Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

Concept Note
DAWN/TWN-Africa Regional Consultation and Training Institute on

"Strengthening Policy Analysis and Advocacy on
Gender, Economic and Environmental Justice in Africa"

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I. Proponents

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
In collaboration with Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Af)

II. Global Context: A Fierce New World & Its Challenges

DAWN has described the first decade of the 21st century as the painful birthing of a "fierce new world" in light of the paradigmatic shifts induced by a run-away neoliberal globalization; a militarized and financialized political economy; a crisis in climate and other natural systems; a deepening food crisis; an energy crisis from fossil-fuel dependence; the decline of the nation-state and the reconfiguration of the geopolitical context.

While governments acknowledge some of these converging crises they have failed to recognize the inter-linkages between them and that at their core lies the unsustainability of the capitalist model of production and consumption. The grossly skewed distribution of wealth and its social and political iniquities, and the domination and destruction of nature have never been more evident to the peoples of developed and developing countries.

These crises have generated heated debates on the restructuring of global governance. Pressures to respond to these challenges in all their complexities have come to preoccupy sovereign nations and the peoples they govern. At the same time, these nations and peoples struggle to uphold values associated with sustainable livelihoods, poverty eradication, human rights promotion, freedom of expression and mobility, respect for identity and sexuality.

DAWN recognizes this developing multilateral terrain as part of a fierce new world that is replete with complicated contradictions, serious fractures, severe backlash, broken promises, and uncertain outcomes for the world's women, especially women from the economic South. There is an urgent need for women's and civil society organizations to critically engage with these debates and advocate strongly for a world where economic and climate justice coincide with gender justice.

Three challenges are highlighted in the global governance debates (see Appendix 1). The **first** challenge is the existence of double standards in the response to the triple crisis of climate, food and finance. An unequal playing field in key policy areas is a major obstacle to coordinated response. The **second** challenge is the search for a sustainable model of economic recovery, growth, and development. The focus on financing climate change mitigation and adaptation is too narrow given the significant resource flows needed for developing countries to shift from high carbon, fossil-fuel energy to low carbon, renewable energy sources; to address the food crisis exacerbated by extreme and frequent climate events, floods, droughts, storms, loss of arable land and biodiversity; and to provide social protection for groups most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including disease, landlessness, migration, poverty, and much more. Thus far solutions to all these challenges have tended to be market- or technology-oriented and driven by corporate interests, which have created new inequalities between the North and the South. The **third** challenge is the inconsistencies between international trade rules (both WTO and regional trade mechanisms) and multilateral environmental agreements.

III. The Africa Context: Gender Dimensions of the Impacts of and Responses to the Triple Crises

3.1. The impacts of the triple crises from a gender perspective

While African (and other developing) countries bore little responsibility for the global crises which mostly originated in the North, the (similarly neo-liberal) policies pursued by African governments over the three decades, and the structural constraints of their economies which were reinforced by those policies, combined to shape how these countries experienced the crisis and the options for facing up to them. Thus, the primary commodity export-dependence of African economies have deepened even further, while many have undergone de-industrialisation and seen stagnating performance of their manufacturing sectors. This has reinforced the inherent vulnerability to external shocks.

In addition, the open trade, investment and financial regimes and policies that these countries have adopted have meant that little of the wealth generated by increased primary commodity production have accrued to the countries. For instance, international reserves accumulated by these countries during the years of export boom proved insufficient protection from significant and persistent current account shocks associated with the drying up of external sources of finance, especially of the scope and scale experienced during the crisis.

The human expression of these structural economic distortions and policy failures of African economies, in particular as they were magnified by the global crises, was defined by unequal relations of power which condition not only the distribution of productive assets and the fruits of production, but also the differences in the impacts of the global crises between the various social groups and men and women within them. The poor, the powerless and the vulnerable social groups - of which women constitute the large majority - thus continue to bear the brunt of the global crises.

Coming on the back of the food, energy and climate crises, the global financial and economic crises have gravely penalised women, as jobs and means of livelihood were lost and the public revenue reduced. As social services had become out of reach of the increased number of impoverished people, and social protection systems had been curtailed by neoliberal policies, women have also become the surrogate safety nets for the families and communities affected by the negative impacts of the triple crises.

As it is well known by now, Africa is one of the world's most vulnerable continents to the effects of climate change, although its contribution to the problem is minimal. Africa contributes less than 3.5 per cent of global emissions of CO_2 and is long-overdue ecological and economic compensation, given the North's direct role in Africa's environmental damage.

