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**Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

**Summary of the WomenWatch online working groups on the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action**

**Note by the Secretary-General**

1. During 1999, WomenWatch held global online working groups to gather information on implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.
2. The members of the working groups represented more than 120 countries and included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government representatives, intergovernmental organizations and researchers.
3. The working groups focused on identifying, in particular:
  - (a) Policies, legislation, strategies and partnerships that have been successful in furthering women’s equality;
  - (b) Case studies, best practices and examples of successful government business and civil society efforts as well as lessons learned;
  - (c) Remaining obstacles to progress and how they can be overcome.

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\* E/CN.6/2000/PC/1.

4. WomenWatch is the United Nations gateway to global information about women's concerns, progress and equality. It was initiated by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. WomenWatch is an inter-agency activity involving the participation of many United Nations organizations.

# **Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action 1995-2000: voices of gender advocates, researchers, government representatives and civil society organizations**

## **Summary of the WomenWatch online working groups**

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## I. Executive summary

In preparation for the Beijing+5 review, approximately 10,000 individuals joined the **WomenWatch** online Working Groups to discuss progress that has been made in implementing the **Beijing Platform for Action**. The result has been the collection of lessons learned and strategies from every region of the world to guide further action. More than 120 countries were represented among the members of the Working Groups, which considered progress to date, identified continuing obstacles, offered lessons learned and shared “good practices.” Although the results are neither exhaustive nor conclusive, they are representative of the broad experiences of those working for gender equality. They also provide an excellent resource of ideas and strategies to be adopted and adapted as appropriate. As one participant pointed out, *“In UN-related processes such as the Beijing Platform for Action Review, we are sometimes called upon to make broad and sweeping statements about what ‘women’ want, hope or struggle for - we sometimes unify at the risk of marginalizing the marginalized or invisible. We need to make sure that we do not speak of women in universal terms.”* (Philippines)

Across the 12 critical areas of concern, there are both shared and unique obstacles, lessons and practices. Taken together, some common trends emerge. What common obstacles impede progress in all the critical areas of concern and what actions do they suggest? What overarching lessons can be drawn from the experiences shared in the dialogues?

### CROSS-CUTTING OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

Across all the critical areas of concern, a number of obstacles were repeatedly identified as significant barriers to progress in achieving the objectives agreed upon at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The majority of these obstacles are not new but progress in addressing them has been slow.

- Some cultural values, societal norms and practices and religious beliefs place lower value on the contributions, work, ideas and lives of women and girls.
- Women and gender equality are poorly represented in decision-making and policy-making.
- The benefits and negative impacts of trade liberalization, globalization and privatization are contradictory and uneven, with disproportionate numbers of women being negatively affected.
- Sex-disaggregated data is often not available.
- Violence against women and girls at home, in schools, related to discriminatory religious beliefs and in the media continues to grow.
- There is an absence of the political will necessary to undertake action that will achieve lasting change.

### LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learned and shared by participants during the online Working Groups represent important guidelines for future work towards implementation of the Platform for Action. While most were specific in nature, common or shared lessons that cut across all critical areas of concern also emerged:

- Enforceable legislation to create an enabling environment for gender equality must go hand-in-hand with education and awareness-raising strategies.
- To change the attitudes and practices that impede progress towards gender equality, it is essential to start with children early in life and place specific emphasis on gender equality in both formal and non-formal education for young people.
- Simply having more women represented in government or other decision-making positions or having legislation mandating gender equality “on the books” is not sufficient to effect change. Such practices are not synonymous with addressing gender issues.
- Incorporating gender concerns into long-standing debates can often lead to more holistic and effective strategies. For example, looking at gun violence from a health and injury-prevention perspective rather than as strictly a “law and order” issue can provide additional entry points for advocacy and action.
- Holistic and multi-pronged approaches are critical to effecting change, whether in health care, education, advocacy or human rights work.
- Global, national and local-level involvement and context-specific strategies are important to creating lasting change for women, whether in conflict resolution, developing appropriate tools for gender-analysis, or simply stimulating discussion on issues of concern.

### **SELECTED WORKING GROUP HIGHLIGHTS**

A wealth of “on the ground” experiences and lessons learned over the past five years were shared during the Working Groups.

Participants spoke out on the importance of targeting early childhood education...

*The Equal Opportunities Commission has targeted education from early childhood as a strategy in promoting equal opportunities. It aims at integrating these concepts into the schools rather than creating another school subject. In particular, a training module was developed for pre-school children, with picture books, teaching materials, games and songs. Training workshops were organized for over 700 kindergarten and nursery school teachers. Over half of the kindergartens in Hong Kong participated. (Hong Kong)*

Described how women are creating alternative healthcare services...

*We have been trying to develop an alternative health care system, which will be managed by the federation of local women’s groups. Our organization strives for decision making and management control by the women’s groups themselves. All the existing efforts, with some exceptions, have been geared towards raising awareness and providing services to those who are already aware and have access to those services which never reach the poor and illiterate villagers. If we think about equity: is it justified? (Nepal)*

Welcomed new legislation and policies on women’s rights and representation...

*The policy of affirmative action has gone a long way towards augmenting women's participation in the political and public spheres in Uganda today. Here, each district is required to vote to parliament one woman to represent women's voices in parliament, but besides that, women can also compete on merit during elections with men in various constituencies. Affirmative action has thus brought more than 40 women to parliament today and has resulted in many women occupying public positions in many institutions - with Uganda being the only African country with a woman Vice President! (Uganda)*

Are finding new ways of addressing conflict...

*We are working on moving gun violence away from the law and order and purely conflict debate, and towards addressing it within the framework of 'health' and 'injury prevention.' This framework moves the agenda away from post-war, or post-injury, but pre-war, or 'prevention' of injury.' It is based upon the Ottawa Charter framework, that is, 'all people have a right to mental, physical and social well-being.' (Australia)*

Are crossing ethnic divisions to build peace...

*I want to share some strategies and methods used by women's groups in Cyprus. On group formation, from the outset we get the agreement of participants that they only represent themselves, as persons, not NGOs, etc. We also get the agreement of the participants from the beginning that we are there in order to express and understand 'needs' rather than enforce 'political positions.' At the beginning, women coming from two ethnic groups have completely difference attitudes and get a 'shock' from hearing the other speak so differently. We give them the opportunity to represent the most traumatic moment in their history. At this stage the two separate groups start merging. The group has no structure, no leader, no hierarchy, and everyone feels equal. Throughout this process, women are looking within themselves. Change comes from within, not from outside. (Cyprus)*

And are creating and fostering new partnerships for women's equality.

*Organized and creative, women in the informal labour sectors (street vendors) have bonded, and together with men, have organized groups to dialogue and lobby for protection. In Cebu, People's Organizations (PO's) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have formed into tripartite bodies with local governments (GOs) to advocate on issues that concern street vendors and local government code. This strategy of working together is demonstrating that it is possible to create civil societies through networking, organizing and education. (Philippines)*



## II. Introduction

As the United Nations begins its five-year review of the implementation of the **Beijing Platform for Action**, there is a diversity of knowledge and experiences, experiments and strategies from which to draw. Many non-governmental organizations, researchers, individuals, intergovernmental organizations, governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and specialized agencies have made important contributions. What successes can be reported since 1995? What are the persistent obstacles that continue to hinder efforts to meet the ambitious set of tasks ahead? What lessons have been learned in the past five years and what new issues are women facing? What further concrete actions and initiatives can be undertaken to overcome the obstacles to the full implementation of the Platform for Action?

In 1999, the **WomenWatch** project brought together a diverse group of individuals representing different organizations, areas of work and geographic regions to share their experiences in implementing the Beijing PfA. Twelve online Working Groups were carried out through e-mail, each covering a critical area of concern. The Working Groups shared an overall framework and focused particularly on identifying:

### WHAT IS WOMENWATCH?

WomenWatch is the United Nations gateway to global information about women's concerns, progress and equality. It was initiated by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. WomenWatch is an interagency activity with participation from many UN organizations.

WomenWatch is located at:  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>

- Policies, legislation, strategies and partnerships that have been successful in furthering women's equality;
- Case studies, best practices and other examples of successful government business and civil society efforts as well as lessons learned; and
- Remaining obstacles to progress and how they can be overcome.

From September to December 1999<sup>1</sup>, approximately 10,000 people joined the Working Groups to ponder collectively the issues, share lessons learned and provide input

into the Beijing+5 review. The results offer a wealth of practical ideas that will be critical to future work towards implementing the goals of the Platform for Action: equality, development and peace.

### The 12 Working Groups were:

1. End Women's Poverty
2. Achieve Educational Equality
3. Secure and Promote Women's Health
4. End Violence Against Women
5. Women and Armed Conflict
6. End Women's Economic Inequality
7. Promote Women in Power and Decision-Making
8. National Mechanisms for Gender Equality
9. Claim Women's Human Rights
10. Women and the Media
11. Strengthen Women's Role in Environmental Sustainability
12. Empower the Girl Child

<sup>1</sup> Two of the Working Groups took place outside this time frame – End Violence took place from October 1998 to January 2000 and the National Mechanisms Working Group took place from 8 February to 19 March 1999.

## AT A GLANCE

### Who took part in the online Working Groups?

Approximately 10,000 people joined the Working Groups, representing more than 120 countries.

Approximately 10% of members, or about 1000 people, made substantive contributions that were posted to the public discussion, while many others had one-to-one exchanges that contributed to the overall dialogue but were not posted.

On average, contributions were distributed as follows:

North America 35%  
 Europe 17% (including the transitional democracies of Central and Eastern Europe)  
 Asia 17%  
 Africa 13%  
 Latin America 6%  
 Pacific 4%  
 Caribbean 2%  
 Western Asia 2.5%

Although only 19% of all Internet users are outside Europe and North America, nearly half of Working Group participants were from the South. The North-South mix averaged 58% from the North and 42% from the South.\*\* The percentage varied widely across groups, with two discussions – Environment and Decision-Making – having a higher percentage from the South than from the North.

On average, half the Working Group participants represented NGOs.

Government representatives were most active in the Working Groups on National Machineries (30%), Environment (15%), Power and Decision-Making (13%) and Women's Health (13%).

Representatives from academia and researchers comprised 24% of participants on average and were most active in the Working Groups on Education (40%) and the Economy (30%).

Intergovernmental organizations (i.e. the United Nations and the World Bank) comprised the smallest group participating overall (7%).

\*\*Participation from the South was probably higher than this figure indicates, due to the difficulties of analyzing e-mail addresses (i.e. 'global' e-mail domains which do not indicate the sender's country of origin). In addition, Eastern Europe is included in the North.

## Methodology

Each online Working Group ran for six weeks and was guided by an advisory group with expertise in the theme area being discussed<sup>2</sup> and by moderators skilled in leading electronic discussions.

The advisory group for each discussion included a facilitator, thematic advisers and a WomenWatch coordinator (group members are identified in a footnote at the beginning of each chapter). In selecting the advisory group, WomenWatch contacted a wide range of UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in each critical area. The advisory group was selected based on expertise and willingness to commit time to the six-week Working Group.

An agenda for each discussion was developed by the advisory group. The facilitator for each group sent weekly messages to guide the discussion and maintain focus on identifying obstacles, lessons learned and recommendations. Each facilitator wrote a report on the outcome of the Working Group, in consultation with the rest of the advisory group.

The Education Development Center (EDC-USA) provided substantive assistance in content development, as well as assistance in coordination and outreach. EDC also provided day-to-day moderation for the Working Groups, with the exception of Women and the Media (WomenAction 2000) and National Machineries (Christina Janssen).

Membership in the Working Groups was open to all. An invitation was sent to approximately 17,000 individuals and organizations, either directly or via listservs. Outreach efforts focused on women's NGOs, gender studies departments, government officials, multilateral and bilateral

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of End Violence, which was a long-term discussion advised by UNIFEM that ran for 16 months.



organizations. Special efforts were made to reach out to the South and approximately 40% of the invitations were sent directly to people and organizations in developing countries. In addition, the invitation was distributed through individuals' private networks and was publicized on the WomenWatch and UNIFEM websites.

The Working Group archives are available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/forum>. Hosting for the archives was provided by UNDP's Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP).

### **About this report**

This report seeks to compile and share the diversity of ideas that characterized the **WomenWatch** Working Groups. The report was written by Alice Mastrangelo, with input from the WomenWatch committee, the advisory groups and from the moderators at EDC. It draws on final reports submitted by Working Group facilitators, as well as weekly summaries of each Working Group and a review of individual messages received. While it is not possible to cover every topic or issue discussed, the report attempts to highlight issues generally agreed upon as being critical by the Working Group participants, and to offer lessons that are specific and have the potential for replication. A full-length report for each Working Group will be available via the WomenWatch website at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/forum>.

Each chapter features selected **lessons learned**, illustrated by a "case in point" or direct quotation from a Working Group participant. Since it is impossible to represent all the messages received, quotes were selected to represent as much as possible the range of points discussed and to represent members from different regions. Some quotations have been edited for grammar and length, while making every effort to maintain the original intent of the participant. For reasons of privacy, participants' names are not given, but the country and organizational affiliation are provided whenever these are known.

Funding for the Working Groups was provided by the UN Foundation and the Department for International Development/UK.



### III. Critical areas of concern

#### A. Women and poverty

<p><b>End Women's Poverty Online Working Group</b></p> <p>12 October - 23 November 1999</p> <p>Total membership: 971</p> <p>Messages were posted from 63 members in 21 countries (see Annex I), 61% from the North and 39% from the South.**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 54% NGOs</li> <li>· 1% government</li> <li>· 5% intergovernmental organizations</li> <li>· 16% researchers or academics</li> <li>· 24% other affiliations</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>The archive of the dialogue is available at: <a href="http://sdnhq.undp.org/www/women-poverty/">http://sdnhq.undp.org/www/women-poverty/</a></p> <p>**See note in text box on page 8.</p>
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Since the adoption of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** in 1995, there is a growing need to curb increases in poverty occurring in this rapidly changing economic environment. Participants in the *End Women's Poverty Online Working Group*<sup>3</sup> expressed particular concern over systematic discrimination based on gender that exacerbates poverty among women, potential negative effects of trade liberalization and a continuing lack of political will needed to make lasting change. Overall, the agenda for the dialogue focused on causes and experiences of female poverty, macroeconomic and social policies, development strategies to alleviate poverty, access to credit and savings for women and gender-aware research. Promoting

government-NGO partnerships, fostering the use of new services to improve the lives of women living in poverty and developing better understanding about the effects of economic instability and trade liberalization on women's lives were among the emerging issues for the group.

#### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- The negative effects of trade liberalization and privatization processes on the livelihoods of women and girls living in conditions of poverty.
- Persistent, systemic gender-based discrimination in cultural, legal, political and economic spheres that constrain the opportunities of poor women and girls.
- Gaps between policies promoting gender equality and actual changes in administrative practices that would reduce poverty among women and girls.
- Insufficient awareness of, and political will to address, the gendered dimensions of poverty.
- Insufficient representation of women in public office.
- Micro-credit schemes or other economic programmes implemented in isolation from other strategies that aim to facilitate women's equality such as educational programmes or legislative campaigns.
- Insufficient gender analyses and sex-disaggregated data to effectively inform poverty reduction policies.

#### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

##### **The contradictory effects of macro-economic and social policies.**

<sup>3</sup> The advisory group for the End Women's Poverty discussion included Savitri Bisnath (Cornell University), Natalia Zakharova (DAW) and Marisa Kohan (UNIFEM).

