

BEIJING BETRAYED

Women Worldwide Report that Governments
Have Failed to Turn the Platform into Action

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“Although this prize comes to me, it acknowledges the work of countless individuals and groups across the globe. They work quietly and often without recognition to protect the environment, promote democracy, defend human rights and ensure equality between women and men. By so doing they plant seeds of peace.”

—WANGARI MAATHAI, NOBEL LAUREATE, NOBEL LECTURE, OSLO, DECEMBER 10, 2004

“The Beijing Platform for Action is the strongest statement of consensus on women’s equality, empowerment and justice ever produced by the world’s governments. It is a vision of transformation—of what the world can be for women and men, for this and future generations.”

—BELLA ABZUG (1920-1998), WEDO CO-FOUNDER AND FOUNDING PRESIDENT

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

is an international organization that advocates for women's equality in global policy. It seeks to empower women as decision makers to achieve economic, social and gender justice, a healthy and peaceful planet and human rights for all.

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ISBN: 0-9746651-4-2 Copyright © March 2005

Printed on recycled paper by Astoria Graphics UNION BUG

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INTRODUCTION BY JUNE ZEITLIN

Beijing *Betrayed* is the fifth global monitoring report published by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) assessing governments' progress in implementing the commitments they made to the world's women at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995.

Beijing Betrayed brings together the diverse voices of women in some 150 countries in subregions across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia to influence the United Nations 10 Year Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This report presents women's realities—their concerns, experiences, perspectives and analyses—in the implementation process and contrasts sharply with the more formal and often abstract reports governments have presented.

The reports presented here are a testimony to women as agents of change and give us cause for celebration. They show that women advocates everywhere have stepped up their activities since Beijing using the Platform for Action and other key global policy instruments to push governments into taking action. In every region of the world, women have taken the lead in crafting legislation and conducting public awareness activities to promote women's human rights, peace, and sustainable development.

But the reports also provide powerful evidence that key governmental commitments to women—the Beijing Platform and the outcome of the Beijing Five-Year Review, Cairo Programme of Action and 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)—have yet to be achieved. The title, *Beijing Betrayed*, reflects the core of women's critique—"governments worldwide have adopted a piecemeal and incremental approach to implementation that cannot achieve the economic, social and political transformation underlying the promises and vision of Beijing" (see Global Overview, page 10). The reports speak loudly: the women of the world don't need any more words from their governments—they want action, they want resources and they want governments to protect and advance women's human rights.

Women understand that implementation falters because of powerful negative political, economic and social trends constraining the global environment as well as progress at the national level. WEDO's 1999 monitoring report, *Risks, Rights and Reforms*, assessing government actions five years after the International Conference on Population and Development, sounded a global alarm calling for a reversal of "disturbing economic, environmental and political trends that threaten the health and sustainability of our increasingly vulnerable planet." But instead of a reversal, women have witnessed an expansion and deepening of this crisis.

A combination of global trends—the predominance of the neo-liberal economic framework, growing militarization, and rising fundamentalism—have created an environment that is increasingly hostile to the advancement of women's human rights. Since Beijing, the neo-liberal economic model and market-driven policies—particularly changes in trade and finance rules, and the deregulation and privatization of public goods and services—have increased poverty and intensified inequalities between and within nations, with the harshest impact falling on women, the majority and poorest of the poor. Women's work in the care economy remains unaccounted for in gender-blind macroeconomic policy and poverty reduction strategies that further exacerbate the feminization of poverty.

These conditions are perpetuated and structural inequalities reinforced by the enormous power wielded by large transnational corporations and the World Trade Organization, along with the failed economic prescriptions imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The dominance of these institutions in conjunction with the most unilateralist U.S. administration in decades has deepened the crisis in global governance and contributed to the weakening of the United Nations.

