

**The Global Financial Crisis and Caribbean
Women: A Gender Analysis of Regional Policy
Responses**

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Abstract

The Global financial crisis affecting the economies of the world since summer of 2008 has had serious social effects. There has been much concern with the impact of the crisis on the poor and gains made towards improving social development (including progress towards the millennium development goals in the economic South). Any analysis of the true impact of the financial crisis, we argue, needs to include a gendered impact assessment of the social and economic effects in order for responses to be adequately designed and effectively target populations. This assessment was facilitated by the use of secondary data from different Caribbean countries including employment data, policy responses from a national, regional and global level and informal interviews. Women and men are both affected by the crisis but in different ways. Caribbean Women are affected due the specific characteristics of the sexual division of labour in the region for example their large representation in service sectors, higher unemployment rates and dependence on remittances, areas largely affected by the crisis. However, a comprehensive gender assessment remains hindered by the lack of gender disaggregated data throughout the region. We conclude therefore with a critique of the responses to date, a call for empirical data and with recommendations for a more gender sensitive response to the global financial crisis.

1. *The Crisis and the Caribbean*

The global financial crisis which became widely apparent in mid 2008 was in many ways the result of the preceding years of neo-liberal economic dominance and had as its underlying causes "... systematic fragilities and imbalances that contributed to the inadequate functioning of the global economy", failures in financial regulation at the global level as well as inadequate monitoring of the world financial system. (UN General Assembly 2009: 3-4). According to the General Assembly these regulatory failures were compounded by over-reliance on market self-regulation and lack of transparency which led to excessive risk taking and high levels of consumption fueled by easy credit and inflated asset prices (UN General Assembly 2009: 3-4).

The effect of this Crisis on Caribbean economies was instant. Due to the same reasons of poor regulation, supervising and monitoring established national and regional firms such as the Stanford Bank of Antigua and Barbuda and the C.L. Financial Group and CLICO Insurance collapsed. This affected the savings, pensions and other insurance benefits of ordinary women and men. We note that large numbers of women were employed at various levels of these institutions, with a minority enjoying the exorbitant wage packages paid to the senior management of these firms. There has also been a domino effect in other finance and insurance companies tied to the CL Financial group throughout the Caribbean, from Guyana to Jamaica.

The Monetary Council for the ECCB² noted a tightening of the monetary and credit conditions in the ECCU³ at the end of the 2008 cycle⁴ and that the growth prospects for the ECCU economies would continue to manifest the impact of these unfolding global developments affecting the economic viability of major trading partner countries (Lesroy Williams, 2009). From

² Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB)

³ Eastern Caribbean Currency Union

⁴ Comment made by Minister of Finance of Antigua and Barbuda, Dr. Errol Cort

the onset there were job losses in telecommunications, hotel and tourism, manufacturing and media throughout the region, bauxite production in Jamaica and energy and alumina in Trinidad and Tobago.

CARICOM ministers addressing the crisis in late 2008 noted the effect on major investment projects in Jamaica, Bahamas, St. Lucia, Anguilla and Grenada, warning that “tighter credit conditions and lower growth will also negatively affect government’s revenue and ultimately its ability to meet policy goals including improved health services, better education and safety nets for the vulnerable...”⁵ (*Caribbeanwriter*, 2009).

In 2009, the recession brought on by the crisis deepened and many projected a slow recovery in 2010. According to the Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance⁶ (CCMF) Latin America and the Caribbean economies collectively declined by 1.7 % while the developed world was estimated to have shrunk by 3.6 per cent (CCMF 2010: 1). Referencing a UNECLAC report, the Centre noted that although the region experienced a slump in 2009, “... the region seems to be escaping the grip of recession as growth picked up in the second half of the year”. The impact of the Crisis on Caribbean economies includes a slump in major exporting sectors, declining trade flows, declining commodity prices, reduced income from remittances and tourism and a drastic fall in foreign direct investment. Private consumption and investment also declined (CCMF 2010: 1).

According to ECLAC, trade in Latin America and the Caribbean was forecast to drop by 13 % in 2009, surpassing the 10% decline in world trade (CCMF September 2009: 3). The three major economies of the Anglophone Caribbean reflected similar economic effects. By the second quarter of 2009, the Jamaican economy had contracted between 3.5 percent and 4.5 percent

⁵ Comment made by Prime Minister of Grenada Tillman Thomas

⁶ The CCMF is monitoring the economic impact of the crisis on behalf of the CARICOM Task force

(CCMF September 2009:1). The Jamaican economy also shrank by 0.6 per cent in the fiscal year of 2009 (CCMF May 2009: 5). The Planning institute of Jamaica reported that in 2009 real GDP across the spectrum fell 3.9 percent⁷ (CCMF September 2009: 3).

Similarly of Barbados, the Barbados Nation of September 14 reported that the economy had contracted up to 3 % by June 2009 while unemployment had fallen to 9.9% from 10.% at the end of March 2009 (CCMF October 2009:1-2). The 2009 Barbados budget reported a fall in GDP of 2.8 percent in the first quarter of 2009 which was attributed to a decline in tourism. This resulted in a reduction in output in both traded and non-traded sectors (CCMF June 2009: 3).

In Trinidad and Tobago the economy contracted by 3.3 per cent in the 1st quarter of 2009, while between October 2008 and March 2009 the country's economic growth fell by more than four percent, and retail sales contracted by 7.8 percent⁸ (CCMF September 2009:1 and 3). Trinidad and Tobago lost three major energy sector investors, losing US185 million combined in investment revenues (CCMF September 2009). Trinidad and Tobago's economic growth for 2010 is forecast at 2 percent⁹ (CCMF October 2009: 2).