At present countries with the highest cumulative historical emissions from over 500 years of inequitable industrialization, through the destruction of nature and the extraction of resources, continue to deny their climate debt and pass the burden of mitigation and adaptation onto developing countries.

In Kenya for instance, at present the negative impacts of climate change cost $0.5 billion per year to the country, which could lose up to three per cent of its $35 billion gross domestic product (GDP) annually by 2030 due to climate change (AU Monitor, 2010). The country is also facing the spread of diseases induced by climate change such as malaria and the movement of wild animals to areas they were not present before, in a context where the country is just emerging from a prolonged drought that curtailed growth and output of strategic sectors such as agriculture, which accounts for nearly a quarter of its GDP.

Against this background, there is still very little awareness about the fact that the effects of climate change and environmental degradation affect women disproportionately because of their crucial dependence on the various ecosystems for their livelihoods as well as for their productive and reproductive roles. These include their crucial role in subsistence farming for food production, which is already gravely hampered by the changes in agro-ecological conditions and increasing water scarcity, as evidenced in the chronic food insecurity in many Eastern and Southern African countries.

3.2. <u>The policy responses to the triple crises from a gender perspective</u>

To a large extent, the ability of governments to respond appropriately to the triple crises is influenced by the approach that they have taken to the definition of the challenges of these global crises. Unfortunately, in this regard, the responses of African governments so far has been wanting.

With regard to the global financial and economic crisis, African governments have moved from an initial, misplaced optimism that their low integration into the global financial systems would insulate them from the worst effects of the financial crisis as it emerged. With global economic activity in unprecedented decline, African governments and policy makers have become concerned with the collapse of export earnings as well as dramatic declines of international capital flows to Africa, including private flows, workers' remittances, and the expected reduction in ODA from traditional donors.

However, in the process governments and policy makers have proceeded as though because the crisis originated in the mistaken models and policies of advanced industrial countries, responses to the crisis does not implicate their own policies. Indeed, many of the initiatives taken by African governments and inter-governmental bodies, besides addressing the short-terms effects of revenue declines and tightening flows, are committed to further pursuit of the policies of reform that they have pursued over the past decades. As a matter of fact, the prevailing polices of unbridled liberalisation of trade, investment, and deregulation have not only shaped the way in which the global crises have been transmitted to Africa. They have also undermined the resilience of many African economies to the trade and financial shocks generated by the crisis.

Even as the 'resilience' of the majority of African countries has recently been hailed by the international financial institutions (IMF, 2010; World Bank, 2010; AfDB, 2010), on the grounds that it is due to their sustained and "sound" (i.e. neoliberal) macroeconomic management and reforms, their 'swift recovery' from the shocks of the global financial and economic crises has been ascertained mainly on the basis of macroeconomic aggregate indicators that tend to conceal the uneven recovery across countries and sectors. Furthermore, these indicators used to demonstrate recovery do not say anything about the real life processes at the micro level of communities, families and individuals.

More importantly, over two decades of neoliberal policies have contributed in overall terms to undermine women's jobs, incomes and other livelihood activities, and have placed heavy burdens on them. A response to the crisis that simply continues the policies of unbridled liberalisation will simply pose a double disadvantage to women and gender equity issues: even as they suffer the disproportionate effects of the on-going crises, the economic policies and conditions which have contributed to their vulnerability are set to be reinforced.

From a gender perspective, the analysis of the counter-cyclical policies adopted by some African countries points to the persistent neglect of issues of class and gender-based power relations in those policies. In Mozambique for instance, women were not part of the inter-ministerial Group for the Monitoring of the International Situation (GASI), and these counter-cyclical policies did not include specific measures that address gender and class issues. As a result, the policy responses had benefited only a small number of women employed in the civil service (Randriamaro, forthcoming), while inequities between men and women had been ignored or even worsened in some cases.

Most importantly, policy responses to the crises in Africa have so far failed to engage with issues of economic structure, and even more so with issues of policy failure. Rather, most of official discussion is dominated by the fundamental tenets of neo-liberalism. This is clearly evidenced in the fact that despite their decision to shift away from the prevailing macroeconomic orthodoxy and "to implement fiscal stimulus measures where appropriate to weather the impact of the global economic downturn", and to use monetary policy to support this fiscal policy (CAG 2009: Declaration of Freetown, August 2009), the African Ministers of Finance were very quick to affirm that they "remain prepared to exit from the countercyclical fiscal stimulus policies as soon as the macroeconomic conditions permit" (CAG 2009).