The impact and effectiveness of macro-policies, whether focused on economic restructuring or education, in reducing poverty among women and girls was of major concern to participants. A participant from Asia argued that while some specific macro-economic policies have been responsible for increasing poverty among women, they might “bring about improved access for women to human development opportunities and employment,” if reformulated to explicitly consider gender. Similarly, many of the problems faced by women and girls regarding access to social development opportunities “can be proactively removed by the right kind of social policies.” In South Africa, a participant reported that the government is using a comprehensive educational policy to address the historical effects of racial discrimination and thus improve opportunities of poor women. Similarly, in India social policies have been adopted mandating that land assigned to poor households can be registered to women and that financial assistance programmes funded by the government reserve half of funding for women, including state pensions for older women and insurance schemes for female labourers. However, several participants noted a gap between policy adoption and implementation. Participants from Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States stressed that poor women living in economies in transition are forced to assume additional burdens due to economic restructuring. Women become the victims of ‘first to be fired, last to be hired’” (UNDP, Ukraine). The effects of structural adjustment policies (SAPs), with their emphasis on privatization and cuts in social spending, were also identified by participants as further disadvantaging poor women.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED

- **Poverty reduction policies and programmes that are informed by gender-aware analyses of the social, economic, legal and political culture in which they are situated and seek to change discriminatory laws, practices and beliefs can effectively decrease poverty among women and girls.**

*Case in point: The greater proportion of women suffering from various forms of poverty is linked to their unequal access to education, to productive resources and to control of assets, and in some cases to unequal rights in the family and in society. Effective poverty reduction policies must be rooted in the acknowledgement of women's rights and recognize women's multiple roles and the importance of women's informal and unpaid social as well as economic work. (United States)*

*Case in point: Social policies have had a better impact on poverty than globalization and liberalization of the economy due to: i) greater investment in primary education, attention to bridging gender issues; ii) decentralization through the Panchayati Raj system, with 33% reservation for women; iii) greater investment in infrastructure; and iv) greater emphasis on gender-mainstreaming within the government. (India)*

- **Micro-credit initiatives can be an effective poverty reduction tool if they address women's access to and control over resources, rather than economic efficiency alone.**

*Case in point: In Nigeria, this loan, small as it may be, has changed, not only the economic capacity of the women who were forcibly evicted from their homes, but*

*has also made them more active in the struggle for a just compensation for their demolished houses. With education and enlightenment campaigns introduced through projects such as micro-credits, women will become more involved in advancing their own rights. (Social and Economic Rights Action Centre, Nigeria)*

Case in point: *It is important to ensure that women use and have control over the money. Skills training and training in business management should be a part of these types of projects. Linking women to the market and giving them marketing facilities are also some important factors to be considered. These projects need to incorporate gender sensitivity and awareness training for whole families, as a woman's involvement with productive activities cause her extra burden in her existent reproductive activities. (CARE, Bangladesh)*

➤ **Gender mainstreaming is critical to the success of poverty reduction policies and programmes.**

Case in point: *In Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, we have learnt several lessons when incorporating gender into our poverty alleviation projects: include both women's and men's needs and concerns in the formulation of project objectives; identify key constraints to women's participation during project preparation for all components; identify strategies to overcome constraints to participation in all components; allocate project resources to ensure that strategies will be implemented; ensure that sex-disaggregated data is collected throughout the project; assess counterpart capacity for implementing gender-sensitive projects, and, where possible, take action to strengthen this capacity. (Australian Agency for International Development, Australia)*

➤ **Substantive partnerships among governments, the private sector and NGOs are essential for reducing poverty among women and girls.**

Case in point: *The Tamil Nadu experiment on Self-Help Groups was pioneered by a few NGOs as well as by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the 1980's. This experiment proved to be a laboratory model worthy of upscaling and replication in other parts of the State and country. This early pioneering effort was aided and enhanced by assistance of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, through the Tamil Nadu Women Development Project. The prime objectives of the project were to improve the social and economic position of women below the poverty line, through the formation of Self-Help Groups of poor women in these districts, with active assistance and supervision of NGOs. Training in Self-Help Group management, skill development, etc., also played a very important role in empowering poor women. The standing of Self-Help Group members in their families and neighbourhood, and participation of women members in decision-making in their families and community, have improved significantly. Credit goes to the Indian Bank in joining this massive effort and supporting credit-worthy groups with timely doses of credit. (Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation, India)*

**4. AN ACTION AGENDA FOR ENDING POVERTY AMONG WOMEN**

- Advocate for the implementation of micro-finance initiatives that are linked with other empowerment strategies, such as education.
- Develop a more complete understanding of the ways in which global international conditions, such as economic instability and trade liberalization, contribute to the numbers of women and girls living in conditions of poverty.
- Encourage substantive partnerships among governments and multilateral organizations, private sector institutions and NGOs to support poverty reduction initiatives focused on women and girls.
- Foster the use of “new services” that are resulting from changes in information and communications technology, such as telemedicine, to improve the lives of women and girls living in poverty.
- Promote women’s substantive participation during all phases of poverty reduction strategies and policy formulation.
- Formulate and implement gender aware poverty reduction policies.
- Promote the implementation of multi-pronged strategies that redress social, economic, legal and political barriers to reducing the gendered dimensions of poverty.
- Support faster, deeper and broader debt reduction in light of the links between debt-relief and poverty-eradication.
- Support efforts to increase public awareness of the linkages between poverty and gender inequality.
- Support women’s NGOs to work on poverty reduction.
- Support democratic processes that facilitate the creation of jobs, the promotion of investment opportunities, and the lessening of the gap between the resource-rich and poor.
- Encourage the compilation, analysis and use of poverty related data disaggregated according to sex, age, class and race, as well as gender-sensitive indicators to monitor progress in reducing poverty.



## B. Education and training of women

### Achieve Educational Equality Online Working Group

11 October - 19 November 1999

Total membership: 874

Messages were posted from 70 members in 25 countries (see Annex I), 62% from the North and 38% from the South.\*\*

28% NGOs  
1% government  
1% intergovernmental organizations  
40% researchers or academics  
30% other affiliations

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The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/ww/women-edu/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

During the six-week online *Working Group on Achieving Educational Equality*<sup>4</sup>, participants considered core issues pertaining to educational actions and policies affecting all levels of education from preschool to higher education. Gains in girls' enrollment in basic education, girls' academic performance relative to boys, education in situations of armed conflict, the widespread sexual harassment of girls, educational opportunities, education materials and teacher training were among the main topics of discussion and debate. Obstacles to achieving educational equality centred around persistent cultural norms and social practices, as well as educational environments that are discriminatory or unfriendly towards girls.

While most agreed that progress in core areas such as teacher training and attitudinal changes have been modest since 1995, women-led NGOs have been carrying out many innovative and successful educational practices. Looking ahead, participants called for action around emerging issues such as the education of street children and the need for a gendered perspective on education in situations of armed conflict.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Persistent cultural norms and social practices that keep girls from attending school, such as low priority given to girls' education, early marriage and the heavy domestic workload of women and girls.
- Formal educational systems and national governments that have not sufficiently changed curricula, trained teachers or sought to change the social perceptions that perpetuate educational inequality.
- "Girl unfriendly" learning environments, including sexual harassment and discriminatory learning materials.
- Inadequate gender-awareness training for teachers.
- The effects of poverty and its accompanying problems of unemployment, crime or depression on access to education as well as educational attainment, particularly in rural or remote areas.
- Diminishing resources for education in times of national financial crises or shortfalls.
- Demands on the time of women and girls that makes school or literacy programmes difficult to attend.

### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

<sup>4</sup> The advisory group for the Achieve Educational Equality discussion included Nelly Stromquist (University of Southern California), Aicha Bah-Diallo (UNESCO), FAWE, Maria Hartl (DAW) and Dong Wu (DAW).

### **Sexual harassment and violence in schools is a serious obstacle to educational equality.**

A prevailing problem identified across countries was that of sexual harassment of girls. In countries from Sweden and Belgium to South Africa and Zaire participants noted that harassment is a major reason that girls drop out of school. In some cases it is the teachers who sexually harass students, sometimes even resulting in pregnancy. The girls are forced to leave school, while the teachers rarely suffer any consequences. While women's organizations have developed various sex education and STD prevention programmes, many focus on the needs of adult women rather than school age girls. In South Africa a programme called COLTS - Culture of Learning and Teaching Services - is using creative media to explore strategies for ending sexual harassment and violence in schools.

### **3. LESSONS LEARNED**

#### **➤ Multi-faceted approaches are critical to achieving educational equality - from modifying textbooks to offering childcare for siblings.**

*Case in point: I have been involved with education in India for almost 20 years. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was introduced in 1994 as a result of the commitments of the Indian Constitution for Universal Elementary Education (UEE), the National Policy of Education 1986 and the Jomtein Conference. This programme aims to strengthen mainly government rural schools where no fees are charged. The conceptual framework for the programme emphasizes the following: UEE is contextual and varies even across states within the country. Some states may be required to stress quality and achievement having already achieved near total enrollment; while others would need to stress basic participation and enrollment. As is evident each district outlines its own priorities and prepares its own annual plans. The gender focus is strong and it has been seen that among some of the common features of district plans are:*

- *The formation of mothers' committees or PTAs to dialogue with parents on the necessity of sending girls to school.*
- *Free reading-writing materials for girls and children of marginalized groups.*
- *Mid-day meal for all children, to ensure that the girl child gets her share at school.*
- *Ensuring women's/mothers' representation on Village Education Committees which oversee the functioning of the school.*
- *Appointment of additional women teachers and ensuring that each school has at least one woman teacher.*
- *Introduction of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE) for siblings.*
- *Starting Mahila Samakhya Programme (Women's Empowerment) in habitations/villages where mainly poor lower caste women reside to create environment for change. It has been found that after the initiation of empowerment process, these women ask for literacy and numeracy for themselves and their children, including daughters.*
- *Provision of Non-Formal education designed to meet situational problems of girls, e.g. timing and place.*
- *Monitoring girls' enrollment and dropout rates.*

- *Periodical Achievement tests and monitoring of girls' achievement.*
- *Weeding out gender bias from textbooks and ensuring gender-bias-free textbooks (e.g. equal representation of girls in illustrations, protagonists, examples, girls/women not always shown in subordinate positions, textbooks incorporating dialogue with students on these issues).*
- *Ensuring equitable representation of women in all levels of project staffing, school staffing. (India)*

➤ **Given the crucial role of teachers, it is imperative to institutionalize gender education in the training and professional development of teachers and administrators.**

Case in point: *The Equal Opportunities Commission has targeted education from early childhood as a strategy in promoting equal opportunities. It aims at integrating these concepts into the schools rather than creating another school subject. In particular, a training module was developed with the assistance of a professional organization for pre-school children, with picture books, teaching materials, games and songs that the teachers can use in designing their curriculum. Training workshops were organized for over 700 kindergarten and nursery school teachers. Over half of the kindergartens in Hong Kong participated in this programme and each received a free copy of this training module. For primary school children, the EOC collaborated with the Education Department to sponsor a puppet show, Kids on the Block (which originated in the US), to bring equal opportunities into the schools. The EOC also sends out free publications related to the concept of equal opportunities, discrimination, and sexual harassment, etc. to schools and teachers for their reference. Many students from secondary schools and universities call up or visit the EOC to seek information to do their school projects on gender equality or other issues of equal opportunities. (Hong Kong)*

➤ **Addressing functional illiteracy is critical to enlarging opportunities for women.**

Case in point: *The Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALOZ) has never seen literacy as an end in itself, it is seen as a tool to reduce poverty and to empower women by making knowledge available and teaching income earning skills. On graduating from the third level, new literates are able to read anything in their home language, perform numeracy including addition, subtraction (four figures), multiplication and division, and write letters, fill in forms, read and write basic English, and pass the Grade seven entry exams of the formal school system. (Zimbabwe)*

➤ **Parents have the biggest influence on the choices girls can and do make regarding education.**

Case in point: *It is to be noted that although efforts are being made to support girls' education, there are cultural backgrounds from which they originate which should be taken into account. In many African societies (Sudanese inclusive) girls are very much disadvantaged in favour of boys. A girl is often regarded as a temporary member of the family to which she is born, because once she is*



*married she will benefit the husband's family more than her father's. Such attitudes and others are among the factors adversely affecting the education of girls. To change these attitudes requires a revolutionary approach targeted on parents. They need to be enlightened through adult education/literacy that girls education can be as beneficial to them as that of boys. They should know that it is more honorable to marry off a daughter who is well educated than an ignorant one. (Sudan/Finland)*

- **Training low-income women to become early learning practitioners can improve educational opportunities and become a source of income for those women.**

*Case in point: Presently the government has embarked on a national Early Childhood project called Impilo. It funds NGOs in the training of women, from impoverished communities, to become early learning practitioners. Many of these women are themselves functionally literate or illiterate and through this training programme have become literate (grade 9 level). I have just completed an evaluation of one of the pilot centres and the positive results of this programme are already visible. Many of the women have begun to establish centres and generate a modest income by charging parents a fee. (South Africa)*

- **Legal measures to eliminate sexist images and messages from textbooks need the support of teachers, parents and students in order to be enforced.**

*Case in point: There have been two legal measures taken in Argentina for the purpose of modifying textbooks, one in 1984 and the other at the municipal level in 1997. In both cases the local parliament (of Buenos Aires) passed a rule recommending the suppression of sexist images and messages in textbooks. In none of the aforementioned cases did those rules have any real effect in terms of influencing the editorial houses, nor did they motivate support from the educational community. There is a need to develop a stronger and long lasting campaign with teachers, parents, students, even the media, to recognize sexism in textbooks before and during the process of changing educational materials. (Argentina)*

- **Linking educational and training opportunities to economic opportunities is an important part of developing holistic approaches to education.**

*Case in point: I am particularly interested in this discussion as a representative of ACTEW -Advocates for Community-based Training and Education for Women. At ACTEW, we work as advocates to preserve and promote accessible and affordable community-based training for women in Ontario, Canada. The women we work with, many of whom are older, recent immigrants, women with disabilities, sole-support mothers, and/or women of colour, face systemic discrimination and remain disadvantaged by years of economic recession and severe employment displacement. We believe that education and training can be the bridge between poverty and economic independence. Our members' unique sensitivity to the access issues women face enables them to provide holistic and comprehensive employment and training services that enable and empower women to gain and retain quality employment. I think it is more important than ever that those of us committed to providing women-specific community-based,*

*holistic training connect with one another to share curriculum, best practices and resources. (Canada)*

➤ **Sport can be an important developmental tool in women and girls' education.**

Case in point: *In the USA, studies of women who hold high positions in business, government and education administration report that, in childhood and adolescence, they participated in sport or some form of physical recreation which was dear to them. Further, they attribute a measure of their adult success to these important youth experiences. An organization which I represent, WomenSport International, is working to treat sport and physical recreation as a human right which must be available to girls and women. These commitments are strongly related to women's health but are also important to girls' and women's education. Very often the term 'sport' is understood to apply only to men or only to the elite of Olympic style training. The global women's sport advocacy movement is formed by women and some like-minded men who are intent on promulgating the use of sport as a developmental tool for community organizations. (USA)*

➤ **Visual arts and drama can be effective tools in changing discriminatory attitudes as well as violence or other problems within school environments.**

Case in point: *The Culture of Learning and Teaching Services (COLTS) is a project aimed at encouraging learners in the secondary & primary levels to address issues about why the culture of learning and teaching isn't happening at their school. We often use creative media like drama and visual arts. So successful was this project that it has now become a national initiative and is currently being implemented in 5 out of 7 provinces. I supply tertiary students to assist the learners with creating their drama pieces as well as consult, develop resource material, provide training workshops for teachers and supervise my students. Learners participate in District, Regional and Provincial festivals and then in a final National festival which awards textbooks and other resource materials to the winning school. The drama festival is guided by the assistance of professional adjudicators. This year more than 500 schools participated nationwide and this project is indeed getting the attention of government as well as the private sector in a very big way. Within the pieces themselves, a number of specific dramas depict problems of sexual abuse and harassment both at home and within the school's perimeters. They also explore issues of gang rape, pregnancy and STD's. One of the specific outcomes of the project is that learners should have support mechanisms set-up in their schools and Student Representative Bodies should be utilized and developed. (South Africa)*

➤ **High rates of girls' enrollment can often be attributed to policies of universal education.**

Case in point: *Since the 1970s, there is free and compulsory 9-year basic education for all children up to age 14 in Hong Kong. This has made significant change in school enrollment. There is now gender parity in enrollment in primary and secondary schools. In fact, in the past three years women have made up over 50% of the student body in universities. The illiteracy rate of women dropped to about 9% in the early 1990s.(Hong Kong)*

*Case in point: In early 1974, Indonesia introduced the 'SD Inpres' (special presidential instruction for elementary schools) with the goal of achieving universal education for the school going population. Since then, enrollment for girls of elementary school ages, 7-12 years, has risen from 58% in 1971 to 83% in 1980 to 92% in 1990 (years refer to population census years) and 95% in 1995 (Intercensal Population Survey). In fact, enrollment for boys of the same ages rose from 62% to 84% to 91% to 95% for the same years. An important factor in Indonesia's development process has been the rapid economic development, at least until the crisis. This has in turn created jobs not only for men but increasingly also for women, in both the formal public and private sectors. Parents are recognizing the value of investing not only in their sons' but also in their daughters' education. (Indonesia)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA FOR ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY**

- Link education with employment by offering incentives (financial or otherwise) to businesses to hire women and girls in nontraditional positions or fields.
- Make specific linkages between education and economic opportunities, whether through training women to become learning practitioners or informing girls about career opportunities.
- Link vocational training with information about job opportunities in nontraditional fields.
- Form gender fora to address sex discrimination in education and other factors contributing to discrepancies between educational attainment by girls and boys, men and women.
- Establish and enforce government policies for mandatory education of girls, with a quota system to ensure that girls continue beyond elementary education.
- Hold public awareness campaigns advocating for zero tolerance of sexual and intellectual abuse in schools.
- Institutionalize gender education in the training and professional development of teachers and administrators.
- Familiarize teachers with non-sexist and anti-sexist teaching approaches.
- Link academic learning with practical skills for income/employment.
- Promote life-long learning to prevent women from lagging behind in the face of technological and other changes.
- Support poor families in sending girls to school.
- Make use of new technologies and distance education to reach women at home.
- Focus on influencing parental and community attitudes towards girls' education.



## C. Women and health

### Secure and Promote Women's Health Online Working Group

6 September - 15 October 1999

Total membership: 844

Messages were posted from 64 members in 20 countries (see Annex I), 57% from the North and 43% from the South.\*\*

50% NGOs  
13% government  
2% intergovernmental organizations  
26% researchers or academics  
9% other affiliations

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The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/ww/women-health1/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

Over the course of the *Secure and Promote Women's Health Online Working Group*<sup>5</sup>, participants identified poverty and globalization, cultural and religious traditions and lack of political will as the main obstacles to achieving the strategic objectives outlined in Chapter C. of the Platform for Action. The agenda for the dialogue focused attention on major challenges to promoting women's health, effective policies and means to achieve safer living and working conditions, mental health for women and mainstreaming gender in health services. Participants expressed particular concern over the implications of increased conflict and economic transition on women's health as well as the cultural beliefs and attitudes that hinder the goal of securing women's health. Building holistic models of

women's health, empowering women to have greater control over their lives and health and using a rights-based approach to health were identified as the three primary building blocks in a strategy for change.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- The disproportionately negative effects of globalization and increasing poverty on women's health, including women's lack of economic independence.
- Direct and indirect effects of persistent cultural and religious practices on women's health, from infection due to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and female genital mutilation (FGM), to access to food and health care resources at the household level.
- Lack of political will and government commitment to enact national level change and low priority assigned to women's health concerns.
- The effects of the rise of armed conflict and increased violence on women's health.
- An absence of women in health policy decision-making.
- Inadequate tailoring/segmentation of health care services for specific audiences.
- Lack of recognition of the direct connection between social and environmental issues and women's health.
- Lack of choice regarding reproductive health as a barrier to promotion of women's health.
- The growing mental health needs of women, particularly in situations of armed conflict and economic transition.
- The rise of joint religious and political coalitions that have been able to roll back legislation supporting women's reproductive choice.

