Bottom-up Capacity Building: Women in Family and Business

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1. Introduction

Women are key elements in daily life, family integration, reproduction, resource management and in crisis situations. They are able to cooperate and to develop survival strategies for livelihood of their families. However, existing gender identity and social representations are transforming women in social vulnerability, limiting their potential of capacity building inside the family unit as well as business potential in the wider society. Therefore a bottom-up capacity building oriented to empowering women and strengthening their self-sufficiency, starts with food sovereignty and resource management. Micro-business offers poor countries and marginal social classes an opportunity to improve their livelihood and guarantee long-term sustainability above all in regions threatened by global and climatic change.

This paper starts with a conceptual analysis of gender as mode of social situation, creating specific gender security and identity processes. These processes are results of thousands of years of social representations, and therefore the social construction of gender implies high social vulnerability. The second part deals with survival strategies, developed by poor women who were confronted with extreme life conditions. Destruction of rural environmental conditions, socio-economic crises and public insecurity obliged them to migrate with their families and often with the whole community to urban slums. In the third part, women develop a sustainable resource management, specifically related to water, food and energy, crucial elements for the health of themselves and their families. In the forth part, integral capacity–building of women is improving their business potential. In the next part, micro-credit, saving practices and interchange of natural products increase women´s resilience and livelihood. Finally, the conclusions summarize the elements for a sustainable bottom-up decision-making process. Reinforced by top-down participative support from government, international organizations and NGOs, it is able to consolidate human, gender and environmental security (HUGE).

2. Basic Concepts and Focus of the Talk

Gender violence and discrimination is still an invisibile aggression, happening mostly inside families and often socially accepted and sometimes promoted. The origins of this brutal and subtle discrimination are complex, and related to the identity process and social representations of gender construction. There are no doubts and the data collection of United Nations confirmed it, the violence against women and girls is the most frequent one on earth (Riviere/ Cominges, 2001). Every third woman in the world is beaten and every fifth is sexually harassed or abused. This violence against the women includes each year 20 million abortions where 78,000 women die; 80 million women get pregnant against their will; 2 million women are affected by HIV/AIDS (Muthien/ Combrinck 2003); an estimated 60 million unborn female infants are aborted due to gender abortion, infanticide or negligence; 2 million girls are forced into sex

trafficking; 130 million girls suffer from genital mutilation and 4 million girls are sold as slaves, for marriage or prostitution (Source: UNFPA, 2003).

Normally, this violent behaviour happens within the household; however in research surveys men responsible for these crimes accuse men coming from other cultural backgrounds, different regions and other social classes. These kinds of offences are normally not denounced by the affected women and their families because intra-familial violence is often not recognized as an aggression, less a legal issue, because it is taken as normal from a male standpoint (Meyers 1997). In addition, most countries in the South still lack laws against this type of violence, and when they exist, there is no enforcement, due to male judges or patriarchal practices of law and power exercises.

Gender as Mode of Social Situations

The background of this violent behaviour is gender discrimination. It refers to constructed different treatment based on sex, including diverse connotations of values which changes among cultural and social contexts. Thus, in most societies a married women's civil identity is now covered by her husband's. Properties she brought now on the mane of her husband, occupation segregating within the family and lower wages left women dependent on men. For professional and trained women barriers to upward mobility and better pay get limited by the "glass ceiling". Out of over 180 countries only 13 were recently ruled by women: Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, New Zealand (before also Sri Lanka) in Asia; Peru, Panama, Sao Tomé and Chile in Latin America and Caribbean; and Finland, Germany, Ireland, San Marino and Latvia in Europe. Female ministers remain concentrated in social areas (14%) compared to legal (9.4%), economic (4.1%), political affairs (3.4%), and the executive (3.9%). Only 7% of the world's total cabinet ministers are women[1] (UN 2006).

These historical differences generate gender gaps, which often are increased unconsciously. They are taken for granted and can be found in any activity where both gender are involved. Reproductive health is a particular sensitive item for women. Each year 35,000 women and babies die in Nepal alone due to substandard or unsafe conditions of birth and neonatal management (WDR 2006). In Afghanistan[2] each 20 minutes a women dies during birth caused by insufficient health services, the second highest rate of maternal dead in the world, conditions which are worse only in Sudan.

Thus, constructed social identity is the root cause of any discriminative behaviour. The traditional role of a woman is to be a house-wife who cares for children, family, old people and inclusive domestic animals and orchards. Then, the question rose: why are women not overcoming these impediments? Gender biases are related to social roles in

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[1] Worldwide 14% of women are in parliament and 11% in a ministerial or sub-ministerial post. Niger accounts for 1% in parliament and Sudan has no female ministerial official. 61% of women among 15-64 years correspond to labor force and 86% of men; however their salaries represent in Sri Lanka 85%, in France 79%, in Mexico 71%, in Brazil 54% and in Bangladesh 50% of men's wages in manufacturing sector. In the Gulf States which have parliaments, neither Kuwait nor the United Arab Emirates give women the right to vote or stand for election (UN 2006). In economy only five women direct the 500 enterprises listed by Forbes and in disaster agencies and UN related organizations there is one woman in charge of refugees (UNHCR). This male organized system brings multiple discriminative behaviors into governmental agencies and law making process, avoiding progress and reduction in discrimination.

[2] Each woman has an average of more than seven children, and often husbands or grandfather find it more important to buy a buffalo than to send the women to a hospital.

daily life, where men and women acquire different functions and attributes (military vs. childrearing; public vs. private). They are based on social roles and norms. Within this context men are considered assertive, logical and strong and therefore able to direct, while women are confronted with a stereotype of humble, modest, emotional, weak and unable. There is a third element: women's self-identity, social pressure and life-learning processes have internalized their role as career. They self-oblige them morally to care for family members and livelihoods. In moments of risk, their first reaction is to save their children, elders, handicapped and domestic animals. Similar to a man who is able to reach the highest level of honour offering his life as hero for the 'fatherland'; a woman gets her sublime self-realization by giving her life for others in a silent way.