Escalating militarism and new and revived fundamentalisms, both secular and religious, have created a stifling climate for progressive change. Increased militarization since the September 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, framed by the U.S. "global war on terror" and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, comes on top of an increase in regional ethnic and communal violence in many parts of the world. Fundamentalist parties, often led by or supported by the U.S., seek to rollback the gains of Cairo and Beijing, particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to limit the freedom and opportunities of women and girls around the world. The devastating impact of all of these trends intensifies women's social and cultural vulnerabilities, especially the poorest and those coping with the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Operating within this difficult climate, which constrains available resources and narrows public perceptions about acceptable roles for women, few governments have mobilized the political will or leadership at the highest levels to comprehensively carry out the commitments made to women at Beijing. This inaction in the face of such intense opposition to women's rights, underscores the conclusion of this global report—that governments have betrayed the promises they made in Beijing.

Beyond Beijing + 10

As with previous WEDO global monitoring reports, *Beijing Betrayed* is an advocacy tool to hold governments accountable for the commitments they have made to women. We are confident that women around the world, who put so much collective energy into this report, will find multiple ways to use it locally as a source of new ideas and experimentation, for mobilization and policy reform, and globally to press for further commitments and to "bring back Beijing" into the Millennium Development Goals. It will also serve as a benchmark against which women can assess future progress and for countries to see how they compare with others in the region and around the globe.

In conclusion, I want to acknowledge the path-breaking leadership and powerful voices of WEDO's founders. 2004 brought great pride, when Wangari Maathai, one of WEDO's founding board members, received the Nobel Peace Prize. There was sadness too in the passing of Mim Kelber, passionate thinker, writer and fighter, who co-founded WEDO with Bella Abzug. Since WEDO's last monitoring report, the longest-serving founding Board members—Jocelyn Dow, Thais Coral, Brownie Ledbetter and Chief Bisi Ogunleye—have retired from the Board. I thank all of them for helping to get us to this place, and they can rest assured that the energy, spirit and commitment they brought to WEDO for over a decade lives on.

June Zeitlin is Executive Director of Women's Environment and Development Organization.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The 2005 WEDO monitoring report *Beijing Betrayed* has been a collaborative effort from the outset. An exchange of ideas between the WEDO staff and Board of Directors in 2003 was followed by the establishment of an International Advisory Group, comprised of regionally diverse feminist activists with expertise across a range of issues. A questionnaire (reprinted on page 202) was then developed to guide national and regional responses.

While focusing on the Beijing Platform for Action, the questionnaire reflects the understanding that new issues have emerged more forcefully since 1995—issues such as peace and security, trade and finance rules, sustainability and HIV/AIDS—and that the linkages across all 12 Critical Areas of Concern are now even more complex and intertwined. It captures the critical issues in seven themes: Human Rights; Peace and Security; Power and Decision-Making; Poverty Eradication; Education; Natural Resources and Environmental Security; and Health.

WEDO liaised with regional and subregional networks, partners and colleagues to obtain additional perspectives and to recruit contributors with broad ties to the women's movement. We were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response; women everywhere affirmed the need for a new global monitoring report to impact the 2005 Beijing+10 and Millennium Summit+5 Reviews. Contributors and national organizers translated and disseminated the WEDO questionnaire and mobilized feedback from national and regional groups. Organizations and individual women shared their Beijing+10 assessments and reports, data, expert views and photographs.

It was soon clear that one size does not fit all when it comes to the international women's movement—all the contributors used the questionnaire as their starting point, but they have taken different approaches and emphasized different themes depending on subregional priorities and the rich diversity of women's daily lives and experiences. Following is a regional overview of the different ways the analysis and assessments were brought together.

AFRICA

Since the questionnaire responses in Eastern Africa focused mainly on human rights, the contributors supplemented the report with interviews with activists and information from a subregional shadow report prepared for Beijing+10. In West Africa, the questionnaire was taken to a subregional meeting to garner responses, and interviews were conducted with women's groups and women in government. Both subregions submitted their reports in French. In Southern Africa, telephone interviews were conducted for 11 of the 14 countries.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

In Central Asia the information was compiled by a rural women's NGO, in collaboration with other women's organizations in four countries and drawing on alternative reports for CEDAW. In East

Asia, women's groups from Japan, Mongolia and South Korea collaborated on the report, together with individual university women in Hong Kong and Taiwan. China submitted a separate report. In Southeast Asia, women's organizations in Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam completed the questionnaire and provided regional reports assessing implementation of ICPD and Beijing commitments. In South Asia, various networks coordinated country reports. In Bangladesh, representatives from nine women's organizations met in workshop-style meetings to exchange information. The coordinators note that, "though there might be shortcomings in the report, the beauty is its collectiveness, sincerity and the mutual cooperation among different organizations." National reports came from India, Nepal and Pakistan. In the Pacific, academics and activists collaborated at the national level to produce New Zealand's report and a broad group of feminists collaborated throughout the Pacific Islands, bringing together information from 15 small island states.