<sup>5</sup> The advisory group for the Secure and Promote Women's Health discussion included Lesley Doyal (University of Bristol), ARROW, Maria Hartl (DAW) and Dong Wu (DAW).

## 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

### **The low priority given to women's health at the national level is leaving women underserved.**

The dominance of men in positions of decision-making power was cited as a major obstacle to enacting real changes in women's health. The low priority assigned to women's health is evident in examples from India, Tajikistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and the Philippines, where availability of health care services and providers addressing women's particular needs are woefully inadequate. While participants recognized general problem of scarce national resources, the lack of commitment to women's health has continued to leave women underserved relative to men.

## 3. LESSONS LEARNED

From the need to build holistic approaches to healthcare to using a rights-based approach to health, participants in the Working Group shared a wide range of lessons learned and strategies to take forward in continued efforts to implement the Platform's strategic objectives for securing women's health.

- **There is an urgent need to go "beyond the medical model" to build holistic approaches to healthcare.**

*Case in point: The Ntyang Women's group has a membership of 170 rural women. The group has 9 officials who have run their various posts for more than three years. These were elected after the leadership training. The training discussed elements of running groups democratically and taking collective decisions, conflict resolution etc. The group meets once a month during which they have reproductive health education, health talks, and participate in weaving, knitting, plating, making pomade, and baking and making mud pots. These are sold to generate income. The group set up a volunteer reproductive health worker's program, provided essential drugs for the management of reproductive health problems and minor ailments, and also provided non-clinical family planning devices, all in the primary health care context. Services are rendered to the community members through the community drug store located in a strategic place in the district which is easily accessible by the community members. (WHON, Nigeria)*

*Case in point: I am an artist and a Registered Art Therapist (MA, ATR) from the USA. I have recently worked for eight years in a community mental health agency. As I worked in groups, or individually with clients, I began to be aware that many of our women clients had histories of abuse that were not being addressed in treatment. Often the abuse issue was not noted in the clinical records as part of the diagnosis, and if it was, it was seldom addressed in therapy. The reasons for this are many. I agree that treatment and training are best offered in holistic terms. I also believe this is best achieved by integrating topics to address body, mind and spirit, and offering such training within a community format. In other words, women working together, helping other women to work together to help themselves. In eight years of doing groups with women, both as a participant and facilitator, the more integrative and experiential the training and*

*education offered, the more holistic the healing becomes. Teaching self-care and coping skills using multiple modalities such as art, movement, music, and writing, is deeply empowering. Experiential education in health care and nutrition by training women in such areas as relaxation techniques, self examination, gardening, cooking, and local herbal traditions are more lasting than traditional classroom programmes. (USA)*

➤ **Organizing, peer education and advocacy are essential to achieving better health for women, as is building women's self-esteem.**

Case in point: *Women's health in Venezuela is a very important issue. Poverty is the major problem. Many women cannot afford medical assistance, drugs, and do not have access to hospitals or health centers. As an NGO, we held Seminars on Prevention. We understand that Prevention is also a very good support. Education is the key, and through education on how to prevent, we can facilitate many other problems. We taught at schools, university and local communities on how to prevent early pregnancy, how to take care for HIV-AIDS, and how to prevent smoking habits. We also include in these Seminars psychiatric assistance and self-esteem motivation. (Venezuela)*

➤ **Enabling women to take control over their health and assert their rights in designing healthcare services is an important ingredient to success.**

Case in point: *We have been trying to develop an alternative health care system, which will be managed by the federation of local women's groups themselves. The process is quite cumbersome and takes time because it is quite difficult to develop confidence and self-esteem among the disadvantaged women who have been facing violence, oppression and exploitation everywhere. Also, our organization strives for decision making and management control by the women's groups themselves and strongly believes that it is not appropriate to take away the rights of people with the excuse that they are not capable of exercising their rights. Rather, it strongly feels that it is necessary to make them capable of asserting their rights. All the efforts, with some exceptions, have been geared towards raising awareness and providing services to those who are somewhat already aware and have access to those services. (Nepal)*

Case in point: *With WHO warning about India being at the endemic stage of HIV/AIDS, a lot of intervention programmes targeted commercial sex workers (SWs). In most cases the programmes have not made much headway for various reasons, but where the SWs themselves worked as peer workers, the response has been much better. Interestingly the HIV/AIDS intervention programme has now shaped into an empowerment exercise for the women. The women have their own organization with members from other places in the state. Their representatives have participated in international conferences; they have their own co-operative so they cannot be over-charged by shop-keepers, and on their own, they have organized national level conferences demanding recognition under the labour law of the country. (India)*

- **The extent of government commitment and funding for women's health is an important, but not the exclusive, indicator of access to and quality of healthcare services.**

*Case in point: Reproductive health has been announced as a priority in Cambodia in the five-year strategic plan at the national level. However, the health sector has been faced with some issues as follows: The national budget allocation for the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (0.095% in 1999) and the Ministry of Rural Development are very low compared to the Ministry of National Defense (22,07% in 1999) and the total national budget. More medical workers are based in the cities than rural areas. Most health developmental activities have operated at the provincial and district levels, but health centres at the commune and village levels are faced with a lack of materials and resources for expansion. Due to mobile reproductive health training, some women villagers are aware they should come to the health centres for consultation and examination with medical workers. However, treatments and facilities remain significant issues as health centres lack medicine supplies. In the country there exists more male medical workers than female. (In our society, more families promote boys' education than girls'; women are responsible for taking care of households and we are responsible for participating in social tasks.) (Australian Agency for International Development Agency, Cambodia)*

- **A rights-based approach can be effective in addressing not only reproductive and sexual health, but also women's health more broadly.**

*Case in point: Most governments don't have specific policies protecting the (health) rights of migrant workers residing in their country. Existing labour laws are not enforced, international agreements violated, and there are no special initiatives to reach migrant populations with health education messages like safe sex campaigns. Moreover, there are many examples of government policies that are detrimental to the health and well being of migrants. In Malaysia, for example, migrant workers pay first class fees and receive third class treatment in state hospitals, and they do not have health insurance schemes except for accidents and occupational injuries. CARAM-Asia (Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility) is a network of NGOs in seven Asian countries. These NGOs use the methodology of action research to gather the information they need to reduce the vulnerability of mobile people regarding HIV/AIDS by designing appropriate interventions, and to protect their human and health rights by developing effective advocacy instruments. (CARAM, Malaysia)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA FOR SECURING AND PROMOTING WOMEN'S HEALTH**

- Improve and develop education and training of health care workers to enhance knowledge and skills.
- Address poverty and foster women's economic independence as a pre-condition to improved health.
- Call for government policies that guarantee the "right to motherhood" and father responsibility.

- Facilitate access to health care for those who are hard to reach by developing culturally sensitive services, education and training.
- Go “beyond the medical model” to build holistic approaches to healthcare.
- Peer education and training are key to healthcare delivery, particularly in remote areas.
- Integrate organizing, networking and advocacy efforts into health-related programmes enabling women to take control over their health and assert their rights.
- Step up efforts to secure government commitment and funding (political will) for women’s healthcare.
- Adopt a rights-based approach (including the use of CEDAW) in addressing not only reproductive and sexual health, but also women’s health more broadly.
- Engage both men's and women's groups; keep the basic messages clear, simple and action-oriented; work at both grassroots levels in communities and with policy makers, but do not leave out mid-level managers who should be encouraged to take direct responsibility for implementation.
- Track progress towards gender equality in health using basic indicators such as contraceptive prevalence, method mix, and STD rates among others.
- Account for and recognize the direct connection between social and environmental issues and women’s health.





## D. Violence against women

### End Violence Against Women Online Working Group

November 1999 – January 2000

Total membership: 2304

Messages were posted from 190 members in 49 countries (see Annex I), 64% from the North and 36% from the South.\*\*

51% NGOs  
5% government  
3% intergovernmental organizations  
26% researchers or academics  
15% other affiliations

The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://www.globalknowledge.org/english/arcs/hives/mailarchives/endviolence/home.html>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

Section D of the Platform states that violence against women and girls is a major obstacle to development, equality and peace, and constrains most aspects of women's lives. Mirroring the 1993 Declaration on Violence Against Women, the Platform gives a broad definition of violence against women and girls, saying that it is any act or threat of an act that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. Freedom from violence is a fundamental right. The discussion on violence has moved toward recognizing the enormous scope of this problem in every society. There is also an emerging consensus, buoyed by a vibrant activist movement and a growing number of success stories, that violence against women and girls is not an intractable problem. *The End Violence Against Women*<sup>6</sup> online discussion offered many strategies to end violence, including through legislation,

training, better statistics, and new forms of service provision.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Lack of statistics that attest to the extent, nature and cost of violence.
- Laws that are blatantly discriminatory.
- Failure to enforce existing laws
- Lack of protection for women and girls who suffer from violence.
- Impunity for perpetrators of violence.
- A continuing refusal to make violence against women and girls a priority public policy issue, even when strong laws are in place.
- Women's poor economic, social and political status, which constrains knowledge of their rights and access to options and resources.

### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Legal strategies alone are not enough.**

The topic of law reform, advocacy in the courts and other legal-related strategies generated a lively discussion. Members emphasized that many countries still have laws that condone violence against women. In these situations, introduction of national laws that punish marital rape, domestic violence, so called 'honour killings,' and other types of violence against women have been tremendously important.

Yet the discussion on legal remedies also revealed that the issue of legal reform is complex and must be pursued as part of a broader, more comprehensive approach. Many

<sup>6</sup> The End Violence discussion was created by UNIFEM in October 1998 and ran until January 2000. Many members of the UNIFEM staff have provided guidance and input during the discussion.

members perceived that changing laws alone often has little impact. It neither confronts common misconceptions about violence, nor reaches the many women who are not even aware of their basic rights under existing laws. "In India, huge volumes of law have not been able to stop violence against women," an attorney from India wrote. Further, many members voiced concerns that judicial systems function unevenly, often due to a lack of resources. "The legal system in Namibia suffers a serious brain drain and inadequate financial, logistical and human resources, so there is a wide disparity in how courts deal with rape and abuse cases." (Multimedia Campaign on Violence against Women and Children) Others called attention to the corruption that undermines the effective administration of justice in many countries. In some cases, legal reform has been controversial and advocates have warned that it could even result in a step back for women. An example given was in Oregon, USA, where most acts of domestic violence are misdemeanors, but the crime becomes a felony if a woman is struck in front of a child. "This sends a very damaging message: beating up women is relatively acceptable, but doing it in front of a child requires exceptional steps." (Multnomah County Domestic Violence Coordinator, USA).

Many members concluded that multi-pronged strategies are the most effective approach: using international conventions, existing laws, legal reform, lobbying for better enforcement, training of law enforcement officials, and public education and information campaigns to send the message that violence against women in all its forms is a violation of fundamental human rights.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED

➤ **Laws must be backed by implementation, rigorous enforcement, training, monitoring and resources.**

*Case in point: South Africa has passed a farsighted law called the Domestic Violence Act 1998. Unfortunately, the police services are kicking and screaming about their inability to implement. The lack of training, infrastructure etc are some of the excuses used. Implementation of our wonderful legislation is going to require a completely new mindset! (Masimanyane Women's Support Centre and the KZN Network on Violence Against Women, South Africa)*

*Case in point: The government of Tajikistan adopted the National Plan of Action for improving the status of women for the period 1998-2005. In the plan, the government has emphasized that violence should be prohibited in every area of life, and promised to collect accurate statistics on the problem, coordinate with women's crisis centers and design criminal sanctions. However, no resources have been set aside for the establishment of crisis centers and shelters, for training social service workers to help victims of violence, or for equipping state medical institutions. (Khujand Women's Center, Republic of Tajikistan)*

➤ **Collaboration between the judiciary, social service systems and non-governmental groups strengthens work against violence.**

*Case in point: In Mauritius, we have acted against violence on various fronts - legal, administrative and social. A Protection from Domestic Violence Act was passed in 1997 and we have set up an implementation unit with 24 hour service,*

*hotlines and decentralized centres. A referral system has been established with the police, hospitals, and probation services. There is also a family counseling service to provide mediation where the conflicts between the spouses can be resolved. Legal literacy campaigns are being carried out, including in places of work. We use the media extensively to disseminate information. Our next effort will be to conduct research on domestic violence in order to identify the profile of the male perpetrator and to address campaigns towards them. (Ministry for Women, Mauritius)*

Case in point: *The NGO Alternativas Pacificas (Peaceful Alternatives) is based in the city of Nuevo Leon. We are now working with the state government, which for the first time has created the State Committee to Prevent Domestic Violence. For us, this is a great step because the government is recognizing and supporting our work, and fortifying a network that will make our work more effective. After years when there was no effective response from the authorities, I also believe we are going to make real advances. (Alternativas Pacificas, Mexico)*

Case in point: *Our experience in British Columbia is that local coordinating committees can be powerful tools for raising awareness; building trust among service providers, advocates and systems; addressing barriers to effective response to violence; and coming up with innovative solutions and initiatives to make real changes in their communities. (Victim Services Division, Ministry of Attorney General, British Columbia, Canada)*

- **Common indicators need to be identified, and the related statistics gathered, to determine the real extent of violence and the level of government resources allocated to address the problem.**

Case in point: *In South Africa, when a woman reports an assault by a male perpetrator to the police, it is lumped together with other assault cases, except when it is a sexual assault. This means we cannot get statistics on the total number of violent crimes against women. The police claim that the categories for collecting and reporting crime are standard and cannot be changed easily. (South African Medical Research Council, South Africa)*

Case in point: *In Canada, we introduced an over-code that is applied to any offence involving spouse assault. This includes breaking and entering, criminal harassment etc. It took some years for the system to become routine enough so that the stats could be considered accurate, but with training and perseverance it did happen. (Victim Services Division, Ministry of Attorney General, British Columbia, Canada)*

- **Policies and programmes must link violence and a range of other issues, particularly women's health and their economic status.**

Case in point: *We have learned that a major challenge for most survivors of domestic violence in obtaining and maintaining employment is lack of affordable and available child care. Also, many women survivors of violence leave their jobs because of continued harassment and stalking by the abuser. Inflexible work structures do not allow women time off to be in court, seek social services, or look*

*for housing. However, these issues are not being incorporated into national or local policy making and legislation. (Center for Effective Public Policy, United States)*

Case in point: *While the physical injury caused by domestic violence is generally recognized, service providers are not always aware of many other problems, from adverse obstetric outcomes to gastrointestinal disorders to depression. In 1998, the Queensland government allocated the health department \$AUD1 million to combat the health impact of domestic violence. We have piloted a screening system using a short questionnaire in the antenatal and emergency departments of five hospitals. The response from women has been overwhelming. After 12 months, 97% of the 1,174 respondents to an evaluation survey (approximately eight to 12% of whom reported violence) said they thought it was a good idea to ask about violence. (Queensland Health, Australia)*

➤ **Violence is expensive for employers; training can reduce this cost.**

Case in point: *The state of Maryland in the United States now requires 60,000 state employees to attend seminars on the impact of domestic violence on workplace productivity. The governor of the state signed an executive order requiring this, in response to Bureau of National Affairs estimates that employers lose about \$5 billion each year because of absenteeism, increased health care costs and reduced productivity. Managers who know of workers facing domestic violence now refer them to the state's Employee Assistance Unit. Employees are also to call the police if they are in immediate danger, and may take liberal leave or have their checks deposited in different bank accounts. The state is also pressing private employers to offer similar programmes. (Community Well, Research and Evaluation Inc., United States)*

➤ **Disseminating information to women about their legal rights and providing model statutes from other countries is crucial for effective empowerment and advocacy.**

Case in point: *Culturally, widows go through a lot of dehumanizing and harmful practices on the death of their husbands, such as disinheritance, being forced to drink water used to wash the corpse, or being forced into confinement. We have conducted several workshops, broadcast radio and TV talk shows and publish literature and posters. As a result, more widows now visit the legal aid clinic, and they have set up a widows association. (International Federation of Women Lawyers FIDA, Nigeria)*

Case in point: *Legal information on the Internet is still biased towards developed countries, and summaries that are available (e.g. model legislation) are often not detailed enough to give guidance to legal drafters. We have also found that the ability to point to specific precedents from other developing countries is a key lobbying strategy. One useful service would be a compilation of actual statutes on rape and domestic violence from countries around the world, with information about the successes or failures of implementation. Perhaps the UN could function as a clearinghouse for this information. (Windhoek Legal Assistance Center, Namibia)*

#### 4. AN ACTION AGENDA TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Adopt the Declaration and Platform's definition of violence against women, and develop national policies that condemn any form of violence regardless of whether it occurs in the home, the workplace or the community.
- Encourage training on violence across all branches of judicial systems in order to create more comprehensive responses to violence.
- Encourage men to take responsibility and engage in anti-violence work.
- Improve health services for victims of violence, and create new links to essential non-health services, including child care and job training.
- Establish, and assess the impact of, one-stop crisis centers, which help to coordinate and integrate the entire range of services needed by victims of violence, as well as those of other key agencies such as law enforcement and victim witness programs.
- Share effective strategies to end violence among governments, civil society, research institutions and the private sector.
- Ratify or accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well as its Optional Protocol; encourage the use of the Convention in local and national courts.
- Develop common indicators and gather related statistics that accurately depict the scale of violence against women, including those that capture the costs of violence, and that can be used to inform government policy, attract resources and stimulate public debate.
- Hold the police and other judicial officials accountable for their responses to violence; provide positive incentives (job performance) or negative deterrents (penalties).
- Strengthen ties in policies, laws and programmes between trafficking of women and girls and root causes such as poverty.
- Support women's organizations and other civil society groups doing innovative work on violence and/or filling critical gaps in services.
- Find ways to include men in anti-violence work without jeopardizing resources for women.
- Support research into the causes of male violence against women.
- Design a range of education programs to raise awareness that violence against women is unacceptable and to promote effective approaches to ending violence against women, and distribute those programs via mass media, schools, and other channels.
- Develop a globally-accessible knowledge resource related to ending violence against women, which includes such items as guidelines, model legislation, training modules, documentation procedures, and other key materials.
- Improve implementation and monitoring for new and existing laws and international conventions to end violence against women.
- Treat all forms of violence against women (including rape, honour killings, etc.) as public offenses punishable by law.