Therefore, the risk is very real that Africa's specific issues and challenges will be marginalised in the discussions and decisions for reforms at the global level. In addition, African countries will most likely be subject to another double standards, whereby they are constrained to adopt economic measures that other countries reject, and to give up the very instruments of economic management that other economies are now applying and seeking to expand in the wake of the crisis.

Additional challenges are created by the interconnections between finance, food and climate, all of which need urgent attention. These three interconnected challenges are separately addressed in their distinct policy silos, against the backdrop of the continuing lack of political will to take public action on global problems at a global level. The growing distrust of development aid and the sluggish pace of international cooperation on climate change illustrate this critical failure in global governance.

Given this failure, responses to the climate crisis have leaned toward market-based and technological fixes. In a context of declining ODA many African countries entered into so called 'Clean Development Mechanism' (CDM) projects. These market mechanisms – especially carbon trading and offsets – allow Northern corporations and governments generating greenhouse gases to offset their emissions by paying poor countries to store carbon. While the central African rainforest has been a prolific carbon sink for the North's CO2 emissions, the share of CDM financing to Africa continued to be disproportionately low, around 3 per cent of all CDM projects.

These along with other false solutions to climate change, such as geo-engineering, nanotechnology and synthetic biology, are part of capitalism's response to the climate, food and fuel crises. Yet they are not neutral in their design or effect and are likely to increase the existing imbalances between countries, undermine food sovereignty, threaten to appropriate the biological resources and livelihoods of peoples and disrupt the systems of ecological balances for the entire planet.

Resisting the techno-fixes and instead of requesting more CDM carbon trading funds, many civil society groups including the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) are raising climate debt as the optimal financing route. Climate debt addresses the historical responsibility of industrialized countries, that created the climate change crisis, to not only drastically reduce their own emissions but also assume the greatest burden of adaptation and mitigation costs. Securing this financing is a first step toward shifting from a reliance on fossil fuels to renewable energy; transforming African energy, transport, extraction, production, distribution, consumption and disposal systems; and in the process assuring Africa's 'right to development'.

IV. Regional Economic Integration in Africa: Towards Gender, Economic and Environmental Justice?

Regional economic integration in Africa has been a long-standing goal in discussions about economic development in Africa. The on-going global financial and economic crisis has brought renewed attention to the role that regional integration could have played in Africa's ability to withstand global shocks. However there are as many different notions of economic integration as there are protagonists. These vary from at one extreme, the open regionalism promoted within neo-liberal ideology which sees regional integration as a means for the "smoother and gradual integration" of Africa into the global economy; and at the other extreme, the contrasting notion of regional integration as the means through which Africa can disengage from globalisation. In between these, are notions of regional integration which aim to enable Africa engage with the global economy on its own terms.

At the basis of all the different conceptions are contestations about the nature of Africa's economic challenges and the specific issues that need to be addressed for Africa's development. They also have implications for the way in which questions of gender equity are addressed, especially in relation to two issues that are central to any discussion of regional economic integration in Africa in contemporary times: namely (a) structural economic transformation and (b) equity, in particular gender equity. These issues pertain to the questions of the movements of factors of production that routinely form the basis and/or content of discussions of regional economic integration, and point to the urgent need to focus on the substance of economic integration. In this perspective, gender analysis goes beyond issues of political processes, including institutions and participation in decision-making, which should be re-examined and organised in the specific context of the different regional economic integration agendas and processes.

In order to move away from the prevailing approach to gender and regional integration, which tends to consider women as mere victims or beneficiaries that are outside the mainstream regional integration processes, there is need to look with a gender lens at the various ingredients of economic integration as contained in the variety of formulas available on the continent, ranging from the push to full economic union as embodied in groupings such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to the proposed integration of economic sectors as represented by the Community of Sahel-Saharan states; the proposals on facilitating the easing of barriers, the movement of capital and people; and policies that offer a particular incentives or challenges to integration efforts.

