



The Global Fairness Initiative Newsletter

In This Issue... Women In the Economic Crisis

local solutions for a global economy

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

Making globalization work for the working poor

The Global Fairness Initiative (GFI) promotes a more equitable, sustainable approach to economic development for the world's working poor by advancing fair wages, equal access to markets and balanced public policy to generate opportunity and end the cycle of poverty

Upcoming GFI Events

April 30th, 2009 – GFI Poverty Forum- Introducing a Grassroots Perspective to Foreign Assistance Reform. Featured speakers:

- GFI Board Member Reema Nanvaty, SEWA India.
- GFI President Karen Tramontano

April 27th, 2009 – Chairman of the GFI Board Jose Maria Figueres visits GFI from Costa Rica.

Connect with GFI

At GFI we believe in dialogue and see engagement as key to creating fair and sustainable development initiatives. We have recently launched a new blog site and Facebook page.

[Click here to get connected](#)

Recommended Reading

Understanding GFI: How we work for “Fairness”

Creating and maintaining access to economic opportunity is the fundamental challenge facing poor countries and communities in our globalized economy. These access gaps are experienced at the micro level by marginalized small producer communities as well as the macro level by governments seeking to attract direct foreign investment to grow national economies. Gaps range from lack of representation, or “voice,” in both national and international policy making to more simple information gaps that combine to create a deep cycle of local and regional poverty in developing economies. Breaking this cycle and opening opportunity for the marginalized poor requires a framework built around fair access and equal opportunity at local, national and international levels. Advancing this principal of fairness globally means that the voices of the working poor must be incorporated into the core policies and principles that drive our global economic system and opportunities created for poor workers and producer groups to improve their livelihoods.

GFI promotes fairness through a unique multi-stakeholder approach that brings relevant economic and political actors to the table. Be it Government, workers, NGOs, or the private sector, each group has a stake and share in defining economic challenges and developing solutions that expand job and enterprise opportunities. Through engaging each of these players, GFI helps develop solutions that work for all stakeholders, including marginalized groups previously without a voice in these discussions. The dialogue and exchange process created by the GFI model results in commitments by each stakeholder to continue engagement.

The model does not end with dialogue, but puts words into action by identifying technical assistance and capacity building needs, market access strategies, and financing opportunities. This multi-dimensional approach includes several components of poverty alleviation including defining and advocating for value added policy changes. In the end, by creating real linkages between all stakeholders GFI ensures that these organizations and individuals continue to advance the goals that they themselves mapped through the work of GFI's initiatives. These linkages are the basis for future opportunity and innovation and are also the core connections that close the gaps of access and “voice” that so often define the lives of the poor.

Program Highlight:

Women Farmers with Global Potential- India

With generous funding from the Tecovas Family Foundation, GFI officially launched the Women Farmer's with Global Potential (WFGP) project this January which is

World Bank Updates Global Economic Forecasts

(<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/0,,contentMDK:22122200~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:469372,00.html>)

Turning Their Back on the World

(http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13145370)

Implications of the G20 summit for Latin America

(http://www.brookings.edu/interviews/2009/0402_g20_cardenas.aspx)

working with 27,000 women farmers in Gujarat, India. Through the project GFI, in partnership with the Brookings Institution, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the Synapse Market Access Fund aims to improve agricultural production and remove market barriers for women farmers. The fundamental goals are to economically empower poor women producers and create lasting links to market structures so as to better livelihoods and break the current poverty cycle



effecting small women producers in India. The WFGP project is already making exciting progress. Through initial interventions undertaken by SEWA that are aimed at improving the supply chain for castor and cumin farmers important opportunities have been identified including the introduction of improved warehousing and risk management mechanisms. This first phase of work will be followed by a survey to examine the effectiveness of these initial interventions and to further identify factors directly influencing the vulnerability of farming income in order to determine how to best safeguard small farmers from local and global

trade risk. SEWA has begun to coordinate farmer groups and procurement centers which will serve as central locations for farmer training, quality control, record keeping, and for farmers to obtain identified input initiatives. GFI will coordinate outreach to private sector organizations to assess demand, sourcing, and investment challenges and to explore potential avenues for technical assistance. Along with private sector engagement, GFI will also reach out to local and national policymakers to introduce the final piece of the GFI multi-stakeholder process with the goal of creating a framework for policy engagement once the survey and policy assessment results have been completed. The Synapse Market Access Fund will serve as the long-term investment arm of the WFGP program, bringing mid-level financing services to the women farmers so that identified infrastructure and logistics investments can be made to further the market access opportunities created by the program. Synapse, which seeks to fill the credit gap where microfinance does not invest and commercial banks will not, is currently identifying potential India based investment partners to leverage the initial WFGP investments.

Featured GFI Partner:

SEWA

Self Employed Women's
Association



<http://www.sewa.org/>

Feature:

The Role of Women in the Economic Crisis

The global economic crisis is having a disproportionate impact on poor and vulnerable women. In developing countries women often work in the least secure jobs and have little access to labor rights. Their best opportunities tend to be in low-skill manufacturing and production where some labor and wage standards are more readily available. In the current crisis, export driven manufacturing jobs are constricting as companies are forced to cut costs because of falling global demand and decreased access to credit. As a result, women are increasingly being laid off moving them into unemployment or the informal economy where no wage and labor standards exist. The garment sector, a significant source of formal sector employment in the developing world, is just one industry where worsening economic conditions

are most adversely impacting women. Traditionally marginalized and with limited access to skills training, women globally have come to dominate garment production which has low training requirements and has experienced market growth in many developing economies.



Garment suppliers are particularly vulnerable to the credit crunch as they operate on a delicate cycle of debt balanced by anticipated orders. The combination of limited available credit and decreasing purchase orders has meant that many already, and many to come, are either closing shop or asking much more for less from their workers. In the best case women who have been able to keep their jobs are forced to take on more work due to cuts in wages, overtime pay, and other benefits, leaving even those with employment unable to earn enough to support their families. Most workers are no position to raise complaints because the alternative is being out of work and facing a life that is already on the margins of deep poverty. In production sectors like garments where many women are often housed by the factories where they work, there is a double hit that is particularly cruel as losing a job also means losing a home.

“The economic crisis is expected to increase the number of unemployed women by up to 22 million in 2009”

– THE ILO :
Global Employment Trends for Women report.

In most cases the only employment women can find after losing their factory jobs is in the informal sector, where worker rights and safeguards are not protected or enforced. In the many cases where women are “unlucky” enough not to find work in the informal sector, the last opportunities may involve returning to the agricultural communities that they originally left because of limited employment opportunities.

The impacts of job loss are difficult for everyone, but for the working poor, and particularly women, who live right on the margins of survival losing a job can be literally devastating. As countries and multi-laterals respond to current economic problem with stimulus packages and other financial interventions, it is important that policies and programs be designed that deeply consider the unique circumstance of working women in developing economies and the rest of the working poor who stand to suffer the most from this crisis.

For further reading on the economic crisis and women please see Oxfam’s report:

<http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2009-03-29/women-workers-paying-price-economic-crisis>

