Economic Empowerment of Women to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

“Analysis of Turkey’s Progress”


Concept Note

Introduction

As the UN Member States are on their way to conclude the negotiations and launch a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important for states to work for a roadmap on how to achieve these targets. With the lead-up to the post-2015 agenda, this is the time for the Member States to analyze their national and international progress and develop new strategies to collaborate on local and global levels. “Economic Empowerment of Women to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals” panel aims to focus on one of the most important critical areas of the Beijing +20 Agenda: women and the economy. In this panel, Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF), Global Businesswomen Association (GBA) and Peace Islands Institute (PII) would like to analyze the economic empowerment of women in Turkey and discuss actions needed to strengthen their position in economy.

Having more women in the economy secures the social justice by creating opportunities to empower disadvantaged groups. World Bank database indicates that, on average, removing the barriers that limits the capabilities of women entrepreneurs creates 1-2 percentage point growth to Annual Gross Domestic Products (GDP). In the process of Post-2015 Development Agenda, “Member States have recognized that the promotion of

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¹ See the World Bank women, business and law website (http://wbl.worldbank.org)
entrepreneurship through small and medium-sized enterprises can support the achievement of SDGs”. However, due to negative perceptions on women entrepreneurs, society creates both institutional and financial barriers for women empowerment in economy.

As a result of gender discrimination in most of the developing countries, women represent a great portion of disadvantaged and inactive group of human resources. This circumstance creates an economic trap as women labor force is misallocated. There are several ways of actions that can strengthen the position of women in the economy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and increase women’s agency:

• Improving social conditions to allow more women to take strategic positions in decision making mechanisms
• Developing policies to make capital and financial assets accessible to women entrepreneurs and enable them to actively participate in the labor market
• Using information, communication and technology to empower women

**Background of the Panel Topic**

**Improving Social Conditions to Allow More Women to Take Strategic Positions in Decision-Making Mechanisms**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates that everyone has a right to take a part in the governance of his/her country. In order to achieve a transparent and accountable government, women’s social, economic and political status should be improved. In this respect, women’s active participation in the political and business arena is a fundamental driving force to overcome the difficulties that women face in social and

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2 UN General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session, Item 19 of the provisional agenda, 2/22 (New York, 2014)
3 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21(1)
economic settings. Women are usually discouraged from seeking their rights due to the gender-specific concerns in the family and the society. All these facts reinforce the dominance of men in the decision-making bodies.

As the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) indicates, “Women’s equal participation on political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women”.\(^4\) Participating governments in this conference agreed on some measures to advance women’s position in decision-making mechanism. Some of the most remarkable actions are listed as:

- Governments having the mission of attaining gender balance in governmental committees and taking initiatives in electoral systems which will encourage political parties to integrate more women in decision making positions,
- Political parties altering their party structures and procedures to remove all the barriers which could create discrimination for women,
- Non-government and international organizations taking actions to improve the leadership skills of women to succeed in strategic positions and thus provide necessary self-esteem trainings to assist women and girls.

*Graph 1: Number of Women Participating in the High Level of the Public Life*\(^5\)

\(^4\) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, The Fourth World Conference on Women, Article G (182), (Beijing, 1995)

\(^5\) Graph taken from the World Bank Global Monitoring Report 2014
Developing Policies to Make Capital and Financial Assets Accessible to Women Entrepreneurs and Enable Them to Actively Participate in the Labor Market

As in the decision-making positions, women lack the equal access to opportunities as men to empower themselves in the economy and labor force. Lack of bargaining power, discrimination in education and training, inflexible working conditions and lack of access to financial assets are several important facts that impede women to be pioneers in economy and financial sector. Although today women have successfully involved in micro, small and medium-size enterprises, their capabilities are hidden due to limited opportunity to access financial resources. In most of the developing countries, there are legal and customary barriers for women to own land, capital, and get credit for their start-ups. Therefore, creating new employment opportunities is not enough by itself to advance women’s position in economy unless they have equal rights to attain financial assets and factors of production. Positive discrimination in the micro-credit systems would also increase women’s empowerment.