There is also need to analyze the ways in which their gender implications are inter-linked with issues of economic justice, particularly as it relates to the key issue of the structural transformation of African economies. Indeed, one of the key lessons learned from the triple crises is that the predominant sources of growth in Africa – relying mainly on primary commodity exports - do not only deplete natural resources. They have also generated an immiserizing growth for many, especially women, whose fate in the post-crisis context hinges on the policy space and commitment of African governments to address the enduring structural weaknesses of their economies, which has existed even before the global economic crisis and prevented the creation of more equitable African societies. With respect to regional integration, the achievement of the inter-linked goals of gender, economic and environmental justice will also depend on their political will to devise approaches to regional economic integration that can best achieve, simultaneously, the twin-goals of structural change of Africa's economies, as well as equity, as the necessary foundations for sustainable economic development in Africa

V. Objectives of the Regional Consultation and Training Institute

- To provide a forum for raising emerging issues and challenges for gender, economic and environmental justice, brought on by the world systemic and multiple crises and their inter-linkages;
- To share information on the range of global and regional responses to the world multiple crises, including new initiatives that challenge hegemonic thinking and systems in finance, trade and monetary, and environmental policymaking;
- To map current measures, mechanisms and programs at national and regional levels in Africa and discuss possibilities, constraints and contradictions that bear on policy space and choices as governments act to mitigate the impact of the multiple, interlinked crises;
- To encourage young feminists and women's rights activists, to increase their engagement in transforming global economic and climate change governance structures and processes toward expanding developing country policy space;
- To build the capacity of participants in policy analysis and advocacy on key gender, economic, and climate justice issues, and their inter-linkages;
- To contribute to policy proposals and social movement activisms toward and during regional and global policy advocacy targets including the UNFCCC COP 16 (Mexico, Nov 29-Dec 10, 2010), Rio+20' Earth Summit (New York, May 2012), UNFCCC COP 17 (South Africa), etc.

VI. Expected Outcomes

- Increased number of African policymakers, academics and women's rights activists equipped with a better understanding of the inter-linkages between gender, economic and climate justice;
- Increased preparedness of African policymakers, academics and women's rights activists for effective advocacy engagement in regional and global policy processes;

- Increased intergenerational capacities in Southern women's movements, through an increased number of African young feminist analysts and advocates actively participating in DAWN's DTI/RTI network.

VII. Impact

- Sharper analysis and advocacy by participants on the equity and gender equality dimensions of technical policy prescriptions, using a DAWN inter-linkages perspective.
- Enhanced global advocacy through enriched collaboration on analysis and advocacy among key actors in the economic south.
- Stronger learning and generative capacities of the global network of young women's rights activists equipped with DAWN's inter-linkages analysis and engaged in advocacy.

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APPENDIX 1:

Discussion Note on the Triple Crisis

1. Double Standards in Triple Crisis Response

The current global crisis is so severe and encompasses so many areas – finance, climate, food, energy – that countries have been forced, willy-nilly, to coordinate with each other. The question is who has benefited from such coordination? What about the most vulnerable, especially those countries that already faced severe fiscal constraints even before these converging crises? How much have they been helped by the collective actions taken? Sadly, the responses thus far at the international level point to the existence of **double standards in all key policy areas – fiscal policy, trade policy, and monetary / liquidity policy.**

One global inequality is the **fiscal stimulus available to developed countries while developing countries face fiscal constraints** and are often advised by creditor institutions and aid-giving countries, to use fiscal discipline and keep low budget deficits. In the area of international trade, developed countries have been able to subsidize industries that are unable to cope with the recession while developing countries can only use temporary defensive measures, such as increases in tariffs, use of non-tariff measures, or other trade-restrictive measures. Finally, access to liquidity is also differentiated. Member countries of the G20 have identified the possibility of using Special Drawing Rights allocations as a way of shoring up international reserves balances. Developing countries, however, face credit constraints in the commercial markets or with their external debt burdens.

Given the challenges being presented by a global environment that perpetuates an unequal playing field, countries and peoples of the South may use the crisis as **an opportunity for re-imagining international financial, trade and monetary systems and architectures** that are cognizant of global inequalities and which respect policy space for all countries. In particular, the global crisis has highlighted the need for regional (South-South cooperation) and national responses that not only focus on the reduction of inequalities, including those based on gender, race, ethnicities, sexuality, among others, but also contribute to breaking down the hegemonic institutions, systems and structures in the current unjust architecture.

2. Financing Development with Climate Justice and Women's Empowerment

Additional challenges are created by the **interconnections between finance, food and climate,** all of which need urgent attention. These three interconnected challenges are separately **addressed in their distinct policy silos**, against the backdrop of the continuing lack of political will to take public action on global problems at a global level. The growing distrust of development aid and the sluggish pace of international cooperation on climate change illustrate this critical failure in global governance.

