

## The Casablanca Dreamers

The Casablanca Group was formed in Casablanca, Morocco, in 2007, led by Professor Fatema Mernissi, under the auspices of Synergie Civique. Over the years, the Casablanca process has received support from different quarters: the Ford Foundation in the initial period, followed by the current supporters - the UNDP Gender Team and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

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# Assessing and Rebuilding Progress through Women's Knowledge

## Turning the Global Economic Crisis into Opportunity: Women's Ideas

Deconcentrate  
economic and  
political power

Reorganize the regulatory  
mechanisms and financial  
institutions mechanisms as  
women want it

Stimulate public investment in  
spread-out job creation

# Assessing and Rebuilding Progress through Women's Knowledge

The basic premise of this quest called the Casablanca Dream is that we need to call upon feminist voices and tools to negotiate what we aspire for – a world of equality, peace and justice.

The UNDP Gender Team and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in collaboration with the Casablanca Group, an informal group of feminist scholar activists drawn from diverse backgrounds of location, specialization and perspectives, is currently working on the preparation of an alternative framework to ensure that justice is built into macroeconomic ideas and policies.

The process of this partnered project is to draw on messages that are coming from women-led struggles, women's rebellions, women's grassroots efforts at transformation, the special lived and reflective experience of women, and propose policies, projects and strategies of intervention which would enable the reconstruction of inclusive and "just" development. This process of questioning and rebuilding has had a long journey:

- First stop: Beijing +5, UN 2000
- Second stop: Kampala, 2002
- Third stop: Casablanca, 2007
- Whistle stops: Durban, New York, Essex
- Fourth stop: Istanbul, 2007
- Fifth stop: Rabat, 2008
- Sixth stop: Geneva, 2009

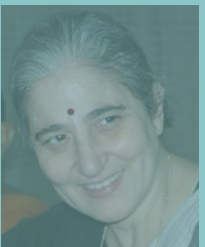
In **Kampala**, Uganda in 2002, it started to 'rethink the feminist movement's premises in ways that are more inclusive, more grassroots-oriented, more culturally relevant and nuanced, and more apt to appeal to a large segment of the world's population that West-focused and initiated efforts of the past that were shaped primarily by the experience of the women of the developed world'. (Mahnaz Afkhami)



Economics for a Post-Crisis World: Putting Social Justice First  
*Diane Elson*



Economic Growth and Equitable Development: Lessons from India  
*Devaki Jain*



Poor Women Organising Themselves for Economic Justice  
*Renana Jhabvala*

In 2009, some of the authors met in **Geneva** to bring together the threads from each paper and weave it harmoniously into a synthesis document to be presented at the Beijing +15 session on the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2010.



The Group in Geneva

The book, tentatively titled "**From Crisis to Equality: Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy**" will be ready by 2011.



Interrogating and rebuilding progress through feminist knowledge in Africa  
*Patricia McFadden*



Paying the Price: The Cost of the Commoditization of Food and Water for Women  
*Yassine Fall*

The process, people and papers of the Casablanca Group are available at the website: [www.casablanca-dream.net](http://www.casablanca-dream.net)

The management of this website was done by the office of Dr. Devaki Jain, Bangalore, India, till early 2010, after which it was transferred to the African Women's Millennium Initiative (website: [www.awomi.org](http://www.awomi.org))

AWOMI, based in Dakar, Senegal, was set up to fill an important gap in enabling poor women to access and benefit from economic opportunities and wealth they contribute in creating, whilst monitoring that resources earmarked to fight poverty get in the hands of those who need them most. They utilize a three-pronged strategy of research, advocacy and social mobilization to address key issues affecting impoverished women and youth.

To contact the new Casablanca Dream administration, please write to Salimata Bocoum at [sbocoum@awomi.org](mailto:sbocoum@awomi.org)

#### Fourthly, taking note of the shift worldwide

Shifts in the source of GDP which is moving from the first to the third sector -- attention must be drawn to how this threatens freedom from hunger and the protection of the environment.

The neoliberal market-driven macroeconomic and sectoral policies which were biased against agriculture, as well as the low levels of investment in both in terms of infrastructure development (such as extensive road network for marketing and irrigation system); as well as the neglect in adopting new technologies for boosting agricultural productivity, led to the rural crisis.

In most parts of the world women are not only small-land size farmers but also tend to cultivate food crops. So putting women farmers on the top of the priorities will

- Enable their self-organization
- Facilitate special credit services
- Improve marketing

Investment in agriculture and related items will revive the rural economy.

#### Finally, to rearticulate the women's movement

Creating new negotiation instruments derived from knowledge and reasoning with the 'other' on policy, to build their global voice, and to give birth to new and humane economic theories of growth.

The ideas for a policy shift are particularly helpful to women as they predominate in the small scale sector of production and trade as well as in agriculture. They are also the most vulnerable in times of crises.

