

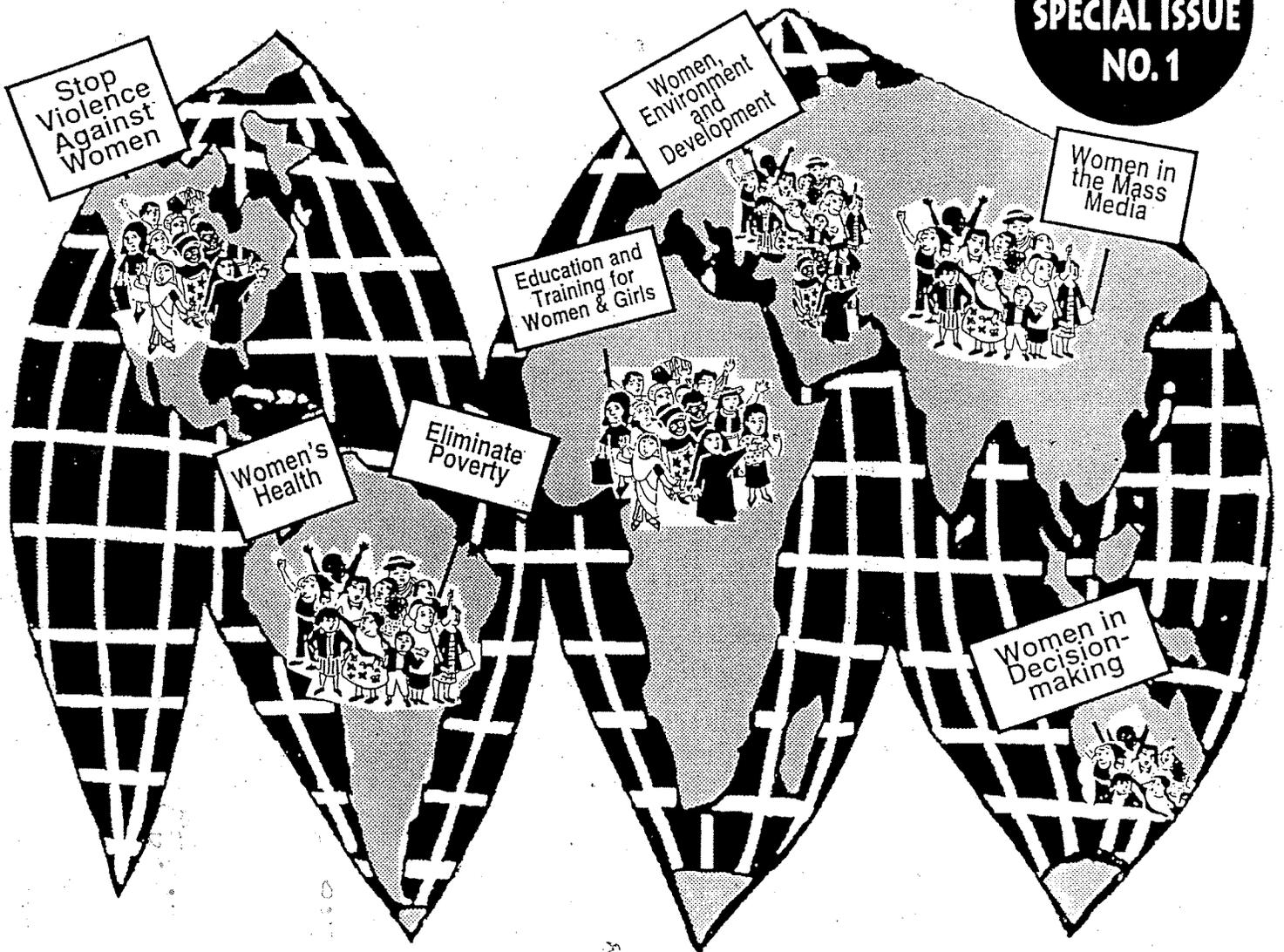
THE TRIBUNE

A WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT QUARTERLY

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NO. 1**



**GET READY! CONNECTING BEIJING
TO ACTION AT HOME**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S TRIBUNE CENTRE



WOMEN'S LOBBYING STRATEGIES...