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

The basis of the EU report was a review of the Beijing Platform for Action by the European Union, conducted by the European Women's Lobby. This was supplemented by reports from individual countries and regional women's organizations. In Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the questionnaire was translated into Russian and distributed to academics and activists. The Canada report grew out of a meeting of feminists and national Aboriginal women's organizations and used indigenous women's rights as a standard to assess the progress of women. In the United States, information was drawn from responses received from 10 national organizations working in all thematic areas, supplemented by two national reports.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, a network of social justice NGO's translated the questionnaire into Spanish and coordinated distribution to and synthesis of questionnaires for 20 Spanish-speaking countries. Similarly, a regional women's network coordinated contributions from its representatives in 14 states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

WEST ASIA

Responses were difficult to collect in West Asia, due to political and social constraints on women's organizations. While the subregion has emerged within the international women's community since 1995, outreach to activist groups continues to be a challenge. Although the questionnaire was translated into Arabic, most responses were not received in a timely manner to include them in the report. Egypt submitted a country report and information on the other countries was drawn from existing NGO reports.



GLOBAL OVERVIEW AND REGIONAL SUMMARY

GLOBAL OVERVIEW AND REGIONAL SUMMARY

Governments, Lacking Political Will and Adopting a Piecemeal Approach to Implementation, Stall the Women's Equality Agenda

INTRODUCTION: THE PROMISES

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995, 189 governments declared their determination “to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity.” Their Beijing Declaration spoke eloquently of commitment to gender equality, women's empowerment and women's and girl's human rights. They adopted the Beijing Platform for Action and committed to its implementation, urging “the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men” to join them in this noble effort. In the Political Declaration issued at the five-year Review of Beijing in March 2000, governments reaffirmed their responsibility to implement the Platform for Action.

In September 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit, 191 governments again reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. In the Millennium Declaration the governments pledged “to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable,” to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement CEDAW.

But despite the policy gains at Beijing and in other United Nations global forums of the 1990s as well as the Millennium Summit, and despite a decade-worth of efforts to use these documents to achieve legal and policy changes to protect and advance women's rights at the national level, many women in all regions are actually worse off than they were 10 years ago.

The subregional reports outlined in *Beijing Betrayed* have found that while there has been progress made through women's advocacy and mobilization, government inaction has stalled progress on national implementation of global commitments:

More governments have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); it has been ratified by 179 countries, up from 146 a decade ago. The Optional Protocol, which enables women to file complaints directly with the CEDAW Committee was adopted in 2000 and ratified by 71 countries to date. But despite these gains, few countries have removed their reservations, and few have incorporated CEDAW's provisions into domestic policy. In some cases explicitly discriminatory laws still remain.

Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000, emphasizes women's equal and full participation in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building.¹ However, there is insufficient public awareness of the resolution and women are still rarely present at decision-making levels or in leadership roles.

At Beijing, governments committed to gender balance in power

structures and decision-making, setting a goal of 30 percent representation, but the average of women's representation in parliament has crept up by just over four percent over the decade from 11.7 to 15.8 percent. However, there have been stunning achievements in many countries through the adoption of affirmative measures such as quotas from local panchayats in India, to the parliament of Rwanda, to the judges elected to the International Criminal Court.

Though women's poverty and role in the economy were addressed in the Beijing Platform, women continue to be the poorest of the poor, concentrated largely in the informal and agricultural sectors, often working in flexible employment, hazardous conditions and with few if any labor protections. Many formal sector jobs have been eliminated, pushing women further and further into informal and often precarious work. Most successes for women's labor rights to date have been around the formal wage economy, where some governments have adopted new legislation dealing with discrimination in the workplace, including equal pay and sexual harassment. Lack of women's access to economic and natural resources and essential public services continues to be a key challenge to the eradication of women's poverty.