The CCMF also noted that tourism arrivals are down throughout the Region except for Jamaica, and that the decline in tourism in the region reflects the global decline in tourist industry.

⁷ Reported in Jamaica Gleaner 19 August 2009

⁸ Express of August 5th and 6th reported

⁹ CNN report 9 September 2009

2. Gendered Impact of the Crisis in the Caribbean

The global financial crisis appears to have negatively impacted employment in the Caribbean. Women as well as men have suffered job losses. This development has social implications. Historically in the Caribbean region women's wage-earning and responsibility for household and family income has been well documented (Reddock, 1994; Massiah, 1993; Safa 1990¹⁰). This has been particularly important for the survival of families, as well as gains towards social development in communities and countries of the region. With employment in tourism and public sector workers' wages being affected by the crisis (these are traditionally highly inclusive of women workers), we advocate monitoring the true developmental impact of the crisis on families and communities.

The ILO confirms that "workers in tourism and related industries are on the front lines of the crisis, with Caribbean economies particularly exposed in this regard. Unemployment is rising in the region: the current projection is that the total number of unemployed will rise between 22.6 million and 25.7 million in 2009 (ILO May 2009: 20).

Unemployment

The crisis threatens the positive trend in employment of recent years for men and women in the service sector (tourism, finance, telecommunications) and further exacerbates the declining employment in industry and agriculture (See table 1 below for data on pre crisis levels of unemployment for Caribbean countries).

¹⁰ Quoted in Resource Sustainability and Caribbean development edited by Duncan F.M. McGregor, David Barker, and Sally Loyd Evans, Kingston Jamaica: The Press: University of the West Indies 1998

Table 1: Human Development and Male/Female Economic Activity in Selected Caribbean Countries using 2005 data

HDI Rank	Country	GDP per capita	Unemployment rate			Employment by economic activity (2005)					
			Unemployed persons (thousands) 1996-2005	Total (% of labour force) 1996-2005	Female (% of labour force) 1996-2005	Agriculture		Industry		Services	
						Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
31	Barbados	17,297	14	9.8	118	3	4	8	26	78	62
49	Bahamas	18,380	18	10.2	122	(.)	6	5	30	94	64
51	Cuba	6,000	88	1.9	129	10	28	14	23	76	50
54	St. Kitts and Nevis	13,307	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
57	Antigua & Barbuda	12,500	-	-	-	3 (c)	5 (c)	7 (c)	29 (c)	87 (c)	63 (c)
59	Trinidad and Tobago	14,603	50	8.0	190	2	10	14	37	84	53
71	Dominica	6,393	3	11.0	80	14	41	10	24	72	40
72	St. Lucia	6,707	13	16.4	164	9	14	11	23	62	45
79	Dominican Republic	8,217	716	17.9	254	2	23	15	24	83	53
80	Belize	7,109	12	11.0	230	6	37	12	19	83	44
82	Grenada	7,843				10	17	12	32	77	46
83	Suriname	7,722	12	14.0	200	2	8	1	22	97	64
93	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	6,568				8	27	72	46		
97	Guyana	4,508	-	-	-	16	34	20	24	61	42
101	Jamaica	4,291	130	10.9	207	9	25	5	27	86	49
146	Haiti	1,663	-	-	-	37	63	6	15	57	23

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2007/2008 Table 21 Unemployment in informal work in non-OECD countries, pp. 229-301, Table 31 Gender inequality in economic activity pp 338-341 and Table 1 Human Development Index pp 229-232.

In 2008 the ILO predicted a scenario of rapidly increasing unemployment, which is expected to worsen in 2009 (Mohideen, 2009). We can therefore expect that since women are the majority of low-wage employees in the services sector, they would be among those losing their jobs¹¹. Job losses in industry in this crisis adversely affect men.

Case of Jamaica¹²

Unemployment brought on by the crisis in Jamaica as seen from the examples below shows a concentration in industry which is male dominated and tourism which is female dominated.

- **As many as 30, 000 Jamaicans have lost their jobs in this crisis reports the Jamaica Gleaner of September 9 2009.**
- **900 out of 1000 bauxite workers are to receive a pay out from Alpart totaling US\$25 million (J\$2.2 billion)**
- **320 staff of Rose Hall Jamaica hotel to be made redundant reports Jamaica Gleaner of August 28.**
- **55 lost jobs at Kingston Wharves between October 2008 and September 2009; 100 workers to be made redundant at Kingston Container terminal, report Jamaica Gleaner of September 21.**
- **55 lost jobs at Kingston Wharves between October 2008 and September 2009 ; 100 workers to be made redundant at Kingston Container terminal, report Jamaica Gleaner**
- **52 retrenched from Sagicor Jamaica with 65 more pending for Cayman and Jamaica**
- **880 of the 1,119 workers of Jamaica based West Indies Alumina Co. to be suspended but kept on pay roll working reduced hours on reduced pay reports CNN (2nd April 2009)**

¹¹ Table 1 shows data on unemployment by sex in CARICOM countries for the period 1996-2005. Women appear to have higher rates. The table also shows data on employment by sector by sex this shows the large representation of women in the service sector (particularly tourism) which is being adversely affected by the crisis.

¹² Taken from CCMF May 2009: 4 and 5 and CCMF October 2009:2

Women are among the migrants most adversely affected by the crisis in the North, losing their jobs and their homes (mortgages), and in some cases having to return home. ¹³ Trinidad and Tobago's overall unemployment rate reached 5.8% in the third quarter of 2009 according to CSO¹⁴ (CCMF January 2010: 3). Grenada's unemployment climbed to 24 percent and the current Finance Minister expects it to be as high as 30 percent at the end of 2009 (Oscar Ramjet February 2009).

