



FOKUS Contact Conference 2012

NGO Forum

*Workshop Summary
18. Januar 2012*



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1 Background

This document is a summary of the workshop held January 18th 2012, as part of the FOKUS Contact Conference. This document is meant to briefly describe the working process and specific results of the workshop.

The purpose of the workshop was to give the Norwegian civil society the opportunity to make concrete suggestions as to what the Norwegian delegation should prioritize during the 56th Session of the UN Women's Commission in 2012, where the main theme is "*The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.*"

Based on this, the contact conference focused on one overarching theme and two main themes:

- UN – The future's equality challenges – International equality work
- Climate change and sustainable development in a human rights perspective
- Food security in a rights perspective



2 Participants

Participants from organizations and FOKUS on day 2

Anja Sletten	Sex og Politics
Anne Marit Hovstad	Norwegian Women and Family Association
Gro Lindstad	FOKUS
Kristin Hansen	Norwegian Women and Family Association
Marianne Jorrdal	FOKUS
Lisa Sivertsen	CARE
Helene Langsether	FOKUS
Anita Sæbø	FOKUS
Kristin Kjæret	FIAN
Ole Bredesen Nordfjell	Reform – Resource Center for Men
Silje Vold	PLAN Norge
Merethe Larsmon	FOKUS board – Women in Forestry
Ingrid Grene Henriksen	The Norwegian Society of Rural Women
Cathrine Hasselberg	RadioRakel



3 Work Method

The work process which was used in the workshop is based on an active interaction between participants with different interests and expertise, to ensure consensus on concrete results. Participants are brought together and included in an intensive process in which information, knowledge and framework are shared and explored. The activities are designed to encourage holistic thinking and collaboration to create a joint recommendation within current key issues.

The participants were divided into three groups for further discussions.

Input from each of the groups were documented and shared with all participants in plenary. During the presentation, the opportunity for contributing comments was given to all participants.

There was a consensus among the participants regarding the final input and associated comments. It was further agreed that the FOKUS Secretariat had the participants' confidence to update the input within each focus area in accordance to the comments and elaborations that emerged in the presentations.



4 Contributions

4.1 Grass roots work

Why is this important?

Together women can change the world!

Women at the grass roots level have the knowledge that can lead to sustainable development

Concrete Measures

- Their voices must be heard and recognized
- Women at the grass roots level must be educated (regarding gender equality, their rights, international conventions, etc.)
- Women at the grass roots level must be given the opportunities for leadership, training and development
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge on climate, environment and sustainable development (South-South and North-South)
- Support women at the grass roots level who run for election
- Organizing must be built using existing structures – both local and religious
- Strengthen the organization for young women and ensure their political input, supporting the opportunities of young women and girls to organize and be heard, both in the community and in politics. Ensure that young people are also involved in discussions, processes and finding solutions.

Contribution to reach goals

- Contribute to local and international mobilization of women
- Finance equality efforts both at home and abroad
- Create arenas for networking
- "Women can do it" courses and support for mobilization
- Grass roots organizations must be ensured influence in international processes



Norway's message to CSW 2012

- Let women's organizations at the grass roots level have access to "big money".

Comments: Regarding this year's theme of special focus at the contact conference, it has been shown that women's lack of participation in political processes, in negotiations and in financial provision and economic management prevents future solutions to many major challenges (ref. UNDP Development Report 2011, sub report to the fulfillment of the UN Millennium Development Goals, etc.) Climate change and sustainable development issues regarding food security and land rights will not be resolved with 50% of the population sitting on the sidelines with no real opportunity to be heard.

Norway must be clear in saying that women must participate; they must gain power and rights so that they can contribute to the democratic processes that we hope will come. The World Bank's report from 2011 – Gender Equality and Development – established that women's economic empowerment can increase GDP in countries with up to 25%. At the same time, the report shows that increased GDP by itself does NOT lead to increased gender equality. Targeted actions are needed to break down barriers that prevent equal participation. Gender equality is a contribution to increased economic productivity.

