



# Celebrating Momentum and Milestones

*A WEDO History of Women's Organizing Toward a Healthy and Peaceful Planet*





A women's global advocacy organization, WEDO envisions a just world that promotes and protects human rights, gender equality and the integrity of the environment.

To contribute toward its vision for the world, WEDO's mission is to ensure that women's rights; social, economic and environmental justice; and sustainable development principles – as well as the linkages between them – are at the heart of global and national policies, programs and practices.

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*Special thanks to the WEDO visionaries,  
pioneers and friends who contributed stories,  
photos and – especially – inspiration to this  
publication.*





## **Celebrating Momentum and Milestones**

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“...THIS IS ANOTHER MOMENT AFTER THE DECADE OF WOMEN, IN WHICH WE CAN REACH OUT AND REENERGIZE THE EXISTING NETWORKS, EXPAND THEM, MAKE THEM STRONGER, MOBILIZE WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD TO CREATE THE KIND OF PLANET WHERE THERE IS PEACE AND JUSTICE, AND WHERE THERE IS HEALTH FOR ALL PEOPLE IN IT.

AND WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO THAT BY COMING TOGETHER AND EXCHANGING OUR VIEWS AND FINDING THE WAYS IN WHICH WE BRING TOGETHER OUR HEARTS AND OUR SOULS AND OUR MINDS. UNDOUBTEDLY, THERE WILL BE DIFFERENCES OF OPINIONS AND INTERESTS AMONG US HERE. WE DO NOT FOR ONE MOMENT SAY THAT ALL WOMEN THINK AND ACT ALIKE... BUT WE DO BELIEVE WE SHARE A COMMON VISION OF A HEALTHY PLANET, ONE IN WHICH WOMEN AND MEN CAN LIVE IN HARMONY WITH EACH OTHER, AND WITH NATURE, LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, RESPECT CULTURAL PLURALITY, DEVELOP TECHNOLOGIES THAT CAN SERVE THE WORLD'S ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND DRAW ON THE COMMUNITY BASED EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM OF WOMEN AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. WE HAVE ONLY ONE WORLD...

SO LET US WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR STILL BEAUTIFUL AND BOUNTIFUL PLANET MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE NEEDS AND DREAMS OF ALL PEOPLE, AND AS WE EMBARK UPON OUR WORK TOGETHER HERE, LET US CELEBRATE, LET US CELEBRATE EACH OTHER. LET US CELEBRATE THE HUMAN WILL, AND LOVE AND CARING THAT WE FEEL NOT ONLY FOR OURSELVES, BUT FOR THE PEOPLE OF ALL CULTURES, COLORS, AND CREEDS. LET US CELEBRATE OUR EARTH...”

*Bella Abzug, Opening Remarks at the Women's World Congress for a Healthy Planet on Friday, November 8, 1991, in advance of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit)*

# Welcome

Friends,

Over the past year, WEDO has been marking its twentieth anniversary. Motivated by those who have come before us and who continue to work alongside us as mentors, peers and partners, we have delved into our collective history, marveling at the stories, the moments of transformation, the ebbs and flows of challenge and victory. While inequalities and inequities endure, while the global crises that drove WEDO's founding persist or are (as some surely are) worsened, and while fundamental counter-forces continue to threaten to roll back progress, in pockets around the world and in historic milestones at the global community level, a revolutionary momentum has remained tireless.

This history in the pages ahead is not meant to be exhaustive – far from it. It is unabashedly subjective – each moment a stone in the foundation for work ahead – highlighted partly because, in gearing up for Rio+20, a milestone for WEDO, as well as for the wider women's, environmental and development movements, we all seek inspiration. It is so easy to become frustrated – especially as many of the same issues and the same rhetoric flood the table once again.

But we go on.

Among Bella's remarkable qualities was her tremendous capacity for optimism. She drew inspiration and motivation from all the women around the world with whom she worked. She celebrated them and, in so doing, she celebrated the momentum of this movement. In turn, we celebrate the countless individuals, organizations, networks and movements who have contributed to every bit of this shared history – from tiny flickers of progress to long-lasting change.

*Cate Owren*

Executive Director, on behalf of the WEDO Team



*Celebrating Momentum and Milestones*

# 1990-2012

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## 1990

From Women USA, a U.S.-based NGO, Congresswoman Bella Abzug and journalist/activist Mim Kelber recognize the announced UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED – later commonly known as the Earth Summit) as a unique opportunity following the UN's Decade on Women: to bring women's voices, experiences and expertise to the environmental agenda. A unique and visionary group of friends, more than 50 women leaders from 31 countries, is mobilized in October 1990 to form the International Policy Action Committee (IPAC).