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lobby: *corridor, vestibule or entrance hall in a public building; group of people who try to get popular and/or political support for a particular cause or sectional interest; to frequent the lobby of a legislative chamber (or UN) trying to influence the members (or delegates) in the chamber; to influence the passage of a bill (or UN document) by lobbying.*

Women have always lobbied. Whether it has been in the community where we live and work, or in legislative chambers in our states and countries, we have fought for our rights in whatever way we could, and increasingly, we have been successful.

An example of women's success at strategizing and combining efforts has been the recent efforts of women's groups at the United Nations. NGOs in general have become more organized with their lobbying efforts since UNCED (the UN Conference on Environment and Development, 1992), at which time the system of accreditation for NGOs was relaxed. Before UNCED, all NGOs needed to have Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council to participate as observers in UN meetings. Now, NGOs can apply to become an accredited observer for any specific UN meeting on a one time basis.

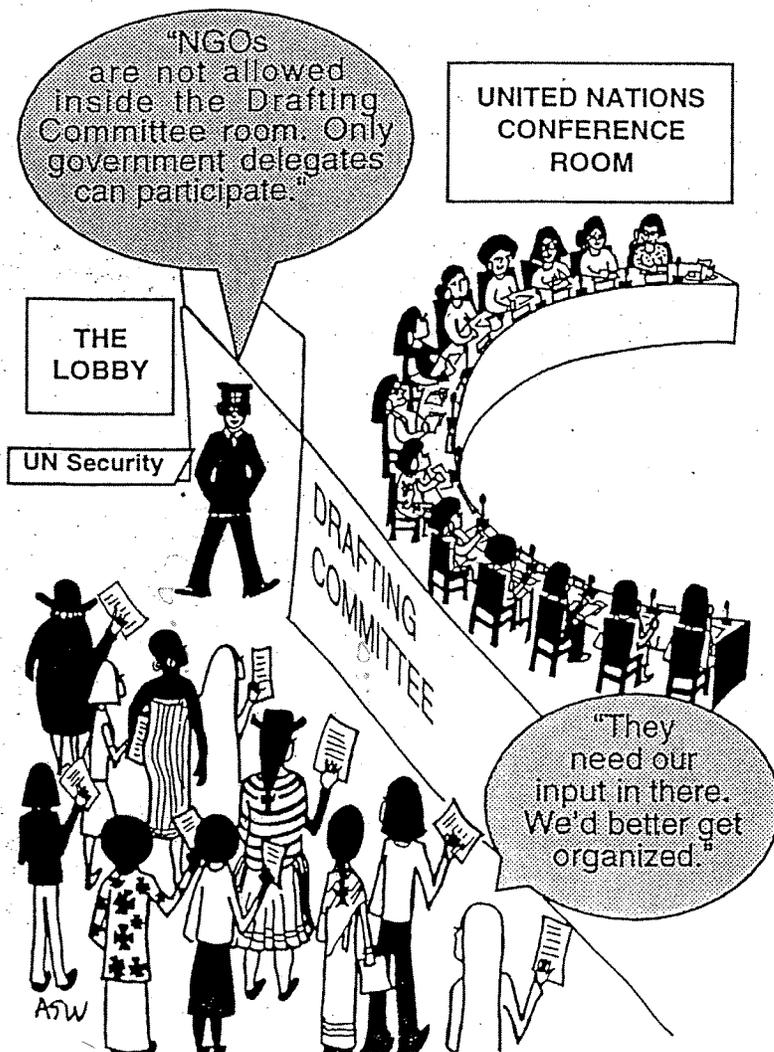
But whether NGOs have consultative status (and many international women's organizations do) or are accredited as an observer for one specific meeting only, they cannot take part in the actual drafting of documents. They are observers, not participants, and have limited rights only.

