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CIRCUITS OF THE CRISIS: BREAKDOWN OF THE ECONOMIC MODEL AND FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE¹

The complexity of the crisis that is currently being experienced implies not only offering a reflection on the process of development posed by the Bretton Woods institutions over the past sixty years, but also on the way in which the production process has evolved in all its variations and as a result the intertwinement with the other half of humanity. Today we not only have the financial crisis, which has been rapidly developing since the end of 2006 and over the course of 2007-2009 but also the complications interwoven with climate change and its effects on the environment and the food crisis. It is in this labyrinth of the circuits of the crisis in which the deepening of the inequalities between men and women appears with greater clarity in their relations with production, distribution, and money.

There is no question that the intertwinement of these circuits in the framework of the crisis also demonstrates the bankruptcy of economic thought (The Economist, 2009). In response to the hypothesis of the general equilibrium in the markets, as an alternative view there was always the idea of financial instability. This was the case to such an extent that the application of the economic policies based on the hegemonic thinking of the past thirty years, at least in the case of women, led to workdays of more than eight hours, precarious jobs, and in many cases, women not only had to engage in a day's work in the formal and informal sector but also had to fulfill their historical tasks in the social reproduction circuit. Even though this study offers a perspective from the vantage point of the commodity-based economy it should be pointed out that in the socialist world the participation of women in the production process was not the result of a struggle to participate in the labor market but was based on the need to increase productivity. For Lu Ye (2004) the history of women's liberation in China was the result of the National Revolution in 1911 and the Communist Revolution. With it, the author says, woman's liberation was achieved in the framework of the concept of social classes; that is, women participated in the social movements, the national struggles, and they were liberated as an exploited class. Undoubtedly, this perception of the progress registered by women in planned economies or in socialist regimes is a perception based on a very specific ideological outlook, namely, socialist. Although this it is not the subject under discussion in this study, efforts should be expended to delve more deeply

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¹ This study involves a research project of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences' (CLASCO) Working Group on Gender, Globalization and Development. It was initially presented in for discussion in the session on Gender, Crisis and Development at the Latin American Scholars' Association (LASA) conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2009. Subsequently and as a result of the financing granted by the International Association for Feminist Economics the study was presented at the end of the same month in the organization's annual conference in Boston. The study concluded with the observations expressed in the Americanist Congress held in Mexico City at the end of July 2009, with financing from the IIEc and CLACSO.

into the concept of gender in the care economy and family economy in relation to the socialist economies. Nevertheless, these countries' transition from planned to market economies in both China as well as the former Soviet republics is today expanding the gender gap as is occurring in the traditionally capitalist societies. And this process is much further developed in areas where large segments of the population are involved in the production of goods for the international market. With the crisis and world recession, the model based on exports of manufactured goods in China and overseas sales of primary products in other regions of Latin America has eliminated large sections of the population from the formal and informal labor market.

Today, to delve into the intertwining of the crises defined as "the three f's" (financial, food and female) implies dealing with the impact of the deepening of the inequalities and the inequity resulting from the macroeconomic policies implemented over the course of the past thirty years but also looking to the future to emerge from the current recession and the evolution of the crisis as the necessary breakdown of the economic paradigm. Even though a gender outlook is extremely important in the construction of economic policies from the feminist perspective for development with equity, such an approach is not present in the alternatives presented to face the financial crisis. In reviewing studies dealing with the crisis in the latest publications of the International Monetary Fund (2009), the World Bank (2009), the central banks, and in the alternative plans for avoiding an increased fall in the GDP of the OECD countries or the G-20 nations, it should be noted that gender policies are absent. Only the United Nations (2009), following the Millennium Goals, mentions gender outlook in response to the crisis. The reflection that we will offer in this brief study will be based on a feminist outlook from the South-South-South.