Thus, identity includes "all the ways one might understand oneself to be a man or a women…with any subset of gender norms, roles and traits ascribed" (Anderson: 2007:4) and understood, while repudiating others (stereotypes, racism). In the symbolic field, gendered representation exists through conventional association, imaginative projection and metaphoric thinking; symbolic spaces: male garage; women kitchen. Thus, roles determine for man and women different social activities (military, childrearing) and norms and stereotypes typify men are self-confident, organizers, capable and powerful; while women are unable, subordinated, dependent and fragile. Society expects to conform to those roles. However, performance and behaviours are socially constructed and do not have fixed trails. With modernization they are becoming more flexible, variable and gender resilient, benefiting not only women but the whole society.

2.1. Gender Security and Identity

These stereotypes affect gender security, which has gender relations as object of reference and the values at risks are identity and social representations (see Oswald 2006). Gender security is normally taken for granted, socially identified and represented within society. During millennia, society as a whole has forgotten that gender relations were socially constructed and reinforced through habits, ideology, beliefs and political systems. The world has been organized for at least five thousand years on patriarchal relations, where the male gender (the strong sex) dominates over the female (the weak one), creating inequity, violence, dominance and submission. Gender security as an analytical concept emerged only recently. Nevertheless, for thousands of years gender differences were taken as an immovable reality, based on biological differences and not as social construction. During these past millennia world got organized within these hierarchical relations (Honegger/Heintza 1981).

Therefore, gender security is systemic within the present society, and it is normally taken as "normal". The relations are linked to gender status–ethnicity/race, class, age and minority status- in relation to the model of reference. Equity and identity are the values at risk. The source of threat comes in first instance from the patriarchal, hierarchical and violent order, characterized by exclusive, dominant and authoritarian institutions such as non-democratic governments, churches and élites[3]. The symbolic

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[3] Men exercise a hierarchical and vertical power of domination and superiority. Women live without proprieties and are subordinated, exercising their powers from the oppression as maternal powers (mother, wife), erotic powers (wife, lover, [prostitute]) and the altered [crazy, nuns] (Largarde 1990). Female powers are marginal (minimal in comparison to the man) and merely delegated. They can only be exercised with permission of the dominant group (father, husband, brother or boss). The main control on

distribution of space and time assigns the male the public sphere: production, *res publica*, *homo sapiens;* and the women the private: reproduction, home, *homo domesticus* or *homo donnas* (Vaughan 1997, 2004).

These processes are not so apparent and linear and there exists interdependence between patriarchy and female submission, constituted by personal identity processes (care) and social habits induced and trained during millennia. As a result of this longstanding process, female identity is obliged morally and socially to be available for the others and to care for them as her process of socialized self-identification. As *homo domesticus* they are concerned about children, family, animals and their well-being. As the "weaker sex" they are supposed to require protection from the men and its physical force (military capacity in the case of a state). Therefore, in moments of catastrophes, conflicts and wars women became the highest vulnerable group and are an appreciated commodity for the aggressors and an object of blackmail among the men in dispute.

Thus, gender security studies first have to be created as a scientific issue and therefore the concept has to be clarified. Gender is an analytical tool, socially constructed and the axis of classification is linked to genital difference (sexual dimorphism: female-male), facts that permits a biological explanation of social representations of gender, rooting still more the mechanisms of distinction and with them the process of discrimination. Macela Lagarde (1990) correctly criticized this process of gender construction as biosocial-cultural) based on the sexual differences. Each culture recognized sexual differences and specified the characteristics that classify the sexual beings in diverse genders (Skjelsbaek 1997; Rosales 2002; Szasz/Lerner 1998; Foucault 1996). The number of sexual characteristics varies inter- and intra-culturally, although the generic classification is manifested in all known societies and for this reason is considered a universal classification, often linked to discrimination.

This process generates roles within society where a systematic process of identification establishes the differences between status, needs, positions and privileges of each gender (Falco 1996). These roles have two explanations. First they articulate the totality of ways through which one expresses gender identity and secondly, it defines the roles in relation to the type of activities that a society determines as adequate for a person with specific gender identity. As these processes are socially developed, these behaviours are not fixed and greater equity inside a society through a systematic analysis of gender relations, understanding how a woman and a man deal in specific social contexts can be achieved. The result of this longstanding gender discrimination has produced historical inequality and inequity. It refers to the process of socialization to "become" a gendered human being; a man or a woman, depending on the position of the social structure with clear gender differences (see Chart 1).

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material goods remains in hands of man who decide on family expenses, property, productive activities, inheritances and gifts. The lack of the right to own properties has reduced the negotiation capacity of woman and created their high dependency. They are exposed to suffer interfamilial and social violence if they try to transgress the assigned social and family roles. Once married, the margin of manoeuvre has been further reduced by both, their own family, but also by the relatives of their husband, where she normally lives and works for.

Gender Equity Indicator	Lowest Country	Worldwide Average	Highest Country	Countries Reporting	Year Reported
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	0.63	0.95	1.03	163	2001
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education	0.46	0.69	1.39	144	2001
Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education	0.15	1.13	3.36	116	2001
Ratio of literate women to literate men	0.42	0.93	1.09	123	2004
Women's share in salaried office employment (%)	6.1	40.26	55.9	136	2003
National parliament seats held by women (%)	0	14.43	49	182	2005
U.N. Gender Equity Index (combined male-female parity in economic, political, and resource decisions)	0.123	0.551	0.908	78	2003

Source: United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), 2005 http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/ww2005/tab4b.htm

Sociology understands gender identity as "a social construct regarding culture-bound conventions, roles and behaviours for, as well as relationships between and among, women and men and boys and girls" (Krieger 2001: 693-700). It is a constructed reality and explains how a person is socially identified, or how the society perceives him or her as a man or a woman. The gender concept could also refer to the process how other persons define an individual based on roles and behaviours (hair, clothes, norms). The formation of gender identity is a complex procedure that includes processes of gestation since birth, of learning during the first infancy and later the socialization and acquiring of social roles. Multiple researchers determine the fixation of gender identity in infancy, even when subsequently differentiated and new roles were obtained (Piaget 1950; Freud 1923, 1927; Doise 1986). It is distinct from the concept of sex, which describes only biological differences. Since it is socially constructed it can be changed, although habits have been socially consolidated during millennia using gender distinction for social discrimination and oppression as something given by physiology (bio-physiological determination). In the symbolic field it represents cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (Oakes/Haslam/Turner 1994; Lacan 1985; Foucault 1996) reflected in the institutional environment, in opportunities of job, and levels of salaries and work loads.