“Just as in the ‘60s she made the connection between women's rights and civil rights, she later made the connection between women's issues and environmental issues. [We] organized one of the first meetings for her precursor organization to WEDO, called Women USA. Our guest was Wangari Maathai, founder of the Global Greenbelt Movement and later a Nobel Peace Prize winner. Over the next decade, [we] worked with women globally on a strategy [toward] the Earth Summit.”  
–Nadine Hack, *beCause*

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“...I HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT WOMEN HAVE TO BE AT THE FRONTLINE OF ACTIVISM...ON EQUALITY ISSUES, ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE, [ON] WAR AND PEACE, ON [THE] ENVIRONMENT, [ON] HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS IS A TRANSFORMATIONAL VISION THAT I HAVE ALWAYS HAD.”

*Bella Abzug*  
WEDO Co-founder and President

“WE MUST NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT ARE PRIMARILY REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS.”

*Peggy Antrobus*  
Women's World Congress for a Healthy Planet

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## 1991

“Asked to plan a UN lunch to discuss women and environment, I invited representatives of the diplomatic corps, NGOs and the UN secretariat – the usual tripartite group. Later, meeting NGOs at the Church Centre for the UN, we internationalists advised Bella that WEDO have co-chairs representing various areas of the world. Bella took that to heart, and so it happened.”  
–Margaret (Peg) Snyder, *Founding Director of UNIFEM*

“WEDO GREW OUT OF FRIENDSHIP. BELLA WAS MAINLY A PEACE ACTIVIST, AND I HAD BEEN IN THE ECOLOGY MOVEMENT SINCE THE DAYS OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT IN THE 1970s. AS WE MET AT UN CONFERENCES OVER THE YEARS, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT WOMEN’S VOICES WERE MISSING IN THE SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA, EVEN THOUGH AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL, WOMEN WERE LEADING THE STRUGGLE TO PROTECT FORESTS AND RIVERS, BIODIVERSITY AND LAND. TO BRING TOGETHER THE DIVERSITY OF WOMEN FROM ACROSS THE WORLD WORKING ON ECOLOGICAL ISSUES, WE ORGANIZED A PUBLIC HEARING IN MIAMI, [THE WOMEN’S WORLD CONGRESS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET,] AND WEDO WAS [FORMALLY] ESTABLISHED AFTER THAT.”

Vandana Shiva



The Women’s World Congress for a Healthy Planet, held in November 1991 in Miami, Florida, gathers more than 1500 women from 83 countries, collecting testimony on how the environment and development crises impacted or involved women, resulting in the consensual agenda for advocacy for the Earth Summit, called the *Women’s Action Agenda 21*.

## 1992

The Earth Summit, UNCED, in Rio de Janeiro is a critical event for women worldwide and for mapping a new development course – one that integrates social, environment and economic concerns.

WEDO organizes the Women’s Tent, *Planeta Femea*, with REDEH and others at the Earth Summit, creating a holistic and inclusive space. Many hundreds of women and men attend and prepare their strategies to influence the official debates in Rio.

As a result of strategic and collaborative lobbying, all UNCED outcome documents include specific gender equality issues and recommendations for strengthening women’s participation in decision-making processes, most notably in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration.



The Convention on Biological Diversity, one of three negotiated at Rio, includes: “Recognizing the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation...”

### Principle 20 of *Rio Declaration*:

“WOMEN HAVE A VITAL ROLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT. THEIR FULL PARTICIPATION IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.”

## 1993

### WEDO LOBBIES FOR AND WINS A PLEDGE FOR GENDER BALANCE IN NEW UN EARTH SUMMIT BODY, THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD), AND BECOMES A KEY CONVENER OF THE WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP.

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## 1994

The third of the so-called 'Rio Conventions', the UN Convention on Combating Decertification is formally adopted, including: "Stressing the important role played by women in regions affected by decertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels..."

WEDO organizes the women's caucus at the UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo – the final outcome of which '[expanded] the frontiers of action for women's development further than any previous UN document,' according to UN news, committing governments to a 20-year plan including increasing investment in women's reproductive



and sexual health and extending primary education to all children and promoting secondary education for girls.



