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Statement submitted by High Atlas Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The High Atlas Foundation's Gender Perspective: Harnessing data gathering methods for women's empowerment in Morocco

Gender and Development, or Empowerment, refers to measures needed to help women gain more control over their lives. In development, this empowerment necessitates women's participation in decision-making, which, in turn, increases self-reliance and self-confidence as female indigenous voices are integrated into positive transformation (Kirchner et al, 2002). Another important goal of this empowerment is to incorporate gender into the development project cycle, a process that requires linking gender analysis and participatory methods, which are not automatically gender-sensitive (Humble, 1998).

Participatory gender data gathering methods include the triple role, gender needs assessment and Gender And Development matrix (Moser, 1993). These measures enable participatory methods to be more equitable in their application by providing measures to evaluate progress, and allow the emergence of gender-sensitive political solutions, thereby challenging gender relations and root causes of women's marginalization and subordination (Cornwall and Pratt, 2003; Crawley, 1998). This approach reconfigures rules of interactions in public spaces so that participants can exercise their voices and decision-making is democratized (Cornwall and Pratt, 2003).

For participatory methods to be effective, they must be designed so the information they help gather 1) accounts for the range of perspectives and challenges of women, 2) involves and impacts their relationships with men, and 3) incorporates sustained and deliberative processes, rather than one-off performances (Cornwall and Pratt, 2003). To help ensure that these processes can continue, the participatory approach should also address social and economic structures at different levels, which are constraints on women's advancement. However, development workers still need to better translate Gender And Development theory into methodologies. As practitioners adapt established techniques in new ways, a result could be the entry of partial, invalid, or unreliable data, which the sequencing of techniques may be able to address (Campbell, 2001)

Participatory approaches provide an "important mechanism to overcome apathy and lack of confidence, make women visible in the community, show them the potential of self-help solutions, and raise awareness that women can play an important role in solving problems" (Moser, 1993). In order to create successful processes, Non-Governmental Organizations are increasingly identified as the "institutional solution," because participation is essential and they have the capacity to reach the grassroots (Moser, 1993). Finally, incorporating Gender And Development theory into the training of participatory facilitators is an important step to achieving gender parity (Humble, 1998).

The High Atlas Foundation has developed a number of new proposals to advance experiential training in multiple provinces in Morocco. These programs build the ability of local women in facilitating community planning of development and addressing the root causes of rural poverty through the promotion of green growth. The High Atlas Foundation has successfully implemented this program with funding support from the Middle East Partnership Initiative in the Rhamna

province; with the National Endowment for Democracy in the Al Haouz, Boujdour and Taroudant provinces; and with the Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Scientific Research at the U.S. Department of State in the Azilal and Taroudant provinces.

We are ready for greater scale. The High Atlas Foundation and the people need and seek your partnership, friendship and support. Please consider becoming a High Atlas Foundation member to achieve gender empowerment in Morocco.

The High Atlas Foundation advances the status, empowerment and livelihoods of women by assisting in the creation of cooperatives. These new cooperatives aid in the formation of businesses, experiential training in participatory methods and project management. Additionally, the cooperatives support women's efforts in advocacy and policy reform. However, the basis of the social change that they create is, in many ways, the design of participatory planning methodologies, which draw out gender perspectives and gender project priorities. As a result, the High Atlas Foundation is fully committed to creating and casting gender-based methods for information gathering and project development.