The recurring crises in the south and the insertion of these countries in the international market since the 19th century have led to economies that are deeply dependent on the economic cycles of the developed nations without achieving over the course of time monetary sovereignty as a productive sovereignty to satisfy the needs of their respective populations. In this study we will mainly focus on a critical reflection on recent texts that discuss the crisis and gender issues. This is with the aim of emphasizing the need to reorient the process of social reproduction that has helped strengthen the financial conglomerates at the expense of the societies involved but that also denigrated the environment. The expression of this is the food crisis, climate change, and the crisis in nonrenewable resources. This involves the need for an ideological change that sustains the process of production and distribution in the capitalist system and emphasizes a balance with nature, with food sovereignty, fair trade and with improved living standards for society. This study begins with a description of the world panorama of the crisis; the global development of the recession and its impact on the labor circuit; the circuit of production, gender, and climate change; financial instability, gender inequalities, and macroeconomic order. This study seeks to offer some ideas concerning the intertwining of the financial circuits with the production circuit established through the financial institutions of Bretton Woods and the distribution circuit interrelated and crisscrossed through the prism of gender.

CRISIS, FALL IN CAPITAL FLOWS AND REGIONAL VOLATILITY

At present, the current world crisis, characterized as the deepest since 1929, threatens, as Keynes said at the time (1936), high levels of unemployment that raises its specter in all countries. The latest report from the World Bank (2009) states that the planet is

entering a stage of low growth. The underdeveloped countries expect to grow only 1.2 percent in 2009, while in 2007, the corresponding figure was 8.1 percent and in 2008, 5.9 percent. Indeed, the panorama is becoming somber and hope for a turnaround in growth is yearned for in 2010. However, the world recession, and with it, the fall in growth, means a decrease in sources of employment, which is coupled with greater job losses worldwide. At the same time, public investments have not only been insufficient to stop the recession, but the same World Bank report (2009) indicates that the underdeveloped countries will receive reduced capital flows from abroad and this means less investment. After having received capital flows of 1.2 trillion dollars in 2007, the figure fell to 707 billion dollars in 2008. A greater contraction in such flows is estimated for the close of 2009, to 363 billion dollars.

The impact of the fall in capital flows and less investment in the underdeveloped countries as well the decrease in trade puts a question mark over the insertion of these nations in the international circuits of world production. One of the most important items is the decrease in government fiscal income, which involves revenue that translates into state social expenditures. At the same time, the decrease in exports diminishes household income and with it poses the threat of unemployment, greater impoverishment of women, and reduced opportunities for young women to access education, public services, and health care.

It is important to point out that thus far despite the great effort to eliminate toxic instruments from the world financial system both on the part of the U.S. Federal Reserve (FED), the central banks of Europe and Japan, and the International Monetary Fund [IMF] as well as the Group of Twenty (G- 20), the economic recovery does not necessarily pass through the channels of the circulatory apparatus of the process of financialization and securitization on a world level but rather requires major significant changes (Girón and Chapoy, 2009).

In this context, a gender analysis and its relation to the evolution of the crisis takes on great importance due to the results of the macroeconomic policies in the social, economic, and political development of society during an almost forty year long period. To achieve economic policy alternatives with a gender outlook that seek to reestablish growth with equity is a priority given the recession and unemployment in order to diminish the impact of the crisis in all the fields of our daily endeavors. We should not forget that from the perspective of the feminist economy² the unequal relations between men and women are the result of market forces and reproduction factors asymmetric of power (Boyd, 1997: 50). These asymmetric relations of power take on greater scope with the crisis and its development. In order to understand the result of the asymmetric effect of the crisis on women it is necessary to divide the analysis on a micro, meso, and macro level in accordance with Van Staveren (2002). Without this division the question of gender in relation to the crisis and development is blurred over and does not enter into the different public policies or in the national budgets with a gender focus to not only reduce poverty but also to cease excluding women.

² For Silvia Berger “feminist economy” is a current of heterodox economic thought that has placed an emphasis on the need to incorporate gender relations as an important variable in the explanation of the functioning of the economy and the different position occupied by men and women as economic agents and subjects of economic policies. Paper presented at the 53rd Americanist Congress in Mexico City, July 2009.