“Women and the economy” was one of the most triggering themes for the empowerment of women in the agenda of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Member States collectively decided on several important actions to be taken⁶:

- Governments enforcing legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work, eliminating discriminatory practices by employers, promoting gender-sensitive policies and measures to empower women as equal partners with men in managerial and entrepreneurial fields, promoting support for women’s development of small enterprises, strengthening women’s access to credit and capital, facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal sector in rural areas,

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⁶ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, The Fourth World Conference on Women, Article F (150-180), (Beijing, 1995)
• Public and private banking institutions increasing the number of women entrepreneurs in advisory boards, mobilizing the banking sector to increase lending and incentives and the development of intermediaries to serve the needs of women entrepreneurs,

• Non-government organizations ensuring that women’s priorities are included in the public investment programs.

Due to inflexible working hours, women participate more in informal sector that are unpaid. However, women’s share in paid employment in the nonagricultural sector has risen marginally. An increasing number of women are now participating at the highest levels of public life. The actions aforementioned would even increase the women participation in labor force even further.

Graph 2: Women’s Share in the Formal Paid Sector

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7 Graph taken from the World Bank Global Monitoring Report 2014
Using Information, Communication and Technology to Empower Women

Information, communication and technology is to key for the economic and political empowerment of women. Ensuring women’s access to these resources will eliminate the barriers that women have to face in both social and economic settings. However, accessing these resources are not enough. Until women have equal opportunities to develop their skills on information, communication and technology, they will continue to be underrepresented. Today, technology is one of the most crucial tools of entrepreneurship. Productive capacity of women cannot be increased without enabling them to learn and engage more in technology. Governments, non-government organizations, and private sector all have responsibilities to provide a high quality of education to women on technological know-how and encourage them to take a proactive role in the information and communication sectors by:

- Providing educational and training programs to girls and women to raise their awareness on the availability of technology to develop their entrepreneurship skills,
- Promoting women’s role in information, communication and technology innovations,
- Providing funds for computer programs and make them accessible to girls and women in rural areas.

Where is Turkey Standing in the Economic Empowerment of Women?

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) “Human Development Report 2014” ranks Turkey as 69th out of 187 countries for Human Development Index (HDI),

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8 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, The Fourth World Conference on Women, Chapter II Article 33, (Beijing, 1995)
which measures the components of a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living.\textsuperscript{9} Turkey’s current HDI value is 0.759, which is in the high human development category.\textsuperscript{10}

Gender Inequality Index (GII) is another economic measure, which reflects the gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. In this index, the share of parliamentary seats held by women measures their level of empowerment while the economic activity is measured by the labor market participation for women and men. Turkey has a GII value of 0.360 and women hold only 14.2 percent of the parliamentary seats. Labor force participation rate of women is also relatively low compared to men.

Table 1: Turkey’s GII for 2013 relative to selected countries and groups\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GII Value</th>
<th>GII Rank</th>
<th>Female seats in parliament (%)</th>
<th>Labor force participation rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other High HDI Countries</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>57.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Turkish Statistical Institute indicates that the proportion of computer usage is 60.2\% for men while it is only 39.8\% for women.\textsuperscript{12} The statistics prove the correlation

\textsuperscript{9} UNDP Human Development Report (Turkey) 2014
\textsuperscript{10} HDI is an index value between 0 and 1
\textsuperscript{11} Data Source: UNDP HDI Report 2014
\textsuperscript{12} Turkish Statistical Institute, Women in Statistics, 2013
between low levels of Internet, technology usage and proportions of high-level managing occupations by women in Turkey.

Table 2: The proportions of selected occupations by sex in Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Level Manager</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge and Lawyer</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>36.3</td>
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Table 3: Share of women entrepreneurs in Turkey

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Graph 3: Share of women entrepreneurs in Turkey compared to other countries

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13 Data Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, Women in Statistics, 2013
14 OECD Annual Database – Gender equality in entrepreneurship
15 OECD Annual Database – Share of women entrepreneurs
Purpose of the Panel

Journalists and Writers Foundation and Global Businesswomen Association are organizing the “Economic Empowerment of Women to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” as a side-event during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 59th Session, Implementing the Beijing Platform For Action. The focus of the 59th session will be on the achievement of gender quality and the empowerment of women. 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly reports no significant improvement in the position of women leaders in decision-making positions. A better monitoring system is needed to ensure women’s participation in government. On the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, Member States concentrated on the importance of improving information, communication and technological skills of women to overcome the barriers.

