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**Supporting women in getting out of the informal sector
and monetarising women's activities:
the role of the Ethical Finance.**

**Written contribution for the first seminar of the
*Chantier Femmes et Economie***

Background

The IV World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, has been a major event in the assertion process of women's rights and of women's role which goes back directly to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The main tools envisaged in the course of the Conference for the promotion of women's role are: *mainstreaming* (acknowledgement and valorization of a gender approach) and *empowerment* (promotion and strengthening of women's political participation). The related challenge has been a sustainable commitment to gender-accountable development: the fight to poverty and the *feminization of poverty* (70% of the world's 1,300 millions poor people are women) by means of the promotion of economic self-sustainability, also through microcredit action schemes.

Issue addressed

Women, in the South and in the North, represent a great part of the *informal sector*, which accounts for a substantial part of all employment in the developing countries and for a growing part in developed countries. This brings forth the issue of gender justice, social cohesion and sustainable development.

A major tool of action is represented by the ethical finance. Why giving credit to women? The ethical finance for women can be considered not only as an instrument for promoting empowerment, but also a way to reduce poverty and its feminization. Moreover, as Grameen Bank experience shows, women are more reliable and guarantee a more efficient use of the resources (also of the financial ones); women borrowers spread the positive social and economic effects of the loan on the community as a whole.

Research proposal

The aim of this short draft is to propose a deepening of the research on Women and Economy from the ethical finance point of view. Both in the North and the South, the aim of the ethical finance and microcredit schemes is to promote women's activities by providing a financial tool for their social and economic sustainability.

A short list of potential issues:

- the role of the ethical finance and microcredit programmes in the promotion of gender and economic justice;
- the role of ethical finance institutions, such as *ethical banks*, in promoting women's role;
- the impact of credit schemes designed for women;
- an assessment of ethical finance experiences;

- international organisations and ethical finance/microcredit programmes: UNIFEM, UNDP, World Bank,

Key words

- Ethical finance
- microcredit
- gender justice
- gender impact
- credit
- feminization of poverty
- informal economy
- social cohesion
- sustainability

Suggested bibliography

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