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"THE FIRST TIME THAT I INTERACTED WITH WEDO WAS IN 1995 DURING THE FOURTH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE IN BEIJING – THEY WERE ONE OF THE STRONGEST ADVOCATE GROUPS. AT THE TIME, I WAS PART OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CAUCUS, AND I ADMIRER THEIR STRONG POSITIONS AND THE WAY THEY ADDRESSED THE NEGOTIATIONS; I MADE A NOTE TO MYSELF THAT I SHOULD WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH THEM. I CONTINUED TO WORK ON GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, AND MANY YEARS LATER, I WAS ASKED TO BE PART OF WEDO'S BOARD. NOW [AFTER MANY YEARS] THAT I HAVE STEPPED OFF THE BOARD, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I AM NOT A PART OF WEDO. I WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF WEDO AND WEDO WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF ME—WE ARE PARTNERS, ALLIES, AND FRIENDS. THEY ARE MY PEOPLE."

*Lorena Aguilar*

Senior Global Gender Advisor, IUCN; former WEDO Board Member

## 1995

The World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen concludes with a major breakthrough: consider women at the forefront of any strategy to promote poverty alleviation. The outcome document set measurable time-bound commitments to reduce poverty, increase access to financial services and shelter.

WEDO launches the campaign *180 Days and 180 Ways* between the Social Summit and the Beijing Conference to keep women's concerns for their rights at the forefront.

WEDO organizes the Linkage Caucus at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. The final Beijing Platform for Action incorporates 89 percent of the Caucus recommendations, with almost two-thirds of them accepted verbatim.



“Change is not about simply mainstreaming women. It’s not about women joining the polluted stream. It’s about cleaning the stream, changing stagnant pools into fresh, flowing waters. Our struggle is about resisting the slide into a morass of anarchy, violence, intolerance, inequality and injustice. Our struggle is about reversing the trends of social, economic and ecological crisis. For women in the struggle of equality, there are many paths to the mountain top... Our struggle is about creating sustainable lives and attainable dreams. Our struggle is about creating violence-free families. And then, violence-free streets. Then violence-free borders. For us to realize our dreams, we must keep our heads in the clouds and our feet on the ground.

**“...FOR US TO REALIZE OUR DREAMS, WE MUST KEEP OUR HEADS IN THE CLOUDS AND OUR FEET ON THE GROUND.”**

Some wonder how I have kept going for so long and how I manage to remain optimistic... I am fueled by the passion of the women I have been privileged to meet and work with, buoyed by their hope for peace, justice and democracy. I am strengthened by each of them. And to each government delegate who pushed the boundaries of progress, I thank you. I thank the United Nations and my sisters in the NGO community for your good humor and hard work. I wish each of you well and sustainable optimism for the days ahead. Never underestimate the importance of what we are doing here. Never hesitate to tell the truth. And never, ever give in or give up.”

—Bella Abzug, *Plenary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, Sept. 12, 1995*

# “WEDO WAS THE FIRST TO TEACH US WHAT A CAUCUS IS, HOW TO LOBBY AND NOT BE AFRAID.”

Noeleen Heyzer  
Former Director of UNIFEM



The Second World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet is held in Huairou in September, 1995, reviewing women's accomplishments and setbacks since WEDO's First Congress in Miami in 1991. WEDO launches nine days of events, called Daughters of the Earth: The Environment and Development Collaborative Web, drawing thousands of participants to hear insights, analysis and strategies.

## 1996

At the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, WEDO joins the Huairou Commission to organize

the Women's Caucus, which advocates successfully to incorporate language that gives people the power to seek legal redress from socially and environmentally harmful decisions that violate human rights.

Bella Abzug is honored by the UN and NGOs worldwide with a UN Peacekeeper's Beret for her work as both 'A Fighter and a Peacemaker'. In her acceptance speech, she says, "As we talk about UN reform and the future, I want to make the most revolutionary statement heard today: unless and until women are 50% of the decision-makers in the United Nations and in every single country, we cannot expect any meaningful change, we cannot expect a new vision. As we enter a new millennium we cannot expect to see the kind of changes that are crying out to happen."

## 1997

At the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 'women and the environment' is high on the agenda, and WEDO-proposed language comprises the agreed conclusions.

“I AM FUELED BY THE PASSION OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES...BUOYED BY THEIR HOPES FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACIES, DESPITE THE OPPRESSIVE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH [OFTEN] THEY LIVE. NO ONE EVER SAID BEING AN ACTIVIST OR AN IDEALIST WAS EASY, BUT I SEE A REVIVAL OF GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING, SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND COALITION-BUILDING, AND THAT MUST BE THE LEGACY OF THE 1990s TO THE GENERATIONS TO COME.”