2.2.Social Representations

The described system of values, ideas and practices is creating simultaneously a structure of order, able to offer a person the possibility to get familiar with the social and material world. The communication within a community offers a code of common social interchange, where several aspects of life, personal and collective history are classified without ambiguity (Moscovici, 1976: xiii). More than three decades ago, Tajfel argued that social identity means how "we live in a world in which processes of unification and diversification happen with gigantic steps and with a rapidity never ever before seen in history" (1981: 31). "Persons have a basic need to simplify and to impose an order to their reality". (Hogg/Abrams, 1988: 78) This process induces them to categorize their social environment through social comparisons, where self-esteem is affirmed and maintained in a positive way. It explains also why this individual self-esteem depends on belonging to a group, not necessary within its own social system of reference.
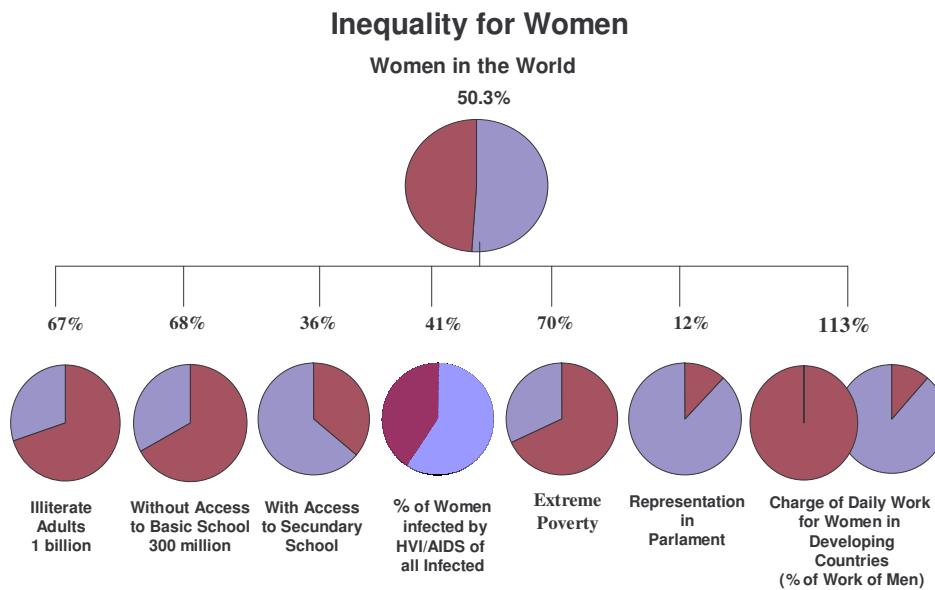
Moscovici described social representation as "systems of value, ideas and practices" that simultaneously "establish an order that permits an individual to get familiarized and to arrange its material and social world" (Moscovici 1976: xiii), together with precise socio-historical givens in any culture. Thus, social representations are systems of ideas, values and practices fulfilling a dual function: a) establishing a framework of order in which the subjects are oriented in their material and social world where they live; and b) permitting the communication with a common code among the members of a collective, where all objects are named and the processes precisely classified (Moscovici cited in: Herzlich/Graham 1993: xiii).

For this reason, social representations originate in daily life[4], where the society is the thinking system. Consequently, a continuum exists between personal and social identity; between inter-personal and inter-group behaviour. It includes social beliefs and social mobility, understood both as a result of personal efforts able to induce social changes (Tajfel, 1981; Haslam et al., 1995, 1999; Bejar 2007). In this sense, the subjective dimension of identity is interrelated with the objective processes where identity is manifested and transformed. For this reason, identity is *processual*, since it is gestated and it changes permanently; *relational*, given that it is transformed by exchanges and interactions; *multidimensional*, because it operates in intra-individual, inter-individual, intra-group, inter-group and ideological environments (Doise 1986); *contextual*, given that it is forged into specific contexts; *essentialist*, because the diversity and the complexity of the social interactions are sustained and transformed though identity processes (Serrano 2004).

The two basic processes of historical production of social knowledge are linked to anchoring and objectification. *Anchoring* is a process permitting to integrate the unknown situation within the existing representation (internalization); and *objectification* permits that these new representations are projected into the world as concrete objects (Duveen 1997: 87). At the micro level these processes of gender identity are 'making the unfamiliar familiar' by anchoring (associative function to other symbols and their denomination) and symbolic objectification of metaphors, analogies or by concrete objects and artefacts, getting used to the types of gender demands and acceptance through image building in mass media (diffusion of gender role in soap operas, propaganda, magazines and notices).

The function are *symbolic,* orienting and facilitating communication from the elaboration of attitudes, opinions, stereotypes, identity presentation of group relations, attributes of responsibility or control, narrative of original myths, ideological domination and illusions. But they are also *pragmatic*: motivation orients the activities, planning, social describing, and norm-building. The acquisition of these control mechanisms (Maslow/Frager/Fadiman 1987) permits in independent situations to internalize in women several basic psychological processes: a) women *should be*: assigned identity (social facts); and b) women *should be for other*: self-identity (socialized) with interdependence to patriarchy. The results of these complex processes of identity and social representations are structural disadvantages of women worldwide, as it is expressed in graph 1.

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[4] These social representations could be reinterpreted as an equivalent for contemporary myths, rites (Eliade 1965; Graves 1985) and belief systems in primitive societies (Moscovici 1984: 181, 1990, 1998, 2000).

Inequality for Women

Women in the World

50.3%

| 67% | 68% | 36% | 41% | 70% | 12% | 113% |

| Illiterate Adults 1 billion | Without Access to Basic School 300 million | With Access to Secundary School | % of Women infected by HVI/AIDS of all Infected | Extreme Poverty | Representation in Parlament | Charge of Daily Work for Women in Developing Countries (% of Work of Men) |

Source: UNIFEM, 2000 and UNAIDS, 2000
90% of all Maternal Deads ocurs in Developing Countries: (500,000 deads/year)

These processes are not only valid for women, but similar mechanisms of assignation of subaltern identities are used in the socialization processes of children, elderly, indigenous, invalids and other minorities having in common a struggle for visibility. Such as for women the values at risks are for these subaltern groups' equity and identity, and there sources of threats are linked to authoritarian governments, multinational enterprises, local bourgeois, churches and other dominant groups.

