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16 March 2010

## Social Watch Presents Its Gender Equity Index at the CSW in New York

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On 9 March 2010, NGLS, [Social Watch](#) and [United Nations Development Fund for Women](#) (UNIFEM) organized a panel discussion at UN Headquarters to mark the launch of a new publication entitled “Putting gender economics at the forefront. 15 years after the IV World Conference on Women.” The report, prepared by Social Watch, describes the gender blindness that characterizes current economic policies.

Moderating the discussion was Zak Bleicher of the NGLS, while the panel included Natalia Cardona, Guacira Cesar de Oliveira, Emily Sikazwe, and Barbara Adams – all of Social Watch. The debate opened with Natalia Cardona, co-author of the Putting gender economics at the forefront, and her introduction of the Gender Equity Index (GEI), a key concept in the paper.

Ms. Cardona explained that the GEI is a comparative indicator that refers to the gaps between women and men in areas such as access to education. It is thus important to realize that the gender equity index does not necessarily provide qualitative assessment. Ms. Cardona also added that access to education is an area where the gap is the narrowest, but that, namely in Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia for women and girls, considerable regression has been documented. Ms. Cardona observed that the economic gains women achieved were wiped out even before the financial crisis hit.

The floor was next given to Ms. Guacira Cesar de Oliveira who applauded the progress that majority of Latin American and Caribbean countries are making; highlighting in particular developments in Colombia, Ecuador, and Argentina. Nevertheless, speaking of the situation in her own country Brazil, Ms. Cesar de Oliveira noted that white men continue to be better off than white women, who are better off than black men, who are better off than black women. A recurring theme in Ms. Cesar de Oliveira’s remarks was unpaid work. She noted that over 50% of human work is unpaid and does not appear in the GDP. In addition, it is women who mostly bear the heavy burden of the global economy as they are the main agents in the care economy (elderly, children, food-production, etc.). According to Ms. Cesar de Oliveira, monetary and labour policies are still blind to gender issues and fail to consider women’s work-time. Therefore, the challenge is to decrease the portion of unpaid work, and pay close attention to how responses to the various crises (financial, economic, food) impact women.

Ms. Emily Sikazwe began by pointing out that: “The economic crisis has shown one thing, that the world has enough resources [to bail-out banks].” Observing the developments in Africa, Ms. Sikazwe mentioned that it is not about the recent economic crisis, but rather about crisis after crisis. Countries in Africa, she continued, were forced to cut back on taxation and adopt detrimental adjustment programs put forth by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while developed countries received bail-outs. “Who are the culprits of what is happening to women?” Ms. Sikazwe asked, and noted that we should not give the IMF and WB a central role again because they have failed us.” Rather, Ms. Sikazwe proposed, that what is needed is solidarity among women and fair-trade.

Last to present her views was Ms. Barbara Adams who pointed out that there are many other gaps than

Putting gender economics at the forefront shows – implementation, policy, and resources gaps. Ms. Adams brought to attention the unusual but considerably positive development of government ownership and initiative in response to the financial crisis. Nevertheless, it is crucial to connect policy arenas and recognize that financing for development is not only about aid, but also about tax, trade and conditions of borrowing. To that end, we need to ask ourselves, how can we turn the [MDG Summit in September](#) into a development summit? The summit presents itself as an opportunity to close the various gaps. Ms. Adams then noted that social protection and creation of decent work can be a way forward.

To view the full report, please visit <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/11750>

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