In the months prior to UNCED, we women combined our efforts in a variety of ways to get our issues and concerns into the UN plan of action known as Agenda 21. One of the most successful strategies was the daily women's caucus at the preparatory meetings.

Caucuses have become an important organizing tool in the preparation processes for all the major UN conferences held or planned since UNCED, including WCHR (World Conference on Human Rights-Vienna, 1993), ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development-Cairo, 1994) SDS (Social Development Summit-Copenhagen, 1995) and FWCW (Fourth World Conference on Women-Beijing, 1995).

By combining our efforts, we women have been able to take our issues and concerns to delegates, and thence into the drafting committee.

So, how exactly does a women's caucus or lobby function? In the following 2 pages, we have outlined some of the main steps in a successful caucus strategy at the UN.

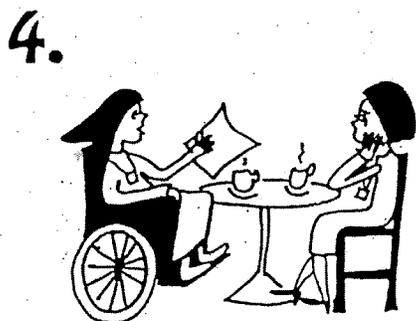


LOBBYING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN....

1. Representatives of women's groups participating at a Preparatory Committee meeting [PrepCom] for a UN conference, arrive independent of each other. All have the same objective: to ensure that women are included as equal partners in every section of the draft documents.

It takes very little time to realize however, that each can achieve much more by combining efforts.

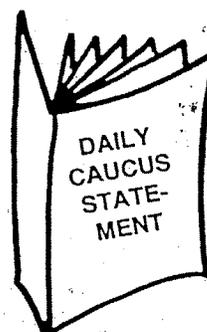
Coming together as a Women's Caucus, they begin to meet every morning to review the results of the previous day's meetings, to share information and to plan follow-up actions.



Discussions can be held with delegates over coffee/tea...



Representatives of women's groups then use the daily statements to lobby their respective government delegations. By combining efforts and skills in caucus sessions, NGOs can talk with delegates knowledgeably, give helpful suggestions on possible changes and adaptations, and add specific issues and concerns where they have been left out (e.g. women's human rights in the initial drafts of the UN human rights documents). Ideally, paragraphs can be offered to rectify the situation!



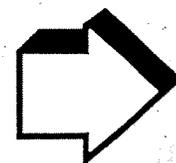
NGOs need to be creative about tracking down delegates.



"on the run"...



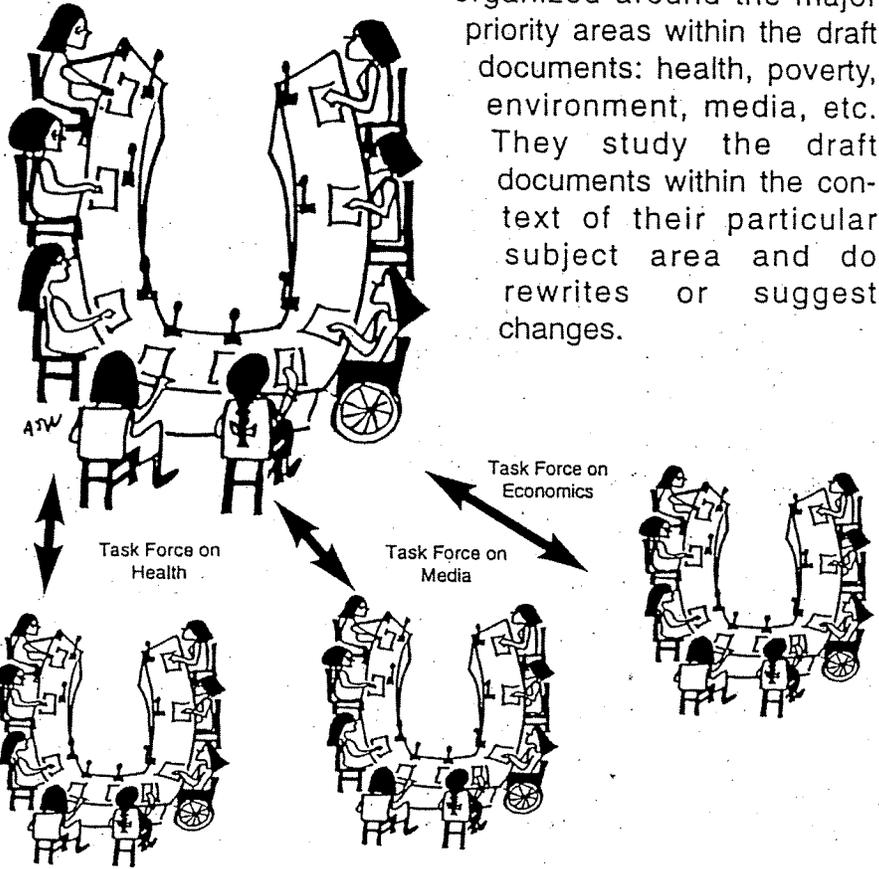
..and/or standing in lobbies...