## E. Women and armed conflict

### Women and Armed Conflict Online Working Group

11 October - 19 November 1999

Total membership: 614

Messages were posted from 68 members in 25 countries (see Annex I), 75% from the North and 25% from the South.\*\*

50% NGOs  
8% government  
3% intergovernmental  
organizations  
16% researchers or academics  
23% other affiliations

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The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://www.sdnhq.undp.org/www/women-armdconf/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

The *Women and Armed Conflict Online Working Group*<sup>7</sup> set out to explore how better to protect women and girls in situations of armed conflict and consider women's roles and participation in conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building. The group's agenda was organized around these issues as well as three additional themes, namely: ending impunity for crimes against women, protection and participation of refugees and displaced persons and the role of women in promoting demilitarisation and reduction of the arms trade. Of particular concern to participants was the question of rape in wartime and what strategies were most effective in securing prosecution of perpetrators. Of equal concern was the prevention of armed conflict. Participants debated gender dimensions of violence, militarism and peace. An emerging

issue for the group was the redefining of security in health or human rather than military terms.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Increasing use of rape and impregnation as a strategy in situations of armed conflict.
- Ongoing difficulty in carrying out legal prosecution of rape and war crimes against women.
- Continued stereotypes, stigma and shame that surround rape impede efforts to record and prosecute such crimes, even where they occur in conflict situations.
- State-sanctioned abuse of particular ethnic groups and women by police and other security forces.
- Absence of women from positions of power in peace negotiations.
- Continued culture of militarism that favours conflict and excludes women from peace-building and political activities.
- Lack of psychological or emotional support in the methods used by international organizations or the media to collect and record sex-based crimes.
- Reprisals against women targeted by the state as "human rights defenders."
- Neglect of the needs of internally displaced women and uneven distribution of aid, with women receiving a smaller share.
- The effects of physical environments within refugee camps and temporary housing situations on promoting conflict.

<sup>7</sup> The advisory group for the Women and Armed Conflict discussion included Gita Raj and Eugenia Piza-Lopez (International Alert), Valerie Oosterveldt (University of Toronto), Comfort Lamptey (UNIFEM), Jane Connors (DAW) and Kerri Power (DAW).

## 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

### **Women's participation in violence and in peace.**

The question of whether women are inherently drawn to peace provoked debate among participants in the Working Group. Most agreed that it was dangerous to insist on stereotypes of women as either peace-loving or as victims. What became evident was that the priorities of women in peace-building are different from those of men, often focusing more on survival issues. Some participants noted that women do bring specific strengths to peace-building, including increased empathy, having often faced discrimination themselves. Also, because women have fewer vested interests in political systems, they are more likely to pursue peace. They are also often the primary victims of conflict, and directly feel the effects of conflict on their families, making them more likely to work for peace or alternatively to pass on hatred because of atrocities committed.

On the other hand, women are often actively involved in conflict situations and violence with varying effects. One participant noted that in Eritrea, 35 per cent of freedom fighters were women, resulting in empowerment for many of these women in the post-conflict period. She related that "Partly due to their role in the 30 years war for independence, ... we see a more equal society." Another participant warned that assumptions by aid communities about women as innocent victims - rather than as potential perpetrators - had perpetuated the conflict in Rwandan refugee camps. Overall, the debate led participants to underscore the importance of conceptualizations of masculinity in creation of militaristic cultures and the gendered construction of conflict and violence. As one participant asked, "How can we, as scholars and activists of gender and conflict, influence those who intervene in situations of armed conflict to incorporate a more nuanced understanding of gender in their programming, going beyond just 'adding women to the picture'?"

## 3. LESSONS LEARNED

- **Significant progress can be made by broadening war crime definitions to include sexual violence committed against women; thereby increasing possibilities for prosecuting such crimes.**

*Case in point: The International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda have made tremendous progress in not only prosecuting these crimes, but also broadening their legal characterization to include rape and other forms of sexual violence as instruments of genocide, crimes against humanity, violations of Common Article 3 [of the Geneva Convention], violations of the laws or customs of war, torture, grave breaches, and, hopefully soon, enslavement. The Statute of the International Criminal Court also enhances the ability of prosecuting crimes committed exclusively or disproportionately against women by providing for the prosecution of rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity. While much remains to be done, the progress made since 1993 is extraordinary. (USA)*

- **The impacts of rape tend to be corrosive, intergenerational and dispersed, particularly where conflict itself is disguised or unacknowledged.**

Case in point: *It is difficult for rape to even be recognized as a political weapon in such situations where the conflict itself is disguised or unacknowledged. Secondly, there is no prospect of relief or a change in situation that victims can look forward to: there is only the endless coping in a situation that never gets different and that everyone fears to escalate. Finally there is a pretense of normalcy necessary for coping with years of such a conflict where the particular rape is just one atrocity among the simultaneous many and where the victims cannot relate to it as occurring in a situation of normalcy. And of course there is no recourse, much less rehabilitation or treatment, available. (India)*

- **Redefining violence in public health and “injury prevention” terms, rather than strictly law and order issues, can open new opportunities for legal or legislative action.**

Case in point: *In relation to Australia, the framework which the organization I work for has been working on is moving gun violence away from the law and order and purely conflict debate, and towards addressing it within the framework of ‘health’ and ‘injury prevention.’ This framework moves the agenda away from post-war, or post-injury, but pre-war, or ‘prevention’ of injury. It is based upon the Ottawa Charter framework, that is, ‘all people have a right to mental, physical and social well-being.’ Working out from here in relation to gun control you would look at such issues like the transfer of arms, domestic guns laws, manufacturing of weapons, changing of cultural beliefs, etc. (Australia)*

- **In conflict and peace-building, the concerns and responses of women are often different from those of men.**

Case in point: *Ironically, it may sometimes be that in war or conflict-torn situations women are those who hate the most since it is their children and their dependents whom they have seen hurt or killed. And unfortunately, since this anger by acculturation is often turned inward, it is frequently passed onto the next generation in attitudes and education. I think it is about time we started having a good hard look at how women do actually respond to conflict, what we need to do about ourselves, how the women's movement has assumed some of the aggression of patriarchy supposedly in order to achieve equality. In Manipur, where women are actually used as the symbols for peace initiatives very often and as the negotiating front, this has complex consequences. First of all, it turns these women into targets themselves. Secondly, while the women are engaged in survival issues and concerns and in the movements against human rights violations to an overwhelming extent, the degree they can control or even input into the political decision making is probably minimal. (India)*

Case in point: *Because women are often responsible for day to day survival, whether in war or peace, they recognize what's sometimes called 'structural violence,' the violence of exploitation, inequality and poverty, as well as overt physical violence of war. They often make a connection between the two, by working on practical projects of survival. For instance, the remarkable cross-community activity of the women's centres in Belfast is made possible by their focus on the similar needs of women in the poor working class city districts on both sides of the conflict. (UK)*



- **Providing humanitarian help for women in emergency situations is not enough – training in women’s human rights advocacy is needed.**

*Case in point: After the Armenian Earthquake in 1988, I began to work with the Georgian Red Cross. In April 1989, we created the Republican Rescue Centre ‘Santeli’ and took part in many life-saving actions in the Trans Caucasus Region. But when rescuers from Santeli worked in the Emergency situation (1991 - 1994), they did not know anything about the Women's Human Rights Advocacy process. Not only humanitarian help was necessary there, but also fact finding, documenting (interviewing), analyzing, and recommendations on how to create a strategy for Women's Human Rights (WHR) protection.*

*We want to do training for women from risk groups (displaced persons and the population on the border of Abkhazia) in Women’s Human Rights Advocacy and behaviour in extraordinary situations, and research the situation in the Gali region through fact finding and documenting. (Georgia)*

- **Community-led peace-building activities can succeed where official negotiations have failed, and can provide models for official processes.**

*Case in point: Even though the environment has not been conducive to a greater involvement of Angolan women in the peace process, a number of peace-building initiatives have been proposed by grass roots organizations led by women with the support of the Angolan government through the Ministry of Family and Women's Promotion and church leaders. Our organization is a result of some of*

**Strategies for peace-building**

- ◆ Support national, local and grassroots peace building initiatives through a coordinated plan of action.
- ◆ Strengthen the institutional capacities of women and other key players engaged in peace building related activities through training in adult education and gender.
- ◆ Mitigate negative aspects of regionalism, ethnic mistrust and rural-urban divisions.
- ◆ Develop appropriate mechanisms for community bridge-building, reconciliation and conflict resolution involving traditional leaders, and religious authorities.
- ◆ Contribute to a national consensus of peace reaching the grassroots organizations (building of peace culture).

*these initiatives and it aims to: i) Create a communication network for exchange of information and experiences in gender and development; ii) Lobby and advocate in the government for gender related issues; iii) Empower women to face the challenges of gender inequality and iv) Provide training to member organizations. This organization was created mainly because women realised the need to participate more actively in the changing of women and men's attitudes and behaviour towards the country's reconstruction and development. (Angola)*

*Case in point: The bi-communal activities in Cyprus started back in the 1990s. We started as 10 and 10 from*

*each community meeting on the border, in a no-man's land called the ‘Green Line’ which divides Cyprus. Our number grew to three thousand, meeting regularly. This was very frightening for the authorities since it proved that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots could meet and talk and understand each other. The official policy was that we could ‘never live together again.’ From the*

*very beginning, women were very much part of the bi-communal peace groups. I created the Bi-Communal Women's Group and it met for more than a year till it was stopped. Women's groups were stopped before anyone else. Why was this? I think women were more frightening to the authorities than mixed groups.*  
(Cyprus)

- **Coming to the peace table as individuals, avoiding strict political positions, networking and forming grassroots women's committees are among the successful strategies for community peace-building.**

Case in point: *I want to share some strategies and methods used by women's groups in Cyprus. On group formation, from the outset we get the agreement of participants that they only represent themselves, as persons, not NGOs, etc. Therefore during seeking they agree not to use 'we' but 'I' and avoid 'generalizations.' We also get the agreement of the participants from the beginning that we are there in order to express and understand 'needs' rather than enforce 'political positions.' At the beginning, women coming from two ethnic groups have completely difference attitudes and get a 'shock' from hearing the other speak so differently. We give them the opportunity to represent the most traumatic moment in their history. At this stage the two separate groups start merging. The group has no structure, no leader, no hierarchy, and everyone feels equal. Throughout this process, women are looking within themselves. Change comes from within, not from outside.* (Cyprus)

- **It is critical to create economic opportunities for women in post conflict reconstruction.**

Case in point: *Rwandan Women Committees, grassroots structures consisting of ten women who are elected in women-only elections to represent women's concerns at each level of government, have already been targeted by the donor and NGO community as conduits for development assistance. The government gave each committee the responsibility for setting up, contributing to and managing Women Communal Funds (WCF), still in the nascent stages of development. The WCF are intended to help start economic activities at the commune and sector level while allowing grassroots women to participate in funding decisions affecting their lives. This is accomplished in part through micro-credit activities, in which the WCF provide small loans at minimal interest rates to women who might otherwise not be able to secure credit. The Women and Transition Program has reoriented many of its activities to work with the Women Committees at the commune level through the provision of funds for their activities and with training and guidance to the WCF Women Committees.*  
(Rwanda)

- **Women's organizations need a formal "place at the table" in preventative diplomacy, peace negotiations and post conflict governance.**

Case in point: *An extraordinary group of women in Liberia founded the Liberia Women Initiative to bring popular pressure to bear on the politicians and warlords. Discussion amongst the women regarding the stalemate in the peace process prompted them to add their voices to the call for disarmament and peace.*

*Though they did not envisage that the organization would become a long-term thing, they became very involved in the Liberian peace process and maintained a high level presence at all the peace conferences. This marked their breakthrough into the peace process, because policy makers were impressed with their tenacity and determination to present and represent the views of women in the peace process, since women have borne the brunt of the violence that has engulfed Liberia. (UK)*

Case in point: *In Burundi women decided to organize themselves and create associations for peace and reconciliations. Unfortunately women were excluded in all meetings organized by the government in order to find a solution to the problem. Even women who were members of the parties were not consulted. Then women saw that they are excluded in any initiative, and they decided to count on their own. They participated in international fora, they met other women and discussed with them. With the help of Ms. Speciose Kazibwe, the Vice President of Uganda and Ms. Perry the ex-President of Liberia, they managed to organize a conference in Uganda, after which they met the President of Uganda, who accepted to negotiate the participation of Burundian Women in the Burundi peace negotiation in Arusha. (Burundi)*

➤ **Capacity-building, training and women's forums are essential to supporting women's participation in post conflict reconstruction.**

Case in point: *The role of women in post conflict reconstruction is crucial in sustaining and maintaining a voice in community dialogue. It is important that when we begin to provide assistance to communities that have come out of conflict there is a role for women's institutions - formal or otherwise. In the case of Sierra Leone for example, we shall be organizing a training programme for organizations wanting to utilize the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (February 28th - March 10th, 2000) concentrating on documenting women's human rights abuses and what these organizations can do with the information. (UK)*

➤ **Opportunities for women to share their stories are important in helping people to understand long-standing conflicts, move towards reconciliation and seek redress, but they must be done respectfully and be accompanied by needed counselling.**

Case in point: *East Timorese refugees are currently arriving in Australia and the International Commission of Jurists Australia have called for volunteer lawyers to take witness statements from the refugees here to preserve fresh evidence for a future War Crimes Tribunal, or internal Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As we all know, the future of a criminal court for East Timor in the style of the ICTY or International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda will be decided by the UN General Assembly and subject to all manner of politics. But I see great value in recording the stories of these women whatever the outcome of the ultimate process, as long as it is done with great sensitivity and care, and only by responsible professionals, and not exploitative media, with proper counselling for all concerned. (Australia)*

#### 4. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT: AN ACTION AGENDA

- Explore the creation of a permanent women's assembly or "Security Council" to address conflict prevention.
- Consider whether rape against women should be addressed as an issue separate to other war crimes, or addressed within the context of existing international treaties that account for such violations.
- Include men in post-conflict reproductive health efforts.
- Work towards redefining security in human rather than military terms or gun control as health prevention rather than strictly a "law and order" concern.
- Create preventative (pre-conflict) "zones of peace" for displaced persons to be maintained by UN peace-keeping forces.
- Develop more nuanced understanding of gender in programming in situations of armed conflict, beyond stereotypes of women.
- Campaign against the use of weapons such as terror, rape, or torture.
- Document sexual violence in a holistic, comprehensive manner and accompany documentation efforts with medical and psychological support.
- Develop an international instrument devoted to women in armed conflict containing language that not only prohibits rape, but explicitly criminalizes all forms of sexual violence.
- Appoint a UN Special Rapporteur on Women and Armed Conflict.
- Work to change the stigma and shame surrounding the victims of rape and other sex-based crimes among women, men, doctors, society at large, the legal system, families, the police, etc.
- Provide increased gender training for all peace-keeping officers, including NATO.
- Include more women in security and monitoring missions.



## F. Women and the economy

### End Women's Economic Inequality Online Working Group

6 September - 15 October 1999

Total membership: 982

Messages were posted from 82 members in 30 countries (see Annex I), 55% from the North and 45% from the South.\*\*

36% NGOs  
6% government  
15% intergovernmental organizations  
30% researchers or academics  
13% other affiliations

The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/ww/women-economy/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

The five years since the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA) have seen rapid and widespread changes in global and local economies worldwide. Globalization, economic transition, trade policy liberalization, and an increasing focus on micro-finance have become part of the debate as well as of women's daily lives. Against this backdrop and within their particular regional, national and local contexts, participants in the *End Women's Economic Inequality Online Working Group*<sup>8</sup> considered what progress has been made since 1995, the obstacles that remain, and the steps required in the future. Broadly, the dialogue centred around ending women's economic inequality, harmonizing work and family responsibilities, and economic policy-making.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Entrenched social attitudes shared by both women and men about appropriate types of work for women and men (gendered division of labour) - attitudes that segregate women into low-paying, low-valued work and put the burden of unpaid caring work primarily on women.
- Lack of recognition of women's home-based work, particularly of older women, and the implications for social security or retirement.
- Forms of economic restructuring and liberalization, which create new problems for women.
- Lack of relevant, sex-disaggregated data and information on employment required for informed policy-making.
- An absence of women in national and international decision-making on economic policy.
- The complex requirements of well-designed micro-finance schemes if they are to serve as a means to reduce the economic inequalities between women and men.

### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

#### Are economic restructuring and big business always "bad for women"?

In every region, participants expressed concern at the potential and actual negative effects of privatization and economic transition. With privatization of public sector services, women are losing jobs and protections against discrimination. In many countries, women are becoming increasingly disadvantaged as their economies privatize. Elsewhere, private companies have adopted non-discrimination policies, unlike the parastatals that preceded

<sup>8</sup> The advisory group for the End Women's Economic Inequality discussion included Diane Elson and Nazneen Damji (UNIFEM), Semia Guermas de Tapia (DAW) and Marisa Kohan (UNIFEM).

them. Participants pointed to the development of ethical codes of conduct and fair trading practices by large companies as an emerging good practice to be encouraged.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED

- **It is essential to design economic programmes and accompany legislative changes with outreach, awareness-raising and/or education programmes that seek to change discriminatory societal attitudes and beliefs.**

*Case in point: In our programmes we have advocated monitoring how the profit has been used within the household. My concern here is that women often do not have control of money within the household and men may take control of the credit funds. There are great benefits micro-credit programmes can bring to women, as long as they are coupled with empowerment measures for women that ensure access and control of household finances and decision-making in consultation with spouses. (UNIFEM/UNDP/UNV, Vietnam)*

*Case in point: I would like to share my experience having set up the Equal Opportunities Commission EOC in Hong Kong in 1996. It is responsible for administering the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance. While legislation provides an important standard and means to protect equal opportunities, it needs to be coupled with promotion and long-term education. The EOC launched a campaign to raise public awareness and promote understanding of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination. In the case of Hong Kong, public awareness of the EOC rose from 35% in 1996 to 87% in 1998. (Chinese University of Hong Kong, China)*

*Case in point: Women are often seen as housewives or beauty queen whereas men are seen as serious businesspeople. The South African Commission on Gender Equality has tried to address this issue by holding annual symposiums with the media and becoming involved in media training to advance alternative and creative ways of dealing with gender issues. We are also hoping to influence the curriculum of institutions that train journalists. (Commission on Gender Equality, South Africa)*

- **National policies legislating nondiscrimination can foster (but not assure) an enabling environment for securing more equitable economic opportunities for women. They have also had unintended negative consequences if they have not considered women's unpaid work.**

*Case in point: If we take the example of Uganda, we can see how affirmative action has gone a long way in empowering women. In Uganda, one of the economic policies has been to design special policies to encourage women to join technical jobs, armies, police, parastatals, commissions, etc. The government made it a requirement that in all sectors of employment, there must be a woman at an executive level. This policy of affirmative action is vital in instilling courage in women. Many women are massively joining the army, police, technical fields and other economic activities once dominated by men. For instance today, the business sector in Uganda is largely 'genderised' because of the deliberate policy*

*of the government to encourage women to take up such economic ventures. Women are now being seen opening private schools, housing finance companies, supermarkets, etc. (Pan Africa Women's Liberation Organisation, Uganda)*

Case in point: *I just finished a case study of the employment practices of a large international agribusiness, Cargill, which purchased 20% of the parastatal Zimbabwean Cotton Board when it was privatized in 1996. Two things were striking. First, they hired women which the parastatal had not done. There is a slight concentration of women in the lower grades, but also substantial concentration at the top level. The computer jobs are new, and they are all filled by young women. These are good jobs, with housing, benefits and permanence. When I questioned Cargill about why they hired women, their reply was that they were an equal opportunity employer. They also pointed out that another section of their code of conduct says that they will obey the relevant laws of the countries in which they operate, and Zimbabwean law forbids discrimination in employment. (Gender and Agribusiness Project, University of Illinois, USA)*

**In contrast**

*A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the economic environment of South Africa has shown that while legislation sets the stage for an enabling environment, large companies are resistant to procuring services or products from women micro-entrepreneurs. (South Africa)*

Case in point: *Although the labour law in Japan requires equality, the reality is that if the business owner demands harder work or longer working times from high-wage, full-time, working women (just as it might and often does from men), women often have to give up their full-time jobs and change to lower-wage, shorter-time period, part-time jobs. The part-time wage is very low. (Japan)*

➤ **Ratification of international conventions can help secure national commitment and catalyze national action.**

Case in point: *Given that the principle lying behind the ILO Convention is equal treatment for home workers, ratification of the Convention is an important step. In Ireland, the government made a commitment to an information campaign for home workers. In India, the government is setting up a committee to look at the adoption of a policy on home-based work, with particularly reference to setting up social security funds for home-based workers. In the UK, the government recently introduced a national minimum wage, which specifically includes home workers. In Madeira (Portugal), the regional government has been influenced by the union and has introduced regulations for embroidery home workers. (HomeNet, UK)*

➤ **The development of tools for analyzing government budgets from a gender perspective are facilitating the reorientation of government allocations towards women's economic empowerment.**

Case in point: *Gender-sensitive budgets or women's budgets are processes and tools aimed at facilitating an assessment of the gendered impacts of government budgets. They are efforts around disaggregating and deconstructing government's mainstream budgets according to their impacts on women and men*

*and different groups of women and men. So far, the women's budget initiatives stressed reprioritization rather than an increase in overall government expenditure. They have also emphasized reorientation of government activities rather than changes in the overall amounts allocated to particular sectors. (International Center for Research on Women, USA)*

➤ **Civil society-government partnerships can support local organizing for women's labour and economic rights.**

*Case in point: Organized and creative, women in the informal labour sectors (street vendors) have bonded, and together with men, have organized groups to dialogue and lobby for protection. In Cebu, People's Organizations (PO's) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have formed into tripartite bodies with local governments (GOs) to advocate on issues that concern street vendors and local government code. This strategy of working together during the stages of planning, implementation and evaluation is gradually being practiced and appreciated, demonstrating that it is possible to create civil societies through networking, organizing and education. (RSCJ, Philippines)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA FOR ENDING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**

Based on the persistent obstacles to progress identified, key issues debated and lessons shared over the course of the dialogue, an action agenda for ending women's economic inequality might embrace the following actions:

- Further develop and use gender budget initiatives to analyze government revenue raising and resource allocations.
- Advocate the adoption of independently monitored ethical codes of conduct and fair trading practices by private businesses.
- Stimulate debate on, and take steps to obtain, the economic security of older women.
- Recognize home-based work of women and girls, with accompanying changes to state-sponsored retirement programmes as well as greater regulation of labour practices to minimize exploitation of girls' and women's labour.
- Promote gender mainstreaming in economic policies, for instance by making gender equality plans obligatory in international development bank transactions.
- Look to self-help and community-led micro-finance programmes as a flexible alternative to bank-led initiatives.
- Encourage governmental - non-governmental partnerships in support of women's economic rights.
- Recognize women's unpaid work and provide services (childcare, etc) to assist families with home work responsibilities.
- Compile and analyze economic and employment data and information on a sex-disaggregated basis.
- Adopt concerted efforts to change discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes as an active component of economic empowerment programmes and legislation.
- Introduce and enforce legislation and policies guaranteeing nondiscrimination and equal opportunity.
- Make use of human-rights, labour and other Conventions to secure national commitment and action in accordance with such legal instruments.



- Use multi-pronged strategies that address cultural, legal and structural obstacles and a “lifecycle approach” that takes into account the multiple roles of women.
- Make gender equality plans obligatory in international development bank transactions.
- Encourage partnerships between governments and non-governmental organizations in support of women’s economic rights.



## G. Women in power and decision-making

### Promote Women in Power and Decision-Making Online Working Group

6 September - 15 October 1999

Total membership: 952

Messages were posted from 87 members in 37 countries (see Annex I), 44% from the North and 56% from the South.\*\*

45% NGOs  
13% government  
9% intergovernmental organizations  
20% researchers or academics  
13% other affiliations

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The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/www/women-power/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

What is the status of women's political representation? How are women in political office or other decision-making positions addressing gender issues? What has been the impact of affirmative action programmes and quotas? How can we strengthen the position of women in decision-making? These were among the key themes addressed by the *Online Working Group to Promote Women in Power and Decision-Making*<sup>9</sup>. The participants in the dialogue reported quite different national experiences regarding representation of women in government and the legislature. Some reported significant progress since 1995, while other reported the lack of any real change in recent years. The impact and effect of affirmative action and quotas were discussed at length, as were a number of strategies for supporting greater participation by women in decision-making bodies.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Women in elected positions who cannot or choose not to speak in their own voices, due to pressure from male family members, the political difficulty in taking a strong stand on gender issues or fear of losing power.
- Insufficient training and preparation of women who plan to be or are involved in the political arena.
- Backlash against women in public administration resulting in demotions and higher risk to lose their positions due to financial cutbacks.
- Women-unfriendly work environments, including sexual harassment, lack of day care services and inflexible work hours.
- Socio-cultural attitudes that circumscribe women's roles and perceptions of those roles and perpetuate negative stereotypes of women who run for or hold public office.
- Lack of access to information and knowledge regarding public life.
- High cost of mounting political campaigns.
- Continued tendency to assign women to sectors in government that are perceived as traditionally female. For example, education, health, social security or community services.
- Threats of violence against women running for political office and their families.
- Lack of government accountability for gender equality.
- Women's multiple responsibilities that make political careers challenging.

<sup>9</sup> The advisory group for the Women in Power and Decision-Making discussion included Zonny Woods, Laufitu Taylor (UNIFEM-Fiji), Natalia Zakharova (DAW) and Kerri Power (DAW).

## 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

### **Is increased representation of women in decision-making positions or positions of power making a positive difference?**

Participants noted that more women in decision-making did not automatically mean better policy, and considered how to support women in power so that they can make positive differences for other women. Some called for individual women and those in organizations to provide female elected officials with the information and support they need to promote gender equality. Creating an environment of shared responsibility and greater accountability to gender equality by those in decision-making positions was stressed by all.

## 3. Lessons learned

- **Informal networking and opportunities to exchange ideas are important to supporting women in political office and making concerns visible to policy-makers.**

*Case in point: We have developed the programme 'Representative and Represented Women,' a series of monthly breakfasts to discuss political issues and develop advocacy activities. Our breakfasts are an example of how a women's organization establishes dialogues with women elected officials across party lines. We invite ALL national women reps and ALL women legislators of the City of Buenos Aires to each breakfast. (Fundacion Mujeres en Igualdad, Argentina)*

- **Women's participation in decision-making and women's leadership is having a positive impact on gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive policies.**

*Case in point: Women's participation in decision making has an impact on the kind of policies that are enacted. If I am to take the example of the Health Policy, one of the Junior Ministers is a woman and she insisted that it be mainstreamed for gender. A retreat was organized and a consultant brought on board to help with the process and this has had a positive impact. For the first time, the Policy addresses issues of violence against women and proposes that data be disaggregated for gender. The challenge now is to operationalise the Policy and this is where we shall be up against a lot of resistance. (Ministry of Health, Uganda)*

- **Quotas and affirmative action programmes have increased women's participation, but still encounter resistance.**

*Case in point: Affirmative action measures have been taken in Eritrea. Thirty percent of seats are reserved for women at the national and regional assemblies resulting in 22% representation at the national level and at the regional level ranging from 27-37.8%. (Eritrea)*

*Case in point: In Uganda, the 1995 constitution clearly in article 32 and 33 stipulates and outlines the rights of women to equal participation in all political and public space with even specific articles addressing the issues of affirmative action.*

*The policy of affirmative action has gone a long way in augmenting women's participation in political and public sphere in Uganda today. Here, each district is required to vote to parliament one woman to represent women's voices in parliament, but besides that, women can also on merit compete during elections with men in various constituencies. Affirmative action has thus, brought 40 odd women to parliament today.*

*Correspondingly, the same constitution provides that women must occupy positions in all government institutions, parastatals, commissions and any other institutions so as to enable them to voice their interests and demands. This policy has resulted in many women occupying public positions in many institutions; with Uganda being the only African country with a woman Vice President! (PAWLO, Uganda)*

**Building leadership skills in young women**

Develop self-esteem and leadership skills.  
Educate young women to think for themselves and make choices.  
Create policies that ensure equal access to early education.  
Educate girls on national political system.  
Support girls in team sports and in acquiring a team mentality.

*Case in point: The Colombian Congress recently passed a quota law that requires that women make up 30% of the highest government positions and, for example, that at least one woman be in each 'terna' (three candidate list of nominees presented to the President or other high officials*

*from which they may name their appointees for higher offices). The law is not yet in effect and many believe that it will be vetoed or declared unconstitutional before ever actually going into effect. (Bogota, Colombia)*

➤ **Developing leadership skills in young women is essential in building future leaders.**

*Case in point: The Gender and Development programme(GAD) co-sponsored with Lithuanian NGOs, a camp for young teenage women. We adapted the 'Girls Leading Our World' (GLOW) camp established in Romania by Peace Corps volunteers, to form the 'Women's Business Leadership Camp.' In addition to business issues, the camp focused on developing personal and leadership skills in young women, especially self-esteem. We believe that before women can become strong in the business realm, including being able to make decisions well, they must have the necessary skills developed. (U.S. Peace Corps, Lithuania)*

➤ **Organizing and advocacy work by women's NGOs is raising awareness and building momentum for women to take action in the political arena.**

*Case in point: There is no electoral law in Nigeria affording women opportunity for equal representation. However, advocacy has increased the awareness of women. For the first time, Nigerian women set a political agenda which was published as a book. They also organized a women's summit and asked for Affirmative Action. Women even formed a political party, and though it was not registered, it is now a political association.*

*On the local level, in the Rivers State, the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) has done a lot of campaigns in the form of advocacy visits, voter education, and radio talks. These methods, again, increased awareness amongst the women folk. The men were sensitized along these lines, as well. FIDA is in the process of getting two gender sensitive legislations to the House of Assembly. This is a result of an advocacy visit to the speaker of the State House of Assembly. (Federation of Women Lawyers [FIDA], Nigeria)*

- **Training and leadership development has been crucial in NGO strategies to prepare women for decision-making roles in both community and political arenas.**

*Case in point: UNDP in Viet Nam is working with the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) on a project titled 'Capacity Development for the Implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women.'*

*This project organized a four day Training of Trainers course focusing on leadership skills, followed by six local leadership training courses for 144 women candidates who stood for election for the Tenth National Assembly in July 1997. There was a focus on campaigning and presentation skills, and the preparation of proposals for action.*

*For a 27 year old health worker, this training session was the first time she had ever spoken in front of a group. During her first few attempts at presenting, she stood in silence. On the last day, with support and coaching from the other participants, she made a five minute speech. She is now one of the youngest members of the National Assembly.*

*The project organized a press conference before the elections to promote positive images of women in leadership and to push for greater representation of women in government. The result of the elections was an increased representation of women from 18% to over 26%. (UNV/UNDP/UNIFEM Gender Specialist, Viet Nam)*

- **Putting specific structures in place that encourage and organize women within organizations can make it possible for women to take more active roles in decision-making.**

*Case in point: In the early 1970s a small group of women within the NZ Labour Party decided that enough was enough. We began the reorganization of the Women's Section of the Party so that it could become an agent of change; through organizing and encouraging and training women to take a larger, more strategic role in politics. It is not an accident that now the Prime Minister of New Zealand and the Leader of the Opposition are both women. (New Zealand)*

- **The women's or gender-sensitive budget is a useful tool for looking at decision-making processes and priorities as well as lobbying and advocacy.**

Case in point: *For South Africa, the Women's Budget allows anyone who is interested an opportunity to see what percentage of government is spent on defence, health, education, etc. Then it allows an analysis of where that money goes - salaries, programmes, infrastructure. Then, an even more in-depth analysis allows you to ask some questions: How many of the employees in the Health Department are women? What percentage of programmes are directed towards girls and women in the Health Department? Are government contracts for the building of clinics going to companies that are owned by women? The answers to these questions form the basis for the calculations that go into producing the Women's Budget.*

*Thus, the Women's Budget is also a very useful tool for lobbying and advocacy. In South Africa, training materials are being developed to popularise the Women's Budget and to train NGOs on the principles behind it, so that they can in turn educate women and men in communities on how to lobby for programmes. (African Gender Institute, South Africa)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA TO PROMOTE WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

- Develop means to open and maintain regular dialogue between constituents and women and men in decision-making positions, whether through direct meetings, videos or other methods, to build shared responsibility for change.
- Create permanent commissions of women in municipal government that can represent women's concerns in the community and can deliberate on those issues.
- Develop better understanding of the impacts and effectiveness of affirmative action policies.
- Provide financial and moral support to female candidates in addition to information and data to support women's concerns.
- Seek to establish permanent allocations in municipal budgets for "gender and development funds" to support programmes and projects for gender equality.
- Develop mechanisms and strategies for ensuring accountability to gender equality in government and other institutions.
- Build coalitions to support important legislative actions.
- Develop leadership skills and self-esteem in young women.
- Educate policymakers on how to integrate gender into policy frameworks.
- Build capacity of women in advocacy strategies and leadership, dealing with media, drafting legislation and ordinances in support of their involvement in public office.
- Make use of the media to bring greater visibility to women's and gender issues as well as to women's representation in decision-making.



## H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

### National Machineries for Gender Equality Online Working Group

8 February- 19 March 1999

Total membership: 428

Messages were posted from 37 members in 21 countries (see Annex I), 67% from the North and 33% from the South.\*\*

28% NGOs  
30% governments  
21% intergovernmental organizations  
14% researchers or academics  
7% other affiliations

The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://www.sdnpc.undp.org/www/ww-natmach/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

Mandated by the Platform for Action to be the “central policy coordinating unit inside the government” with the main task of supporting “government-wide mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policy-areas” (paragraph 201), national machineries constitute the institutional mechanism for implementing the critical areas of the Platform. With this new and additional responsibility, national machineries are developing effective strategies for policy coordination, gender mainstreaming and prompting political action in support of gender equality. The agenda for the *Working Group on National Machineries*<sup>10</sup> centred around these new challenges; namely: implementing gender mainstreaming, coordinating policy inside government, providing technical assistance to mainstream gender and initiating and guiding organizational change. Strategies for creating political will and accountability, developing

new tools such as gender budgeting, and cooperation with NGOs were also major topics covered during the dialogue.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

The dialogue was primarily focused on strategies and lessons learned, but Working Group participants expressed concern over the following obstacles and issues:

- Absence of national machineries in many countries, and low staffing and resources for existing national machineries.
- Uneven commitment and action regarding gender mainstreaming.
- The absence of direct linkages between gender policies developed in the context of donor development policies and the policies and practices of other government departments (health, agriculture, etc) who may be increasingly engaged in international negotiations, delivery of policy advice or project implementation in developing countries.
- Need to define gender mainstreaming as a mainstay of good governance.

### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

#### What are the existing and emerging roles for national machineries?

It was generally agreed that the primary role of national machineries is as catalysts and monitors - firmly proactive in their activities. The role of national machineries as organizational change managers, employing new and emerging change management tools was a common thread. Questions surrounding the leadership and location of national

<sup>10</sup> The advisory group for the National Machineries for Gender Equality discussion included Christina Janssen and the members of WomenWatch.

machineries were also posed. Who is best suited to lead national machineries: Government ministers or public figures within women's movement? Another provocative question posed related to the location of the national machinery. A participant from India noted that under certain political systems, the national machinery might best be located outside of government and function as an autonomous body. She noted that being part of the government can undermine its legitimacy among civil society organizations. Others expressed difficulty with this concept, questioning the locus of accountability for a national machinery outside government and noting that "we cannot abdicate government's responsibility to its citizenry to provide a standard of living and a fair share of the fruits of the economy."

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED

- **Mainstreaming gender into sectoral plans can be effective only if concerted efforts are made to actively involve other line ministries and sectoral agencies in gender-related programming and policy-making.**

*Case in point: On April 6, 1993, the Interdepartmental Commission was created in order to coordinate the 'Positive Action Plan for Women in the Basque Country' as a strategy to guarantee a greater involvement and commitment by the Departments of the Basque Government, as well as to establish a clear means of communications between these department and Emakunde, which is responsible for the monitoring, co-ordination and assessment of these actions. This Commission, headed by the President of the Basque Government, is made up of one person from each Department at a Deputy Minister level so he/she may co-ordinate the rest of the areas of his/her Department and act as permanent interlocutor in all questions relating to the actions for which he/she is responsible in the Positive Action Plan. (EMAKUNDE, Basque Women's Institute, Spain)*

- **Integrating gender into organizations has two dimensions: internal, whereby the organization must promote women's leadership and equality within its own ranks; and external, whereby the organization must ensure women's full participation in and equal benefits from programmes or services.**

*Case in point: The role of the Commission for the Advancement of Women at Interaction, an NGO, has become parallel to that of a national machinery, in terms of enabling our member agencies to become gender sensitive in their organizational structures, procedures and activities. Political will is fundamental and involved top-level leadership publicly supporting gender integration, committing staff time and financial resources, and instituting needed policies and procedures. These conditions can lead to a favorable organizational culture, which involved progress towards gender-balanced staff and governance structure. As organizational culture transforms, technical capacity must develop, including staff skills in gender-analysis and systems for gender disaggregated data. Systems of accountability are also essential. (Interaction, USA)*



**Strategies for building and nurturing political will**

Use the momentum of national political events; eg. Request public positions on gender equality from political candidates.

Use pressure from the women's movement to "make noise" and press for renewed political will.

Make use of "women's days" to garner attention to gender issues.

Develop a sound rationale for gender equality based on existing government priorities and stress the value added by the gender and development approach.

Take advantage of elected officials' public image concerns to pressure for Presidential orders or circulars on women.

Hold regular meetings with Cabinet members or other government officials to report on gender equality progress in various departments or ministries.

Document, publish and distribute "best practices" on gender mainstreaming.

Present and publicize an annual award for significant progress in gender integration.

Require senior level staff to serve on a committee or task force.

Support change agents by providing with ideas and practical suggestions for coping with change and resistance.

Case in point: *How did we initiate organizational change? We obtained the services of experts on organizational development to help us look outward, inward and then outward again. First we clarified the overall vision, identified the entities we need to work with, plotted out the strategic roles that such entities should assume in relation to us, and identified strategies that would harness their support. Second, we looked at the fitness of our existing organizational framework with the demands of catalyzing action to attain gender and development (GAD) vision: (1) we took stock of our strengths and weaknesses, (2) we modified our mandate, mission, vision, objectives, programmes and budget structures, (3) we modified the standard job descriptions given to us by the Civil Service Commission, so that they may be used in conjunction with the revised mandate, vision, mission, etc., (4) we assessed the capabilities of the staff so that we could know their training needs, and (5) we initiated a capability building programme for the staff and (National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women) NCRFW. The one for the staff consisted of developing our core values as a national women's machinery, which are honesty, empowerment, equality, professionalism, commitment to GAD, and teamwork. The one for NCRFW consisted of systems, tools (policy analysis and performance assessment for agencies) and skills in using the systems and*

*tools. (National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women {NCRFW}, Philippines).*

- **National machineries have the potential to mobilize political will among government leadership and must continually develop new strategies to ensure that government implements its commitment to gender equality (see box "Strategies for building and nurturing political will").**

Case in point: *Building on Beijing, we decided to ratify our own internal 'Platform for Action,' in the form of a set of 'Gender Equity Amendments' encompassing governance, management and programmes to our coalition's ethical and operational standards. For us, the amendments have provided a publicly ratified set of 'minimum requirements' As a result, the role of our Commission has expanded to one of providing technical assistance to enable members to comply with standards as well as to continue to nurture political will (which must be an on-going concern). While the amendments have enabled a huge leap in political will, there are inconsistencies amongst member organizations. (Interaction, USA)*

- **Using impact assessments and legal power have been effective in blocking discriminatory policies from being enacted.**

*Case in point: I would like to share an example of how we stopped a policy that would have had negative consequences for women by carrying out an impact assessment. The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland decided to use legal power under the Sex Discrimination Order 1976 to carry out a Formal Investigation into Competitive Tendering involving the privatization of public services. The investigation examined the health and education sectors and found that women had been disadvantaged more than men. Findings were forwarded to the government and Secretary of State. There was no public announcement of a reversal of policy but no further tenders were issued and the government agreed to the guidelines we put forward. (Northern Ireland Equal Opportunities Commission, UK)*

- **Change management and organizational development are becoming major functions of national machineries. These organizational development tools help interpret experiences and better understand the partners with whom national machineries work.**

*Case in point: The Gender Management System (GMS) may be defined as a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organizational framework, to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of gender mainstreaming into all areas of the organization's work (policy, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). A GMS may be established at any level of government and seeks to coordinate efforts among all stakeholders involved in gender equality and equity (government and non-state), with the national women's machinery acting as lead agency in the process. The GMS brings together the gender concepts and methodologies developed in the last 25 years with those of organizational development/ management. It is also meant to be flexible and adaptable to the national context. The GMS Resource Kit covers gender mainstreaming in a range of sectors, including agriculture, education, environment, finance, health, information and communications, legal and constitutional affairs, planning, public service, science and technology, and trade and industry; and a number of other resource materials of relevance to countries/ institutions interested in mainstreaming gender. (Commonwealth Secretariat, UK)*

- **National machineries need to be allocated regular and adequate funds on the basis of concrete plans.**

*Case in point: In the Philippines the GAD budget policy falls under the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) that directs all instrumentalities of the government to allocate a MINIMUM of five percent of their total annual budgets for programmes and projects on women/gender. It began as an innocuous one-sentence directive in the GAA four years ago, and it has since blossomed into a 3-paragraph mandate. It requires agencies to submit a GAD plan which is reviewed by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. Our review enables us to substantially advise the agencies on how to improve their GAD mainstreaming work. Second, the national economic planning and budget departments are tasked to develop implementing guidelines in partnership with*

*NCRFW. And third, the NCRFW and the budget department monitor the allocations, highlighting the problem areas and raising recommendations. The GAD budget policy assures us that agencies will have no 'convenient' excuse (of not having funds) not to implement GAD mainstreaming. (NCRFW, Philippines)*

- **Strong relationships with civil society organizations can create a legitimate base for the national machinery vis-à-vis the national government as well as contributing to agenda setting.**

*Case in point: Following the Beijing Conference, the Africa Secretariat of Third World Network initiated a Project aimed at strengthening national machinery for women in Africa. The project had the following main components. First, research on the current state of national machineries in a number of African countries; second a workshop to discuss research findings and plan the dissemination and advocacy stages of the project. The first part of the project, the research phase, started in 1995 with the preparation of a research proposal which was discussed with a number of NGOs and women's organizations who had expressed interest in the project. Following these consultations we commissioned NGOs and Women's organizations in six African countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Morocco, Zimbabwe and Zambia) to undertake research on their national machineries. The research explored the challenges facing national machinery, their relationship with civil society organizations, the political and socio-economic context within which they operate, their mandate, structure, programmes and their capacity to implement the Platform for Action. The findings of these studies were presented at a regional workshop we organized in Accra, Ghana from 1-3 December to discuss the findings of the research and to also plan the dissemination and advocacy phase of the project. The workshop also drafted a statement containing recommendations to national machineries, governments and civil society organizations to strengthen national machineries and agreed to use this statement for lobbying at the national, regional and international level. (Africa Secretariat of Third World Network, Ghana)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA FOR STRENGTHENING NATIONAL MACHINERIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

Based on the obstacles to implementation identified, key issues debated and lessons shared over the course of the dialogue, an action agenda for strengthening national machineries might embrace the following actions:

- Make use of budget analysis, both “inside” and “outside” government, to analyze how government allocations benefit men and women differently and to advise agencies on developing more gender-sensitive programming.
- Build national machineries’ capacity for change management and organizational development.
- Carefully consider the best location for national machineries, taking into consideration at which level, if it is a government department, as well as the advantage of autonomous national machineries.
- Use impact assessments to block discriminatory policies from being enacted.

- Actively involve other line ministries and sectoral agencies in gender-related programming and policy-making and create inter-departmental group at regional and local level to promote regular communications on gender issues throughout government.
- Promote both internal (promoting women's leadership and equality within the organization's ranks) and external (ensuring women's full participation in and equal benefits from programmes or services) dimensions of gender mainstreaming.
- Foster political will for gender mainstreaming among government or departmental leadership as a first step in developing other vital components of gender integration; namely: technical capacity, accountability and a positive organization culture.
- Employ multiple approaches to capacity-building in gender mainstreaming, eg. formal gender training sessions, training materials development, mentoring programmes and establishing working groups.
- Ensure the allocation of regular funds to national machineries.
- Develop meaningful GAD plans to accompany GAD budgets.
- Develop ongoing and sustainable strategies for strengthening communication and coordination efforts between civil society organizations and national machineries.



## I. Human rights of women

### Claim Women's Human Rights Online Working Group

8 November - 17 December 1999

Total membership: 1239

Messages were posted from 109 members in 40 countries (see Annex I), 56% from the North and 44% from the South.\*\*

62% NGOs  
2% government  
<1% intergovernmental organizations  
13% researchers or academics  
23% other affiliations

The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/ww/women-rights>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

Securing women's political, social, cultural and economic rights and the role of international treaties in helping to achieve that goal was the focus of the *Claim Women's Human Rights Online Working Group*<sup>11</sup>. Participants expressed particular concern over the persistent cultural and societal values that discriminate against women in the household, in waged employment, in political life and elsewhere. Other major obstacles to progress on women's rights included the effects of globalization, discriminatory religious beliefs, gaps between legislation "on paper" and "in practice" as well as the fact that in some countries women do not enjoy basic rights of citizenship or suffrage. Strategies for promoting and securing economic, social, political and cultural rights centred around making use of the Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international instruments to pressure for national-level change as well as awareness raising at all levels, gender audits of legislation and practice, greater involvement of men and of young people, starting from preschool. Areas identified as "emerging" since 1995 and demanding greater attention included a special emphasis on widows and the elderly, and more locally appropriate and context-specific approaches to women's rights advocacy.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Values, cultural norms, religious beliefs and societal practices that are inherently discriminatory against women remain in conflict with the full achievement of women's human rights.
- Unequal representation of women in government, decision-making bodies and political life in general due to custom, lack of educational opportunities, family and home responsibilities and women's distrust of or disillusionment with political systems.
- Nations that are states parties to CEDAW sometimes have reservations to the convention that impede significant national action.
- Expressly sex-discriminatory provisions contained within customary or religious laws, as well as lack of full legal rights for women in some countries – including in nations that are signatories to CEDAW.
- Contradictory effects of economic transition - leading to women gaining new rights, but often losing advantages they enjoyed under former economic systems such as education and employment opportunities.

<sup>11</sup> The advisory group for the Claim Women's Human Rights discussion included the members of the Center for Women's Global Leadership and Marisa Kohan (UNIFEM).

- Negative impact of globalization, trade agreements and arrangements on women's health and reproductive rights as well as labour rights, including gender wage gaps and hiring practices that discriminate against women (eg. requiring pregnancy tests).
- The rise in multinational corporations' power allowing them to determine women's working conditions, pay, opportunities and health care access.
- Persistent sexual harassment in the workplace and policy of maintaining the confidentiality of violators.
- The persistent and widespread problem of violence against women due to societal values that render the problem invisible as well as or in addition to insufficient laws or enforcement of existing laws.
- The threat to reproductive rights posed by rising religious fundamentalism, prompting the repeal of progressive policies on reproductive rights, particularly in Eastern European countries.

## 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

### **Context and culture-specific approaches are needed when working towards securing women's human rights.**

While participants strongly agreed on the universality of women's human rights and the significant effect of global organizing and advocacy in support of claiming those rights, some participants argued for more context or culture-specific approaches to human rights work. Given the ethnic, socio-cultural and socio-economic diversity within countries, one participant noted that, "those of us who work in the field know that many times neither theory nor methodology are applicable." Another participant from Nigeria called for country-specific agendas and programmes that respond to specific types of women's rights abuses that occur in various regions, but cautions that those approaches must be holistic in their design. The lack of interest, information and action about women's rights concerns was something that many participants felt needed to be addressed through education and awareness raising. In the Philippines, the example was given of informal get-togethers where women discuss everyday life concerns because "most women, and even men, don't really understand what human rights are."

## 3. LESSONS LEARNED

- **Advances in affirmative action and women's equality have been achieved as a result of organized pressure from the women's movement.**

*Case in point: The Women's Center was set up in 1994. It is a lobbying and information sharing organization, focused on women's rights. In Albania, there are more than 80 women's NGOs. Fifty-four of them focus on women's rights and legislation; participation in decision-making; economic empowerment of women; violence against women and women's health; education and training. These NGOs are working on improving the legal status of women. The Albanian legislation does not include discrimination of women, but in reality discrimination against women exists in many aspects of life. Women's NGOs have had an impact in improving legislation related to women's property rights, children's rights, domestic violence, reproductive rights, and so forth. (Albania)*

Case in point: *In Venezuela, since January 1999 new laws were created to protect women from violence and sexual abuses as a result of the Commitment to the Beijing Platform. A strong alliance and cooperation within the government department 'Consejo Nacional de la Mujer' and NGOs has been formed. Government is working to educate police, prosecutors, etc. But we still have a lot of work to be done to ensure good application for new laws. The police must still be trained to respect people, especially women, when they report a problem of violence. Information about laws on gender violence is being made available to women. We have brochures, we hold seminars, TV programmes, and news information. (Venezuela)*

- **National ratification of CEDAW and the Platform for Action have often been effective in prompting national anti-discrimination legislation.**

Case in point: *Since 1991, the country has had a quota law (30% of legislative positions must be held by women). In 1994, CEDAW was incorporated into the constitution. The capital city of Buenos Aires now has its own 'non-sexist' constitution which goes beyond the national laws in promoting equality. Argentina is also looking at a law that would make sexual harassment in the workplace illegal. (Argentina)*

- **Non-discrimination legislation without positive statements regarding women's rights may not be adequate to allow women to enjoy those rights.**

Case in point: *The 1999 Nigerian Constitution contains provisions prohibiting discrimination on grounds of ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, etc., but no positive declaration on the status of women is made. Rather, a drawback on the implementation of international treaties is implicit in the provision which accords force of law to such treaties only to the extent to which they have been enacted into law by the National Assembly. Thus CEDAW and others like it are effectively deferred from coming into force even though Nigeria has for several years now ratified it. A constitutional review exercise initiated by the Executive and the Legislature is currently on. It is a welcome development to the human rights and civil society community who have pressed for it since the new Constitution was signed into law in May by the immediate past Military Head of State. As is often the case, the facts often reveal a situation at variance with the law. Still, the above-mentioned steps at legal reform in favour of women's human rights, while being far from exhaustive or conclusive, do offer pointers for women's human rights activism in the new Nigerian democracy. (Nigeria)*

- **Building awareness of and support for women's rights is needed at community and national levels.**

Case in point: *Afghanistan has been one of the forgotten countries after the cold war, the war which gave birth to Islamic extremists and terrorism in Afghanistan. The voices of innocent men and women who are left alone and forgotten have not been heard. There are many published stories, reports, pictures, and field trips by international agencies, but what has been done after reading or hearing of those incidents? Nothing, it is only lip service. Are the Afghans not human beings? Educated and professional Afghan women, who fled the culture of oppression, are*

*left without attention with no job opportunity outside Afghanistan, and some of them are forced to start begging, with their advanced education degrees, in order to feed their children. The grassroots Afghan women should be given the chance to participate actively in the international events in order to raise their voices and tell their untold stories. The elite Afghan women alone cannot represent the grassroots Afghan women. (Afghanistan)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA TO CLAIM WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

- Put special focus on eliminating violence against widows and the elderly, groups often overlooked in struggle to end violence against women.
- Increase men's awareness of, and support for, their wives' and daughters' rights.
- Develop country-specific projects that take into account political and social conditions of the local community.
- Strive for greater awareness of and sensitivity towards cultural differences in human rights debates.
- Pressure corporations to adopt practices that support women's economic and labour rights.
- Incorporate gender equality, human rights and governmental systems in the formal and non-formal education of children and youth.
- Assess the gender equality practices of government ministries and review all pending legislation for discriminatory effect or gender-bias.
- Investigate rights violations in governmental offices on gender equality practices, recruitment of personnel and the development of professional advancement programmes.
- Continue to advocate that all women's rights are human rights, inextricably connected to men's rights.
- Examine rights of women working in agriculture and of immigrant/migrant women.
- Incorporate information on CEDAW into formal and non-formal educational curricula, including training for immigrants and those seeking refugee status.
- Adopt holistic approaches to women's rights that take into account the linkages among economic, reproductive, health and labour rights.
- Adopt legislation regarding sex disparities in wages and other discriminatory practices in hiring.