Efforts to engage more men in child and family care are being pioneered, with some success, in the Nordic countries. But in most parts of the world, unremunerated family care responsibilities continue to rest on the shoulders (and backs) of women and measures to create conditions of equity in sharing family welfare and household responsibilities are lacking.

The goal of universal enrollment in primary education for girls and boys contained in both the Beijing Platform and the Millennium Development Goals is likely to be met in 2005 except in sub-saharan Africa and West Asia. However, school dropout and illiteracy rates remain high for girls, inequality persists at higher levels of education, and very few governments are taking action to revise school texts and curricula to counteract gender stereotyping.

Women play a critical role in managing natural resources and have extensive knowledge and experience of the water, land, and energy supplies that sustain households and communities. Yet women still lack land tenure or inheritance rights in many countries and current trends such as water privatization undermine their ability to own, manage, use and conserve these resources and to provide for themselves and their families.

Worldwide, women are still struggling for the right to autonomy over their own bodies. Violence against women has gained greater visibility and more government attention and legislation, but few measures address the root causes of violence or challenge the entrenched cultural norms which permit rape and domestic violence to be viewed as a private family matter. Moreover, war rape and other forms of coercion and sexual abuse still plague countless women and girls caught in situations of armed and ethnic conflict, despite international laws

While there has been progress made through women's advocacy and mobilization, government inaction has slowed movement on national implementation of the global commitments.

FLASHBACKS

Top: Women rallied in New York for Beijing +5.
Bottom: In Beijing, Conference Chair Gertrude Mongella (R) with (L-R) WEDO's Bella Abzug and Madeline Albright, then U.S. Secretary of State.



making such acts war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Trafficking of women and children into bonded sweatshop labor, forced marriage, forced prostitution and domestic servitude has become a larger global concern, but the reports give little indication that governments are making significant efforts to combat these crimes or to protect the human rights of women affected by them.

There also continues to be significant threats to women's health. Access and affordability remain problematic worldwide, particularly affecting low-income women and women in rural areas. In the case of women's reproductive health, obstacles such as access and affordability are compounded by cultural and religious fundamentalism.

Women and girls are also most at risk from HIV/AIDS, primarily because of continued patterns of sexual subordination, and the stigma attached to the disease makes obtaining services all the more difficult. In many parts of the world, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has also further increased women's income-earning, domestic, and care-taking responsibilities.

According to the subregional reports brought together here, the rhetoric has failed to play out in the reality of women's lives. Governments worldwide have displayed a lack of will in turning their commitments to women's rights into decisive action, instead adopting a piecemeal and incremental approach that cannot achieve the economic, social and political transformation underlying the promises of Beijing.

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 imbalances 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.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Beijing Platform states that the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for governments and the United Nations and is essential for the advancement of women. In keeping with this, most nations of the world have now ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)—up from 146 in 1995 to 179 in 2005, or more than 90 percent of the members of

Box 1. Gender Myths From the Indian Frontline¹ BY SRILATHA BATLIWALA AND DEEPA DHANRAJ

Religious fundamentalism and neo-liberal economic policies are converting poor grassroots women in India into both agents and instruments in a process of their own disempowerment. These forces are not necessarily acting in concert, but are effectively utilizing certain 'gender myths'—i.e., "feminist insights [that] become mythologized as they become development orthodoxy."² We examine the impact on grassroots women in India of two of these myths.

Gender myth I: Giving poor women access to economic resources—such as credit—leads to their overall empowerment. This myth arose out of successful feminist efforts to shift economic resources into women's hands, gain recognition for women's roles in household economies and enable poor women to influence local development. However, the idea that women are the best investment for poverty alleviation, and the mass-scale creation of so-called women's "self-help groups," are actually intended to foster a form of depoliticized collective action that is non-threatening to the dominant power structure and political order. For example, one of India's largest poverty alleviation programs, in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, was focused entirely on rural women. Its underlying assumption was that by making small loans to rural women on a mass scale, the state could abdicate from all responsibility for rural poverty alleviation, leave it to women to improve their families' and community's lot, and earn rural women's allegiance for the ruling party. In fact, that party was thrashed in the next election as poor women, exhausted with the burden of numerous productive activities and multiple loan repayments, expressed their ire through the ballot box. But in other parts of the country, the narrowly focused self-help groups have rendered women oblivious to the fundamentalist mobiliza-

tions going on under their very noses.