Of particular concern in the recession, according to the ILO is the apparent increase in vulnerable employment by the end of 2008. The ILO warns that "for many who manage to keep a job, earnings and other conditions of employment will deteriorate" (ILO 2009:6).

Poverty

The impact of the crisis on employment has implications for poverty and raises concerns for increased incidence of working poor. ILO reported that prior to the onset of the crisis, "... more than 1.2 billion workers around the world were living with their families in poverty..." (ILO May 2009: 5). The Caribbean is characteristic of 'working poor' in addition to high incidence of poverty among female headed households. With respect to global concerns for poverty, the Caribbean was on track to meeting MDG 1 which speaks to poverty and hunger. The financial crisis compounded by the global food crisis needs to be monitored for potential threats to increasing incidence of hunger in the Caribbean.

¹³ Caribbean Affairs

¹⁴ Reported in Trinidad Guardian December 30 2009

Remittances and Migration

The recession in the US reduces the opportunities for migrant labour (including women) thereby affecting remittances. It also reduces migration as an option to relieve the region's economic stresses. This has effects both for households and the economies as a whole as remittances comprise significant components of national income in many countries of the region for example, up to or over 12% in Guyana, Haiti and Jamaica) (McClatchy, 2009). Reduced remittances could have various effects on children and other dependents of migrants and those taking care of them, causing impoverishment for the households, malnutrition, school absenteeism, ill-treatment of children by care-givers etc.

Remittances for Latin America and Caribbean for 2009 are expected to decline by 4 million from 2008 figures; totaling \$64 million (CCMF July 2009: 3). It has been suggested though that as Caribbean migrants are not employed in the sectors affected in the early stages of the crisis, reduced remittances may not be immediate as in Latin America¹⁵. The Inter American Development Bank (IDB) foresees that remittance flows as well as the viability of migration as an economic option will be restored when the global economy recovers.¹⁶

In the case of Jamaica, the Gleaner of August 14 2009 reported that remittance inflows had dropped to close to 16 per cent since January of that year (CCMF September 2009: 3). There was also a drop of 39 per cent in Domestic cargo arriving at Kingston container Terminal (compared to January 2008) and 35 % (compared to February 2008).

In Guyana remittances were down in the first quarter of 2008 while in Haiti, remittance flows increased for the first quarter of 2009 but at a slower pace than for the same period in 2008 (CCMF June 2009:1).

¹⁵ Sentiments expressed Dr. Wesley Hughes PIOJ Jamaica (SC Admin 2008)

¹⁶ IDB 2008

Decent Work and Worker's Rights and Income Inequality

Alarming, some organisations are using this crisis to 'rationalize' staff even where they have not yet been directly affected by the Crisis. Trade unions in Trinidad and Tobago noted in 2009 the emerging pattern where pregnant women were the first to go¹⁷. This is in direct contravention of the Maternity Leave Act of that country. Additionally, persons have been subject to reduced working hours per week with simultaneous salary cuts.

This issue of workers rights and gender inequality was highlighted at the International Trade Union Confederation in Brussels in October 2009. The Women's delegation reported that the crisis is 'exacerbating inequalities' and warned that in their current state Financial Institutions "... are no longer able or willing to, invest enough in public services or care work, two sectors where the workforce is largely female" (World Financial Crisis Blog 2009).

The ILO report reconfirms that gender inequality remains an issue within labour markets globally, informing that it was estimated that 6.3 % of the world's female labour force was not working but looking for work in 2008 (an increase of .3 % from 2007 data). For males that figure stood at 5.9% (an increase of .3% from 2007 data (ILO 2009:6). In addition, working poverty, vulnerable employment and unemployment were beginning to rise as the effects of economic downturn spread (ILO 2009:6).

The gender gap in labour force participation rates and employment is more stark and pronounced. Large numbers of women are not even part of the labour force. Warning about increases in vulnerable employment, ILO projected three scenarios for vulnerable employment rates, with rates rising more for males than females except in Latin America and the Caribbean where "... a more significant impact on vulnerable employment rate is worse for women than for men" (ILO 2009: 31). Vulnerable employment

¹⁷ Source: Telephone interview with National Workers Union in Trinidad and Tobago, March 10, 2009.

includes unsecure jobs both in terms of lacking formal contracts and wage agreements, lack of access to or inability to unionize as well as exposure to indecent working conditions.

Social Protection and Public Sector Investment Programmes

Although most Caribbean governments pledged against cuts in social sector expenditure, we remain concerned that reduced revenue for Caribbean states can in the long run potentially affect education, school meals, public transportation, public health, social welfare payments etc. We also need to be wary of reduced International Assistance as agencies and their programmes in health education face cuts. For example the Global fund for HIV/AIDS, and CRN + (Caribbean Regional Network Plus- and Caribbean Regional Network for Persons Living with HIV and AIDS) was in early 2009 facing financial challenges threatening continued operation due to notably reduced commercial lending.

However, throughout the region, many governments show their commitment to social programmes having increased spending for pensions, poverty assistance, and disability benefits. Some countries have training programmes for the newly unemployed or persons who need more secure employment¹⁸.

¹⁸ See table 2 below.

3. The Region's response to and recovery from the global Financial Crisis Of 2008

Regional governments have had to review their budgets (Trinidad and Tobago), take salary cuts (10 % for Jamaican parliamentarians), and freeze salary increases. In the case of St. Lucia, the proposed wage freeze has resulted in disputes between the Government and two major trade unions. Barbados' Prime Minister Thompson "assured that all caution will be taken to ensure that employment is not reduced while special attention will be given to protecting the essential social services".¹⁹ (See Table 2 below for more examples).