2.3. Social Vulnerability

Social vulnerability is a concept related to unsatisfied human needs and limited access to resources (Melillo/ Suárez/Rodríguez 2004) and therefore the loss of human security is understood as freedom from fear (in the Canadian sense where a campaign against personal landmines were in the centre of the preoccupations) and freedom from want in the sense of Ogata/Sen (2003). The four pillars of human security (see Brauch 2007; Bogardi/Brauch 2005; Annan 2005) are complementary and should guarantee a minimal access to basic resource for the poorest in the community. This procedure would avoid under- and over-consumption and could secure the basic satisfaction of needs to anybody, independent of geographical, social, age or gender status, reducing also the impacts on natural resources.

As women and girls are normally more exposed to threats, it is necessary to include social vulnerability considerations in its cultural surrounding (Oliver-Smith 2004). Thus, the security dynamics could be oriented to threats for individual identity and social representation, where not only the physical survival is in danger[5], but also the cultural

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[5] Further, World Bank (1998) documented empirically that with each loss of 1% in GDP in Mexico as a result of induced socioeconomic crises, the rate of homicides increased by 1% and robberies with violence by 2%. Something similar occurs with the global environmental change and the new threats of extreme hydro-meteorological events or the growing poverty in countries of the south, linked to soil

one, often reinforced by religious concerns. Therefore, Wisner (2004: 194-205) insists that social vulnerability creates contradictory also empowerment for vulnerable and he distinguishes four approaches for dealing with social vulnerability: demographic, taxonomic, situational, and contextual or proactive. Linking Gramci's 'ideological apparatus of state' with identity and role theories, the past decades of impoverishment in the South and Arab countries (El Kayat 2004), environmental destruction, migration, depopulation due to disasters, wars and desertification, have pushed survival strategies increasingly into the hands of women (Oswald 1991).

3.   Women' Survival Strategies

The term survival strategies had its origin in Latin America, when in the 1950's started a massive rural migration to urban slums. Settled in hazard prone areas in the suburbs of big cities, adverse urban conditions obliged women to develop specific survival strategies (Duque/ Patrana 1973; Oswald 1991; 2006). After the illegal occupation of marginal and risky land, they built shelter from precarious materials (waste), found in landfills. However, the chronic unemployment and the missing opportunity for income obliged women to develop complex strategies. First, they sold any unnecessary goods, later they borrowed among familiars, neighbours and in the shop. However, soon this possibility felt and when economic crises increased, food got scarce. Then women got organized at a different level, picking up early in the morning from garbage half perished products and transforming them in a collective popular kitchen.

Collective community work (kitchen, child rearing, visits to public functionaries) was organized through rotation. Collectively, they struggled for basic services (electricity, water, access, security, health and community centre) and the legalization of land and services. However the fault of money obliged them to fight for public subsidies and poverty alleviation programs. Beside all these activities, women still found time for some temporary paid work as domestic, washing or ironing; others generated services, handicrafts, food selling, etc.

Furthermore, popular colonies are not only hazard-prone but also exposed to organized crime and gangs. Thus, only social organization permits to fight against public insecurity, and often police is involved in these illegal processes. The sum of these complex actions empowered women and therefore they were able to fight against intrafamiliar violence. The result is that often women were left alone as head of household struggling for the future of their children (INEGI 2004). After a decade, most of these colonies achieved some social and economic consolidation (Oswald 1991, 2007).

Survival dilemma

Not all social groups found a way out of marginalization. Due to new economic crises, environmental deterioration, climate change, disasters, missing jobs and social unrest, survival strategies are often not sufficient. Risks, threats, stress, migration and conflicts

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erosion and urbanization due that peasants are obliged to abandon their fields as a result of a survival dilemma).

are destroying livelihood and affecting entire communities, confronting families with a "Survival Dilemma" (Brauch 2007).

This represents an extreme situation, aggravated for highly vulnerable such as women, children, and elderly. There survival option gets reduced:

- To stay, suffer from hunger and being threatened by dead
- Wait for governmental help and surviving badly
- Migrate and confront conflicts for water, land, food and jobs in the new place
- Part of the family migrate and sends remises
- Migration to urban slums with low life quality, jobless and living in dangerous areas
- Increasing the contingent of environmental refugees
- Develop resilience, adaptation and coping mechanisms to challenge the situation (local survival strategies).

The most common alternative is rural-urban migration. However the deterioration of social conditions in highly risky urban slums is pushing people to migrate illegally outside the country. Reinforced by political deterioration and environmental threats, Kofi Annan (2005) estimates during this century more than one billion environmental refugees. Added to the today existing 204 million migrants, the world situation will change dramatically (see graph 2).
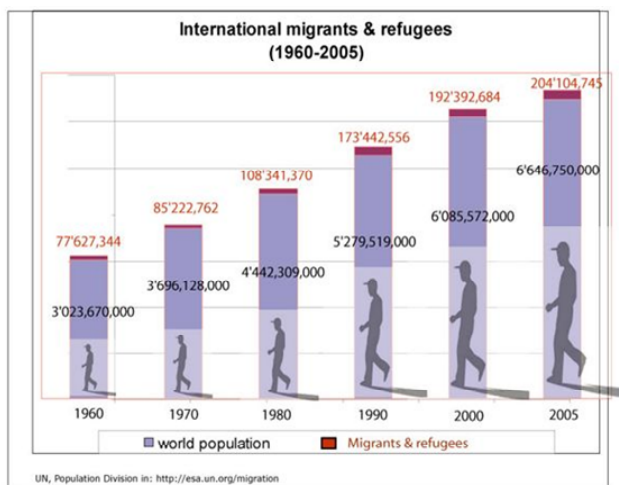

4.   **Women and Sustainable Resource Management:**

Gift economy (Vaughan 1997, 2004) and *ecofeminism* (Mies 1988; Shiva/Mies 1997; Bennholdt/Mies 1999; Oswald 2007) are reinforcing gender security. Relating environmental destruction, food scarcity and women's discrimination and violence (Pickup 2001), scientists established analogy between the process of exploitation of gender and nature. Both are victims of the same system of domination, appropriation, violence (Maier 2001) and destruction (Warren 1997; Mies 1988). Ecofeminists understood that colonization, plantation and monocultures also destroyed the mystical connection with Mother Earth (Shiva 1988, 2002; Shiva et al 1999; Plumwood 1991; Vaughan 1997; Howard 1999). Similar processes occurred when patriarchy evolved several thousand years ago (Warren 1997).