## J. Women and the media

### Women and the Media Online Working Group

8 November - 17 December 1999

Total membership: 1000

Messages were posted from 115 members in 41 countries (see Annex I), 52% from the North and 48% from the South.\*\*

39% NGOs  
2% governments  
2% intergovernmental organizations  
23% researchers or academics  
34% other affiliations

The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/ww/women-media/>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

The *Online Working group on Women and the Media*<sup>12</sup> covered a range of topics from access and availability of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to how women are faring in media and journalism. The critical role of women's media networks and potential of ICTs for giving women's voices a wider audience as well as the impact of globalization and concentration of media in fewer hands were also discussed and debated. Participants expressed concern over persistent and negative portrayal of women in the media and exchanged numerous strategies for monitoring and challenging gender-biased, violent or gender stereotyped media messages.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Persistent negative or stereotypical portrayals of women in the conventional media

that are perpetuated and accentuated by new media, for example video games, the Internet and music videos.

- Lack of media images depicting minority or disabled communities.
- Lack of women in decision-making positions, and lack of gender-sensitivity in media decision-makers as well as those in policy formulation.
- Lack of role models and mentors for women journalists.
- Limited support from donor agencies for alternative media produced by women, resulting in inability to reach audiences.
- Limited access to electronic information due to the high cost of ICT equipment and connectivity.
- Inaccessibility of electronic information that is available primarily English.
- Perception that computer use and training are male pursuits, despite the fact that women use computers widely at work.
- Increased monitoring or relocation of information workers to home, resulting in lower wages and fewer benefits, and often reinstating women's confinement to the home.
- The export of women's work from the North to the South, where wages are greatly deflated, as a result of globalization and availability of computer networks.

### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

#### Portrayal of women in the media - a closer look

Across most regions and countries, most Working Group participants agreed that very little has changed in the portrayal of women in media since 1995, whether in advertising or news media. Negative, stereotyped, inaccurate and violent images of women are

<sup>12</sup> Moderation for the Women and the Media discussion was provided by WomenAction 2000. The advisory group included WomenAction 2000, Daphne Plou (APC Women's Networking Support Program), Young-Lan Kim and Jin-Sook Doo (Research Institute for Asian Women, Sook-Myung University) and Marisa Kohan (UNIFEM).

pervasive. Some groups of women are simply invisible, including those from minority populations, women and girls of colour in some countries or women who are disabled. Women's issues are circumscribed to features on home or beauty. Moreover, the increased commercialisation of every medium has intensified the visibility of negative images, from billboards to television to newspaper. New media such as the Internet are perpetuating and accentuating much that is negative despite growing numbers of women in business, of women parliamentarians and journalists.

From South Africa and Sri Lanka came the argument that both society and media play a role in perpetuating negative portrayal of women. Many questions remained unanswered among participants. What is it we want from the media, more accurate images? What are the implications for freedom of expression and censorship? What is the role for government in regulating media and advertising? What about voluntary codes of ethic for media?

### LESSONS LEARNED

- **Traditional and conventional forms of communications media and new information technologies are not mutually exclusive.**

*Case in point: At the present, among other things, we are building the perhaps first ever Feminist Internet Radio Station. Yesterday, from the VIII Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentro in the Dominican Republic, we did the first live broadcast in Internet from our own women-run WEB Radio.*

*The advantages: 1. Radio stations can pick it up while it is happening or afterwards, to re-broadcast. 2. The oral language of women in Internet brings the emotional and effective dimension of the experience, lost often in written language. 3. Women in radio here recorded the programmes and send them to their stations. 4. Cheap! No international calls. (FIRE, Costa Rica)*

*Case in point: In communicating with each other, sharing information and networking there is no either/or about using new or 'traditional' media or technologies: women are using whatever media are most useful and appropriate to communicate and exchange information at any given time or place: songs, e-mail, posters, the web, poems, video, plays, magazines, radio, drawings. The so-called 'traditional' media, which in many places are really the 'mainstream' media, can be used by women for empowering themselves and others. These media are also used to misinform, distort and disempower women. The content is what is crucial, no matter what means or technology, old or new, is used. (Isis International Manila, Philippines)*

- **Civil society organizations, including women's NGOs, can intervene and act as intermediaries to improve women's access to and control over ICTs and information.**

*Case in point: One area which needs more impetus, is lobbying and advocacy at various levels within the ICT sector. What is important is for civil society and women's organizations to interact with government in order to ensure that gender policies are representative of the diverse needs of women. This is happening but*

*my sense is not fast enough given the pace at which new technologies are being introduced. (South Africa)*

Case in point: *We have a small cybercafe in the Permanent Workshop for Women and we find that most of the women come to us because they feel at ease when being trained or guided by other women. We find that mainly women over forty, who are just learning to use their computers, feel really uneasy when a young boy is the one in charge of hands-on training. (Argentina)*

- **Women's media and women's media networks have been fundamental as a means of strengthening women's organizations and promoting exchange and debate.**

Case in point: *A media related association, the Zambia Media Women Association (ZAMWA) is working to advance the status of women at all levels by increasing their access to media and developmental information. ZAMWA therefore promotes the use of media to sensitise society on gender issues and works with other women's rights organizations to advocate and lobby for legal changes that favour the rights of women and children. (Zambia)*

- **Communications systems, including new technologies, are effective and essential means for strengthening women's participation in democratic processes, in international governmental deliberations and for global organizing.**

Case in point: *The Women's Ad Hoc Coalition is a group of 28 women's NGOs throughout Croatia monitoring and influencing the 1999 Croatian elections. Our plan is to reach as many women as possible educating them to make an informed vote, and to use all form of media doing so. The activities vary from street actions, e-mails, to posting documents and events on the webpage. We also wanted to inform the international community about the coalition, which is why all information is posted in English and Croatian. The Internet is one of the freest forms of media in Croatia, it is the only form that is not owned and controlled by the ruling party.*

*Our latest e-mail campaign was a petition asking for the resignation of the Minister of Justice and the creation of a Croatian National Day of Against Violence Towards Women, in regards to the triple murder in the Municipal court room during divorce proceedings. The response was overwhelming. Most of the signed petitions came from Bosnia, where someone printed up the petition, made photocopies, asked women to sign and mailed us the signatures. The whole process of this petition was wonderful, all sources of media were used. (Croatia)*

- **Where women are more actively engaged and involved in the media industry, significant changes in media portrayal of women can take place.**

Case in point: *The portrayal of women in the media has changed quite a bit especially because more women have graduated in communication studies in the university and they are now working in the main media, print, electronic, TV and radio. Before the 90's a woman journalist would very seldom sign an article on international affairs, politics or economic issues. Now lots of them do so, which*

*means that they have gained the authority to analyze and give their opinion on issues that used to be considered of male domain. Some women journalists have already reached a place in the decision making process in big newspapers and in TV and radio news and information services and programmes. (Argentina)*

➤ **Women's organizations are developing many innovative campaigns to confront negative images of women in media and public advertising.**

*Case in point: At the Beijing conference I was made aware of some interesting work done by women in Kenya who used the radio and song writing media in two ways. First of all they set up a song writing competition, open to both men and women, for the best song about positive contributions women make to everyday life. Secondly, they publicize the competition, events surrounding it, and songs produced by it through the radio medium. The goal was to balance the negative stereotypes of women in popular song (the heart-breaker, betrayer, etc.) with the positive work of women (as friends, mothers, providers, etc.)(USA)*

*Case in point: One important effort I took part in has to do with a positive action on publicity. I was part of a jury sponsored by UNIFEM to award non-sexist publicity in the Iberoamerican Festival of Publicity that takes place every year in Buenos Aires. More than 5,000 TV and radio commercials and graphic publicity participate in this big event. The award has had quite an impact and we found that we were able to start a good dialogue with owners of publicity agencies and those in charge of thinking out and creating the commercials. In this part of the world, this area is almost totally dominated by men, so to start some dialogue is really important. (Argentina)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA: WOMEN AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

- Promote a broad debate through the UN on communication and democracy including the active participation of women.
- Address the need to undertake with UNESCO a status report on progress on issues raised in the 1995 study on women and the media, including the linkages between economic systems and media portrayal of women.
- Promote women's use of new technologies that make audio and visual media more accessible and participatory, such as micro radio transmitters, community access television or mobile tele-centres.
- Develop training programmes for women's organizations in computing, information management and media strategy.
- Support and develop initiatives that create women's and gender-sensitive content for the Internet.
- Carry out on-going media monitoring for gender bias/sensitivity and share results with policymakers in media and society.
- Institute voluntary or legislated advertising standards for billboards and other advertisements.
- Translate, reproduce and repackage information using a variety of media, using electronic communications, newsletters, radio, popular theatre, etc.



## K. Women and the environment

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengthen Women's Roles in Environmental Sustainability Online Working Group</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">6 September- 15 October 1999</p> <p>Total membership: 503</p> <p>Messages were posted from 51 members in 26 countries (see Annex I), 46% from the North and 54% from the South.**</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">49% NGOs 15% government 9% intergovernmental organizations 21% researchers or academics 6% other affiliations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>The archive of the dialogue is available at: <a href="http://sdnhq.undp.org/www/women-enviro/">http://sdnhq.undp.org/www/women-enviro/</a></p> <p>**See note in text box on page 8.</p>
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Enhancing and increasing women's participation, including through involving indigenous voices and knowledge, gender impacts of environmental degradation, partnerships for environmental action, and gender-analysis in natural resource management featured among the key themes addressed by participants during the *Strengthen Women's Roles in Environmental Sustainability*<sup>13</sup> dialogue. Participants expressed concern over a number of obstacles to progress such as the lack of women in decision-making, difficulties in applying current gender-analysis tools to environmental projects, and constraints to women's participation. Other topics ranged from the implications of weapons' testing on the environment and women to questions regarding the difference women's involvement makes to natural resource and environmental

programming. Participants shared many lessons and strategies for fostering new partnerships, strengthening gender-analysis in environmental sectors and bringing indigenous voices to the debates, among others.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Inadequate consideration given to the cultural beliefs, social arrangements and economic realities that keep women from participating fully in environmental and natural resource management. "Usually the need for women to become involved in the process only comes about when a shortfall has been identified - a knowledge gap which only women as resource users can fill." (WWF, Zimbabwe)
- Lack of sufficient number of female extension workers.
- The environmental threat posed by the arms race and development of biological, atomic and other weapons, with its specific implications for women.
- The lack of gender-analysis in the planning and development of many environmental and natural resource management projects despite mandates regarding gender equality at the donor or headquarters levels.

### 2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

#### **Are site-specific or eco-system-specific gender-analysis tools necessary in environment and natural resource management?**

The participants addressed the question of the extent to which current methods of gender-analysis and mainstreaming are adaptable for use in environmental and natural resource management programming. It was noted that addressing gender issues and involving women in environmental management are not synonymous, nor does one necessarily

<sup>13</sup> The advisory group for the Strengthen Women's Role in Environmental Sustainability discussion included Lene Poulsen and Heather Denbow (UNSO/UNDP), Mac Hengari (DAW) and Kerri Power (DAW).

follow from the other. In certain contexts, there appears to be a gap between addressing gender issues and addressing environmental concerns because of the lack of an integrated approach, or because those involved with developing gender-sensitive policies do not have the interest or needed expertise in environmental programming. A continuing obstacle to gender-sensitive planning in environment are methodologies that treat women as homogeneous, or are not applicable among ethnic groups where assumptions about patriarchal relations do not necessarily hold.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED

- **When women become more involved with natural resource management planning, they bring with them a wealth of traditional knowledge that, when applied, will promote sustainable development.**

*Case in point: It has been our experience that whenever women have taken initiatives in conservation and protection of their natural wealth they always incorporated their traditional knowledge, practical experiences, religious sentiments, code of social conduct, cultural practices and their own devised system in it. Because of this women have been tremendously successful in conserving their natural wealth in a more constructive manner. It was urgent need to conserve forest wealth that gave birth to the idea of the Maliti Forest. Maliti means 'mother's home.' On the occasion of marriage of any Maliti girl, the plantation of saplings is the responsibility of the girls. The Maliti Movement has spread to 500 villages. The women of Uttarakhand have taken the leading role to carry on this cultural movement in order to preserve the diversity and natural heritage of the Himalayas. (India)*

- **National level policies and departments focused on gender issues are often not well versed in environmental issues, resulting in a lack of analytical frameworks that can be effectively used in environmental programming and policy-making.**

*Case in point: In regards to linking local level concerns and experiences with national level policies, my experience in Latin America is that the new ministries disregard or are not interested in, environmental policies. They treat gender issues in a completely sectoral manner. Therefore they are not addressing the feminization of poverty which in poor economies is caused mainly by the depletion of resources, or the many environmental problems women face every day. In consequence, we should push for a better understanding of environmental problems among gender officials. National gender policies should also include, in an integral manner, environmental policies. (Bolivia)*

- **While national policy may articulate gender concerns, this does not automatically translate into actual involvement of women in policy-making. Likewise, women's membership on committees and boards does not necessarily translate into meaningful or sustained participation or achieving gender equality.**

*Case in point: Almost all national policy and strategy documents of Bangladesh include/support gender sensitive approaches. However, women's involvement on a policy/decision-making level in an appropriate way, is yet to be seen. Women's*

*involvement is usually linked to their roles of educator/promoter at the household and community levels. They are more expected to provide free or voluntary time for their involvement. Often women of the right qualifications and capabilities are not asked to become members in decision-making bodies. This has been observed by us in water and sanitation committees, as well as in local government action committees. (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh)*

Case in point: *The Convention to Combat Desertification has now been ratified in more than 150 countries with commitments ‘to provide for effective participation at the local, national, and regional levels of both women and men in policy-planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes.’ More than 60 countries have established participatory National Action Programmes. Awareness-raising focusing on women’s participation have been launched with positive responses and many countries have paid special attention to ensure that women are members of decision-making bodies. However, recently women’s voices have been raised that sitting in committees does not necessarily lead to equal participation and there is the sincere feeling that more focus should be given to moving beyond simple quantitative measures. (UNSO/UNDP)*

- **How men view and treat women on a daily basis is indicative of how they will respond to women’s involvement in environmental decision-making.**

Case in point: *The majority of programmes that are intended to deal with gender issues in environmental management have been aimed at involving and empowering women. I have and will continue to promote this approach. However, more recently, I am also looking at how I can work with men to help them change how they view women so men will WANT to reach out to women to include them. I believe that the most effective way to do this is to start with basic conceptions of what men think are appropriate ways to treat women, how men treat women in conversations among men, in conversations within families, in movies and books, on the street, at parties—in daily life. We can expect men to react to women in meetings on resource management in the same way they react to women in other aspects of life. If we are to change the former, we will also need to affect the latter. (USA)*

- **Collective organizing among women is a critical factor in their capacity to confront environmental degradation and gain greater access to natural resources.**

Case in point: *Special efforts are needed to strengthen and promote women’s groups at the local level. Women have the potential of taking leadership, so their capacities must be enhanced by providing them education, training, access to all kinds of information, etc. The Himalayan Action Research Centre has also created a cadre of women motivators who are organizing women in the use, protection, conservation and management of their natural resources. (India)*

- **When women are actively involved in environmental projects, they become community leaders and diversify programme activities.**

Case in point: *I am working for the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in South Africa. I am part of the national coordinating body for the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification and Gender Mainstreaming. The National Action Programme in this project is my responsibility. One of the lessons I have learned from being involved in Gender and Environment issues is that poverty in communities where women's major role is food provision has led these women to be leaders of their communities. They earn respect and community leadership by being able to find alternative methods of income and by being able to produce however small amount of food from barren lands. Once women in these situations organize themselves, they are able to plan community development by even moving away from food production to economic development and environmental management. (South Africa)*

- **Information is key to women's effective participation in natural resource management, but awareness raising is not always sufficient to ensure action.**

Case in point: *A project called NetWise is a networking initiative to support capacity-building in the Southern African Development Community, particularly aimed at decision makers, researchers and student on natural resource management. It is centred around a directory which is available on the NetWise website ([www.netwise.drfn.org.na](http://www.netwise.drfn.org.na)) and on CD-ROM, there is also a website on the internet which is used for discussion and 'virtual workshops.' Women who are involved with decision making about natural resources are often not the ones who attend workshops, training courses etc. Training on the use of the network will focus on women. (Namibia)*

- **Providing information and resources in local languages and in locally-appropriate formats is critical to grassroots women's ability to fully contribute and take part in environmental and resource management programmes and debates.**

Case in point: *The grassroots women should be fully informed about policies, programmes, and also about the declarations and documents being made at national and international levels regarding environmental issues. The translation of such documents should be done in local languages. HARC is doing it through establishing village and block information centres, which has enabled women to get an easy access to various types of information. Such information centres should be established at District, State and National level. (India)*

- **New linkages and collaborations, including local -national - international connections and partnerships between women's and environmental groups have increased effectiveness of environmental programmes, projects and outreach.**

Case in point: *I work with the Rainforest Action Network (RAN), in the US. In 1996, the National Organisation for Women called national attention to the Mitsubishi Manufacturing organization for its monumental sexual harassment violations. In response, leaders of my organization said that we should boycott Mitsubishi not just because of this, but also because Mitsubishi Corporation's Wood Products Division is one of the world's greatest environmental destroyers.*



*Mitsubishi's operations destroy rainforests and the lives of indigenous people who live there. NOW and RAN promoted that everyone should keep Mitsubishi's feet to the fire and show that companies must come to realize that being an 'environmental pariah' - or turning a blind eye to sexual harassment - is bad for business. (RAN, USA)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S ROLES IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

- Redefine and expand the scope of resource management activities to include areas in which women are already actively involved.
- Create village information centres that will disseminate information on global and local environmental concerns in locally-appropriate formats.
- Build linkages among community groups worldwide, and between women's and environmental organizations seeking to protect their local environments, in order to mobilize more powerful and effective campaigns.
- Involve men in debates and discussions regarding women's environmental concerns.
- Develop gender-analysis tools that are/can be tailored to various ecosystems.
- Educate women working in fields such as mining, health, or education about issues of sustainability and environmental degradation in order to gain additional allies.
- Strengthen existing women's organizations and support new ones organizing around environmental issues.
- Draw on women's knowledge of environment and natural resource management.
- Develop gender-sensitive environmental information systems.
- Make use of the Convention to Combat Desertification, as a new generation of participatory development tool, to support implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
- Train and involve women motivators in environmental programming and planning and management skills. Recruit and train more female extension workers.
- Ensure that indigenous voices and groups participate in debates and decision-making.
- Accelerate efforts at increasing women's participation in decision-making at policy levels as well as in environmental education and activism locally.