Budgets

Jamaica and St. Lucia's budget of April 2009 both reflected "adjustments to the income tax system including an increase in personal income tax threshold". This is expected to "provide relief to lower income earners and increasing equity in the tax systems" (CCMF May 2009: 4). St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2009 budget outlines specific interventions in social welfare on behalf of the poor.²⁰

St. Lucia implemented "full pass through pricing mechanism for fuel and increase in taxes on cigarettes and alcohol", and plans to implement VAT after April 2010 and establish a larger Tax payer office. (CCMF May 2009: 4)

The ECCB's monetary council at its regional meeting in February 2009, agreed on measures to mitigate the impact of the global economic downturn. They agreed to ensure the stability of the currency; to

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ The Vincent and the Grenadines 2009 Budget <http://www.gov.vc/govt/Files/Budget%20Address%202009%20.pdf>

implement public sector investment programmes “in areas that would generate the greatest economic benefits in the short term to provide the necessary stimulus in the recovery effort; [and] social safety nets to protect the most vulnerable groups” (Lesroy Williams, 2009). In a similar vein CARICOM has set up a Regional Task Force on Policy Implications of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis to monitor the impact of the crisis.²¹

In 2009, the Curacao’s Women’s desk confirms the gendered impact of the crisis as well as inadequate protection for women by early policy responses. The impact of the financial crisis on Curacao women includes an increase in requests for food boxes; more women are reporting domestic violence caused by the financial crisis; inability to pay child care; increased employment on the black market and more. They have written a paper identifying the social impact of the crises to present to the Government.²² The aim is to highlight the costly and complex problem and to urge the government to take action. Also in the OECS, tourism ministers came together in December 2008 to assess implications of declining tourism (OECS 2008).

IMF

In light of much concern expressed over a return to IMF borrowing, the IMF claims to have “... overhauled its concessionary facilities for the poorest countries”. This change allows Caribbean countries borrowing from the IMF to use these funds to “finance government expenditures, something which the Fund expressly forbade before the change in policy” (CCMF October 2009: 1).

World Bank

The Bank has trebled lending to US 100 billion and funds have been accessed by various countries. It has also fast tracked US \$2 billion of

²¹ Table 2 gives more examples of responses to the crisis at the national, regional and international level.

²² E-mail response to Query Geraldine Archer, CAFRA National Representative

funding via its subsidiary International Development Association, directed towards the poorest countries. Those who have accessed this fund include Haiti, Guyana and four OECS countries (CCMF October 2009:1).

Jamaica's reforms for the national education system, a capacity building project is to be supported by a US \$16 million loan from the World Bank (CCMF January 2010): 2).

Regional Banks

According to Mr. Suresh Sookoo of RBTT Financial, financial losses to regional banks were minimal and hence no serious effects have been experienced especially since "they had not followed international banks into the market for derivatives and secondary instruments" (CCMF October 2009:1).

Other Projects

Suriname is to address its problem of low-quality housing as well as the lack of affordable housing for low income groups. This initiative is to be funded by a US\$15 million loan and target about 3, 000 households. (CCMF January 2010: 3).

Antigua has accessed US \$50 million from the regional trade bloc ALBA for the purpose of paying back wages of public employees (CCMF September 2009: 3). The Caribbean Development (CDB) has made available US 4.2 billion to be accessed over a two year period (CCMF May 2009: 3-4).

Tourism

Prospects for the resurgence in the tourism revenues remain dull as the recovery is characterized by “jobless growth” in developed and developing countries.²³ The region depends on these countries for visitors hence reductions in unemployment and increase in spending in these countries need to be substantial before it can impact on tourist arrivals and revenues. Some countries have embarked on aggressive marketing campaigns to lure visitors as many hotels close and workers are sent home. However there is much concern for high end markets as in the current climate of regulation luxury accommodation may lose some its clientele.

Employment

Barbados has employed some job saving measures such as NIS loans through the Unemployment Fund for employers unable to pay salaries and tax waivers on interest and penalties. They have also instituted customs duty concessions for tourism related commercial shipping and boating for companies in operation for 15 years; rebate increase from 15 to 20 percent on excise tax; refund of VAT on building materials for first time home owners and removal of VAT from locally produced art and craft in customs controlled environments (CCMF June 2009:3).

Table 2 below gives more examples of policy action taken on a country level in the Caribbean.

²³ Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance Newsletter: Volume 3, No 1, January 2010: p.1 Data from taken from Livemint.Com, Wall Street journal, November 6 2009

Table 2. Summary Table of responses to the Crisis in the Caribbean Countries with emphasis on Barbados, Jamaica and Select OECS countries

	Country Action
<p>National response</p> <p>Fiscal& Trade</p>	<p>Barbados Central Bank financial education programme introduced since 2008 (money management and personal financial planning);</p> <p>Jamaica: Increased marketing in US for tourism; Budget cuts; Salary cuts and wage freeze; 20% increase in minimum wage; Government to increase public borrowing ceiling from; US\$ 12 billion);</p> <p>Antigua and Barbuda; Elimination of consumption tax on some items (mainly food); Reduction in service charge on certain items;</p> <p>St. Kitts and Nevis: Suspension of common external tariff on 31 food and non-food products ;</p> <p>Dominica: Tariff reductions for selected articles (mainly food items)</p> <p>St. Lucia: Salary cuts and wage freeze; Improving productivity and controlling consumption); Increase in subsidies for flour, rice, sugar; Suspension of common external tariff and consumption tax on nine articles; Number of staple foods and health-related articles subject to price controls increased from 15 to 44;</p> <p>Grenada: Suspension of common external tariff on selected goods</p> <p>St. Vincent and the Grenadines: Review of common external tariff on 31 food and non-food products;</p>
<p>National response</p> <p>Social/ Sectoral Policy</p>	<p>Antigua and Barbuda: Subsidized utilities for pensioners and Pension payments increased;</p> <p>St. Kitts and Nevis: Distribution of 224 acres of land to rural workers for agricultural production; Price controls extended to a larger number of goods ; Revision upwards of minimum wage;</p> <p>Dominica: Social welfare payments increased by 10% (Dominica); Minimum wage increased; Exemption from hospital costs for certain sectors of the population; Increase in school transfer subsidy;</p> <p>Grenada: Free milk programme for families with small children and persons with special needs;</p>