As alternatives, they propose self-reliance and cooperative systems in villages, traditions developed in Tanzanian's *ujamaa*, South African's *ubunto*, and Mexican's *ejido*. Without alienating cultural goods, they appropriate technology, and induce sustainable field management, green agriculture, local markets, self-sufficiency, food sovereignty and renewable energy sources (wind, solar, biomass). They recognized that the most stable and long-lasting human organizations were small eco-villages with about 150 persons, based on communal land rights and some collective work. Comparing this knowledge with Lao Tse's approach, ecofeminists saw that a similar system of livelihood was proposed 2,500 years ago by this great Chinese thinker (Oswald 2007).

A holistic management of natural resources includes social equity, environmental sustainability and economic efficiency, where techniques, information and policies are integrated in an institutional framework, able to manage scarce resources (see graph 3).
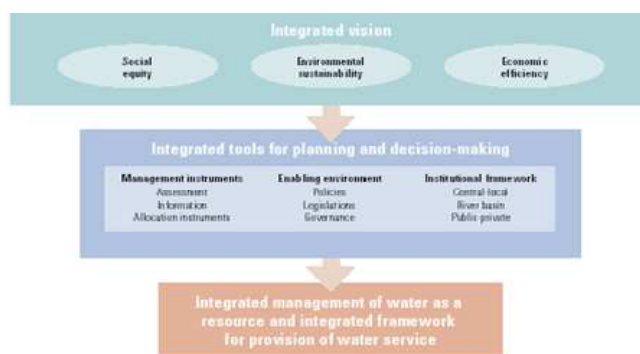
Source: GWP, 2002

4.1. Water

During the last century population has tripled and water use has increased six times. Civilizations have grown around water facilities and disappeared due to drought or hydro-meteorological hazards. Waterways were used for transport, trade, agriculture and livelihood. Due to water shortage, engineers have transported water across long distances or have constructed water pipelines and huge dams, affecting ecosystems, destroying water basins and resettling indigenous people. In daily life safe water access, regional and temporal scarcity and pollution have been underestimated. Our planet "is covered by 70% of its surface by water, wherever it represents only 0.07% of its mass and 0.4% of its volume." (Oswald, 1999:41). The majority of water is salty and the sweet water is mostly frozen in polar glaciers. Only 0.014% of the liquid resource is available in lakes, rives, dams and deposits. Shiklomanov (1993 and UNESCO, 2005) calculates that from this sweet water 30.1% is located in aquifers, 0.05% as residual humidity, 68.7% in glaciers, 0.26% in lakes, 0.03% in swamps, 0.006% in rives, 0.003% is biological water and 0.04% is moisture in the atmosphere[6]. This is an

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[6] Multilateral organizations of United Nations distinguishes among blue water (located in aquifers, with an amount of 33.9 millions of km^3; where 70% is used in agriculture, 20% for industries y 10% for households) and green water. This provide from rain and yearly 25 millions de km^3 run naturally through ecosystems. It is used in 60% for agriculture, basically among poor peasants during the raining seasons in

equivalent of 600 million km^3 per year, which is recycled every eight days.

Furthermore, water changes in time and space. It is responsible for most economic processes and urbanization. Subregionally, North and Central America Central counts with 15% of water resources and 8% of population; South America 26% vs. 6%; Europe 8% vs. 13%; Australia and Oceania 5% vs. less than 1%; Africa 11% vs. 13%; and the highest scarcity *per capita* is in Asia with 36% disposal vs. 60% of population (UNESCO/IHP, web, 2005). Finally, 84% of disasters are linked to hydro-meteorological events and in developing countries more than 80% of water is used in agriculture. Therefore water pollution and scarcity, above all in poor countries in Asia is one of the greatest challenges to sustainable development, where women are the crucial stakeholders.

However, water scarcity is growing due to physical and economic stress. Today, three billion people lack a basic sanitation system and 1 billion lack direct and sufficient access to drinking water. The effects of unsafe water are water-born and vectored illnesses. Every year 500 million get sick from these diseases and millions die, especially children due to diarrhoea. Daily, millions of poor people struggle for minimal water allowance, and the poorest of the poor, the highest vulnerable, are women and children in the Third World. Access to safe and sufficient water for drinking, cooking, hygiene and some crops for self-sufficiency are basic human rights, mainly affecting women. However, half of the world population does not count with this basic resource, limiting life quality, agriculture and industrial development.

4.2. Food

75% of the 1.1 billion people are living on less than one USD/day in rural areas. 852 million suffer from chronic hunger with 842 of them living in developing and transition countries. Chronic child undernourishment, iodine and iron insufficiency reduces intellectual capacity by 10-15% (Álvarez/Oswald 1993). Hunger (protein-caloric malnutrition and the loss of micro-elements) generates an estimated economic loss of GDP per year of 5-10% of all poor countries, equivalent to 500 billion USD (FAO 2005). Women are only directly affected by chronic undernourishment and childbearing, but also indirectly when caring for sick children and families with hunger.

Women's role in food is crucial. They generate among 60 to 80% of the food in poor homes and half of the world requirements. Nevertheless, in Mexico only 17% of women own land property or have access to agrarian land rights. In Africa women represent 33% of the labor force in agriculture; 70% of the rural daily wages; 60-80% of the subsistence production; 100% of the transformation of food; 80% of food storage; 90% of weaving and 60% of market activities, but only 2% possess or count on communal land rights (FAO 2002).