Female involvement has been proven to be profitable, and from a Norwegian perspective, the opinion is that the Norwegian economy does not have its foundation in oil revenues, but in women's participation in the work force and their economic contribution to society. This is also an important narrowing of the question: How to get equality in poorer parts of the world to pay off economically and how to convey this message to leaders in the South?

When it comes to concrete measures, economic contribution must be given to both national and local women's organizations. Quota measures have proven to be effective measures.



4.2 Climate change and sustainable development in a human rights perspective

Why is this important?

At COP-17 in Durban in December 2011, the political consensus was that there was no reason to celebrate the progress made since discussions ended up in a political-tug-of-war, and some countries lacked a willingness to contribute to change. Challenges in climate and environment seemed too great. However, in Durban, there was one small step forward – several references were made to include women and gender equality in the text of the final document. These positive steps must be carried over to COP-18 in Qatar in December 2012. Without women's participation and involvement, climate problems will not be resolved. The current debate is characterized by the fact that it is largely dominated by men and those with economic means. It is strongly influenced by market and technology-driven and has little to do with the people who are actually affected by climate change. Women in the South lack access to information and access to participate in current debate which shapes their future. As the debate is now, these women lack access to economic resources, making this a male-dominated debate that lacks a gender perspective. The discussions, however, must include those who are actually affected, who feel a personal ownership to the challenges at hand. Women must be guaranteed information and financial means which allow them the opportunity to participate in the processes and debates with the market and technology forces on the same footing as men..

In 2012, the international community will highlight the 20 year anniversary of the Rio conference which raised sustainable development and environment to a clear debate theme. As we prepare for Rio+20, questions regarding women and gender equality are important overarching themes which will be fully supported by Norway. This must be done by promoting concrete proposals for action.

The Norwegian role for the inclusion of women in civil society; Norwegian authorities should:

- The processes and measures which need to be taken to meet the goals of clean energy must be transparent and include civil society.



- Quotas of women in delegations and processes. Involving women at all levels – both in decision making processes and as a target group. Such measures must not further support inadequate power structures, but contribute to increased participation across class, gender and ethnicity.
- In order to provide civil society a genuine opportunity to apply for funding to combat climate change locally and regionally, capacity building must be done to give access to information and application procedures.
- To empower women at the grass roots level, capacity building must be provided to assist women in monitoring and evaluating ongoing projects and to increase their understanding of the negotiations on climate change.
- Gender balance must be included and addressed in budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of funds granted for projects and program activities.
- Increase focus on civil society and support establishing mechanisms that allow civil society to better hold governments accountable to international, national and local commitments and promises.
- Resources should be allocated to women in the South to build databases which summarize networks which can highlight their different capacities to assist women in relation to analysis and information gathering, to suggest solutions to climate problems.
- It is important that Norwegian authorities continue to allocate sufficient funds to ensure women's participation in relevant forums, especially within the UN. This includes women from the South, women from trade unions, young women and representatives of indigenous peoples. Due to financial turmoil, including in particular the Eurozone, we see signs that other countries are cutting back on this type of support. Therefore, it is especially important that Norway contributes.
- Men need to be included in equality efforts. Gender equality and women's rights concerns affect both men and women and as such need both women's and men's efforts to be successful. This is particularly important when the



men's privileges should be addressed, for example having decision power over women's lives. In addition to poverty, environmental problems and lack of education and participation in decision-making oppresses men as well as women, indicating that men and boys have their own gender-based challenges and needs, which should also be accounted for.

In strengthening information and transparency measures, Norwegian authorities should:

- Information which can be communicated in relation to climate and sustainable development should have a built-in gender perspective
- Information and awareness in relation to climate problems and themes must be done both at the level of government as well as within civil society.
- Social indicators must be used in work related to climate change and sustainable development
- Support local organizations

In relations to climate change initiatives and sustainable development, the Norwegian authorities should:

- Prevent climate measures from depriving women of their livelihoods
- Local anchoring –to ensure more inclusive processes and legitimate measures
- Climate measures must take into consideration local knowledge from indigenous peoples, preserve this knowledge and pass it down to future generations
- Disaggregated data (gender, age, caste, disability, etc.) needs to be collected before and after the projects