	Country Action
Regional Response	All Caribbean: CARICOM Task force on Policy Implications of the Global Financial and Economic to monitor impact of the crisis and coordinate a response ;
International response	All Caribbean: G20 IMF Fund; Strengthening of UNESCO's Women's Studies and Gender Research Network; IDB US\$90 billion in loans to Latin America and Caribbean Countries for next two years; WB US 100billion made available for lending
International assistance sought	Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines: financial assistance form IMF Exogenous Shocks Facility (ESF);

Source: Caribbean Writer 2009; Caribbean Net News 2009; Mc Clatchy 2009; Caribworldnews 2009; BBC Caribbean News in Brief 2009; UNECLAC 2009.²⁴

These interventions seek to protect the poor and social sector programmes but to date are largely inadequately informed by comprehensive assessments of impact of the crisis. The economic and social impacts of the crisis need to be directly targeted by policy at the household, community and national level. According to the World Bank, (February 2009) effective policy responses to the Global financial Crisis should “build on women’s roles as economic agents”. The Bank also warns that if the effects on women and children are ignored this is likely to result in increased poverty and threats to future development.²⁵

²⁴ UNECLAC’s paper on The Reactions of Latin American and Caribbean Governments to the International Crisis: an overview of policy measures up to 30 January 2009.

²⁵ Impact of financial Crisis on women and Families PREM Gender and Development World Bank, February 2009.

4. Impact of responses on women's lives

To date, the responses to the crisis have come out of agreements and meetings void of participation from women's organizations and of contributions from women economists. Additionally, the policy recommendations to date have not been informed adequately by gender disaggregated data since it is not available.

UNECLAC proposed to set up an observatory to monitor the gendered impact of the crisis. However, it was later decided (mid 2008) that the proposed 'Gender Equality Observatory' which is to be launched in 2010 will not adopt the financial crisis as one of the areas of focus for the observatory. Instead it will monitor issues of gender equality linked to violence against women; women's reproductive health issues; and women's participation in decision making processes. The crisis will be addressed by the Economic Affairs Unit²⁶.

In all likelihood this is not peculiar to Curacao, however analysis of the responses from regional sources, to date, reveal very little acknowledgement of the gendered impact of the crisis. Other women's groups when contacted had no report on action to mitigate the impact of the crisis on women with some admitting to lacking the capacity to do such monitoring or reporting. The Barbados Gender Bureau in December 2009, for example, while acknowledging the lack of capacity for research offered to attempt to 'collate gender disaggregated data on economic indicators.'²⁷

Discussions at the national and regional level of the increased unemployment and likely increases in poverty fail to project or emphasize the differential implications for women and men, boys and girls. Without a deliberate gendered response it is more than likely that targeting of policies to the specific needs may be deficient.

²⁶ Information received from UNECLAC representative in May 2009.

²⁷ Email response from Acting Director, Ms. Patricia Boyce, 15.12.09, Barbados Gender Bureau

We are however concerned about the potential for these measures implemented to date to cushion the effects of the crisis on women, other vulnerable groups and households due to the lack of data and statistics that would facilitate effective targeting. Such responses appear more like a one-size fits all strategy laden with anticipation for a trickledown effect to ensure all vulnerable groups are covered rather than strategic targeting of such groups.

In responding to the crisis CARICOM has set up a Regional Task Force in January 2009. By mid 2009, CARICOM Secretary-General, His Excellency Edwin Carrington have however acknowledged the need for statistics for effective monitoring of its impact. On July 30th a forum on statistics was held in Trinidad and Tobago under the theme “The Urgency of Statistics: Enabling the development in the Caribbean Community”, and “was geared at meeting the needs of the development of a highly effective statistical base to monitor and inform the policies to mitigate the effects of the global financial and economic crisis on the Region” (CARICOM Secretariat July 2009).

5. Towards a framework for assessing the gendered impact of the crisis in the Caribbean

Since the world pounced into action in response to the global financial crisis there have been a myriad of 'alarms' sounding off throughout the economic North and South. Among these has been the need to highlight and monitor the social effects of the collapse of the world financial systems. Women's organizations have however moved to highlight the implications of the social impact of the crisis for women. According to the Association for Women's rights in Development (AWID), one of the startling admissions is that the world is experiencing simultaneous crises, such as the food and energy crisis, climate change, alongside the collapse of the economic, financial and developmental model which we have been acting by, all of which adversely affect women (AWID 2009).

In particular, concern is with the implications for progress made in social development in terms of poverty reduction, increased school attendance and enrolment, employment and access to decent work, maternal health and child health (particularly in the context of the Millennium Development Goals). The women's organisations have added among their concerns "the lack of real commitment to MDG 3 on gender equality" and the "... lack of gender analysis and monitoring in the MDG reviews..." (Tina Wallace 2008).