Therefore, local agricultural production and trade, with access for women and small peasants to water, seeds, credits, technical and financial support is crucial in overcoming chronicle malnutrition. Women's access to land for production and livelihood is a key element in reducing violent and patriarchal structures inside of

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the south and the rest of 40% is employed in the production of fishes and aquaculture in sweet water (Shiklomanov, en UNESCO, 2005).

families, countries and in the global economic system. However, normally women, indigenous and peasants are not taken into account in the national and regional definition of rural policies. Neither the right is granted to the majorities to produce and *consume healthy, permanent and culturally accepted food,* which is locally produced, sold, cooked and consumed. Through the present trade system and agricultural subsidies in industrialized countries, the right of regions and nations for protection of poor countries to struggle from dumping in food imports is limited due to external political pressures. The same happens with agricultural prices, today unable to cover the real production costs. National and local governments also have an obligation to improve the nutritional situation of their citizens by stimulating local food production and transformation, clean water, sanitation and elimination of parasites; all of them preventive health factors. Finally, there exists a link between environmental services and farming, land planning and participative democracy. All together are able to stabilize jobs in rural areas and create livelihood and life quality, guaranteeing the basic human right for non-migration.

Further, the present situation of water and food is not reflecting the productive reality of the world. In spite of population growth of the last two centuries, nowadays there is sufficient food to feed the whole human population – 4.2 pounds per person- (Lappé/Collins/Rosset 1998). Nevertheless, only 64% of the agricultural products are used for human food. The rest is transformed industrially or is utilized as feed for animals and livestock (FAO 1994 a/b, 2005a/b; FAOSTAT 1997; FAO/IFAP/WFP 2005a/b). Brazil, with a high level of hunger is promoting a public policy of eradication of undernourishment (see graph 4), including strategic food stocks, public support for production, increase of salaries and nutritional support for children and pregnant women. These integrated models could be able in short term to improve health and live quality of the most humble people.

**Programa "Fome Zero" (Without hunger) in Brazil**
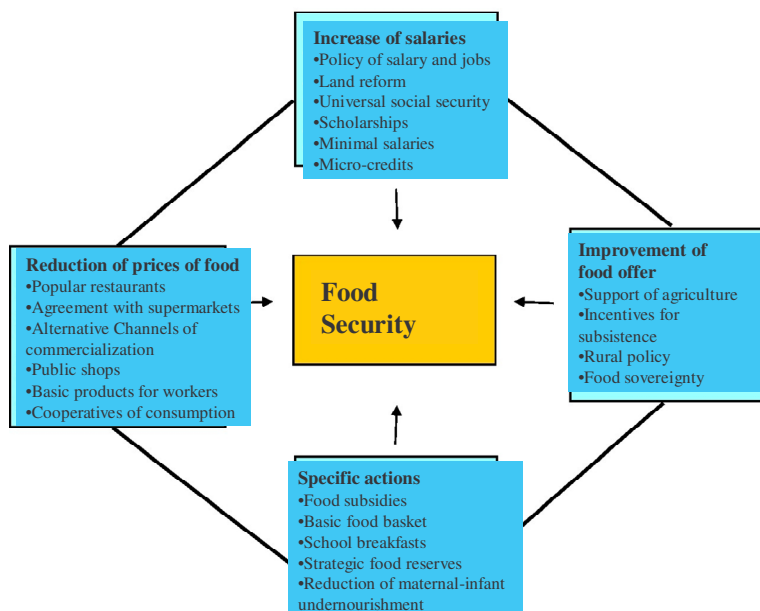
Fuente: Instituto Ciudadanía, 2001, Sao Paulo, Brazil

4.3.Energy

Energy is the motor of development during the past century and oil is the highest appreciated commodity. The primary global energetic consumption in 2005 was 10.53 billion tons, with an increase of 2.4% from the former year (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2006). Oil represented 36% of primary commercial energy with 3.84 billion tons; carbon 24% and natural gas 21%. The rest are diverse hydro-combustibles, biofuel and other renewable sources, such as sun and wind. Transportation is estimated to consume 56% of global consumption, industries requires 33%; households 7% and commercial uses 4% (International Agency of Energy, 2006). In 2005, USA consumed 25.43 million barrels per day, Europe 15.58; the OCEDE states 49.65; Russia 3.8; China 6.59; Latin America 5.0; Middle East 6.12; the Non OCDE 33.95, and Africa 2.91 of a total of 83.6 million barrels per day. The increase in the last four years was 6.42 million barrels per day (*idem*). This increase is similar to the GDP growth, and slowly the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries are raising their energetic demand. Similar trend is observed in the Middle East. The increase creates not only scarcity of a non-renewable resource, but also climate change and global warning, affecting the whole planet. Therefore, the future of development is linked to the generation of sustainable energy, where thermo-solar technology is in the long run the most sustainable substitute for fossil hydrocarbons, supported by wind and biomass energy (see graph 5).
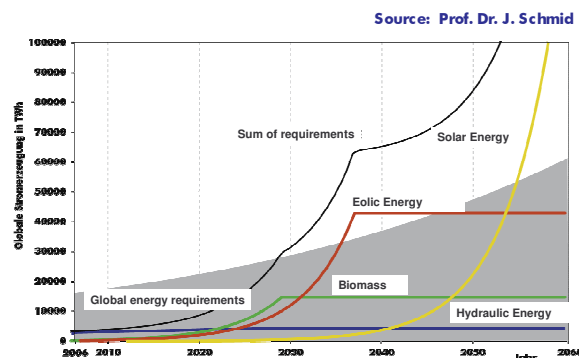
5. Capacity Building

Confronted with this complex resource management and holistic development projects, women could rely on capacity building, linking up science and technology with life quality and innovation (see graph 6), where technology stimulate economic growth and create conditions for human capacities. Women are gaining a more important role in university training, economic participation, and innovation. Together with men they are able to create a sustainable future.
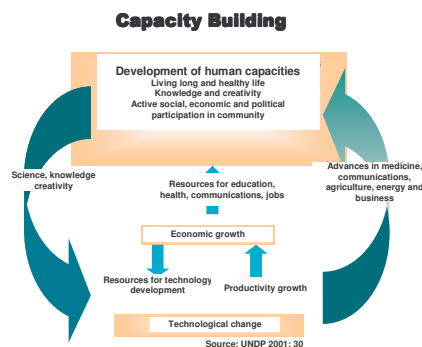
6.   Business Potential

Multiple feminist approaches reject essentialism of some post-modernist views or epistemic privileges. The critical advance of women's epistemology lies in its "logic of discovery" (Harding 1991: 56) where "marginalized lives provide the scientific problems and the research agendas" (Harding 1991: 62). Without doubts, there is a potential for combating marginalization with a bottom-up perspective, instead of a simple top-down strategy. Anyone, men and women with sensitivity, can engage in the problem systematizing process (Rodriguez, 1989). Freire's methodology of liberation of the oppressed (1998) permits the generation of knowledge by discovering local interests and values. He promoted a non-dominant perspective through learning from the daily situation. He was aware to include economic, administrative and cultural aspect in his liberation process.