The substantial increase in the female labor force in all sectors of the formal and informal economy on a world level is an undeniable reality. In the case of Latin America the macroeconomic policies applied under the guidelines of the Washington Consensus placed women in the job market with the aim of increasing family income as well as to satisfy the demand for poorly paid labor and boost the profits of international corporations. Despite the rapid economic growth in the Latin American region during the past few years, economic development has been very unequal both between as well as within the countries and it has been characterized by a strong volatility in GDP accompanied by recurring bank, monetary, and financial crises that have contributed to a very unfavorable distribution of income and greater inequity between the genders (ECLAC, 2008).

WORLD EVOLUTION OF THE RECESSION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LABOR CIRCUIT

The developing crisis is gathering steam around the world and is affecting the development of both the emerging economies as well as the United States, Europe and Japan. We cannot fail to mention the current role played by Chinese women who are tied to industries involved in exports of manufactured goods in the western coast of continental China. This is a clear example of policies oriented to the external market using the cheap labor force, competing indiscriminately and betraying the minimum economic rights of workers in terms of public safety, decent housing, and a healthy diet. The dimensions taken on by gender in this crisis are revealed much more dramatically for women than for men. Its expressions are higher unemployment rates for women, the decrease in income for female-headed households, the decline in remittances sent by women to their families, and cuts in social programs for women for them to improve their situation in the economy, political sphere, and in public and social life. Meanwhile, the crises have been continual in the underdeveloped world, and for women have translated into a greater number of hours worked in the home, precarious jobs, and lower pay than men as well as emerging jobs without social benefits and services and without a pension for the future (Sen and Grown, 1997). We could affirm that in the underdeveloped countries the weakening of women's conditions and the widening of the salary gap between men and women has been a constant over the course of almost forty years of stabilizing policies implemented not only in Latin America but in other regions by the IMF.

The world panorama is not at all encouraging for society as a whole. The economic outlook for 2009 alone points to a very significant fall in GDP. The IMF estimates a 1.9% contraction for 2009 accompanied by the deepest recession since the Second World War (IMF 2009a). In addition, the downturn is truly global in nature; according to projections, per capita GDP should contract in the countries that account for three-quarters of the world economy. In times of economic turbulence, women experience the negative consequences much more rapidly and benefit more slowly from the recovery. According to an International Labor Organization report (ILO, 2008) the unemployment rate for women grows more rapidly than for men. At the same time, governments do not establish specific programs from a gender perspective to deal with the recession but rather they are centering their efforts in saving the banks and in reestablishing the financial circuits.

The International Labor Organization in its annual report on employment trends for women indicated that of the three billion people employed worldwide in 2008, 1. 20

billion were women, that is, 40%. The report warned that in 2009 the worldwide unemployment rate for women could increase to 7.4%, compared with 7% for men.³ This would result in an increase of between 24 million and 52 million unemployed workers in the world, of which between 10 million and 22 million would be women. According to the ILO, the total number of unemployed worldwide could increase from 190 million in 2007 to 210 million at the end of 2009. At the same time, the ILO estimated that vulnerable jobs in 2009 could fluctuate between 50.5% and 54.7% of the total for women, and between 47.2% and 51.8% for men (ILO, 2009).

In the fight against poverty the key role played by women in economic and social development is clear. In the developing world, for example, between 50% and 80% of the production, preparation, and sale of food are the responsibility of women, as are 70% of small companies. Despite United Nations' interest in achieving equity and in closing the gender gap, with the crisis it will be difficult to reach this goal. The same UNDP document pointed out that in 2009 the region will not experience economic growth; on the contrary, it will become poorer. According to the most optimistic projections, from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the region will post 1.9% growth; this represents a decrease over previous growth rates of 5.5% (2006), 4.6% (2007), and 4.6% (2008). Even the IMF's projections speak of 1.1% growth in GDP and other sources, including private banks, anticipate negative growth (UNDP, 2009).

The need to create better paid and decent jobs implies in addition to reorienting the monetary, fiscal, and financial policies of our countries, establishing the needs of nature and life itself for humankind's survival. A singular advance is enshrined in the recently approved Ecuadoran Constitution, which "... adopts the outlook of the "Good Life" as an axis, which brings together aspects of the cosmovision of the indigenous peoples with ideas hailing from feminist and ecological economic thought" (León, 2008). From this perspective, alternatives to the economic crisis can be raised from a gender outlook in order to generate a new more equitable and sustainable economic model.