Since 2008, women's organizations have met on several occasions to assess the impact of the global financial crisis on women and to warn that responses should not be a 'one-size-fit-all' but should specifically target all groups in terms of their peculiar vulnerabilities. Writers on the impact of the crisis on Caribbean women (including UNECLC regional office) have joined the rest of the world in acknowledging the gendered impact of the crisis. The responses of the different Caribbean countries, from the initial

stages of the crisis to the present have made special allowances for social development however since they are largely economic and address macro economic concerns there remain some serious challenges. Our primary concern is that these initial responses failed to adopt gender specific policy directions.

The international organizations taking the lead by holding strategy meetings include Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), AWID- Association for Women's Rights in Development, IGTN- International Gender and Trade Network (bringing gender analysis to trade issues), WIDE- Women in Development Europe, DAWN- Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (bringing gender analysis to micro economics and development), NETRIGHT- Network for Women's Rights in Ghana, FEMNET- African Women's Development and Communication Network, among others. There have also been UN Conferences on the Crisis and advocacy in the form of demonstrations outside G20 meetings.

In the initial stages of the crisis, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), for example, moved to highlight the potential gendered impact of the crisis by drawing attention to its impact "upon the full-realization of human rights of women and girls worldwide."²⁸ They identified likely effects as: unemployment, increase in responsibilities both at work and at home; decrease in income, and potential increase in societal and domestic violence against women.²⁹ Stephanie Seguino (2009) has support these claims extensively in her analysis of the crisis.

One of the primary concerns in the wake of the crisis is the reduced employment and budgetary adjustments throughout the region. The ILO

²⁸ UN Press Release 6 February 2009

²⁹ Ibid

noted a stronger increase in male unemployment in the industrialized economies compared to women in 2008, 1.1 percentage points for men versus 0.8 points for women (ILO 2009:6). It should be noted however that the rates of male employment exceed that of women in every country in the world including in the Anglophone Caribbean region. It should also be noted that social implications of male unemployment and the resultant reduced household income remains a cause for concern for women. This is because history shows that when the state or economy is weak, women bear the social costs disproportionately taking on the burden of healthcare, child care, elderly care and education (AWID 2009). They also note the increasing trend of gender-based violence and criminal violence that have gendered characteristics.

In 2009, AWID advocated that “Women need to take part in fiscal processes and in the broader debates around responses to the crisis as these affect their lives: planning and implementing budgets and dealing with tax policies are just two examples of spaces in which women should be” (AWID August 2009: 3).

Key sources of data for measuring impact of the crisis

Coping Mechanisms and Survival Strategies

There are lessons to be learnt from history about the impact of recession, economic crises and structural adjustment (periods of economic slowdown or contraction in general) on the lives of women. These lessons can inform the indicators selected to monitor the impact of the crisis on Caribbean women, such as assessing survival strategies, since women are affected in different ways and may respond using a variety of strategies.

Recession may force women to enter the labour market in areas such as low-income work and various forms of sex work to replace, a loss of male household income often taking on employment for low wages. At other

times they are forced to exit the work force. Both outcomes contribute to a fall in household income.³⁰ There may also be increased involvement of women in the informal sector. The issue of migration is worth studying as in the past it has been an option available to Caribbean women and men and may not be available in the same way. Regional illegal migration for example seems to be of growing concern providing women with the option of more risky and dangerous employment as sex workers as hinted by the growing number of women found recently in Trinidad and Tobago whose relatively buoyant economy acts as a magnet for wage seekers.

Household Income is also a key indicator of livelihoods survival impacted upon by rising male and female unemployment. For women, it has been observed that “reduction of household incomes under recession may lead to an ‘added worker’ effect, whereby the supply of female labour increases to compensate for loss of real income at household level as male real wages fall and unemployment rises and, possible, men are replaced by women in certain areas of employment to reduce costs” (Baben, 1993: 16).

Involvement in informal labour activity does have potential benefits for the household but there are negative effects. Some of these effects include decreased worker productivity for the public sector workers who try to balance formal jobs and informal income earning activity, as well as additional stresses on family life due to the time spent being involved in informal labour activity. Moser (1992)³¹ has noted also the increased burden of childcare on older female siblings as mothers take on longer work hours.

³⁰ Sally Baben Impact of Recession and Structural Adjustment on Women’s work, December 1993.

³¹ Quoted in Baben 1993.

Methodological challenges

While it is often very easy to map women's responses in times of economic crises and recession, the challenge lies in adequately assessing the impact of the changes in their labour force participation and household income on development. Such assessment requires "longitudinal and systematically gender disaggregated data; time use and time series data, etc. which is often not available (Baben 1993). Data on the rise in women's participation in labour force often leave the researcher to deal with problems of 'accuracy', 'comparability', along with other 'conceptual and collection problems' (Baben 1993). These challenges persist today and also apply to efforts to assess women's unpaid work. Monitoring the impact of the current crisis on household income would therefore have to address these challenges.

In the context of the impact of the current financial crisis on women, the International Labour Organisation advises that "a distinction should be made between the continued disadvantaged position of women in global labour markets, and the immediate impact of the current economic crisis"(ILO 2009:6). They also warn that "access to full and productive employment and decent work is crucial for all, and decent work deficits are the primary cause of poverty and social instability" (ILO 2009:6).

Elements of gender sensitive policy responses

Policy responses to the global financial should therefore manifest an awareness of effects on women's employment and income and how it affects the household. Policies should therefore:

- Operate on the key principle of gender equality in order to "help offset the unequal social and economic burden" (ILO 2009:32).

- Reflect an awareness that “... if men control income, it is less likely to be spent on increasing or improving household food intake, or other welfare enhancing expenditure, than if women control or influence spending” (Baben, 1993: 38).
- Be cognizant of the fact that policies are needed to “facilitate the optimal allocation of women’s labour (from an efficiency perspective)”³² during the crisis and in the recovery period.