Bella Abzug  
Excerpt from remarks at The Nation Forum, May 1, 1997

Earth Summit+5 ends in June, with governments failing to make immediate commitments to address environmental crises that have worsened at alarming rates in five years. WEDO solidifies its commitment to sustainable development as a priority.

## 1998

“Enough of the music, that is, the talk. The new millennium is for dancing, that is, for action.”  
—Chief Bisi Ogunleye at CSD-7



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan delivers a statement at the UN tribute to Bella.

**“BELLA ABZUG...WAS HERE FIRST AND FOREMOST TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN ARE NOT CONFINED TO THE KITCHEN TABLE, BUT ARE PRESENT AT EVERY TABLE: THE TABLE THAT DEALS WITH ECONOMICS, THE TABLE THAT COPES WITH GLOBALIZATION, THE TABLE WHERE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS TAKE PLACE...”**

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Bella Abzug passes away March 31. Mim Kelber writes about how WEDO started out as just a group of friends. “Bella S. Abzug lived to become one of the 20th century’s great women leaders. She was honored for her championship of the world’s women, human rights, the poor and oppressed, and most of all for her people-nurturing vision of a healthy, peaceful planet. Admirers and foes alike praised her for her brilliance, honesty, and dedication to women’s empowerment and democratic values.”

## 1999

An Optional Protocol to CEDAW is adopted, giving women the right to make submissions to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee.

The WTO Ministerial Meeting in Seattle is a failure; WEDO joins 50,000 people to peacefully protest the social and ecological impacts of WTO rules driven by corporate goals to control people’s health, food, environment and work. A Gender and Trade Network is established to research existing gender and

trade relations, form gender and trade networks to advocate for change, and to help women better understand and become involved in economic issues.



“At the ‘Battle in Seattle,’ the global force of corporations was beginning to be answered by the global force of ordinary people. And women were a vibrant part of that force—from the Raging Grannies with their battle cry, to the sweatshop workers, to the hundreds who marched in single file, mouths taped, eyes and ears covered, across the street from the robo-cop police of Seattle. We mobilized on our own and we joined marches organized by men. Our message: ‘We are present and we are resisting this madness!’”  
—Jocelyn Dow, former WEDO President, March 2000

## 2000

Five years after Beijing, women still only account for 12.7 percent of the world’s parliamentarians—an increase of less than three percent. Seeking to correct the imbalance, WEDO launches the campaign *50/50 by 2005: Get the Balance Right!* in June 2000 during the UN Beijing+5 Review session, bringing together women leaders from all regions to learn from each other’s experiences and develop national and local strategies.

At the Millennium Summit, the ‘fundamental value’ of equality for development is asserted in the Millennium Declaration: “*The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.*” MDGs 3, 7 and 8 include WEDO-specific priorities: promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing global partnership for development, respectively.

“...In the MDG drafting process, WEDO and other women’s rights advocates argued that gender equality and women’s empowerment are essential cross-cutting components for achievement of all the goals. If the approach to implementation is gender blind, if adequate resources are not identified and if global economic policies remain discordant with social and environmental needs, the MDGs [will] not succeed.”  
—Excerpt, *Women’s Empowerment, Gender Equality, and the Millennium Development Goals: A WEDO Information and Action Guide*



## 2001

The UN World Conference Against Racism is held in Durban, where WEDO participates in the Women's Human Rights Caucus. The Conference attempts to bring global attention to the interconnections of race and gender.



In preparation for the 10th anniversary Earth Summit in Johannesburg, WEDO begins developing strategies at an international conference on gender perspectives in Berlin, sharing knowledge and expertise in three areas – energy, transport, and information for decision making.

WEDO works with an international working group of women activists and the Network for Human Development (REDEH) to revitalize the Women's Action Agenda 21 and update with the new Women's Action Agenda for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet 2015. WAA15 is an action plan for governments, international institutions, and civil society that focuses on peace and human rights, globalization for sustainability, access and control of resources, environmental security and health, and governance for sustainable development.

**“THIS IS NOT A WORLD IN WHICH WE HAVE TO CONSIDER WHAT THE ROLE OF THE UN MUST BE; THE ROLE OF UN MUST BE, UNEQUIVOCALLY AND UNCOMPROMISINGLY, TO STAND IN THE FACE OF CORPORATE BRUTALITY AND PROFITS IN THE NAME OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE SIDE OF THE POOR AND THE POWERLESS.”**

*Jocelyn Dow*

*At the International Forum on Globalization*

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## 2002

CSW adopts agreed conclusions on environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters, which includes a comprehensive set of policy recommendations to enhance women's empowerment and promote gender equality in situations of natural disasters.

