation) were also discussed. Finally, participants noted that the nature of **the relationship between empowerment and labor force participation** cannot be determined unless one understands the context of the economic activity.

III. MEASUREMENT

Broad conceptual issues in measurement were discussed but not resolved. Does HDR intend to measure:

- Women's development, a country's development, or women's empowerment,
- Women relative to men in the country, or women's status between countries, or
- Women's status using a single index? How would one determine the weighting schema for the different components? Participants acknowledged that a single index enables media attention to the issue.

In measuring gender equality, which does HDR intend?

- To choose the standard of the dominant group and seek to close the gap, or
- Equal valuation of different contributions,?

Participants concurred that the **GDI is not very useful**-- HD and gender inequality should be kept separate. However, **GEM was highly regarded** and seen to have a constituency. Its simplicity was useful in the media in Turkey, for example. But, "women in senior positions" needs to be broadened.

Desirable data are scarce (e.g., gender wage gap data), and HDR should take the opportunity to outline what is needed and to raise the bar on data. Data on violence against women are scarce and non-comparable.

Violence against women is important, and reflects among other things societal barriers to full participation and visibility of women. There was a lengthy discussion on measures of violence against women – including how wide a range of forms of violence should be included and how to address regional variations in the forms of violence-- intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honor crimes. It was suggested that HDR consider presenting the number of incidents against females relative to those against men. Studies on this issue (e.g., WHO, US State Department) were discussed. Problems include the fact that better reporting apparently increases the incidence, which penalizes countries trying to make progress in reporting. High prevalence may also mean increased awareness rather than an increased level of violence.

Reproductive rights and sexual freedoms are underrepresented in current indicators. These are issues that are politically hot, but that is not a reason to not include them. Regional variations are important.

Another thought was to look at the legal framework that (dis)empowers women—e.g., how institutions treat domestic violence, sexual freedoms, etc. Policy frameworks can be measured where outcomes are unavailable, though data on the latter is better.

Overall, **HDR needs a more focused gender measure.** It was argued that an empowerment measure with gender as one component is not useful.

There should be one lead indicator on global gender equality. Objective measures potentially have more power than what an expert has coded. Alternatively, HDR could have a **scorecard on the status of women.**

What UNDP does is very influential at the national level. HDR is unique in the UN-- it's quite rare to name names. HDR is very important for advocacy. It raises the question of what it really means as to be ranked a certain way. Keep the composite index simple because people will turn to it year after year.

IV. WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE

Globalization requires scientific and technical knowledge. Quantitative indicators on education do not suffice-- one also needs data on quality of education. The goal is to have a balance between the genders.

Policies that have worked in bringing about gender equity in education can be examined (e.g., UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in Gambia worked together to figure out the cause of dropout rates in adolescence, which led to the building bathrooms for girls which successfully reduced dropout rates).

Measures should reflect urban/rural gaps. There can be broader effects – for example, availability of pre-school facilities affects women's time and employment. However, high education does not necessarily mean high employment rates: in the CIS, the majority of unemployed are well-educated.

Issues to consider:

- Share of state expenditures on education;
- Transformation of education to labor market participation, and how this differs between genders (e.g., Turkish case);
- Development of education system to respond to labor market needs;
- Women who have broken their careers for childrearing and availability of adult education;
- Availability of preschool facilities;
- Reliance on private education;
- Returns to education by gender;
- Allocation of educational resources between girls and boys;
- Performance of girls and boys in school;
- Curriculum offered;
- Share of women with doctorates, or university administrators.

Education provides empowerment, but only up to a certain point. When women dominate a profession, it loses its social status. A new challenge is that in developed countries, education systems are being seen as not serving boys. However, education has tremendous value as the most important path to upward mobility.

There is gender segregation in subjects studied. (e.g., share of women in science education.) This can sometimes work to women's advantage (e.g., in CIS, the changed demand for labor meant that traditionally female fields of study started to be more in demand than male fields).