## L. The girl child

### Empower the Girl Child Online Working Group

8 November – 17 December 1999

Total membership: 934

Messages were posted from 87 members in 31 countries (see Annex I), 63% from the North and 37% from the South.\*\*

49% NGOs  
1.5% government  
1.5% intergovernmental organizations  
25% researchers or academics  
23% other affiliations

The archive of the dialogue is available at:  
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/www/girl-child>

\*\*See note in text box on page 8.

The organization and content of the *Empower the Girl Child Online Working Group*<sup>14</sup> reflected the multiple issues addressed under section L. of the Platform for Action: The Girl Child. The discussion centred around five key areas: education, violence, economic exploitation and sexual and reproductive health. Of major concern to participants were the persistent cultural norms that place low value on girls and exacerbate a wide range of problems, from poverty to violence to child labour. Economic exploitation, inequality in education and widespread violence and sexual abuse were among the additional obstacles and challenges to progress. An area of key debate for participants was the issue of child labour and specific national contexts in which it exists. Participants stressed the importance of parental and community involvement and of

holistic approaches to the problems faced by girls and young women as well as the need for a better understanding of the complex factors contributing to girls' inequality.

### 1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Persistence of negative cultural values and attitudes towards the girl child among women as well as men.
- Continued socialization of boys to violence and violent behaviour.
- Lack of age-disaggregated data.
- Lack of understanding of the specific obstacles and attitudes towards girls that limit their opportunities.

#### Education:

- Sexual harassment and violence in schools.
- Gender stereotyped and biased textbooks and teaching.
- Low enrollment rate of girls in school.
- Gender gaps in science and technology.

#### Economic exploitation:

- Pressure to earn income (to work) that keeps girls out of school and directs them to domestic service or low-wage jobs.
- Dangerous or exploitative work environments.
- Invisibility of the exploitation of girls' labour in the household.

<sup>14</sup> The advisory group for the Empower the Girl Child discussion included the members of the UNICEF Working Group on Girls, Koh Miyaoi (DAW) and Dong Wu (DAW).

**Violence:**

- The low societal value of girls that results in the denial, acceptance and tolerance of violence against girls.
- Under-reporting of preadolescent incest and sexual abuse.
- Severe and long-term effects of unreported and unaddressed sexual abuse on girls, including low self-esteem, psychological damage and high-risk behaviour that may lead to HIV/AIDS.

**2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT****Is eliminating child labour possible given economic realities of many girls and their families?**

The debate reflected the complexity surrounding child labour, citing the links between education, child labour and violence as well as the contradictions between the low value of girls and the high value of their labour. Some argued that conditions of poverty in many developing countries demanded that children work from a young age and others gave examples of where girls view work as empowering. Participants agreed on the need for better definitions of what constitutes “work” or “exploitation” as well as a clearer understanding of variables such as age, ethnic differences, culture and societal norms in developing programmes and policies that address child labour.

**3. LESSONS LEARNED**

- **Holistic approaches to education and empowerment of girls are the most important means to overcome the major and interconnected problems they face, including violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, labour exploitation, poverty and discrimination.**

*Case in point: When we came here, we could not write or read anything, we sat in circles like stones and hardly made any response. After seven months, we know how to read and write letters, we are aware of our rights and needs, we know many laws about child and women violence, the curse of dowry, personal hygiene, gender equity, risk of early pregnancy, etc. Before we were bounded by the superstitions and no say in our families. Now we take our own decision. We stopped an early marriage of one of our group members. We convinced her parents that an early marriage is illegal and their daughter’s health will be at risk. (Action-Aid, Bangladesh)*

*Case in point: The Women's Health Organisation of Nigeria: Youth Action Project (YAP) which started in October 1996 is committed to empowering the girl child especially in accordance to the treaties Nigeria is signatory to. The Project has the following as part of its objectives in its quest to empower the Girl Child: 1) Provide information that will help the adolescent to understand their sexuality and protect them from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and the subsequent risk of infertility and death from HIV infection; 2) To enable adolescent females to develop appropriate self-esteem, negotiating and coping skills for better development of their sexual and reproductive life; 3) To provide reproductive health care services to youth, in a way that ensures confidentiality and good quality healthcare; 4) Provide leadership and vocational activities to*

*the female youth to enable them to cope with life options; and 5) Involve the adolescents in the design, planning and implementation of projects directed towards their needs. The YAP empowers the girl child to gain inner power to express and defend her rights and gain greater self-confidence, self-identity, self-esteem and control over her life and personal and social relationships and make responsible well informed decisions. (WHON, Nigeria)*

➤ **Involving parents and communities and building support among them for girls' education and empowerment is critical.**

Case in point: *I am working with one programme of Rozan, called Aangan. 'Aangan' has been working with children and adolescents for the last 5 years. It focuses on the emotional health of children in general and child sexual abuse in particular. Our team members include psychiatrists, psychologist, teachers, community workers, researchers, our young volunteers, etc. The Aangan team has had the experience of working with the community and has found that addressing the topic of child sexual abuse in isolation was not the most effective method of dealing with this issue. It was felt that children and adolescents needed to be helped in becoming more confident, develop better communication and interpersonal skills and have more awareness and links to the support systems around them. This problem was especially seen in girls who often are unable to express or talk about themselves. Keeping this in mind, Aangan developed a system of addressing personal issues in a safe and non-threatening way. These are series of 8-10 sessions in which the focus is on self-esteem, emotions, feelings, communication, gender and child sexual abuse, etc. A major break-through for Aangan on this issue was when a series of articles on child sexual abuse were published in the children's magazine of a local English newspaper. In response to these articles by the name of 'OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES,' which also covered body image, Aangan received around 450 letters, not only from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse but also from children writing about their sexual health concerns. Given the phenomenal response, the magazine and Aangan collaborated and started a monthly problem page where children wrote to us for help. (Pakistan)*

Case in point: *(TADO) has a support programme for girl-child education in the Northern Region of Ghana. Female enrollment in school in the Northern Region of Ghana is the lowest in the whole country. Besides, the dropout rate is extremely high. Our Girl-child Education support programme has been working towards providing incentives for girls in rural areas to go to school. We have undertaken in-service training for most of our agents in education (teachers, head-teachers, local managers etc) on issues of gender - reflecting mainly on implications for girl-child education. We have also organized sessions for girls' prefects in primary and junior secondary schools to provide them with strategic information that will keep them in school. (Ghana)*

Case in point: *We have found that the single most effective technique for raising the status of the girl child is the education of the mothers as human resources. If the mothers are literate, then their daughters will be literate, even if they are not sent to school. If the mothers have a sense that they are intelligent, valuable human beings, they will impart this sense of worth to their girl-children. To place*

*the mother in a role where she is respected and expected to contribute to the decision making process is a vital component to the uplifting of the girl child. All our training is holistic, it is integrated literacy to vocations, health gardening etc. We have also found that when the mother and father take part in family life training together, and learn about principles such as consultation and unity, they are much more aware of the importance of the girl child and her value as a human being. The fact that they participate in the training together also enables the men to see the women as equals and value her opinion and decisions. (India)*

- **Girl-only clinics that demystify science and technology and link girls to career opportunities are effective in attracting and retaining more women and girls in the science and technology fields.**

Case in point: *I am from a multi-disciplinary network for Africa called the Multi-Disciplinary African Women's Health Network (MAWHN). The experience from Ghana in girls' education is worth narrating. For over 5 years now, the Ministry of Education has been concerned with the disparity in the number of girls reading science and mathematics at higher levels. It therefore started a Science and Mathematics clinic for girls that started as a day event but has gone on to cover several days. The aim is to demystify science and mathematics and to expose them to possible careers and progression as well as to get them to interact with various women role models in the country who share their experiences. There is now a whole unit for Science and Mathematics as the project has succeeded beyond anticipation. In fact the numbers of girls applying to read Science and mathematics in tertiary institutions has increased. (Ghana)*

- **Key aspects of programming to reduce violence against girls involves girls' rights, self-protection, and empowerment and involves boys as well as girls.**

Case in point: *Our project 'Empowering Education - Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Girls and Boys' is concerned with the strategic goal of reducing violence against girls and women by gender education of girls and boys. When teenagers are involved themselves in this process, it is very successful. Our programme has been in existence for about four years and we have many examples of good practice. Our programme consists of four parts: Successful Communications (Conflict Transformation), Dialogue on Diversity (Gender Education and Human Rights), To Manage Yourself is to Cooperate with Others (Team Management, Leadership, Team Building), The Road to Non-Violence (Prevention of Violence specially Trafficking). (Ukraine)*

- **The exploitation of girls' labour in the household is closely linked to their limited opportunities for education as well as attitudes about the value of the work and contribution of women and girls that perpetuate inequalities.**

Case in point: *ROSHNI works with women and girl children with a thrust towards the Muslim girl child since women of this community remain most educationally, socially and economically backward in relation to other women. We concentrated in the slums of Chennai and we seek to educate illiterate women and school dropouts. We also conduct vocational programmes, and provide assistance for employment wherever feasible. ROSHNI also administers a non-formal school for*

*the girl child to wean them away from child labour. In my state girls are involved in rolling BEEDIES, a local form of cigarettes. We provide vocational training courses in office assistants, tailoring, and secretarial functions. Spoken English classes are conducted to improve their communication skills. All these facilities are provided free and in their own neighborhoods since these young girls are not allowed to go out to work or learn a trade by their families. We have trained 500 young girls in a span of five years and have also found them placement. We have provided them machinery to pursue their avocation of tailoring and where necessary even provided them with nutrition. We also provide education in legal rights as well as counseling and free legal aid where necessary. (India)*

#### **4. AN ACTION AGENDA TO EMPOWER THE GIRL CHILD**

- Directly and actively involve boys in eliminating sex discrimination and developing mutual respect.
- Place greater emphasis on eliminating incest and sexual abuse of preadolescent girls.
- Involve girls in the design, implementation and evaluation of all interventions.
- Give greater attention to the situation of girls' labour within the household.
- Establish networking organizations for girls, including girl resource development institutes and training centres.
- Develop holistic and comprehensive programmes for girls that encompass education, empowerment, negotiating and leadership skills, health, etc.
- Involve parents and communities in programmes- build support among them for girls' education and training and provide support to mothers in particular.
- Reduce violence and exploitation of girls by emphasizing girls' rights, empowerment and participation.
- Collect and analyze age-disaggregated data for use in programming, advocacy and policy formulation.
- Conduct more and better qualitative and participatory research on girls' situation and the influence of mothers, families and communities on their opportunities and choices.



## Annex

### Countries represented in the working groups

<i>Poverty</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Armed conflict</i>	<i>Economy</i>	<i>Power and decision-making</i>
Australia	Argentina	Armenia	Angola	Bangladesh	Argentina
Bangladesh	Australia	Australia	Australia	Belgium	Australia
Barbados	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Burundi	Cameroon	Belgium
Canada	Belgium	Belgium	Canada	Canada	Canada
India	Brazil	Cambodia	Croatia	Costa Rica	Chile
Japan	Canada	Canada	Cyprus	Dominican Republic	Colombia
Kenya	China	Hong Kong, China	France	Ethiopia	Cuba
Malawi	Finland	India	Georgia	Fiji	Ecuador
Mexico	Germany	Nepal	Germany	Hong Kong, China	Eritrea
Netherlands	Guinea	Netherlands	India	India	Ethiopia
Nicaragua	Hong Kong, China	Nigeria	Ireland	Jamaica	India
Nigeria	India	Philippines	Kosovo	Japan	Indonesia
Russian Federation	Indonesia	Russian Federation	Nepal	Korea	Jordan
South Africa	Mexico	Sudan	Netherlands	Netherlands	Kenya
Spain	Norway	Switzerland	New Zealand	Nicaragua	Liberia
Thailand	Pakistan	Thailand	South Africa	Nigeria	Lithuania
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Peru	Uganda	Suriname	Norway	Malta
Ukraine	Philippines	United States of America	Switzerland	Pakistan	Mexico
United States of America	South Africa	Venezuela	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Philippines	Mongolia
Venezuela	Sweden	Viet Nam	Turkey	South Africa	New Zealand
Zimbabwe	Uganda		Uganda	Spain	Nigeria
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sri Lanka	Philippines
	United States of America		Ukraine	Sudan	Poland
	Viet Nam		United States of America	Switzerland	Romania
	Zimbabwe		Viet Nam	Uganda	Russian Federation

<i>Poverty</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Armed conflict</i>	<i>Economy</i>	<i>Power and decision-making</i>
				United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	South Africa
				United States of America	Spain
				Vanuatu	Suriname
				Viet Nam	Thailand
					Trinidad and Tobago
					Turkey
					Uganda
					United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
					Ireland
					United States of America
					Viet Nam
					Zambia



<i>End violence</i>	<i>Institutional mechanisms</i>	<i>Human rights</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Girl child</i>
Armenia	Argentina	Afghanistan	Argentina	Australia	Argentina
Australia	Bangladesh	Albania	Australia	Bangladesh	Australia
Bangladesh	Belarus	Argentina	Belgium	Bolivia	Bangladesh
Belgium	Canada	Australia	Cameroon	Brazil	Cambodia
Bulgaria	Chile	Azerbaijan	Canada	Canada	Canada
Canada	Costa Rica	Belgium	China	Chile	China
Croatia	Fiji	Bhutan	Costa Rica	Côte d'Ivoire	Colombia
Fiji	Georgia	Canada	Croatia	Denmark	Dominican Republic
Finland	Ghana	Croatia	Cuba	Ethiopia	Germany
Gabon	Indonesia	Cuba	Czech Republic	Fiji	Ghana
Georgia	Jamaica	Denmark	Ecuador	Iceland	India
Germany	Philippines	Georgia	Fiji	India	Indonesia
Ghana	Poland	Germany	France	Jordan	Israel
Hong Kong, China	Russian Federation	Hong Kong, China	Guatemala	Kenya	Kenya
Hungary	Spain	India	India	Korea	Malaysia
Iceland	Switzerland	Indonesia	Indonesia	Mexico	Mexico
India	Trinidad and Tobago	Islamic Republic of Iran	Italy	Namibia	Nepal
Italy	Uganda	Israel	Republic of Korea	Pakistan	Netherlands
Kenya	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Kuwait	Malawi	South Africa	New Zealand
Korea	United States of America	Macedonia	Malaysia	Thailand	Nigeria
Malawi	Zimbabwe	Malaysia	Mali	Uganda	Pakistan
Mali		Mexico	Mexico	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Philippines
Mauritius		Nigeria	Nepal	United States of America	South Africa
Mexico		Pakistan	Netherlands	Viet Nam	Spain
Micronesia		Panama	New Zealand	Zimbabwe	Switzerland
Namibia		Philippines	Nigeria		Turkey
Nepal		Poland	Pakistan		Uganda

<i>End violence</i>	<i>Institutional mechanisms</i>	<i>Human rights</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Girl child</i>
Netherlands		Russian Federation	Philippines		United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
New Zealand		San Marino	Senegal		Ukraine
Nigeria		Senegal	South Africa		United States of America
Pakistan		Singapore	Spain		Viet Nam
Paraguay		South Africa	Sri Lanka		
Philippines		Spain	Suriname		
Poland		Switzerland	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		
Russian Federation		Tunisia	Trinidad and Tobago		
Senegal		Turkey	Tunisia		
South Africa		United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		
Suriname		United States of America	Uruguay		
Sweden		Vanuatu	United States of America		
Switzerland		Venezuela	Zambia		
Tajikistan			Zimbabwe		
Thailand					
Trinidad and Tobago					
Uganda					
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland					
Uruguay					
United States of America					

*Note:* This list represents the countries of “active” members (i.e. those who posted a message to the list, in which they indicated their country of origin). It is not possible to identify the countries of members who didn’t post messages, as a large percentage of e-mail addresses are global and do not indicate the owner’s country of origin.