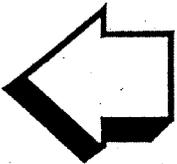
... AT UNITED NATIONS MEETINGS

2. A major part of the work of the women's caucus in addition to providing a forum for all women to air their views, issues and concerns is the monitoring of all amendments and re-writes of the draft documents. In order to be able to focus on specific subject areas within the draft documents, the caucus breaks into Task Forces.

Task Forces are usually organized around the major priority areas within the draft documents: health, poverty, environment, media, etc. They study the draft documents within the context of their particular subject area and do rewrites or suggest changes.

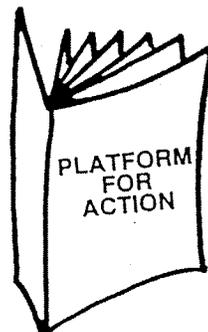
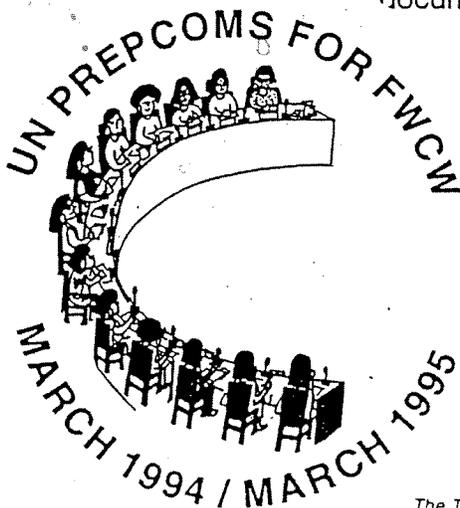


The Task Forces report back to the caucus daily. From these reports, daily caucus statements are produced relating to the part of the draft UN document being discussed by delegates that day.



5. From the PrepCom comes the final draft document for the World Conference on Women in Beijing, September 1995. Delegates to the World Conference will forge the final Platform for Action from this document.

6.



LOBBYING STRATEGIES IN THE REGIONS

The first of the five planned Regional Ministerial Meetings around the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, was held in the Asia and Pacific region in Jakarta, Indonesia, June 1994. Representatives of women's groups across the region participated as observers and together came up with several very successful lobbying techniques. Along with daily women's caucuses, much like those described on the two previous pages, two strategies in particular stand out.



NGOs WEARING SASHES THAT ANNOUNCED MAIN CONCERNS OF WOMEN WELCOMED DELEGATES AT THE ENTRANCE.