This is not to suggest that economic empowerment programs are uniformly disempowering—the successes of micro-credit for women are well documented. But we must be more aware of how such interventions are being designed and delivered in increasingly disempowering ways, instrumentalizing poor women and being distorted to serve other agendas.

Gender myth II: If women gain access to political power, they will opt for politics and policies that promote social and gender equality, peace and sustainable development. Thus, quotas or other methods of ensuring high proportions of women in elected bodies will transform these institutions. Women will alter the character of political culture and the practice of public power.

For decades, feminists have argued that women's access to power and decision-making authority in the public realm was as critical to achieving gender equality as changing power relations in the private sphere of households. We assumed that once women had access to political power, they would act for greater justice and equity. In India, however, far from women transforming politics, evidence of the reverse is mounting. Particularly frightening is the way in which fundamentalist parties have mobilized and fostered women's political participation to advance their own agenda. At the grassroots level, we are witnessing both this kind of instrumentalization and the marginalization of women elected representatives in multiple ways, in a manner very similar to what is happening in other parts of the world.

The myths regarding women's capacity to transform both politics and public power clearly underestimated the ability of the existing system to corrupt, co-opt or marginalize women, or how it would compel

or manipulate them to compromise their goals for narrow party interests. We failed to address the possibility that women would be proponents of reactionary, sexist, racist, elitist or fundamentalist ideologies.

If we then combine the depoliticized forms of collective action promoted by state-sponsored women's micro-credit programs, the mobilizations of women by fundamentalist groups, and the subversion of the agency of elected women, what emerges is a deeply problematic construct of women's citizenship: the docile, apolitical poverty fighter in local economies, and the militant fundamentalist fighter in local politics.

But this is a serious learning moment for feminists. We are at a historic juncture where the marginalization of feminist critiques and mainstreaming of feminist strategies forces us to change our own constructs and approaches, which means looking much more closely at what is happening to women on the ground. We must examine and unearth the deeper, more fundamental processes of restructuring power and politics that are afoot—the ways in which resurgent patriarchy, neo-liberal economics and fundamentalism are combining to construct a new kind of female citizen. The challenge now is to move towards more nuanced and contextualized approaches that can hopefully begin to confront and contain these formidable forces.

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Notes

1. Based on an article published in *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No.4, October 2004, pp 11-18, Sussex, Institute of Development Studies.

2. Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead, Concept Note, Workshop on 'Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: Repositioning Gender in Development Policy and Practice,' Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2-4 July 2003

the UN. In 1995, the Pacific Islands and Territories subregion had the largest number of countries—eight out of 22—that had not yet ratified CEDAW. By 2004 this figure had climbed to 14. In West Asia seven more countries have ratified CEDAW since Beijing, giving rise to more open debate on women's human rights.

Citing conflict with national laws, cultural practices and religious beliefs, a number of States Parties in South Asia, Southeast Asia, West

Asia, Northern Africa and the Pacific have entered reservations to core aspects of CEDAW, namely condemnation of discrimination against women in all its forms (Article 2); in social, cultural and family-based patterns of conduct (Article 5); in political and public life (Article 7); regarding nationality (Article 9); and regarding marriage and family relations.²

The U.S. is the only industrialized nation that has not yet ratified

CEDAW. For years the Convention languished in the Senate, and although it was reported favorably by the Foreign Relations Committee in 2002, the current administration has failed to provide crucial support to move it forward. The city of San Francisco, however, enacted a local ordinance in 1998 based on CEDAW principles. Others that have not yet ratified: Brunei Darussalam, Cook Islands, Holy See, Islamic Republic of Iran, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Nauru, Niue, Oman, Palau, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan and Tonga.

As of January 2005, 71 countries had already ratified the Optional Protocol, which was adopted in 2000 and empowers women to make submissions to the CEDAW Committee and the Committee to initiate inquiries.