Women mobilize to hold on to the gains from previous UN conferences, especially in the realm of reproductive health and women's rights, and the Women's Caucus secures a number of hard fought gender-sensitive references in the draft outcome document.

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**THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, OR RIO+10, IN JOHANNESBURG, REVIEWS PROGRESS SINCE 1992'S EARTH SUMMIT, CONFIRMING THE NEED FOR GENDER ANALYSIS, GENDER SPECIFIC DATA AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ALL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS, AND THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS.**

The Women's Action Tent captures the spirit of the global women's movement, offering women accredited to the official proceedings and those who were not a space to share and assess progress over the past decade and strategize beyond WSSD. Women take to the streets: “Women's Rights are Human Rights!”

“We continue to draw strength from the experiences women have shared with us, the courageous ways they have found to confront conflict and extreme economic deprivation. We have moved forward with a renewed urgency to fulfill WEDO's mission—the achievement of women's equality, a healthy and peaceful planet and human rights for all—working globally and locally in the United States.”

*—June Zeitlin, former WEDO Executive Director*



## 2003

WEDO convenes the Women's Caucus at the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan, joining partners and hundreds of other groups from around the world to reject privatization. The Caucus achieves many objectives, most notably the inclusion of a statement on gender in the official record of the 'Dialogue between Ministers and Forum Participants,' and the addition of gender mainstreaming and community-based approaches to water management in the final conference document.

"The same pernicious forces that are causing so much insecurity in the world have given rise to global and local movements seeking alternatives to war, neo-liberalism, environmental devastation, gender and racial oppression, and social and economic inequalities. Women are agents of change and have made enormous contributions to social movements worldwide. Organizations pushing for peace and justice cannot succeed without women's active participation and leadership."

—*Women Challenging Power in a New Global Context: The WEDO Manifesto, December 2003*

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**"THE BEST APPROACH TO PROTECTING THE WORLD'S ECOSYSTEMS IS ENSURING THAT WOMEN ARE INVOLVED IN INTEGRATED LAND AND WATER USE PLANNING."**

The Ministerial Declaration of the 2nd World Water Forum 2000

## 2004

WEDO co-founder Mim Kelber passes away, survived by her husband, two daughters, and five grandchildren. Her legacy lives on in WEDO and other feminists around the world.



The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) convenes the First Global Women's Assembly on the Environment: Women as the Voice for the Environment (WAVE), in Nairobi, in partnership with WEDO, the Network of Women Ministers of Environment and other civil society groups. The assembly aims to position women's issues at the center of global environmental efforts, resulting in a Manifesto on Women and the Environment, concrete recommendations and project proposals for UNEP.



**THE UN RELEASES THE MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT, STATING THAT HUMAN ACTIVITY IS HAVING A HUGE IMPACT ON THE BIODIVERSITY OF WORLD ECOSYSTEMS.**

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"We call upon all concerned to step up action. In order to achieve sustainable development and gender equality, strong alliances and systematic communication are needed across the world. Together, as agents of change, bound together by our commitment to justice, equality and peace, we can sustain our environment and our common future."

—*WAVE Manifesto, Nairobi, October 13, 2004*

## 2005

WEDO publishes *Beijing Betrayed*, a global overview and regional summaries of progress in ten years:

"The international women's movement has had a stake in the United Nations beginning 30 years ago with the First World Conference on Women and the launch of the Decade for Women.

The UN emerged as a critical vehicle for the global women's movement, and its world conferences resulted in greater recognition of gender inequalities and propelled governments to make global commitments to advance women's rights. While the UN is the most universal and legitimate global governance institution, it finds itself at a crossroads, as it is being undermined by the growing dominance of the international trade and finance institutions, and weakened by a lack of resources and power imbalance among its diverse membership. In the coming year, governments will be considering a series of major proposals for reform of the UN. Despite its weaknesses, women continue to challenge the UN, pushing for a stronger forum for women's mobilization and ability to influence global policy."

WEDO and IUCN draft a Gender Plan of Action for UNEP, which is adopted by the governing body, calling upon governments and the agency



to mainstream gender perspectives into their environmental policies and programmes, to assess the effects on women of environmental policies, and to integrate further gender equality and environmental considerations into their work.

