

Report of the Expert Group Meeting on *The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014:* Gender and Sustainable Development

Background

The *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* (*World Survey* hereafter) is a five-yearly publication, mandated and discussed by the Second Committee of the General Assembly. It provides critical input for the integration of gender perspectives into economic and development issues. Previous *World Surveys* have been issued in 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009.

The relevant General Assembly resolutions on ‘women in development’ provide guidance on the theme to be covered. Accordingly, the *World Survey* focuses on selected emerging development issues that have an impact on the role of women in the economy at national, regional and international levels. The *World Survey* provides an assessment of the benefits accruing to women as a result of their effective participation in development, such as income, conditions of work, and decision-making. Ways and means of enhancing women’s role as agents and beneficiaries of development at the national, regional and international levels are also covered in the Survey. Key policy recommendations for women’s effective mobilization and integration in development are provided, as well as recommendations for strengthening attention to gender perspectives in all aspects of development.

The 2014 World Survey

The theme for the *2014 World Survey* is gender and sustainable development. It will aim to provide a conceptual handle on the issue of ‘sustainable development’ from a gender perspective, and to concretely apply these conceptual insights to a carefully selected range of contemporary policy issues and debates about the environment and sustainability that have gained ground and have particular significance for gender equality and the rights and livelihoods of women and men.

The *2014 World Survey* can play a pivotal role in clarifying the centrality of gender inequalities and gender power relations, as well as women’s contributions, to sustainable development. The Survey can underscore how gender perspectives – gender divisions of labour, resources, and knowledge; women’s key roles in food security and conservation; and questions of equity and intersectionality of gender with class, race/ethnicity, etc. – are critical to understanding and taking action on pressing sustainable development issues, ranging from the transition to ‘green economies’ to climate change, land grabbing, and food, water, and energy crises.

The World Survey will include chapters on the following topics:

1. **Conceptualizing gender and sustainable development** - this chapter will elaborate and apply a conceptual framework around which the rest of the chapters will be organized, and in order to address the transformational challenge in bringing gender to the core of the current discourse on sustainable development, the 'gendered pathways approach' will inform its conceptual basis and methodology.
2. **Population dynamics, poverty, and environment from a gender perspective** - this chapter will examine the linkages between gender, population, poverty and sustainability, drawing on dominant population/environment paradigms and the implications on women's fertility.
3. **Agriculture, food security, and 'land grabs' from a gender perspective** - this chapter will explore the current trends in international priorities for food security from a gender perspective, as well as the increasing global scale of land grabs and their gendered implications.
4. **Socially transformative investments towards sustainability from a gender perspective** - outlining the conceptual issues behind investments/innovations, and identifying a number of possible concrete innovations and investments, which are geared towards gender-equitable sustainable development.
5. **Women's industrial employment and sustainability** - aiming to evaluate patterns of women's industrial employment from the perspective of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Expert Group Meeting on the World Survey

UN Women, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on 'The *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014*' held in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 26 February, 2014.

At the EGM, authors presented draft chapters that formed the substantive basis of the *World Survey*. For each presentation, the author was paired with an expert discussant who responded to the content of the chapter. Discussants, along with the other expert participants provided inputs to the chapters, identifying their major contributions, strengths, as well as any missing elements.

The chapters discussed and their discussants were as follows:

1. Conceptualizing gender and sustainability
 - Authors: Melissa Leach & Lyla Mehta

- Discussants: Wendy Harcourt & Bina Agarwal (did not attend)
- 2. Rethinking the role of population in sustainable development
 - Author: Betsy Hartmann
 - Discussant: Mohan Rao
- 3. A policy agenda for food security if gender mattered
 - Author: Sakiko Fukuda-Parr
 - Discussant: Marjorie Mbilinyi
- 4. Investments for sustainable development with gender equality
 - Author: Isha Ray
 - Discussant: Liane Schalatek
- 5. Women's industrial employment and sustainability
 - Author: Elissa Braunstein
 - Discussant: Stephanie Seguino

In addition to the above participants, the meeting included the following:

- Denisse Cordova, Gender Officer, FIAN International
- Simon Thuo, Regional Director - East Africa, Global Water Partnership
- Martina Otto, Head of Policy Unit, Energy Branch, UNEP
- Patricia Colbert, Deputy Director, the Gender Office, WFP
- Jennifer Nyberg, Senior Adviser, Office of the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, WFP
- Jomo KS, Assistant Director-General for Economic and Social Development, FAO
- Rob Vos, Director of Social Protection Division, FAO

Jomo KS gave a welcoming statement at the start of the meeting, and Rob Vos presented closing remarks, along with Saraswathi Menon, Director of the Policy Division. The meeting also contained sessions on the conceptual framework and on the policy implications of the report.

Outcomes

The chapter drafts and the overall direction of the next issue of the *World Survey* were discussed at length over the three days, resulting in a lively and spirited debate over the key imperatives for sustainable development and gender equality. The experts shared their perspectives and brought to the table their unique experiences with the various dimensions of sustainable development the report will address, which brought into sharp relief the real and urgent need for the *World Survey* to effectively articulate them in its next edition. As UN Women is a relatively new organization with a broadened mandate, this new flagship report, once the responsibility of Daw, has new opportunities to reach a broader audience and bring forward important issues for women's rights into the global development agenda.

Over the course of the meeting the authors received critical feedback on their papers, which are to form the basis of the chapters of the report. In addition to the inputs and responses to the papers themselves, the definition of sustainability emerged as an issue that needed to be addressed. As a result the format of the last day was shifted to incorporate breakout groups and a more cohesive session on finding a gender-responsive definition of sustainable development, that would be adopted as a lynchpin for the report in general, and its conceptual framework in particular.