6.1.Micro-credit

Micro-credit is crucial for poor people unable to access the formal bank system. An example brings a complex emergency management in three southern states of Mexico: Campeche, Quintana Roo and Chiapas starting in 1982[7]. The project was territorially well integrated and relied on the creation of mini-entrepreneur mentality, able to improve livelihood and create jobs for both, Mexicans and refugees. The model was based on self-reliance and business efficiency. Common cultural identity was created through orchard development among women being refugees and natives. The common cultural history (Maya indigenous) and the suffering of genocide established a fertile ground for collective work (graph 7).

Graph 7   Model of self-reliant entrepreuneurship
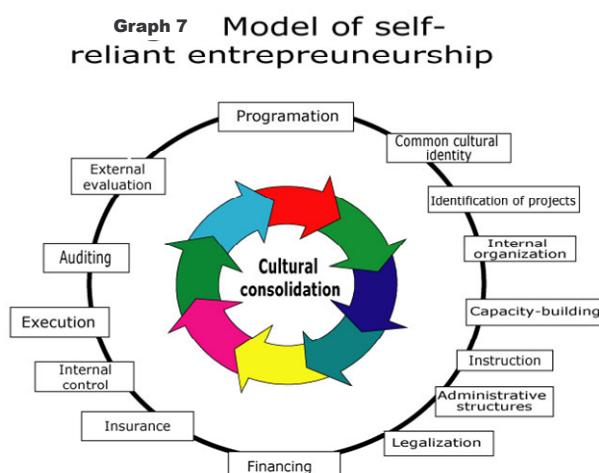
Initially, international support for the Guatemalan refugees had created zeal and envy among some Mexicans, while on the refuges side they feared to be deported. They also had to overcome the traumata of the war and the uncertainty, which blocked a self-reliant behaviour. Once positive links between both communities were consolidated, a

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[7] Refugees from Guatemala were resettled from the border line of Guatemala to safer places in these three southern states. Getting the option to integrate definitively in Mexico, the European Union, UNHCR and the Mexican government through COMAR (the nation commission attending refugees) developed in close cooperation with the local population an ambitious micro-regional integration program. After many failed former development projects, a long-term effort named PAID 1 (*Project of Support for the Definitive Integration in the States of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Chiapas*) was launched in 1997 using a participatory methodology.

jointly defined regional development process started for these four micro-regions including eight municipalities: seven former refugee camps and 15 villages with 141,307 inhabitants; 26,729 Guatemalans and 114, 578 Mexicans, 24% of them monolingual indigenous. After a successful process of training of local participants, women and men in administration, saving practices, check-book management, economic rationality of investment, as well as in auditing and reinvestment, the program started with great success. Advised and trained by international experts and local government officials, they planted 454,594 hectares.

The success was in a model of free association for business (cash crop production, agriculture, pork farm, bakeries, dress-making, grocery stores, etc.), reinforced by systematic training of participants. From the beginning, as it was their own money, they paid back in time credits and insured their crops, threatened by disasters. The new model was based on a collective learning process of co-generation and cooperation with common interests. During this process the dignity among the participants grew as well as their sense of responsibility. Their proper decision-making for productive process implied some risks and they learnt to be aware. From 41 created groups 16 decided to promote a legal constitution. The rest of the community and the neighbouring villages observed this progress and soon they joined the society or created their own association[8].

6.2. Saving

The basic process of capital accumulation is financial management and proper saving. A cooperation for dresses started with 30 members, 100 pesos proper capital and a saving policy of one peso/day/person. Together with a transparent financial management, reinvestment and a risk capital of 30,000 pesos from European Union, after six year the cooperative owns more than 5 million pesos (see graph 7). All their members have improved their lifestyle and houses. Children live in clean and healthy conditions have drinking water inside their houses, school breakfast and get lunch in a common kitchen organized by a group of women.

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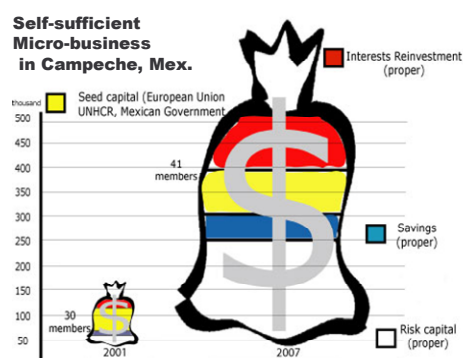
[8] These positive experiences spread over the whole state of Campeche. 9,600 ha from Mexicans and Guatemalans rain-fed and forests plots were associated with 9,000 ha from the Mennonites, establishing an area of 18,600 ha of an UMA (*Unity of Management for Conservation of Wild Life)* for the conservation and rational management of deers (v*endado cola blanca*), of special wild turkeys (*pavo ocelados*) and other threatened species though special hunting permissions. Ecotourism and controlled hunting brought income, new jobs and better life conditions, together with handicrafts and jewelry, which are sold to the visitors and the regional market. The threatened animals growth and people cared about their health and environmental conditions, reforesting the area with native species.

Similar processes of saving, reinvestment, popular economy or economy of solidarity (Cadena 2004, 2005) are reported by MST, the Landless Peasant Movement in Brazil, which accounts today with more than three million affiliates and friends. They built up a proper primary, secondary and high school, teacher training and peasant university system, where their members and peasants interested gets educated in an integral model of self-reliant liberation process. They have learned that economic and social limits can be surmounted by political organization. Today this independent organization guarantees the biggest country in Latin America three of the five basic food items[9]. Their model of horizontal integration of agriculture and livestock assure a sustainable agricultural mode of production. The vertical integration reduces cost, permits green agricultures and maintains and recovers highly polluted soils and water. For the rest of the world this model of micro-business and self-sufficient and sustainable food sovereignty, creates dignified livelihood for marginal social group, and represents a feasible alternative for regions and countries threatened by poverty and environmental stress.