COMMITTING TO ADDRESS WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY, WEDO LAUNCHES THE *MisFORTUNE500* CAMPAIGN – THE FIRST AND ONLY COMPREHENSIVE WEB RESOURCE THAT DOCUMENTS AND EXPOSES HOW BUSINESS PRACTICES AND CORPORATE-DRIVEN POLICIES VIOLATE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, WHILE FOCUSING A SPOTLIGHT ON THE MANY WAYS WOMEN WORLDWIDE ARE MOBILIZING IN RESPONSE.

WEDO and ENERGIA co-chair the Women's Major Group for the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which focuses on themes including energy and climate change.

"WEDO has been working in alliances and coalitions with other women's groups that share a vision of a more equitable, humane and sustainable world. Women's perspectives on the environment are holistic: focusing not only on ecological issues but on economic, political, social and cultural issues that affect the natural environment. It is political (as well as technical) recognizing that when there are imbalances of power

WEDO LAUNCHES *WOMEN ENGAGING GLOBALLY IN THE U.S. WITH THE CENTER FOR WOMEN POLICY STUDIES AND THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, CREATING A TOWN HALL MEETING FORUM FOR AMERICAN WOMEN TO LEARN ABOUT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN.*



## 2006

WEDO is recognized with the Champion of the Earth award by UNEP, citing WEDO as "a champion in the field of women's economic, social and gender rights and a beacon for the empowerment of women across the environmental and development debate."



between corporations and communities, the wealthy and the poor, governments often stand on the side of the more powerful. [WEDO] challenges ‘myths’ that link environmental degradation with overpopulation, the supposed lack of knowledge on the part of those who lack a formal education, and asserts the value of indigenous knowledge. It is visionary.”  
–Peggy Antrobus, DAWN

## 2007

WEDO responds to consultations with partners all over the world by turning focus to climate change, one of the most urgent issues on the global agenda and particularly as a women’s rights issue.

In partnership with IUCN, UNDP, and UNEP, WEDO launches the

Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) at the UNFCCC conference in Bali – growing quickly to be an alliance of more than 50 UN agencies, IGO, I-NGOs and NGOs working together to ensure climate change policies, programs and decision-making at every level are gender-responsive.

WEDO launches the *Women Demand Action on Climate Change Campaign* in the U.S. to mobilize support for a progressive U.S. foreign policy position on climate change and related issues.



## 2008

WEDO investigates the ‘Delivering as One’ UN initiative, hosting workshops in two countries, Tanzania and Vietnam, to explore how women and gender equality mandates are integrated into the One UN pilots.

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AT UN HEADQUARTERS DURING THE ANNUAL CSW SESSION, THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL ANNOUNCES HIS SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENED GENDER ARCHITECTURE AT THE UN, FOR WHICH WEDO AND PARTNERS HAVE BEEN MOBILIZING SUPPORT.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CWGL AND THEN HUNDREDS OF WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS AROUND THE GLOBE, WEDO HELPS TO LAUNCH THE GENDER EQUALITY ARCHITECTURE REFORM (GEAR) CAMPAIGN, THE GOAL OF WHICH IS A NEW, STRENGTHENED WOMEN’S ENTITY IN THE UN SYSTEM.

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In partnership with organizations from Bangladesh, Ghana and Senegal, WEDO develops some of the first substantive national case studies on gender and climate change, which are published as part of *Gender, Climate Change and Human Security*, commissioned by the Human Security Network. WEDO begins building an advocacy team of women and gender experts from around the world to mobilize around climate change as a women’s rights issue and prepares for action with these partners at its Gender and Climate Change Workshop in Dakar.







“Greater inclusion of women and inclusion of a gender-specific approach in climate change adaptation and decision-making may reverse the inequitable distribution of climate change impacts. And greater inclusion could improve adaptive decision-making itself, reducing the negative impacts on the entire community, thus enhancing human security.”  
 –*Gender, Climate Change and Human Security: Lessons from Bangladesh, Ghana and Senegal*

## 2009

U.S. Congressional Resolution H.R. 98 is introduced by three congresswomen on April 2, 2009, recognizing that disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and the efforts of women globally to address climate change.

Part of the GGCA and in partnership with Finland, WEDO launches the Women Delegates Fund, supporting women from least developed countries to join national negotiating team on climate change, contributing to an increase in the representation of women at climate talks.

WEDO works in collaboration with GenderCC, LIFE, ENERGIA, WECF and other women’s organizations and networks to establish an official women’s constituency at the UN climate change negotiations.