<u>Macroeconomic Policies</u>

Macroeconomic policy determines the allocation of resources in the economy. For instance, the financial flows that the South needs can be encouraged/ discouraged through multiple macroeconomic instruments, incentives or disincentives. These constitute a powerful array of tools for influencing, controlling and shaping policies and actions of poor countries in virtually all domains, including those having to do with climate change and sustainable development. Moreover, as feminist economists have underlined, **macroeconomic policies are not gender neutral and have differentiated impacts on men and women.**

From the perspective of climate justice, **macroeconomic policies need to ensure policy space and flexibility for developing countries to achieve their development goals and adapt to climate change.** In particular, the policy parameters for the design of macroeconomic policies must provide policy space for developing countries in the areas of investment promotion and regulation, industrial and trade policy, and finance regulation. This implies the need to address several outstanding issues that are briefly discussed below.

Chief among these are the structural drivers of the present global growth model, which has proved to be environmentally unsustainable, as evidenced in the body of scientific knowledge which clearly links climate change to the last 200 years of economic growth in the industrialized countries of the North. While the economic recession may reduce global carbon dioxide emissions by 3 per cent (IEA 2009), **economic recovery in the absence of the adequate policy changes will bring about an upward trend in greenhouse gas emissions** as the use of fossil fuels grows again.

Thus, some analysts have underscored that recovery from the financial crisis will exacerbate the climate and food crises, if there is no significant and sustained shift to low-carbon models of growth (Addison et al, 2009). Whether the global recovery sustains itself or not, poor countries and their peoples are likely to be negatively affected: "if the recovery from the global financial crisis stalls, then poor countries and poor people will suffer another macroeconomic shock (the recovery in trade, remittances, and commodity prices will all stall) (Addison et al, 2009). But if the global recovery sustains itself, then **food-prices and energy prices will continue to climb,** delivering fresh shocks to energy and food importers" (ibid.) This points to the **vital importance of a new, global food architecture and comprehensive social protection systems.**

External Debt and Climate Debt

The **external debt burden** that most poor countries continue to bear is a major impediment for their adaptation and development strategies. In particular, it is a cause for major concern that the debt relief mechanisms are linked to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes, most of which overlook both gender and environmental issues.

Climate justice advocates have raised the **notion of climate debt**, which addresses the historical responsibility of industrialized countries that created the climate change crisis, to not only drastically reduce their own emissions but also assume the greatest burden of adaptation and mitigation costs. At present countries with the highest cumulative historical emissions from over 500 years of inequitable industrialization, through the destruction of nature and the extraction of resources, continue to deny their climate debt and pass the burden of mitigation and adaptation onto developing countries.

Fiscal policy

The fiscal effect of climate change on the budgets of poor countries is substantial, and will **make those countries more aid-dependent** (Jones et al. 2008; Addison et al., 2009). On the expenditure side, there is the heavy burden entailed by the public actions required for flood-control; assistance to displaced populations; health services to deal with the spread of diseases; social protection to cope with more vulnerable livelihoods; etc. On the revenue side, the tax base is eroded by the economic downturn caused by climate change (Addison 2009b; Heller 2003, cited in Addison et al., 2009).

As underlined by the IPCC in its 2007 Synthesis report on Climate Change, fiscal policy can and should provide for **non-climate taxes/subsidies and/or other fiscal and regulatory policies that promote sustainable development**. Taxation and fiscal policy can also be designed so as to be more gender responsive.

3. Incoherence between Trade, Environmental and Gender Policies and Agreements

As a result of the reduction of global demand and trade finance due to the global financial and economic crises, world trade has experienced its sharpest decline in decades, exceeding that of the Great Depression (Eichengreen and Kevin O'Rourke, 2009). Against this background, the actions that governments have to take at the national level to meet the agreed emission reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol will affect the costs of production of traded goods. The competitive position of producers in world markets will change and affect international competitiveness. As countries develop their national response strategies to "level the playing field", trade measures are likely to play an increasingly important role. In this context, **any measures taken to reduce emissions will have to take into account the disciplines of the various World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements.**

Coherence between the regimes that govern world trade and climate change is therefore of primary importance, especially since the UN convention on climate change does not specifically provide for any trade related environmental measure, and the Kyoto Protocol states that measures to combat climate change should not constitute "disguised restrictions on international trade". Parties are to implement policies and measures in such a way as to "minimise adverse effects on international trade".