CEDAW reporting is mixed. Some subregions report countries have been slow due to lack of political will, poorly qualified government personnel, inertia within successive political administrations and lack of response mechanisms (Pacific, CARICOM). Others testify to regular reporting by most countries that take treaty provisions into account in preparing national documents (CIS, EU).

CEDAW Compliance and National Law

Some subregions report that CEDAW ratification has been positive as nations sought to be in compliance. In East Asia, China adopted its first basic law on the protection of the rights and interests of women; Japan revised its nationality law, changed high school curricula and adopted the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, and many local governments have adopted their own ordinances for gender equality.

Some progress was reported in Southern Africa, where the judiciary has used CEDAW to make judgments on women's rights. Some countries in the subregion have initiated measures aimed at domesticating provisions of CEDAW and some other international human rights instruments. However, most governments in all regions have not yet translated CEDAW into concrete measures that can be put into operation at the local level.

In some regions, such as Central Asia conditions of women post-CEDAW ratification have actually worsened and there has been little or no movement on the rights of indigenous, minority, immigrant, disabled and other particularly vulnerable women (Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand).

Regarding national discriminatory laws, progress has been made in some regions in the crafting and passage of national laws against discrimination and violation of human rights. A number of countries in Northern Africa have reviewed their constitutions in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the constitutions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries emphasize "equality before the law." However, in both urban and rural areas, there is no widespread knowledge or awareness of these constitutional provisions.

Yet, even where non-discriminatory laws and national machineries have been in place over time, this has not curtailed inequity. CIS countries have no discriminatory legislation regarding equality and all have adopted national action plans and set up institutional machineries for women's advancement, but this has not lessened discrimination against women since there are no effective mechanisms to monitor and enforce the laws. In the European Union, the right to equality has been integrated into the foundations and objectives of the Amsterdam Treaty (1999), which mandates the Community to eliminate inequalities and promote equality of women and men in



Facing the press, former WEDO Board Chair Jocelyn Dow.

all its activities. Despite these measures, however, human rights policies very often fail to protect women's rights as recognized by both European and international texts.

Women most often cite patriarchal backlash and lack of political will at the institutional level as the greatest obstacles to governments implementing and enforcing CEDAW and national human rights laws.

These reports are replete with examples of how pervasive is the power of those forces wishing to hold back women's rights—in the Pacific, culture and religion are often used to justify discrimination against women. In the EU, women's advocates express alarm at the growing importance of religious fundamentalism, with references to religion and tradition more and more frequently being invoked as a justification for increasing control over women and girls. Sexual and reproductive rights of women are particularly under threat. Aotearoa/New Zealand reports a reaction against feminism, with a significant and vocal segment of the society of the view that women's empowerment has received sufficient attention. The center-right main opposition party has recently appointed a spokesman for men's health because, it says, the rise in women's rights is overshadowing men's needs.

Despite legislative gains in many countries, discriminatory laws remain on the books that constitute a total denial of women's basic rights and reinforce discriminatory practices, mainly in the areas of personal status and marriage subject to customary rules.

Right wing forces purport to "protect" culture, tradition and religious values while promoting the "natural" status of women as primarily wives and mothers. In West Africa, the laws governing the individual and the family confer in nearly all countries the monopoly of power and decision-making on the husband as the "head" of the family. For instance, Mali institutionalized obligatory obedience to the husband; in Togo, a husband may oppose his wife's taking a job.

In some CARICOM countries, women who marry foreign men cannot acquire citizenship for their husbands, but men who marry foreign women receive automatic citizenship for their wives. Additionally, women are required to obtain permission from their husbands before they undertake some basic reproductive health procedures.

In the Gulf countries of West Asia, women who marry foreigners are forced to give up their nationality, and although this restriction does not apply to women in the non-Gulf states, they cannot transfer their national-



Women are particularly discouraged from using national laws because of the tedious procedures, the cost of litigation and very limited access to the legal system.

ity to their husband or children from the marriage. There are still laws in the subregion that allow fathers to marry off their daughters as young as 12 or 13 years old, and a woman is still required to have a male guardian to validate her marriage.