WEDO’s team of advocates contribute to securing unprecedented text on women and gender equality in UNFCCC outcomes, emphasizing the importance of women’s participation and leadership, access to financing, technology and capacity building, and contributions as agents of change. But WEDO protests the UN’s lack of transparency and access to civil society:

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“[WE]... EXPRESS GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE ISSUE OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS AT THE COPENHAGEN COP. THE FAILURE TO ENSURE CONFERENCE ACCESSIBILITY TO THE THOUSANDS OF ACCREDITED CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES WAS A DIRE INDICATION OF THE INABILITY TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE IN A COMPREHENSIVE, EQUITABLE, TRANSPARENT AND JUST WAY.”

Women and Gender Constituency Press Release, December 2009



UPON THE PASSING OF WEDO VISIONARY BROWNIE LEDBETTER, FORMER BOARD MEMBER CHIEF BISI SAYS, “BROWNIE: THE GRASSROOTS OF AMERICA, THE RURAL WOMEN OF AFRICA, AND THE POOR OF THIS WORLD WILL NOT FORGET ALL THE RALLIES YOU ORGANIZED FOR THEIR VOICES TO BE HEARD.”

## 2010

WEDO organizes the women’s caucus at the Convention on Biological Diversity conference of parties, mobilizing support for full implementation of the new Gender Plan of Action.

WEDO works more vigorously at the regional and national level to highlight both the urgency and



the gender perspective of climate change. It partners with UNIFEM regional offices to produce assessments of gender and climate change throughout the Caribbean and conducts trainings throughout Asia, Latin America and the U.S. with various partners.

After years of tireless lobbying and awareness-raising, in collaboration with partners around the globe, WEDO and GEAR celebrate the agreed Resolution to form UN Women and supports the appointment of Under-Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet.

WEDO is honored for its work on gender and climate change by the National Council for Research on Women (USA) with its 2010 Advocacy Award.

UNFCCC Cancun Agreements include eight references to gender and climate change in outcome text, including for operational bodies that will then include gender in implementation. An ally negotiator:

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“WE ARE PROUD OF EVERYBODY WHO HAS BEEN [PART OF] THE CREATION OF THE NEW GENDER ARCHITECTURE FOR THE UN. WHAT COMES NEXT WILL EQUALLY DEPEND ON OUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT AND WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN ALL PROCESSES, AT ALL LEVELS. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE “WOMEN”– NOT BECAUSE I THINK THEY NEED TO BE OVERBURDENED, SOLELY RESPONSIBLE OR HAVE SPECIAL RIGHTS – BUT BECAUSE THE NEXT PHASE FOR WHAT’S NOW CALLED ‘UN WOMEN’ IS ALL ABOUT THEIR LIFE, THEIR NEEDS, THEIR ROLES AND THEIR INTERACTION WITH THE DEVELOPMENTS IN EVERY COUNTRY OF THE WORLD.”

*Monique Essed Fernandes*  
WEDO Board Chair

“WEDO has been very strategic; they have a certain target to get delegations to make and support proposals on gender. They match advocates with negotiators and [in so doing] they have attained a lot of success. They have done a very, very good job...”



## 2011

UN Women, the new high-level UN entity tasked to tie global gender equality and women’s empowerment policies to national actions and to reinforce gender equality commitments throughout the UN system, is officially launched on Feb. 24, 2011, with Bachelet declaring, “Gender equality must become a lived reality.”

UPON WEDO’S OFFICIAL 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY, BOARD AND STAFF CONVENE FOR A STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT, RECOMMITTING TO THE VISION AND FOUNDING MANDATE OF THE ORGANIZATION.

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WEDO joins forces with Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), Voices of African Mothers (VAM), and ENERGIA to comprise the steering committee for the Women’s Major Group, which includes hundreds of women and organizations worldwide, to organize for the twentieth anniversary of the Earth Summit, Rio+20.

In collaboration with GGCA, IUCN and the CBD Secretariat, WEDO joins government and local civil society partners to write Haiti’s National

“THE ONLY CERTAINTY WE HAVE IN THIS LIFE IS THAT EVERYTHING CHANGES, WHICH IS IN LINE, OF COURSE, WITH THE NATURAL CYCLES OF LIFE. WEDO EMBRACES THESE CYCLES AND MAKES SURE THE NEXT GENERATION IS READY TO STEP UP... I MET WEDO AS A YOUNG ACTIVIST. THE TRUST, SUPPORT AND INSPIRATION I RECEIVED FROM WEDO STAFF AND BOARD ENCOURAGED ME TO GO BEYOND MY OWN PERCEIVED BOUNDARIES. AND NOW I AM A BOARD MEMBER MYSELF – AND PROUD THAT WEDO EMBODIES THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AS DECISION-MAKERS AND LEADERS.”

