



Geneva, 7 May 2012

Attention:

Secretariat of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (hrcadvisorycommittee@ohchr.org)
c/o Ms Elena Kountouri-Tapiero / Ms. Alexandra Swetzer
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Subject: Consultation on the Preliminary Study of the promotion of human rights of the urban poor – strategies and practices (Human Rights Council Resolution 19/7 “The right to food” of 22 March 2012)

The MMM International would like to thank the Human Rights Advisory Council for giving all relevant stakeholders the opportunity to give comments on the “Preliminary study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the promotion of human rights of the urban poor: strategies and best practices”.

In relation to this preliminary study, the MMM International wishes to draw the attention of the Advisory Council to the issue of unpaid work, which is particularly relevant in the context of urban poverty, as highlighted in a recent joint report of the UNFPA and IIED: Urbanization, gender and urban poverty: paid work and unpaid care work in the city – March 2012

(<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/UEPI%207%20Tacoli%20Mar%202012.pdf>)

To quote this report: “Specific aspects differentiate urban poverty from rural poverty. While urban residents are more dependent on cash incomes to meet their essential needs, income poverty is compounded by inadequate and expensive accommodation, limited access to basic infrastructure and services, exposure to environmental hazards and high rates of crime and violence. **This gives urban poverty a distinctive gendered dimension as it puts a disproportionate burden on those members of communities and households who are responsible for unpaid care work such as cleaning, cooking and looking after children, the sick and the elderly.**

Further: “**Since women hold primary responsibility for care and reproductive activities, they are especially affected by limited (or, in some cases, lack of) access to basic services. Similarly, limited access to essential infrastructure such as water and sanitation, inadequate shelter and restricted mobility all contribute to increase the burdens related to unpaid care work,** and thus exacerbate gender-based disadvantage. The resulting ‘time poverty’, rather than income poverty, is typically overlooked by policy-makers but is a key element of multi-dimensional poverty”.

“It has also long been argued that the understanding of how economies operate, the characteristics of poverty, and the likely impacts of public policy cannot be fully grasped without **bringing unpaid work into the picture**. Understanding urban poverty from a gender perspective includes both paid and unpaid care work as well as dependency and powerlessness in gender relations”.

The MMM International therefore suggests the addition of the following recommendations:

- The unpaid care work burden, mostly carried out by women, should be “brought into the picture”, i.e. properly valued and recognized as “work”, and taken into account by policy makers. It is particularly relevant in the case of urban poverty.
- The provision of basic infrastructure and services, i.e. water and sanitation, but also access to energy, waste disposal, as well as access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), should be the first priority when devising policies to alleviate urban poverty. Not only such infrastructures are needed for the direct or indirect realization of basic Human Rights, but only with such basic infrastructure and services can women, mothers in particular, have more time to seek and engage in paid work and earn revenues that will in turn support the realization of such human right as the right to food and adequate nutrition or the right to education for their families.

About the MMM International (Mouvement Mondial des Mères / Make Mothers Matter):

The “Mouvement Mondial des Mères / Make Mothers Matter International” (MMMI), was created in 1947 and was granted UN consultative status in 1949. MMMI raises awareness of society and policy makers on the vital role of mothers for promoting peace and on their contribution to social, economic and cultural progress. MMM is an international, apolitical and non-denominational NGO. It holds ECOSOC general consultative status at the United Nations. The MMM network federates affiliates and associations in 40 countries and represents more than 6 million mothers in the world.

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