CIRCUIT OF PRODUCTION: IN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE, AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL

Climate change is the expression of the circuit of production characterized by the result of the irrational exploitation of scarce resources to satisfy mankind's needs. The

³ The ILO issued a call to generate "creative solutions" to deal with the gender gap. It underlined that it was to be expected that the economic crisis would be more prejudicial, in terms of unemployment, for women than for men in most of the regions of the world and more so in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report added that the only regions in which it is likely that the unemployment rates would be less negative for women are East Asia, the developed economies and the countries of Southeast Europe that do not belong to the European Union, in which the gender gap was less pronounced in terms of job opportunities before the onset of the current crisis. Labor market projections for 2009 show a weakening on a world level, both for women as well as for men. The ILO estimates that the world unemployment rate could increase to between 6.3% and 7.1%, with its respective rise in the female unemployment rate to between 6.5% and 7.4% (compared with the range of between 6.1% and 7.0% for men). The report pointed out that although women are still more vulnerable, the crisis is pushing a larger number of men toward vulnerable jobs, in comparison with 2007. In Spain, joblessness has reached close to the four million mark in the course of almost a year, with that country's unemployment rate reaching 17.36% according to the National Statistics Institute, with more than one million being foreign workers. Undoubtedly this affects both the women who have lost their jobs as well as the family income in the countries of origin, and therefore "full employment" policies are an urgent necessity.

industrial, technological, and financial revolutions have been the central axis that has reorganized our lives for almost three centuries, upsetting the balance between nature, economic development, and gender. A very important element in the current crisis is the collapse of the economic development model of our economies. Undoubtedly the creation of a new economic paradigm in response to the economic crisis will include a gender focus accompanied by an interest in achieving equitable and sustainable development. Economics from the feminist perspective takes on greater importance in studying and analyzing the economy from a different outlook than the one used since Adam Smith (1776) wrote *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* or David Ricardo (1817) in his book *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. On the other side of the ledger, the lessons taught by climate change invite us to introduce a necessary change in the type of production based on non-natural resources in response to an economic crisis that threatens to become an economic depression due to the depth of its evolution and the course currently being taken by the change in paradigm in the technological revolution on the level of renewable natural resources.

If the 1929 crisis implied the reformulation of state public policies and the reactivation of the economy through job creation, the current crisis involves an additional element, namely, the introduction of a gender focus and ecological equilibrium. In other words, moving from an economy based on nonrenewable resources to alternative sources of energy that do not increase carbon emissions; that is, from the “American way of life” to the “good life” or *sumak kawsay* (an Aymara phrase). This would be a very important step to recover our nature and return a balance to the earth given the rapid environmental deterioration resulting from climate change.

Climate change is a constant priority for the marginal sectors in the countryside, especially for families who earn their living from and consume food production. The extreme poverty in the countryside reaches the limits of survival in which women assuring food for the family nucleus is indispensable. Even though it is women who are directly tied to access to water and food, it is the state that must provide the population with basic services. Therefore, financing for water treatment and distribution and an infrastructure for food distribution should be part of the economic recovery program. The only way to achieve this is through social spending for infrastructure through the development banks.

Reversing climate change must become a universal priority. Efforts to achieve sustainable agriculture that would help eradicate hunger are a priority for public policies in both the developed countries as well as the emerging economies. Indeed, it is women who are most linked to food production in the rural areas of the poor countries, and who are suffering the consequences.

FINANCIAL INSTABILITY, GENDER INEQUALITIES, AND MACROECONOMIC ORDER

The great economic crisis of 1929 and financial instability are a permanent characteristic of the world economy during the 20th century. But beyond a doubt the growing feminization of the work force is also a characteristic of that century (Boyd, 1977: 53). The first half of the century was marked by two world wars and the great economic depression, which lasted from the end of the 1920s until years after the Second World War. Therefore, the financial system established after the war in Bretton Woods outlined the path to financial, commercial, and political stability for the