*Sayida Vanenburg*  
WEDO Board Member



Strategy on Gender and Climate Change. “Working with WEDO [has been] one of the best experiences I have [had] in the past five years. It was like a big family and I have learned more than you [could] imagine.”  
–*Haitian Project Partner*

In September, WEDO and the women’s and environmental movements lose a pioneer, Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai. Memories and celebrations of her life and work flood in and are captured in tribute: “...How lucky we are that she was here in this world among us. She was such a beautiful spirit and always moved us to act with such clarity...”

–*Anita Nayar, former WEDO Associate Director*

## 2012

The session of the CSW fails to come to agreed outcome – and shortly thereafter, delegations strip the Rio+20 zero draft negotiating document of rights-based language. WEDO and the Women’s Major Group strategize and mobilize pressure on governments around the globe for a strong outcome of Rio – one that does not roll back rights, but rather continues to build on the groundwork secured in 1992.

WEDO remains focused at the UNFCCC – ensuring the post-Kyoto framework and agreements include long-fought for gender equality language and the new bodies for climate finance, technology and capacity building include women’s participation and perspectives.

Committed to its Women Delegates Fund, WEDO develops a more comprehensive capacity building program, designing trainings on diplomacy and negotiating skills, media and communications, and technical climate change issues.

Critically concerned about the exclusion of women’s rights and

perspectives in mitigation efforts, WEDO investigates REDD+, supporting a rights-based precautionary approach to forest carbon offset initiatives. Action research in four countries begins.

With an eye on the potential Sustainable Development Goals and the strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development, WEDO and partners mobilize awareness around and support for a women’s rights-based post-2015 agenda.

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“THE ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN’S GLOBAL VOICES ON THE ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS REMAINS AS CRITICAL AS EVER. WEDO KEEPS THESE ELEMENTS, FOR GLOBALLY ORGANIZING AND FACILITATING, STRATEGICALLY ADVOCATING, AND CRITICALLY MONITORING PROGRESS ON PROMISES MADE, AT THE HEART OF ITS MISSION. IT IS MY BELIEF THAT STRONG PARTNERSHIPS – INCLUDING WITH INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL SISTER-ORGANIZATIONS, THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN – WILL HELP TO MAKE WEDO’S DREAM OF A PEACEFUL, JUST AND HEALTHY PLANET MORE REAL IN THE FUTURE.”

*Irene Dankelman*  
Advisor and former Board Member





## Living the Change We Want to See in the World – and Harnessing Momentum to Carry On

*What if we, as women, use this opportunity of the UN Conference on Environment and Development to be the change we want to see in the world?*

This was the starting point of WEDO: a group of friends, a group of women activists occupying a range of strategic positions around the world, trying to figure out how to innovate, how to collaborate – how to be the change we want to see.

WEDO has lived this vision. Our agenda has continued to foster the intrinsic connections of sustainable development, including addressing poverty, human rights, reproductive rights, and well-being, caring for all forms of life in equal measure.

Partnership and companionship – walking side by side in a common

direction – is a principle WEDO cultivates, a main contribution to what we see as a (necessary) feminist revolution. Strengthening commonalities and celebrating diversity amongst the women's global movement, we sustain each other – because we are among friends.

WEDO itself – and all the individuals who have driven it and comprised it – has been a mentor for many of us. For me, I learned to be confident, to couple my humanity, caring and empathy with strategic thinking, and to have the courage to stand up and claim big action. I miss my mentors. I miss the compassion, the passion and the strategic insight of Bella, I miss the intelligence and discrete refinement of Mim, I miss the companionship and humor of Brownie, and I miss the beauty and the enormous generosity of Wangari.

But we always said, *WEDO is not just an organization, it is a movement* – and as a movement and organization both, it continues and is inspiring a new generation to carry on.

*Thais Corral*  
Advisor, founding Member and  
Vice-President of WEDO (1991-2003)

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Cover, Pages 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21: Andrea Quesada-Aguilar; Welcome Page: WEDO Archives; Page 6 (first column): Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, (second column): WEDO Archives; Page 7 (first column): Jewish Women's Archive – Joan Roth, (second and third columns): WEDO Archives; Page 8 (first column): Jewish Women's Archive – Diana Mara Henry, (second column): WEDO Archives; Page 10 (first column): WEDO Archives, (third column) Library of Congress; Page 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22: WEDO Archives

Printed locally on recycled paper  
using non-toxic toner inks and renewable  
wind-powered energy.



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