The Rabat colloquium had the theme [Assessing Development Paradigms through Women's Knowledge](#). Sixteen papers were commissioned by the UNDP on separate themes and concerns to be published in a book. The goal was to go beyond fragmented assessment in relation to particular goals and targets and to reflect more deeply on the kinds of societies that are being created and the extent to which they can achieve social justice. This called for an interrogation and rebuilding of concepts, measures and methods for achieving progress.

In [Casablanca](#) and [Istanbul](#) the group attempted to link women's understanding of reality into macroeconomic propositions. One of the frameworks that emerged after the two day meeting in Casablanca in 2007, was to hang the facts, analysis and evaluation under the broad themes of *Women, Water And Wealth* -- shifting away from goals such as gender equality, mainstreaming gender, etc. Instead to see women as primary critical actors in the economy; water as the most critical issue for women (related to poverty and environmental concerns) and wealth as the reflection of the outcomes of inequality that have emerged globally.

In [Rabat](#), the attempt to build an analysis and proposals which can be negotiated with the global quest for another route to progress, drawn from very different spaces.



The overall objective of the discussions and the papers was to reconstitute economic reasoning and economic development strategies.

The process, the documents and the forthcoming book have key messages which are relevant to the economic crisis of 2008-2009. They emphasise that there is need to bring women's voice into this debate. Given that women are located differently from men in the political and social economy, and given that their scholarship and experience of politics is different, they may have other ideas on types of economic and political arrangements that are called for to deal with the fallout of the crises.

Further it is necessary to discuss questions related to how to reorganize and re-strategies women's voice to deal with issues like global economic structures and policies.



Gender Dimensions and Global Crises in a Context of Climate Change  
*Itza Castaneda and Sarah Gammage*



Women's Movements in Post-Colonial Africa  
*Hope Chigudu*



"Rebooting" Is Not An Option: Toward Equitable Social and Economic Development  
*Stephanie Seguino*



Gender and Human Rights Perspectives on the Global Economic Crisis  
*Sakiko Fukuda-Parr*



Modernity, Technology, and the Progress of Women  
*Hiroko Hara*



Globalisation, Labour, and Women's Work  
*Lourdes Beneria*



Integrating Unpaid Household Services into the Nation's Economic Accounts  
*Solita Collas Monsod*



Cuban Development Alternatives to Market-driven Economies  
*Marta Nunez-Sarmiento*



The Group in Rabat

**Identifying some of the key concerns:**

- Basic commodities like food and water are threatened
- There is turbulence in economies and societies
- There are rising inequalities of wealth and income
- Rising affirmation of narrow identities and conflict over identities, perhaps coming from conflict over resources in turn suggesting unequal powers
- There has been a loss of control over knowledge, livelihoods, even lives for a vast majority of people

**Identifying that there is a need to:**

- Shift the understanding on how women are viewed and view them as growth agents and channels of development rather than as victims or beneficiaries of welfare
- Direct the strategies that we evolve at redressing injustice rather than just relieving suffering
- Recognise that while poverty is a central issue, it must be redefined as deprivation
- Understand the difference between a financial crisis and global recession and the implications of each as well as our response to each
- Reconstruct how growth is fuelled

The ideas that emerged from this analysis were:

**Firstly, to reconstruct how growth is fuelled**

The new paradigm looks at changing the engines of growth, derived from the argument that the earlier engine has generated stark inequalities and acute deprivations and the global crises of 2008-2009. There is a quest for a more democratic engine that puts livelihood and wage-earning on a large scale, which in turn would generate the demand for production, which in turn could be the engine of growth. *Spread the economic engine* is the message that is coming out of everywhere - from President Obama of the USA to leaders from other countries such as India.

Let the demand come from a dispersed platform of incomes, small business, workers on infrastructure projects, etc. This programme demands public investment and credit flows to these economic engines.

**Secondly, a call for deconcentration**

Deconcentration of the source of the GDP, of the market and the location of the power of the financial market. Today, the trend is to concentrate production and trade in the large, in the corporate, in banking systems which are interlocked and peaked - with sharp focal points. The new argument is for dispersed production, dispersed financial services, greater strength to regional and sub-regional networks and local banks which would have viability and which would have the capacity to manage even if there is a break down in the New York Stock Exchange.

**Thirdly, environmental safeguarding**

Water deprivation can be used as an index of many items of development -- measurement of poverty, of inequality, of misuse of water, of women's health, as well as destruction of water resources due to various types of investment, various types of infrastructure development (big dams, industrial use, pollution, and most of all global warming which threatens to melt the glaciers and flood several countries).



Gender Dimensions of the World of Work in a Globalized Economy  
*Naoko Otake*



Progressive Masculinities: Oxymoron or Achievable?  
*Jael Silliman*



Equity in Post-Crisis China: A Feminist Political Economy Perspective  
*Lanyan Chen*