Irrespective of methodological and measurement challenges, some concrete observations have been made over time of the situation of women in times of economic slowdown, which cannot be overlooked by policy responses to the crisis. At this juncture in our history, it is important to assess the impact of the crisis on women and men by looking to indicators such as school enrolment and attendance, reduced access to health care, signs of economic disempowerment through reduced access to credit particularly micro credit and increased incidence of crime and violence against women, among others. It is also important to evaluate government budgets for the extent to which they employ gender responsive budgeting practices. We can also observe incidence of reduced child care services in light of its implications for increased involvement for women in the care economy, and the burden of balancing care and paid work.

Table 3 below gives more insight into the type of gender disaggregated data needed for adequate monitoring of the social impacts of the crisis. If informed by such data governments and development institutions can produce gender sensitive policy responses to the global financial crisis.

³² Colier, 1990; Haddad, 1991; Palmer, 1991; Horton et al, 1991 quoted in (Baben, 1993:38).

Table 3. Select indicators and sources of gender disaggregated data for monitoring the gendered impact of the crisis³³

Indicators/ Data needed	Rationale	Methodological challenges/Limitations
Budgets: Annual budgetary expenditure, expected outcomes and real outcomes Gender budget analysis	Identify where there have been cuts and what goals were realized especially in social sectors	Generated annually Absence of gender analysis training in education programmes in Economics, Insurance and Credit Union Training
Financial sector: institutions such as credit unions and insurance companies: gender disaggregated data on access to credit, pension funds and delays in disbursement of funds, patterns of investment, repayment and membership	Pension funds in particular are an indicator of welfare especially as women are living longer than men Information on reasons for seeking credit is important as persons with reduced income or unsecure employment tend to seek credit to get by	Prone to willingness of institutions as they may regard information as sensitive Absence of knowledge, training or awareness in the area of gender analysis
Poverty and Consumption data: including retail sales; access to health services, public assistance; education attendance and enrolment	Increases or decreases in access to health and education are reliable indicators of welfare To inform incidence of hunger and malnutrition and coping strategies for cases where children are pulled out of school to aid in productive activity	Poverty assessments done every 5 years except in the case of Jamaica Consumption needs to be measured against real and constant prices Consumption data available quarterly in developing countries but may only be available annually if household budgetary surveys are conducted Retail sales collected annually Increasing indicators used in qualitative assessment of survival strategies often expensive and not done in the interest of time
Health: sex differences in mortality rates, maternal mortality, infant mortality, causes of death	Reduced access to health care are indicators of reduced income as people often forgo accessing health care on limited income	Mortality data should be readily available annually however Participatory Poverty Assessments are likely to give reasons behind increases or decreases in access to health care
Social Welfare: increased incidence of persons applying or seeking public assistance from governmental and non governmental organizations	Increased incidence of persons on the welfare line points to impact of unemployment and reduced household income on incidence of hunger and poverty	Agencies need system of integrated data management to keep record of applicants, those assisted and those turned away and make it available to researchers
Agricultural output: increases or	These are indicators of survival	Such data is often difficult to access

³³ Informed from analysis of gaps in policy responses, interview with CCMF official associated with monitoring impact of crisis for CARICOM and ECLAC official attached to Economic Affairs Unit involved with monitoring impact of the crisis.

Indicators/ Data needed	Rationale	Methodological challenges/Limitations
decreases in agricultural output domestic consumption of agricultural produce; percentage of land distributed to women and men for agricultural production; land ownership and inheritance trends	strategies that speak to welfare and nutrition Women and men's access to agricultural extension services and land has implications for reducing hunger/nutrition	Data generated needs to be reliable as agricultural production on this level often does not have much impact on the local economy Data often collected for international organizations and not for notional or regional distribution
Formal and informal sector Employment Data: wage index, income data	Job security has implications for pursuit of informal sector employment to monitor changing trends	Income data unreliable and not easily disclosed, Informal sector employment data not available and therefore need to be monitored by regional Governments
Crime and domestic violence: increased incidence of violence against women; homicides due to gender based violence; petty theft and praedial larceny; youth violence; child abandonment; criminal and gang violence	Petty theft often an indicator of survival strategies Tension caused by reduced income likely to result in increased violence in the home Economic hardship likely to lead to child desertion with male children more likely to be deserted Youth violence and gang violence are often signs of the breakdown of the social infrastructure	Most crime data generated serve different ends and may be disguised (e.g. indecent assault may mean rape) as are often collected for different purposes Crisis centers and Law enforcement agencies may regard domestic violence data as sensitive and not be willing to share information
Remittances: qualitative assessments of remittance use (both monetary and material) on a household level; monitor domestic cargo at ports;	Micro level analysis of remittance use will inform of the developmental impact of remittances on lives of women, men and children as well as on local production markets	Data needed would employ focus group methodologies that are time consuming and costly Information often regarded as personal and may not be revealed Public have limited understanding of the developmental impact of remittances Studies should be conducted on both ends –sender and recipient
Care Economy/Women's unpaid work: women's unpaid house work and care work (children, sick, elderly, Persons living with HIV/AIDS in the home and community	This work is an indicator of support for working mothers, welfare of children and community Such work also takes away from productivity in economy if done by educated and skilled women	Often generated using time use surveys which are expensive and time consuming

While there are challenges in obtaining a lot of the data needed to measure the social impact of the crisis, there are moves by regional bodies to address the challenges and gaps. ECLAC plans to work on monitoring

informal sector employment while CARICOM has proposed to work on improving the statistics generating capacity of regional governments. Additionally, ECLAC Gender observatory is putting effort into generating regional data on domestic violence as well as making it readily available online. In instances where such data will be generated for the first time issues of comparability (in terms of pre and post crisis realities) may pose a problem. However such data but can aid in future planning for dealing with economic slowdown.