- Consultation of all affected groups which utilize knowledge and experience and further advance competence
- Direct support for climate measures rather than quota trading
- Regional development must be considered as part of the measures tackling climate change. Support must be given in a targeted fashion to those measures which support small-scale agriculture and other agricultural production.
- Increase support to sustainable small-scale agriculture as well as strengthen economic support and expertise for climate change adaptation and efficiency.
- Production of biofuels must not be used at the expense of human rights and access to food. Produksjon av biobrensel må ikke gå på bekostning av menneskerettigheter og tilgang til mat.
- Support must also be given to reforestation efforts to maintain biodiversity and to bind carbon since planting trees can be combined with development. Planting on a smaller scale at different location can be combined with payment in the form of coupons or credits which can be exchanged for food, clothing, equipment and training. This kind of project exists in South Africa where the poor plant seeds and trees in their backyards, later selling them to an organization that replants these trees around a landfill. The majority of those participating in the project are women. This is an excellent example of 'green' jobs.
- Norwegian energy development projects should be part of the budget to ensure funds for relocation and further protection of resources.
- The development of a green economy and green work to strengthen women-oriented initiatives – the effect on women must be included in the development of projects.
- Women's security must be integrated into the work of climate-related crises. The incidence of gender based and sexual violence increases when a crisis occurs. Efforts to prevent and reduce the risk of these types of violence must be integrated better in relief work.



- An appreciation of girls and boys as agents of change in their communities should result in children being more involved in concrete measures for disaster prevention and adaptation to climate change. Children and young people, must also have the opportunity to voice their opinion and be heard by decision makers at the local, national and international level.
- Ensure women better access to higher education in order to increase participation in the development of technological solutions to counter the effects of climate change.
- Women, climate and technology should be included as a distinct part of the Norwegian negotiations leading up to COP in Qatar.

4.3 Food safety in a human rights perspective

Why is this important?

Globally, women constitute at least 65% of the world's agriculture force. In parts of Africa, this number is as high as 75-80%. At the same time, women are involved only to a marginal degree in discussions regarding agriculture, technology development, evolving production possibilities, access to the markets, use of genetically modified seeds and crops, development of infrastructure as a means of opening access to new market possibilities for small-scale farmers, the impacts of climate change on agriculture and other areas which affect the farming community. There is a lack of questioning that approximately 70% of the chronically under-nourished in the world are associated with agriculture and the portion of total aid allocated to agriculture-related projects are slight, while declining globally. In such a situation, women are particularly affected to a larger degree than men and the economic consequences are great. Women comprise 70% of the world's poorest and own 1% of the real estate globally. The focus on women and gender equality in the fields of climate change, sustainable development, food security, and property rights are closely linked.

In the processes that Norwegian authorities and politicians are a part of, in 2012 and onwards, it is important to include the following demands from civil society -

In global food policy, Norwegian authorities should:



- Carry out an analysis of the impact of Norwegian food policy for women in the South as part of "A consensus for development"
- Have a trade policy that has a clearer gender perspective
- It is important that women's small-scale local business endeavors and local economic status are supported, not hindered. To take this into consideration, rules for world trade should be reviewed.
- Contribute to strengthening workers' rights in the agricultural industry
- Confront all forms of child labor and to ensure that children who work in agriculture are able to utilize their right to an education
- Confront political initiatives which try to privatize natural resources, for example the patenting of seeds
- Continue to have a restrictive policy regarding gene modification
- Contribute to ensure every country's right to produce food for their own population
- Strengthening women's participation in food production can increase food security and thus help to reduce the risk of food crises. Preventive measures such as support to grain banks, water wells, vegetable gardens and women's rights and economic empowerment will reduce the risk of humanitarian crises related to food shortages. Budget support for preventive measures and emergency aid must be seen in closer context.

Regarding the right to land, Norwegian authorities should:

- Contribute to the commissioning of the FAO guidelines "Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests," which also will fight inappropriate seizure of land.
- Support social movements and human rights activists who work to influence agriculture policy, including the illegal seizure of land.
- Contribute to the development of control mechanisms for the business and aid sectors such that, for example, biodiesel production does not adversely effect necessary food production.