capitalist world. The IMF and the World Bank established the financial circuits that gave life to the strengthening of the economic agents. These economic agents were the colossal state and the big financial conglomerates, which delineated the path for development from the postwar period until the beginning of the 1970s in an articulated and regulated fashion. After a great period of financial stability and economic growth, the breakdown of the Bretton Woods Agreements in 1971 led to financial instability. The persistent financial instability in the capitalist world and mainly in the underdeveloped countries was the expression of a period marked by different types of crises: devaluation crisis, foreign debt crisis, bank crisis, stock market crisis, the Asian crisis, the dot.com crisis, and other crises centered more in different countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, Argentina, Russia, and the Long Terminal Capital crisis (Girón, 2002). An entire period of financial instability took hold from the 1970s to the present day major financial and economic crisis. Of course the characteristics of this period intensified due to the constant crises during the period of deregulation and financial liberalization. The 1980s and 1990s were a period in Latin America characterized by low economic growth rates, the explosive incorporation of woman into the labor market, and the recurring instability reflected in constant economic, political, and social crises.

Therefore, it was precisely in the second half of the last century in which women were not only part of the alternative for increasing family income but they also entered public life both in the social movements as well as in parliaments. The 20th century is the century of the feminist revolution. It could even been affirmed that the 20th century was characterized by three great revolutions: the socialist revolution, the Keynesian revolution, and the women's revolution.

Although invisible, women have been the alternative to the stabilizing policies of the IMF and the World Bank over the past three decades. In response to instability, the solution was the imposition of monetary, fiscal, and financial policies that gradually eliminate the state's participation in the economy. These policies, which diminished the participation of the public sector and oriented the economy toward a market economy, rapidly pushed women into the labor market. The decreased role of the state in providing social and health-care benefits and in job creation led to a mass migration of women from their cities of origin to places offering better paid jobs and employment opportunities. In this wave of mass migration women were the solution for boosting the income of the families that they left behind in their places of origin. The migration not only occurred from the countryside to the city, but also from one city to another and from their countries of origin to nearby nations such as the United States in the cases of Mexico and Central America. Many women went from Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru to Chile and Argentina but others moved outside of the Latin America region to Europe and the United States. The report prepared by the Global Commission on International Migration point to neoliberal type policies as one of the causes of this great wave of migration (United Nations, 2005).

The relationship between financial instability, economic crisis, and gender during the past three decades has become so profound that family relations and the family prototype based on the man as main breadwinner have been transformed. Women's participation in the labor market as of the 1970s can be attributed, in the great majority of cases, to the need to increase family income. Even though the family has been transformed, ideologically the supremacy of men over women persists on many levels. It is important to emphasize at least the impact of the economic crisis on gender. However, it is also important to keep in mind that in a cash economy, financial

instability is a constant feature of the capitalist system itself. This hypothesis has been explained by several authors such as Kindleberger (1984), Minsky (1984), and Keynes (with great depth)(1936, chapter 12). It is important to emphasize how the policies framed in the Washington Consensus according to Singh and Zammit (2000: 1258) have not only had an impact on the bank crises but have also deepened the wage gap between men and women and have not reactivated employment as part of an immediate anti-cyclical policy to achieve growth. For example, in the framework of the financial reform, the capital account was liberalized during the 1980s. Shortly thereafter, the liberalization of the capital account had an impact on bank crisis⁴ in the United States, the Scandinavian countries, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela to mention just a few nations.

The alternatives in Latin America to overcome the economic crisis involved the loss of monetary sovereignty, the foreignization of a large part of the financial systems, and the privatization of state owned enterprises. The negative effect of these policies that help attract private capital flows unequally affected women (Elson, 2002: 12). The increase in unemployment and the fall in income pushed children and youth –both male and female- into the job market without them having finished their basic education. Their consumption of basic foods in order to obtain the nutrients necessary for intellectual development decreased and they ceased attending school, thus creating a mass unskilled labor force, which contrasts with the advance of knowledge society. As such, these policies, based on high interest rates and monetary restriction to attract private capital, have had a negative impact in the long term for the balanced development of society and their influence is very difficult to measure. For Fujuda-Parr, Sakiko (2008: 4) the contraction in social spending, particularly in essential services such as primary health care, education, and transportation, aims at ensuring balanced budgets to stabilize the economy, in the process destabilizing human lives.