6. The importance of a Regional and Global gendered Response:

The way forward for a gender response to the crisis involves both regional and global players. With regard to the new economic leadership opportunities from G20 initiatives we acknowledge that the G20 in its final communiqué recognized the human and gender dimension of the crisis and committed to addressing women in plans to create employment, stating:

We will build a fair and family-friendly labour market for both women and men. We will support employment by stimulating growth, investing in education and training, and through active labour market policies, focusing on the most vulnerable. (G20, 2009 PAR 26.).

This commitment addresses work-family conflict to which the ILO is committed. Though aiming to foster global partnerships (especially for the economic South), these recommendations lack clear mechanisms for implementation or even mobilizing governments. Hence it is difficult to see this as a real strategy.

While these recommendations may indirectly benefit Caribbean women, addressing the gendered impact of the crisis will require monitoring by

international institutions as well as regional women's organisations. At present however, women's organisations in the Caribbean have not taken a unified regional response to the crisis. They remain preoccupied with the continuing fallout of the neo-liberal policies e.g. gender and trade issues, the backlash against the movement, inequality, violation of human rights and increases in domestic violence, among other issues. While they may be making statements at the national level, a regional response to the crisis has not yet been formulated.

According to the ILO the time is opportune to "increase the ratification and improve the application of international instruments regarding gender discrimination" (ILO 2009: 32). We should also promote policy responses to promote 'sustainable economic governance'.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This financial crisis has gendered impacts; hence we strongly recommend incorporation of gender analysis in research and data gathering to ensure that the policy prescriptions are equitable and all inclusive. We also advocate for the involvement of women's organisations and gender sensitive institutions in dialogue to resolve crisis. Alongside other progressive NGO's, they should take the lead in crafting alternatives and in coordinating and implementing the response to the crisis in the region.

Disaggregated data on employment from the various sectors is needed to assess the gendered impact, hence governments and women's organisations should support those positioned to generate such data. Also needed is data on declining remittances, remittance use (by monitoring finance flows, domestic cargo and household consumption); increased or decreased agricultural output; gender disaggregated data on informal labour sector participation as well as access to credit particularly micro credit; and access to social services (health {maternal mortality, child

mortality and morbidity}, social assistance and education {attendance and enrolment}).

Regional bodies recommend maintaining expenditure on social policies or public sector investment. This along with human resource development strategies such as training of women to increase skills or competitiveness for employment, are likely to offset the impact of the crisis on women. It is also important that we monitor declining aid and implications for the vulnerable. The entire region also needs to prioritise the revival of the agricultural sector, (focusing on regional food production for local consumption and for export) and support the informal inter-island trade through which mainly women traders transported food across borders.

The lead role of women's organizations will however follow needed revitalization as the movement has experienced a generational decline and transformational politics generally has been weak among young people; the individualism and market orientation of the neo-liberal paradigm has affected collective organizing.

8. Potential future impacts of the crisis

Economists continue to remind us that the recovery from the crisis is long and that those affected will most likely take a while to recover. In light of the statistical and methodological challenges in monitoring the social impact of the crisis, it follows that we may not become truly aware of the social impact of the crisis for the Caribbean until later down on the road to recovery. Support for the vulnerable should therefore be for the long haul. The vulnerable include not only women and children in Haiti, but the rest of the Caribbean who already face disadvantageous access to resources as a result of the crisis³⁴. Serious transformation is also required in the philosophy, organization and practices of the IMF (as well as monitoring of conditionalities and impact of social sectors). For this a global movement

³⁴ They continue to be at risk as recovery from crisis may be long (Prensa Latina 2008)

of women is recommended to monitor and critique IMF conditionalities for the borrowing South as well as monitoring of government commitments to not reducing social sector expenditure.

9. Concrete suggestions to the global arena based on our regional reality

1. The CARICOM Women's desk, regional bilateral agencies e.g. UNIFEM Caribbean Office and Gender Departments throughout the region should document the gendered impacts of the Crisis and use this to influence regional policy through the CARICOM Regional Task Force. Academic institutions should also promote research and teaching of gender analysis methodologies such as gender budgeting and the principles of gender mainstreaming.

2. Girvan describes the Caribbean as being "... at the margins of history and on the floorboards of global decision-making with no place at the table". The G20 proceeds without Caribbean representation to lead the South out of the crisis³⁵. This position of marginality can be addressed by the Women's movements in the region who could strategically position themselves at the forefront of calls by social movements and international agencies to include women and social movements in reshaping the global economy; guaranteeing safety nets and providing social protection. The aim should be to guard against reversing gains in social development particularly employment, poverty reduction, support systems for working parents (especially as some countries return to borrowing from the IMF).

3. The various agencies and task forces set up to monitor the crisis in the Caribbean (CARICOM, ELCAC) need to adopt a real commitment to improve the statistics that inform the policy responses and work towards generating timely gender disaggregated data as well as getting around the hurdles to generate qualitative data on the impact of economic recession at the household level.

³⁵ Girvan April 14, 2009

4. The economic crisis should not shift focus from work on ameliorating the causes and impacts of the threat of climate change to small island states such as the Caribbean. The food crisis and energy crisis should also remain on the agenda. These threats increase challenges for the poor, increasing the social and economic vulnerability of women. Gender mainstreaming should therefore continue to manifest in all policy spheres as the region adopts and maintains a sustainable development agenda (with special support for women's involvement in agricultural food production).

DRAFT

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