- Work for the implementation of land, property, inheritance rights and the implementation of agricultural reforms for women and other vulnerable groups.

With respect to Norwegian agricultural aid, Norwegian authorities should:

- Shift Norwegian agricultural support in the South to focus more on women and small-scale production.
- Conduct a gender analysis before action is taken and make evaluations with the same focus during and at the end of projects and programs.
- Contribute to the development and distribution of technology which promotes women's participations and increases efficiency of small-scale agriculture.
- Contribute in the arrangements which are intended to give women access to agricultural credit.
- Support sustainable planting projects which are targetted towards local energy, material and food production.
- Increase women's access to local markets, including through the investment of infrastructure, technology and knowledge building which can increase women's participation.
- Develop local cooperative models where wmoen are represented at all levels.
- Have a long-term perspective in connection with food crises and relief work. Many food crises are cyclical and at least 10% of all relief work should be focused on prevention.
- Contribute to food production in urban regions as well, for example, through vegetable gardens.

4.4 Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Since the main theme of the UN Women's Commission in 2012 is "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges," we believe that the Norwegian authorities should address rural women's sexual and reproductive health and rights as an important concern. We know that there are major differences in women's access to sexual and reproductive health and that women's social and economic status and geographic location and age play an important



role in women's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights – and that rural women in the South are particularly vulnerable. This is also an area one faces political backlash internationally.

Still, about 1000 women die daily as a result of their pregnancies. In most developing countries, maternal mortality is the main cause of death for girls between 15 and 19 years of age. Women in the South, especially the poor and poorly educated women in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are particularly vulnerable, according to WHO and the UN. The World Bank development report for 2012, "Gender Equality and Development," has emphasized the high maternal mortality rate as an important reason for the authors to describe this as "mortality excess" compared to men.

We also know that 215 million women in the South lack access to modern contraception. Young, poor, poorly educated and rural women have the highest risk of unwanted pregnancies. Strengthening women's decision-making power over their own sexuality and reproduction is an important aspect of "empowerment" of women. Increasing women's access to modern contraceptives are not only an important measure in itself, but is also a measure that has a number of other positive effects on gender equality and sustainable development. A decline in fertility rates in developing countries that are based on women's own desires will support the participation of women in the workplace, helping to reduce household poverty and increase economic productivity and provide for stability at the country level. A reduction in population growth will also contribute to greater environmental sustainability

Since we know that pregnancy-related mortality is particularly high in rural and poor areas, it is important to address reproductive health and high maternal mortality during this year's Women's Commission. Pregnancy-related mortality and poor access to reproductive health also constitute barriers to women's social, economic and political participation.

Regarding sexual and reproductive health, Norwegian authorities should:

- Pursue a major commitment to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights and the health-related MDGs by emphasizing SRHR as an important area of rural women's empowerment and increased participation in economic, social and political life.
- The implementation of measures that secure women's access to reproductive health is first and foremost important in itself to secure women's rights, but is also has a series of positive effects for women's participation in social,



economic and political life. Similarly, absence or poor access to reproductive health, aside from being a violation of women's rights, presents a barrier for women to participate in education, employment, and decision-making processes.

- Ensuring access to reproductive health can be interpreted as access to safer pregnancies and childbirth, access to legal and safe abortions, access to modern contraception, health care related to sexuality and reproduction and sex education.

Regarding food and health, Norwegian authorities should:

- Contribute to developing and dissemination knowledge on the relationship between nutrition/food and health.
- Promote SRHR in all relevant fora. This is of course important in itself but is also clearly linked to food security. Maternal mortality is now higher in rural than in urban areas, which means that many children lose both their caregiver as well as their food producer. In other cases, it is the children themselves who are having children, which carries serious consequences for both mother and child's nutritional state.
- There must be a possibility for mothers to breastfeed fully for the first 6 months of a baby's life. This must also be a continued possibility until the child is 2 years of age.
- There is a strong correlation between reproductive health, poverty, population trends, consumption patterns and consumption of the environment. Ensuring women's access to reproductive health is therefore a concrete measure which maintains the goal of increasing women's equality as well as being a measure that maintains a goal of sustainable development.