Blockage of progress at the institutional level is a serious problem. Again and again the regional reports point to a lack of political will on the part of governments as the basis for weak institutional machineries and enforcement structures, inadequate resources and lack of follow-up action. To be sure, poverty often plays a role, but much more could be achieved if governments were determined to find the way. The Eastern Africa report points to Tanzania, where the Attorney General's Office is still studying the Law Reform Commission's review of national laws and its recommendations submitted in 1992, as an example of where the spirit is willing but implementation remains slow or nonexistent.

The Aotearoa/New Zealand National Action Plan for Human Rights fails to address women's equality and human rights or to even mention CEDAW. Moreover, in all regions women in particular are discouraged from using national laws because of the tedious procedures, the cost of litigation and the distance of the courts. Many people have little knowledge about their rights and very limited access to the legal system.

In the U.S., enforcement of sex discrimination legislation has been declining under the Bush administration with a quiet phasing out of the few institutional mechanisms intended to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The current Government has voiced concern for human rights violations against women internationally, but has often undermined women's sexual and reproductive rights on the global stage, including restricting funding to overseas groups that provide comprehensive reproductive health services including abortion, in addition to slashing its funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Public Awareness

The Beijing Platform calls on governments to work actively to promote women's rights and to provide gender-sensitive human rights



education and training in the public system. But in all regions, CEDAW and the Optional Protocol are not well known and human rights awareness lags.

Women's rights activists have used these international commitments to advance local struggles, and there are a few stand-out cases of them being used to particular success in individual cases—in Nepal (South Asia) to demand tougher rape laws and in the Philippines (Southeast Asia) and Brazil (Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean) to successfully lobby for a gender equality provision in the Constitution. In India, the Supreme Court applied CEDAW principles to cases on sexual harassment at the workplace and to the right of the mother to be the guardian of a minor child (South Asia).

Few governments have made an effort on public education about human rights through the education system or media campaigns as stipulated in the Platform for Action. One exception is Vietnam (Southeast Asia), where there are gender awareness training courses, measures to remove gender stereotypes in school textbooks and radio and television programs featuring gender equality. Another is Guyana (CARICOM), where human rights are included as a subject in the school curricula.

According to all reports, civil society organizations, with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies, have been much more proactive than governments in promoting action on women's human and legal rights. Pacific women have worked with human rights groups on training, advocacy and technical support to influence CEDAW ratification, implementation and reporting and created a regional agreement on women's rights—the 1995 Pacific Platform for Action.

In Southern Africa, a number of national associations of women lawyers and paralegal centers have been set up to help explain the law and assist poor women with court litigation. These centers translate laws into local languages and make it easier for community members to understand laws and make informed decisions. In West Africa, significant advances in gender-sensitive human rights education and training for public officials have been due to the work of regional organizations. Doctors, police officers and traditional and religious leaders have become more committed to CEDAW after outreach actions and training. In the CARICOM region, women's networks in collaboration with country-level chapters have conducted training of trainers with police officers who subsequently become tutors in their in-house programs.

A popular website in Jordan (West Asia) provides information about women's human rights, but women's groups still cannot hold national level public meetings to critique gender-based discrimination in countries such as Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The situation has improved in the other Arab countries, where women have been able to hold landmark gatherings.

Despite a chronic lack of financial and human resources, NGOs in many regions have conducted public education programs and published texts in local languages. They have simplified texts and presented these in more accessible formats such as comic books, posters and slide shows. Local women's NGOs have conducted seminars and training courses for women to explain how to use the legislation to protect their rights.

Violence Against Women

In the Beijing Platform for Action, governments agreed to “take urgent action to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women in private and public life, whether perpetrated by the State or private persons...” Yet, the issue of violence against women remains an acute problem affecting some two thirds of women in relationships worldwide. The reports support these data. For example, in Kazakhstan (Central Asia) over 60 percent of women suffered from physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, and nearly one third of U.S. women (31%) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, with young women aged 16-24 particularly at risk. In 2000, 44 percent of married women in Colombia (Latin America) suffered violence inflicted by male partners and 11 percent of pregnant women reported abuses. In Canada, Aboriginal women are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to experience partner violence, and that violence is more likely to be severe and potentially life-threatening.