The challenge from a trade policy perspective – and for the WTO in particular - is to draw the line between legitimate measures to restore competitiveness and those designed to create an unfair advantage to local producers in the countries that have the necessary financial and technological resources. Already, carbon and energy taxes have been introduced in a number of European countries. These all include some form of compensatory measures including total exemptions for certain sectors, reduced rates for most energy-intensive processes, ceilings for total tax payments and subsidies for energy audits.

More generally, issues at the **interface between trade and environment have attracted increased political and market attention**, even before climate change came on top of the international agenda. Such issues include "market access, agriculture, traditional knowledge, transfer of environmentally sound technology, environmental goods and services, environmentally preferable products, and issues concerning eco-labelling and certification costs" (UNCTAD, 2006:3). Thus, WTO member countries agreed to include trade liberalization in EGS (environmental goods and services) in the negotiations agenda (paragraph 31(iii) of the DMD) "with a view to enhancing the mutual supportiveness of trade and environment" (UNCTAD, 2006:3), in spite of the complex nature of the mandated negotiations, which pertain also to tariffs and NTBs (non-tariff barriers). This is compounded by the **lack of clear definitions and specific criteria for environmental goods and services**. Against this background, many developing member countries have called attention to the potential imbalance in the share of environmental and trade gains between developed and developing countries.

In this connection, of note are the EU plans to build on its expertise in green technologies and to promote the idea that "the Kyoto Protocol, and whatever global agreements will follow it," should be seen "as investment and trade agreements", and to "create an open global market in environmental technologies… that allows green technology and investment to move freely" (ref) through the WTO along with the regional and bilateral trade agreements. In addition, environmental provisions and/or specific governance structures focused on environmental issues have been part of a number of recent bilateral trade and investment agreements (UNCTAD, 2006). An increasing number of developing countries, in turn, are focusing on **the integration of environmental issues into economic and social policies**. The involvement of many developing countries in biofuel production – which potentially tightens the link between food and fuel prices - is an example of such efforts to seize opportunities for promoting trade in products derived from the use of biodiversity.

Because of their crucial dependence on environmental resources, together with their central role in the management of these resources, the stakes are very high for women in this context of increasing marketization of climate change. The emerging issues around trade and environmental measures (TREMs), together with the governance of the global agenda for addressing climate change constitute additional layers on top of the host of issues that women face in relation to trade policy, including the emerging global regime for protection of intellectual property and knowledge, trade-related investment measures, standards, etc.

It is evident that **the global food crisis continues to deepen and affects women disproportionately.** It exemplifies in a dramatic way the inter-linkages between the international trade regime, food availability and pricing, and the extreme **vulnerability of many poor countries and poor people to both price volatility and climate change**. Experts predict that cereal production will fall in 65 countries due to climate change (FAO, 2009), while global and regional trade agreements have created "a global competition among consumers" (Murphy, 2009: 22) whereby poor consumers are the main losers.

At the same time, **the food crisis has triggered the so-called "land grab"** by corporations and rich countries in several developing countries, many of which are characterized by high levels of chronic hunger and poverty. These along with other false solutions to climate change, such as geo-engineering, nanotechnology and synthetic biology, are part of capitalism's response to the climate, food and fuel crises. Yet they are not neutral in their design or effect and are likely to increase the existing imbalances between countries, undermine food sovereignty, threaten to appropriate the biological resources and livelihoods of peoples and disrupt the systems of ecological balances for the entire planet.

The **increased deregulation of international trade in agricultural commodities** has played a significant part in the global food crisis. However, the international response to this crisis does not seem to address the need to regulate speculative demand in agricultural commodities future markets. Nor does the push for the completion of the Doha Round of negotiations (HLTF, 2008) take into account the dramatic changes in global trade in terms of levels of commodity supplies and the related issue of the contribution of the global credit crunch; trade positions among major food exporters; and other political economy issues that bear on the final outcomes of the proposed response to the food crisis.

As happened with the global food crisis, speculation in the expanding carbon markets is also bound to become a key factor in global responses to climate change.

Given the complexity of the issues under consideration, the challenge from a feminist perspective is to ensure that both policy makers and women's rights activists have all the facts in hand. In this respect, information and training are much needed to better understand all the issues at stake and devise appropriate responses, especially informed advocacy, given the decisive influence of corporate lobbying groups on both trade and environmental policy outcomes.