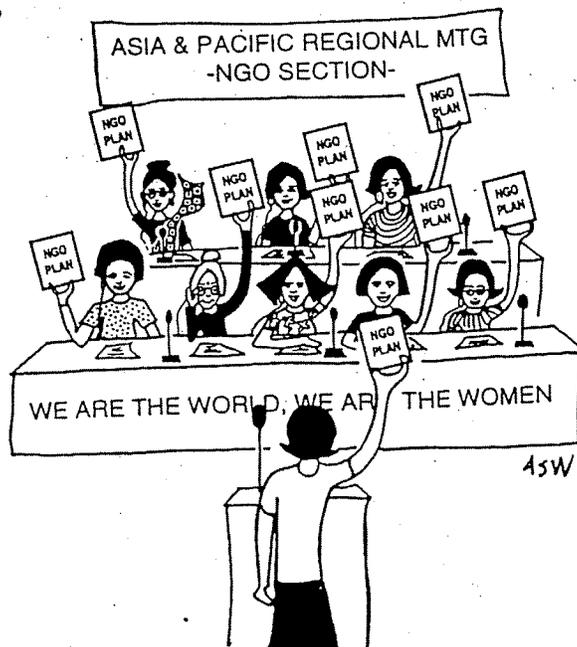
STRATEGIES OF ASIA AND PACIFIC NGOS

On the opening day of the Ministerial Meeting, NGO representatives lined the entrance wearing sashes that promoted the main concerns of women. As they arrived, dignitaries saw the women lined up and naturally assumed that they were some kind of official welcoming party. So they shook hands with each woman, noting the words on the sashes as they passed by.

A Women in Development Symposium held in Manila, Philippines in November 1993, had resulted in a far-reaching NGO Plan of Action for the Asia and Pacific region. More than 500 representatives of NGOs from across the region had participated in the symposium.

Copies of the NGO Plan of Action were in the hands of all of the women as they arrived to participate as official observers at the government meeting. The Plan had a bright yellow cover so was clearly recognizable. The women had decided that each time a mention was made of the Plan, they would all wave the book high in the air. The strategy was carefully developed, and speakers were "set up" to mention the NGO Plan of Action during important plenary sessions.

The Plan became a hot item, and NGOs were approached by delegates who wanted copies for use by their country delegations.



THE WOMEN WAVED COPIES OF THE NGO PLAN OF ACTION WHENEVER IT WAS MENTIONED BY ONE OF THE SPEAKERS AT PLENARY SESSIONS.

LOBBYING STRATEGIES IN COUNTRIES



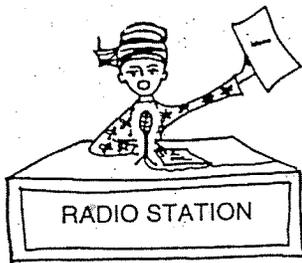
Speak out at public meetings.

By far the most important arena for lobbying strategies is within our own countries. It is at national level that women must make changes in the laws that discriminate against us, and in the way society looks at who we are and what we do.

Lobbying strategies take many forms at country level, and the women who live in those countries are the best strategists. You know how to reach your leaders, you know how to reach the community at large.

Speaking out at public meetings is a basic strategy, perhaps with the draft Platform for Action in hand, or a brief report that you and your group has written on a major issue of concern to women in your country, an issue you want to see placed before the World Conference on Women by your delegation.

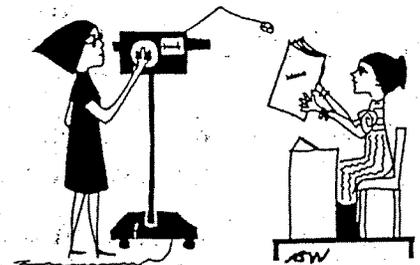
Speaking out on the radio will get this message even further afield. If it's possible to present the issue on television, that's another great way to get people talking.