The crisis intensified in 2008 with the collapse of investment banking of investment, symbol of Wall Street but also symbol of financial capitalism, ending in a great recession declared as such in 2009. The main priority in terms of policies to guarantee a lasting economic recovery is the reestablishment of the health of the financial sector. The three priorities stipulated in previous editions of the Global Financial Stability Report continue to be valid: 1) guaranteeing that the financial institutions have access to liquidity, 2) identify problematic assets and resolving their situation and 3) recapitalizing the weak but viable financial institutions and resolving the situation of the bankrupt institutions. The report even emphasizes that “...In advanced economies, room to further ease monetary policy should be used forcefully to support demand and counter deflationary risks. With the scope for lowering interest rates now virtually exhausted, central banks will have to continue exploring less conventional measures, using both the size and composition of their own balance sheets to support credit intermediation.” (IMF, 2009b). This paragraph affirms the interest of the state and the central bank to regulate the economy from a monetarist and financial perspective. It is difficult to consider an expansion of social programs with a gender focus with such fiscal policies.

Thus far there are no public policies in place on the part of the U.S. Federal Reserve and the central banks of Europe and Japan and even Latin American governments to

⁴ One of the most frequent explanations to explain U.S. bank crisis at the beginning of the 1980s was the deregulation and liberalization of the financial system

specifically sustain employment. This is even less the case with government employment programs with a gender focus aimed at reactivating the economy. The economies posted declines in GDP at the end of 2008 and the near future is in no way encouraging. The proposals in response to the generalized economic crisis and recession in Europe, Asia, the United States and Latin America only involve measures aimed at saving the banks, insurance firms, and mortgage companies such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in 2008. In total, the packages to rescue these companies topped three trillion dollars to clean up the global financial system and save international liquidity. However, the governments have lacked vision to save society from the social crisis that has erupted with the loss of homes, loan collateral, and even pension funds.

The specter of the crisis even affects pension funds. In this scenario, women face a decrease not only of their wages and family income but also employment opportunities. It is indispensable to move forward through government measures with a gender focus not only in public budgets but also seeking ways for women to be less affected by the crisis. With the stroke of a pen, government budgets are approved in function of financial capital and the struggles successfully achieved by women are erased, not only in terms of spaces in public life but also in state programs. It could even be affirmed that for the Millennium Goals, already threatened by the crisis in some countries, it will be difficult to show that progress has been made by 2015.

MILLENNIUM GOALS, MACROECONOMIC RIGHTS, AND THE FINANCIAL CIRCUITS

The Millennium Goals were posed as the need to eradicate extreme poverty and improve economic well-being, not only as a gesture of good will on the part of the United Nations but as a priority necessity to expand society's consumption. We could not imagine, however, a cash economy without credit institutions, the trade in commodities based on exchange, and a credit policy sustained in micro-financing. These elements are perhaps the most important for oiling both the financing as well as production and distribution circuits in terms of women's participation. These good will agreements at no point mention solid financial systems with the participation of development banks where the infrastructure is improved for the common good of the spaces in which women have taken charge of social reproduction. Let us consider the example of communities where male emigration has been much greater than female emigration. For women, micro-credit has allowed them to organize themselves around local production and distribution of their products but neither education, health-care, nor infrastructure for decent housing can be supplanted by micro-credits, in which the state must have a greater presence to guarantee access to water, employment opportunities, and food sovereignty.

The Millennium Goals are a good will agreement to reestablish consumption levels, expand employment opportunities, and promote women's participation in the formal or informal labor market, be it with a decent or precarious job, although in the end analysis this involves the production of value at a lower cost. But at the same time, value cannot be produced without consumption. Therefore, increasing women's income helps to close the productive cycle. On the level of financial, productive, and distribution circuits, women, as the gender gap closes, are indispensable in a cash economy. Equity is key for the good performance and health of the exchange of both the labor force as well as commodities.