6.3. Interchange

Solidarity has been in traditional and modern societies a mechanism to deal with disasters, crop failing and economic problems. Peasant organizations worldwide are increasingly bypassing the present monetary system and try to avoid the loss of profit due to the unequal trade system. Today, multiple cooperatives exist who exchange directly coffee or tropical fruits against basic crops. The price is fixed by consensus favouring often the weaker. In moment of scarcity, this model helps with bottom-up solidarity to overcome the temporary miss-harvest. In better years, the support is returned often by gifts and a type of ceremonial-rent. During the economic crisis in Argentina, most of unemployed professionals and workers started to interchange their ability with others maintaining not only factories functioning, but offering also basic maintenance of services without using money or payment. Also in this case the consensual agreement was the base of interchange and the exchanges were not only related to food production but to all kind of services.

Similar processes can be found with environmental services, where in promoting equity and efficiency women play a crucial role. Climate change and social crises are and will further affect water disposal, on both the demand and the offer side (see graph 8). Pollution limits the quantity and quality of water. To avoid greater scarcity, an integration of environmental services, maintenance of infrastructure, and management of basin, with resource care and social accepted tariffs could reduce conflicts on the demand side and maintain the existing offer. For greater social justice, poor people could benefit from cross-social subsidies. On the demand side, agriculture, industry and households are using saving technologies. Special education, laws and the establishment of a long-term culture of water would be able to change habits of persons and productive systems. Campaigns for reduction of water, reuse and recycling improve short-term sustainability. Conflicts among water use could be resolved through consensual agreements, where government, society and business define collectively the process of development, caring about vulnerable groups and water saving technologies. Political participation and transparent administration is able to deal in sustainable way

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[9] In this moment more than 600,000 landless peasants are occupying unproductive land from landlords and are struggling to transform it into productive cooperatives.

with population growth, new hygienic demands and urbanization. Therefore, life quality, jobs and nonviolent conflict resolution can guarantee a professional water provision.

Efficiency and Equity with Natural Resources

Fuente: Oswald y Sandoval, 2006
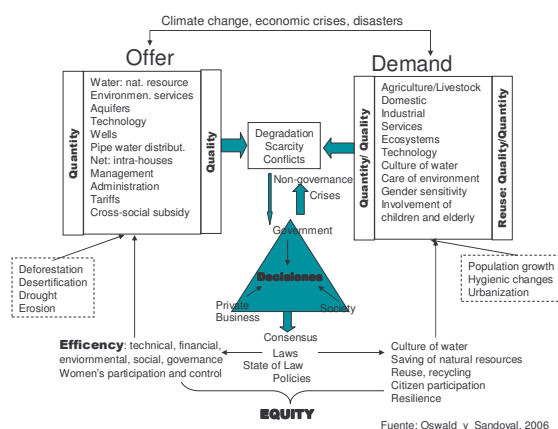
However, difficult environmental conditions can generate greater scarcity, obliging government, society and business to take more drastic decisions, to create laws and to reinforce them in order to avoid conflicts and future crises. To avoid missing governance and possible survival dilemma, resilience-building practices, saving and recycling technologies and technical and financial efficiency creates a complex system of water supply and distribution, where sanitation and reuse are crucial. In all these processes women are the most affected, but also the social group able to promote consensus among different opinions and to maintain the global interest of the community above the particular ones of business and agriculture.

7.   Conclusions: Sustainable Decision Making Processes

Gender security, related to human and environmental security creates a HUGE (Human, Gender and Environmental Security) security. It suggests a widened concept of gender that could include other vulnerable groups such as children, elders, indigenous and other minorities with a human-centred focus on environmental security challenges, peace-building and gender equity (Oswald 2001, 2004, 2006). This global concept is considering livelihood, food security, health care, energy saving, public security, education and cultural diversity (Stephenson 1992). The HUGE concept analyzes the violent and exclusive structures within the family and society, questioning the existing process of social representation-building and traditional role assignation between genders. It focuses on overcoming the consolidated gender discrimination, widening the narrow male-female relationship. It also reorients 'human security' to defeat discrimination through specific governmental policies, institution building and legal reinforcements by stimulating political and social participation of women, young and elders (Jelin 1998; Kaji' 2001).

It includes 'environmental security' concerns where healthy environment and resilience-building for highly vulnerable groups can reduce risk impacts (Brauch 2003, Dalby 2007; Cardona 2008). A varied world implies political and cultural diversity, able to generate nonviolent conflict resolution processes by reinforcing peace-building in conflict-prone regions (Ameglio 2004). In synthesis, HUGE integrates social, environmental, human, and cultural and identity concerns, offering solidarity, resilience, peace-

building and equity in an increasingly insecure and risky world (UNEP 2000-2006). The trans-radical level of expansion of HUGE is related to the upcoming theories of ecofeminism, eco-indigenism, cultural resistance, and economy of solidarity, linked up with a different model of masculinity (Jiménez/Tena 2007). In all these approaches the traditional social identity patterns are challenged in a holistic way, reinforced by social equality, environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, gender equity and nonviolent conflict resolution. As a result, an integrated process of capacity building and bottom-up reinforcement of gender, with dignified employment are locally created and conflicts, migration and informal and illegal labour are reduced. Solidarity and gift-economy (Vaughan 1997, 2004) are strengthening the most vulnerable with resilience capacities.

Complex social networks sustain humans in normal times. Human vulnerabilities during crises, scarcity, conflicts and disaster bring disruption or failure of these networks. Gender analysis will lend a more nuanced understanding of women as social beings aligning in networks of family and community. More accurate understanding and training will facilitate network support that underlies a resilient society: women educate, care, reproduce historical memory, cultural background, give material family sustenance and often maintain political stability.

Active female participation reduces social vulnerability, improves resilience to crises, increases survival of communities, and reduces gender violence and insecurity. Therefore a central challenge for policy is to make gender work at home, in economy and in the community more visible and more valued. By including the process of social identity and representation these efforts get oriented to empower women and improve not only their livelihood, but that of the whole community.

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