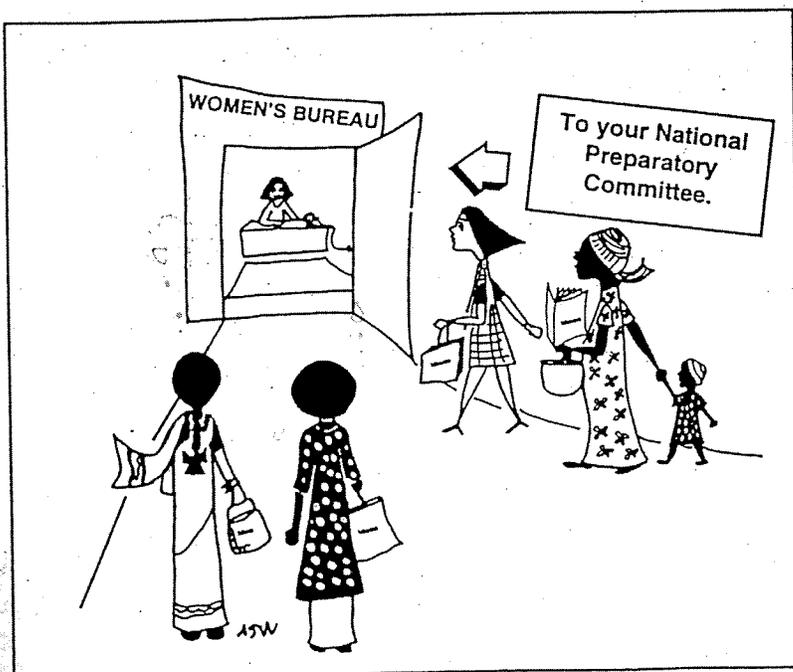
Speak out on the radio.



Use your local and national newspapers to publicize issues you want included on the Platform for Action.



Maybe you can get important issues onto a television programme.



Take your issues and concerns to your country's National Preparatory Committee.

Get your message into the newspaper, either as an interview, or by alerting the press that you will be holding a press conference on an important issue before the country concerning the rights of women.

And don't forget that there is a National Preparatory Committee for the Fourth World Conference in your country, often the Women's Bureau. Take your issues and concerns to your National Preparatory Committee.

The more you can get an issue out into the public domain, and the more people you can get behind specific concerns of women in your community, the more chance you will have of getting those concerns onto your country's list of priorities.

LOBBYING LESSONS LEARNED...

The following is a summary of the lessons learned by NGOs participating at the Jakarta meeting

- 1. NGOs should closely monitor the official preparations.**
You need to make sure there is adequate space for NGOs to meet, and that there is access to the official documents. Also, lobby for time for NGOs to speak at the plenary.
- 2. NGO briefings are an absolute necessity.**
Daily briefings provide a base for NGOs to share information, and to plan strategies and actions.
- 3. Have an information table where NGO documents can be distributed.** Additionally, a banner with the name of the Regional NGO Working Group and a bulletin board for announcements will give you visibility and a way of maintaining contact with each other.
- 4. Plan "media events" that will catch the eye of the national, regional and international media.**
The more people you have that are knowledgeable about the concerns and issues being brought to the meeting by NGOs, the more chance you will have that these issues will be taken seriously by the official delegates.
- 5. Prepare short, printed statements that are timely and strategic, for delegates to use in drafting sessions.**
Long, involved statements will be ignored by officials. Keep your inserts crisp and to the point.
- 6. Always brief NGO newcomers and include them in the process.**
Not everyone can attend meetings full-time, and NGOs (particularly those from the host country) will come and go as they are able. They need to be briefed and included to the extent possible, otherwise a valuable resource is lost.
- 7. Set up committees/task forces on specific issues and concerns, and put skilled, well-briefed chairs in charge.**
In addition to task forces on major issues (e.g. health, environment, violence against women, etc.) you also need task forces on such areas as press, information and documents, lobbying strategies and collective actions. A well-informed, skilled chairperson is a must.
- 8. Special efforts are required to have an issue area that has been excluded or ignored inserted into the documents.**
For some NGOs, there is a feeling that their specific area of interest has not been dealt with in the official document(s), and when this is the case, special strategies need to be adopted. An example of this is the issue of women, science and technology, a major concern of groups worldwide who are organizing a major science and technology activity at the NGO Forum in Beijing.

Adapted from *NGO Forum on Women '95 Bulletin*, Number 4, June/July 1994.