Many education measures are problematic. For example, mean years of schooling has the complication of repetition; combined gross enrollment is a flow variable; attendance (should consider non-attendance by girls); pre-mature dropout rates. Literacy should be measured in terms of functional literacy, computer and legal literacy, numerical literacy (it was noted that nobody believes that the level of literacy in Tajikistan is actually 99.8%).

Education has both an intrinsic value and instrumental value. However education has sometimes become a tool in the hands of religious communities. Religious education is often reinforcing traditional sex roles.

V. WOMEN'S HEALTH/AUTONOMY OF THE BODY

The session began with a discussion of the environments for reproductive health-- **political environment** (participation of women in decision-making process, executive government, judiciary), **economic environment** (management of economic resources, credits, property, employment, labor rights, access to health protection for pregnant, uninsured women), **social environment** (antagonism to some groups excluded from social processes such as minorities, female immigrants) and the **cultural environment** (in Bosnia, a lack of family planning, abortion used as a solution). HDR should pay attention to each of these environments. But, HDR should look at the entire life course of women, not just their childbearing years and capabilities.

Women's health should not be reduced to reproductive rights. A right to choose reproduction and the institutional framework (the legal framework for abortion, for family planning) is very important. Are the appropriate laws and mechanisms in place? Is there a national strategy to prevent violence against the family and women?

Women's status goes far beyond their bodies and reproductive capabilities, so this should not be the sole focus. Likewise, women and children are distinct issues. The status of children does not necessarily reflect the status of women.

In low fertility countries, the inability of women to combine work and family was regarded as a disincentive to have children. Many women cannot afford to have children because of the lack of a social safety net (e.g., maternity health, parental leave, affordable and high quality childcare, sick leave) that allows them to combine work and childbearing/motherhood. Hence they exit the labour force.

Various health measures were suggested, including:

- Indicator reflecting a **women's right to choose an abortion** (a graded indicator), expressed in terms of autonomy or a choice. However, selective abortion is an issue.
- **Maternity mortality ratio**
- Would not advise including the total fertility rate because it's impossible to interpret—in some countries, the more children, the more powerful within your family. In China, the number of children allowed is limited, can be disempowering
- Prevalence of FGM, and related laws.
- Legislation that criminalizes same-sex relationships.

- **Whether forced sex within marriage is rape.**
- Proportion of births attended by a professional health personnel.
- Adolescent fertility rate.
- Minimum legal age of marriage.
- Measures on access to services like
- Prevalence of honor killings.
- Childcare indicators-- shows how men are willing to give more opportunity for women.
- Arranged marriages
- Psychological well-being of women, such as
- Violence against women.
- Long and healthy life, not only of women but also men. (In CIS, men die earlier, by about 16 years. Higher rates of morbidity, TB, unhealthy lifestyle, suicide for men.)
- Prevalence of child marriages.

VI. CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Conflict and violence are incompatible with human development. But policymakers often lack understanding of violence, especially violence against women. HDR could highlight this issue.

Conflict is caused and perpetuated by impunity culture, lack of justice, the arms industry and the economic and the lack of political instability. The main victims of conflict are women and children, including within the home.

Violence may be a part of the culture (e.g., in Afghanistan, since the 17th or 18th century). Violence impacts opportunities in labor market. Could examine rule of law, as was done in the Afghanistan national HDR. (After it was published, the Supreme Court complained.)

A conflict indicator could be the share of the population that are refugees, from UNHCR, although this neglects domestic violence Other issues to examine that relate to violence are violations of property rights of women, and rape. After armed conflicts ceases, there is talk of reconciliation. But we don't talk about reconciliation of violence against women.

VII. CONCLUDING SESSION

This session focussed on the value of the global HDR. Reactions stressed its importance of the HDR. Some saw it as a learning/teaching tool-- its neutral, academic approach lends to it. None saw it as a "teaser" for the national HDR.

All said that the rankings are taken seriously, and noted its credibility. It can tackle issues that cannot be easily raised in some countries at the national level, and is thus a HDR is a tool for promoting dialog and promoting change.

Some participants thought that the quality of translation in the HDR was sometimes poor, which led to misinterpretation.