



**Commission on the Status of Women
Sixtieth Session**

**Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable
development**

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

**Participation and multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender-responsive
implementation of 2030 Agenda**

**Celebrating each accomplishment on the road to
sustainable development: "one, one cocoa full basket"**

By

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Her Worship the Mayor

Senator and Concillor

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations

OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION

Let me begin by thanking UN Women and the organizers of this sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, for graciously extending an invitation for me to participate in this panel discussion looking at “participation and multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.”

As a local government practitioner, a community activist and an unrepentant champion of a participatory approach to governance built on the foundation of democracy, social justice and equality, Today, I want to share with you my own perspective on the link between the empowerment of women and sustainable development. I will speak of what I am more familiar with: the Jamaican experience. I am well aware that Jamaica is but one country, one small island developing state, but I do believe that we have made some strides from which others can learn, and we still have challenges to confront, where I believe we too can learn from others. I’m certainly looking forward to learning from the wealth of experience gathered today.

A global picture assignment

Women empowerment

Helen Clark in the foreword to the UN Human Development Report 2015:

“Today people are living longer, more children are in school and more people have access to clean water and basic sanitation. Per capita income in the world has gone up, and poverty has gone down, resulting in a better standard of living for many people.”

This is indeed the reality but the other side of the coin is that there are still significant challenges in eliminating poverty and improving the social conditions of our people; in protecting our environment and ensuring the economic survival of many of our citizens.

More than twenty five years have come and gone since the Fourth World Conference on Women (1990) and since we’ve been talking about gender equality and women’s empowerment. In fact haven’t we been talking about gender equality since the 1970’s with the declaration of UN Decade for women?

In the intervening years we have made progress, but it has been uneven across the globe and even within countries. Some feel that policies and programs, and certainly the results of our action have not demonstrated full engagement in the quest for gender equality and women’s social, economic, and political empowerment.

Here are some facts that we need to be mindful of, facts that I believe are important if we are to remove the systemic barriers that prevent us from achieving gender parity and the empowerment of women.

World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2015: Around the world, women are paid less than men, in most countries earning on average 60%-75% of men's wages;

Over a third of women have experienced physical/sexual violence by a partner and/or sexual violence by a non-partner in their lifetime.

UN Women, 2015: Women are more likely than men to work in informal employment. In South Asia, over 80% of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment. In sub-Saharan Africa, the figure is 74%, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is 54%.

According to the World Bank: Women bear disproportionate caring responsibility for children, the elderly and the sick, spending far more time each day on unpaid care work than men. Taking care of sick family members, their parents and children. This means that they have less time to dedicate to earning a living to improve their quality of life and that of their families

The Jamaican Context - What's the position in Jamaica?

“A people without knowledge of their past history and culture is like a tree without roots” - Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey

Several program/platform/ plans for action later (Cairo, Beijing, Caricom) before I get there I want to briefly look backwards (to where we are coming from).

Jamaica was the first English speaking country in the Caribbean to achieve universal adult suffrage and grant women the right to vote and be elected to Parliament (1944)¹. The right to vote regardless of race, gender or social class² was expected to be the beginning of the process of gender equality.

In the 1970s under the Michael Manley Administration, Jamaica adopted very progressive laws that gave women maternity leave with pay and instituted equal pay for equal work. The 1970s in Jamaica was similar to other parts of the world with active advocacy leading to several pieces of legislation to protect the rights of women. Notwithstanding this long tradition of activism for gender equality and significant gains in access to basic services and in legal reform to protect certain rights of women, a 2001 World Bank Policy Research Report claims that in no part of the developing world, including Jamaica, are women equal to men in legal, social and economic rights.

Jamaica has achieved these gains over the years through the advocacy and hard work of many women's organizations working together, often across party lines. There has been several consultations with numerous stakeholders and sometimes this has taken many years to finally arrive at e.g. the National Policy for Gender Equality (2011) and the Charter of fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender were both implemented.

The World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development points out what we already know: “greater gender equality can enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative”.

The World Economic Forum lists four sub-indexes to achieve gender parity:

- Economic Participation and Opportunity
- Educational Attainment

¹ Jamaica National Policy for Gender Equality 2011.

² Near full enfranchisement was realized in the USA in 1965 with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the ratification of the 24th Amendment in 1964.

(http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/universal_suffrage)

- Health & Survival
- Political Empowerment

The Local Urban Agenda

For the first time, the UN development strategies formally recognize the role of cities and global urbanization in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) #11: “make cities and human settlement safe, resilient and sustainable.” In fact it has been said that at least 60% of the SDG targets and indicators lend themselves to implementation at the local level. As city government we are interested yes, in goal #11 but then there is also goal #16 in respect of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions; goal #8 – promoting economic growth and employment with cities as an element in economic growth and local economic development; SDG#9 building resilient infrastructure and I could go on!!!

The point is that municipal government is ideally poised to be **the** point of coordination and collaboration

Where are we now

Notwithstanding the fact that there are still frontiers to cross, in Jamaica we know that the glass ceiling can be broken. There are several role models for the possibilities of what our girls can become: Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Director of Public Prosecution, Political Ombudswomen, Attorney General, Minister of Government, Local Government Mayors, Chairpersons of Boards, Board Directors, entrepreneurs, pilots and CEOs of Private Sector Companies, including areas where it might otherwise have been thought impossible, like the Jamaica Public Service and the Jamaica Private Power Company both electricity generating companies.

In 2015, we all celebrated the International Labour Organization (ILO) report that indicated that Jamaica has the highest proportion of women managers globally. Meaning that we were in a better position than countries like the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

There is work to do...

Even as we celebrate the one, one cocoas in our basket, research tells us not to relax or get comfortable. The research reminds us that increased economic development does not necessarily lead to female leadership. An increased acceptance of working females has not necessarily lead to an increase in female leadership. The **2012 World Bank Report** indicates that addressing issues of poverty is a major step in making the advances we seek. These changes have to be made at the level of the household, the market and institution. The Report also identifies four priority areas for action:

- Reducing excess female mortality and closing education gaps where they remain
- Improving access to economic opportunities for women
- Increasing women's voice and agency in the household and in society
- Limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations

These seem to me to be areas that could benefit from our attention in any debate going forward.

Recommendation

“This debt has now become a burden that places a stranglehold on our capacity to fund vital social services”- Minister of Finance Budget debate 2012

The study also found that while the number of women in senior and middle management positions has increased over the last 20 years women were still under-represented in top management. Our current challenge therefore is to continue to increase the number of women who actually occupy top management positions.

- Acknowledge talk as the kind of action that will:
Create safe spaces for the dialogue to continue for bold conversation.
Create shared understanding and platform for action.
- How to balance the empowerment of women without alienating our men
- Gender mainstreaming: how is this done and how do we forge partnerships for a national conversation.