



# CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE BLUE ECONOMY – A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Prof. Narnia Bohler-Muller, HSRC  
Seychelles 2015



*The legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women. As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance.*

*As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow.*

*As long as the continent refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself, it is doomed to failure (former President Nelson Mandela)*

In a 2012 study the OECD identified the main elements of gender empowerment::

- Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the (M)SDGs - it is about human rights and equitable societies.
- There is scope for increasing donor investments in women's economic empowerment.
- Achieving women's economic empowerment is not a "quick fix". It will take sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment from all development actors.
- Start with women by integrating gender-specific perspectives at the design stage of policy and programming.

- More equitable access to assets and services – land, water, technology, innovation and credit, banking and financial services – will strengthen women's rights, increase agricultural productivity, reduce hunger and promote economic growth.
- Infrastructure programmes should be designed to maximise poor women's and men's access to the benefits of roads, transportation services, telecommunications, energy and water.
- Women experience barriers in almost every aspect of work. Employment opportunities need to be improved. At the same time women perform the bulk of unpaid care work. This is an area for greater attention by development actors through increased recognition and valuing of the ways in which care work supports thriving economies.

***Innovative approaches and partnerships are needed to scale up women's economic empowerment. Women's voices must be heard as we must participate in our own empowerment.***



# **SOUTH AFRICA'S REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 2015**

# Education

- Education arguably underpins much of women's full engagement in the economy, as is the case for men, and is therefore central to the achievement of gender equality.
- It will improve access to more remunerative areas of the labour market through improved skills and productivity levels
- It will enable women to engage more meaningfully in society and make better-informed decisions.
- At a broader level, education is seen as key to promoting economic growth and reducing poverty.

# The Labour Market

- the labour market is the key arena in which most individuals engage with the economy.
- Productive employment provides access to resources via wages and inequalities within the labour market may therefore have far-reaching consequences in other areas.
- Thus, an environment that enables women to effectively engage in the labour market is essential to address some of the various economic inequalities that exist between the sexes.
- Women's employment is more concentrated in a smaller number of sectors than men's, with 84 percent of female employment in the services sector. This concentration of employment may over-expose women to downturns within those sectors.

# Access to land, credit and property

- Women should be able to engage in the economy and sustain livelihoods through leveraging assets.
- The evidence suggests that women within South Africa have relatively equal access to credit in various borrowing contexts, although barriers exist with respect to ownership of land and property amongst women.
- Results are mixed and intertwined with geographical and cultural contexts. The challenge seems particularly acute in rural areas (as a result of cultural practices and the ownership of land by chiefs).
- Females and female-headed households have, on average, lower access to both private and public assets than males and male-headed households.
- The provision of public services has led to improved gender equality (this includes socio-economic rights such as the right to housing, food, water, sanitation and social security).



# Poverty and inequality

- While poverty has declined since the end of apartheid, females remain more likely to be poor than males (the 'face' of poverty in South Africa is female). Additionally, poor females tend to live further below the poverty line than their male counterparts, suggesting greater vulnerability.
- Rural or non-urban females are relatively worse-off than their urban counterparts
- African and Coloured females also experience higher poverty rates than Asian and White females.
- female headed households are considerably more reliant on social grant income than male-headed households.

# Unpaid work

- The report provides a number of estimates of women's contribution to GDP, each of which make strong assumptions.
- These estimates suggest that women's contribution to GDP is probably somewhere between 35 to 45 percent. The key problem with these estimates is that estimates based on GDP and wages systematically underestimate women's contributions due to women's specialisation in unpaid work—the production of non-market services within the household, which are not included in estimates of GDP.
- In terms of time use it is clear that women are responsible for the lion's share of unpaid work, with women bearing a particularly large burden in terms of care work.

# The report also considers the costs of violence against woman

Related to the above OECD and South African studies, there is a very direct cost of violence against women through the reduction of productivity. Conservative estimates of the economic costs of loss of productivity due to violence against women (VAW) are around 2 percent of the global GDP (World Bank 2013).

The effects of abuse on women's work and employability are numerous and may include limiting women's access to funds, and thus their independence.

*“...progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in the development agenda requires a human rights-based approach, and requires support for the women’s movement to activate and energize the agenda. Both are missing from Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Empowerment requires agency along multiple dimensions—sexual, reproductive, economic, political, and legal. However, MDG 3 frames women’s empowerment as reducing educational disparities. By omitting other rights and not recognizing the multiple interdependent and indivisible human rights of women, the goal of empowerment is distorted and “development silos” are created...” (UN Women)*

# SDG 5 proposes a range of targets to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*

5.1 end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

5.2 eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.3 eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations

5.4 recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

5.5 ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life

5.6 ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

5.a undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources in accordance with national laws

5.b enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular ICT, to promote women's empowerment

5.c adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

SDG Goal 14 deals with the *conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*. Amongst the targets are reducing pollution; protection of marine and coastal ecosystems; minimizing the impacts of ocean acidification; regulation of harvesting, and ending overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. By 2030 the target is to increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

AU Agenda 2063 aims at ‘a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development’. This includes the continent’s blue economy: it outlines that “Africa’s ... ocean economy, which is three times the size of its landmass, shall be a major contributor to continental transformation and growth”. The AU is undertaking important initiatives in this regard. An example is the Continental Conference on the Empowerment of African Women in Maritime that took place in Luanda, Angola in March 2015. The conference theme was ‘African Maritime Women: Towards Africa’s Blue Economy.’



- One goal of the AU's 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS) is to encourage states to create a blue economy that would foster wealth creation through coordinated and sustainable maritime industries, such as fishing, shipping and resource extraction.
- The AU has also declared that 2015 to 2025 will be Africa's Decade of Seas and Oceans. It is interesting to note that Agenda 2063 will focus on women in the first decade, so the role of women in the blue economy is a very relevant topic to explore.
- In South Africa *Operation Phakisa* focuses on the ocean economy and how employment can be generated through fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, ports and resource exploration.

President Michel of the Seychelles commended the AU for including the key priorities of the African Island States as well the increased participation of women as key areas as part of the Agenda 2063, which include emphasis on the **development of the Blue Economy, the fight against climate change, the growth and development of tourism, and maritime connectivity sectors as drivers for change and growth.** He also emphasised maritime security which he described as essential to the development and inclusive growth of Africa.

Women have an important role to play in developing and participating in the Blue Economy. For this to happen, conditions must be met to empower women and to free them to develop their capacity and improve their lives. This should not be limited to employment and participation in the labour market, or through the recognition of unpaid labour and care work. Women's rights should be protected and fulfilled so as to create an enabling environment for personal and communal growth. An example could be to ensure that socio-economic rights, which benefit women and children the most, are complied with at State level. After all, education is not possible if one does not have shelter, food, water, sanitation or electricity. The basic needs of women should be met, and importantly their dignity and self-worth respected.



THANK YOU