In fulfilling the Millennium Goals, gender suppositions are extremely important given an exponential fall in social spending (Correa, 2009), micro-credit as an instrument of charity to avoid a greater pauperization, and remittances as a complement to family income. At the same time, women's participation in public life and parliament is part of the mirror of societies that are in appearance democratic. However, true democracy is when through monetary policy, the employer of last resort is established as an indispensable resource for creating jobs through specific programs. A gender focus cannot be left out of fiscal policies, specifically in relation to budgets. Such proposals should be applied to all government budgets as a way of increasing social expenditures on health and education from the vantage point of the future society. In this regard, basic education for girls and women is a priority as well as access to health care in order to reduce mortality and also to ensure the nutrients of a good diet.

A democratic society will base its goals in fiscal, monetary, and financial policies. A society that wishes to present solid alternatives to the crisis will have to break with the paradigm of neoclassical theory. It is at this time of the crisis that the democratic and equitable society that wishes to close the gender gap will make changing economic policy its goal. It is not only public policies that go hand in hand with the employer of last resort but also economic policy, job protection, and access to food, health and education. To the extent that studies on "the use of time" indicate the number of hours women and men dedicate to caring for the family and the workday, it will be possible quantify the type of public policies necessary to ensure better opportunities. This is provided that the state assumes part of the responsibility for developing infrastructure through the development banks in order to improve the environment both for the family unit as well as society. Even though, on this level the Monterrey Consensus can provide follow-up to the Millennium Goals, financing policies specifically for women must be achieved along the road to the generational transformation. In synthesis, let's open the debate on the conditions for development and the economic policies needed to achieve a society with social welfare and equity.

OUTLOOK

The disarticulation of the circuits in the production, circulation, and financial spheres transgress order with an unequal interrelation with women. The increase in food insecurity, the volatility of prices of basic goods and fuels, climate change, as well as the lack of results, up to now, in the multilateral trade negotiations in order to deal with not only the financial crisis but also the food and environmental crises have had an effect on the loss in confidence in the international economic system. The worsening of the global economic situation is greater than had been indicated in numerous initial estimates, and it is projected that the recovery will be gradual and unequal. Although some countries continue experiencing positive, although much slower, growth, the most recent UN estimate indicates that GDP on a world level will diminish by 2.6% in 2009, the first such decline since the Second World War. The crisis threatens to result in disastrous consequences for mankind and for development. Worldwide, millions of people are losing their jobs, income, savings, and homes. The World Bank estimates that more than 50 million people, especially women and children, have already fallen into extreme poverty. According to projections of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, the crisis will lead to an increase in hunger and malnutrition worldwide, reaching an historical level of more than one billion people. Although there are positive signs such as the improvement of some GDP indicators in some countries for 2010, the

stabilization of the stock markets, and the anti-cyclical investment plans in economies such as China, Japan, and the United States, which have prevented an even greater fall in the economy, the prejudicial effect on female employment has already occurred by diminishing family income. The crisis has not only had a negative effect on society in relation to the labor market but the psychological impact is destroying the social and political climate.

The proposals for the discussion of the agenda on gender for change poses several questions. What are the agenda and the issues to be deal with in the causal relation between gender and the financial circuits? A contribution of this study to the debate and the generation of ideas and of course to the Latin American academic community is to present the specific policies that are being implemented in the democratic governments of the region or those that should be carried out with a gender focus in order to reactivate the economy and avoid a further deepening of the crisis. These policies encompass or they should encompass specific actions for girls and women in order to achieve a better future for the female population. The following is a list of only some of the political proposals in the framework of development policies based on equity and a gender perspective: budgetary policies with a gender focus; policies to promote female employment; policies to favor the care economy; policies to empower women; policies to boost women's participation in public life; micro-credit programs for women; old-age pensions for women. These policies correspond to the micro and meso sphere while the change in economic policy would be in the macroeconomic guidelines in unstable economies. It is a challenge to achieve, in the framework of a deepening crisis, the equal and distributive recovery of women. Will it be a long wait, or will we soon see some real results? All this is in the hands of the big macroeconomic reform and in the transition from a minimalist to a strong state. In other words, a Keynesian, revolutionary, and long-term "big bang" in favor of society and especially women.

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