In this respect, Member States and NGOs will review the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, which is the first five-year assessment of the Platform for Action. In parallel to the theme of CSW 59, JWF and Global Businesswomen Association would like to gather academia, UN officers, NGOs and experts together to revise the lessons learned and not learned from the Beijing Platform. The area of concentration for the “Economic Empowerment of Women to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” will be on improving women’s position in decision-making bodies, making financial assets accessible to women entrepreneurs and improving their skills on information, communication and technology to encourage women to be leaders in the economy. Experts will discuss what are the socio-economic challenges that women go through in Turkey than hinder their capacity.

Burak Eskici (PhD), from Harvard University, conducts field research in Turkey on women's empowerment. He is an expert on the socio-economic development of Turkey in the last century. For this project, he specifically focuses on the role of cultural values on female disempowerment in Turkey, and analyzes self-esteem as a byproduct in charity activities in NGO's run by women. In his unique research, Eskici chooses to investigate women who participate in grass-root efforts and explores the process in which these women discover their own potential while helping others in need. Dr. Eskici will present preliminary results of his research as one of the panelists in this side event.

**Format of the Side Event**

- Panel format with experts and a moderator
- Open to all

**Date and Time**

- March 10, 2015 at 3:00PM

**Venue**

- United Nations Headquarter CR8

**Welcome Remarks**

- Esra Kavurmaci, Chairwomen, Global Businesswomen Association

**Keynote**

- Paulette Woolf, Chief of Management Support Services, UN Office of Information and Communication Technology
Moderator

- Sevgi Akarcesme, *Journalists, Today’s Zaman Daily Newspaper*

Panelists

- Aisha Osori, CEO, The Nigerian Women’s Trust Fund
- Dr. Burak Eskici, Lecturer, *Harvard University Department of Sociology*

About the Organizers

Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF), has been established by a group of distinguished writers, scholars and journalists in 1994 to contribute to peaceful coexistence and dialogue by bringing together intellectuals from all political spectrums with different cultural, religious, ethnic and ideological backgrounds that belong to the many diverse disciplines in science, religion, philosophy, politics, and art. Its mission is to look for ways of building a common living space based on reconciliation and mutual respect. Currently there are six different platforms under the Foundation; each platform specializes in different aspects of building dialogue: Abant Platform, Dialogue Eurasia, Medialog Platform, Intercultural Dialogue Platform and Women’s Platform, and a Research Center. To carry its national mission to the international arena, JWF holds General Consultative Status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, being the first and only institution to achieve this status in Turkey.

Global Businesswomen Association (GBA) is an international non-profit NGO that was founded in Istanbul. Association opens its door to all languages, religions and races and intends to organize and manage activities which will bring women in Turkey and world together in the common ground of business and entrepreneurship, develop their success and experience in the professional fields, create awareness of the society and
social issues and contribute to their solutions. To achieve its objectives, the association has chosen dialogue, education, humanitarian aid, respect, fairness, sharing, and development concepts as the method and all projects have been based on these concepts.

Peace Islands Institute (PII) is an NGO that facilitates a forum of mutual respect and collaboration. PII develops original and alternative perspectives on vital issues that our society is facing, generate solutions to these issues, and support successful practices. PII serves to act as the soil for fruitful dialogue, peace, and civil service just as the soil on this “global island” gives forth flowers of different colors, scents and shapes. Besides organizing intellectual panels and discussion series, PII also prepares annual reports for both non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and governmental agencies on social issues. There are five centers, which are promoting education, friendship and harmony: Center for Global Affairs, Center for Social Affairs, Center for Interfaith Affairs, Center for Education, and Center for Media.