Violence against women has gained more visibility and more government attention and legislation worldwide, but domestic violence still goes largely unopposed and unchecked by church and social structures due to entrenched cultural and customary norms. It has often been trivialized as a natural part of family life. However, these views no longer go unchallenged. Across the world, women’s and civil

society awareness-building campaigns and public pressure on governments have been breaking the silence that surrounds the issue of traditional and contemporary culture-based violence against women.

In Morocco (Northern Africa), civil society pressure has resulted in revision and adoption of progressive legislation and the establishment of counseling centers and a data collection system in police stations. The SADC governments (Southern Africa), pushed by women’s advocates, have promulgated anti-violence laws, including sexual offenses acts that criminalize marital rape and the willful transmission of HIV/AIDS.

In West Africa, women’s rights organizations mobilized against female genital mutilation (FGM) and won positive legislation in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo.

NGO-led family and women’s counseling centers now exist in almost every Pacific country. In addition, the Fiji Police Force, pushed by Fijian NGOs, has adopted a “no-drop” policy for domestic violence cases, meaning that any complaint received by the police must be prosecuted.

Many of the measures taken by governments do not challenge the root causes of domestic violence, which is still largely regarded as a private matter. Others do not go far enough—for instance, the EU has no Treaty article on violence against women, despite its transnational dimension and prevalence across all Member States, and a

Box 2. Human Rights and Human Security BY CHARLOTTE BUNCH

Women all over the world saw the Beijing Platform as a vital social compact between governments and citizens who pledged to work together for the human rights and human security of all women. The Platform recognized that meeting women’s needs in areas from education, housing and food security to ending impunity for violence against women was not only desirable for development but also a human rights obligation of governments.

Women’s activism has brought increased awareness of the massive daily violations of women’s basic right to bodily integrity (violence against women, rape as a war crime, high maternal mortality rates, etc.), and of the sex discrimination still present in areas such as education and property rights. It has also revealed many women’s lack of access to justice and the basic conditions necessary for exercising their human rights.

As a result of this growing awareness, international standard setting on gender-specific forms of discrimination and abuse has advanced over the past decade. New mechanisms include the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Criminal Court articles on rape, forced pregnancy and gender-based persecution and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Regionally, there is a new Optional Protocol on Women’s Human Rights to the African Charter on Peoples and Human Rights, and Special Rapporteurs on women’s rights have been appointed in Africa and the Americas. At the national level, more laws have been passed addressing women’s concerns, particularly domestic violence.

Women are also increasingly engaged in addressing global issues, and this has brought new energy and constituencies to debates on human rights, security and the UN. At the same time, however, increasing militarism and the growth of fundamentalisms of many kinds, as well as the inequities produced by global economic policies, have become major obstacles to achieving the promises of the Beijing Platform. Since September 11 many countries have used the excuse of ‘national security’ and the ‘war on terror’ to undermine human rights and further neglect women’s daily human

insecurities, which are caused less by terrorism than by poverty, violence, lack of control over their sexual and reproductive lives, etc. These issues are also fuelling the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Report of the UN Commission on Human Security redefines global security in terms of human and ecological needs instead of national borders defended by militarism. This approach holds promise for women, but it is losing ground in the current political climate. Women need to use Beijing +10 and the review of the Millennium Summit in 2005 to reinvigorate these ideas and bring greater gender awareness to them. This is an urgent moment for advance or retreat on the issues of human rights and human (in)security for women around the world. Governments must take concrete steps and commit resources not only to the implementation of the Beijing Platform but also to address the challenges that have arisen since Beijing that impinge on women’s rights and lives.

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draft declaration on combating domestic violence will have no legal status. Even when legislation exists, violence is so deep-rooted and widespread it cannot be curtailed. In Bangladesh (South Asia) law enforcement authorities find themselves ineffective to contain gang rape, acid violence, dowry deaths and trafficking. Some government actions silence women's voices—in Bahrain (West Asia), for example, where women were denied permission to organize a national conference on the issue of domestic violence.

Governments have too few programs to train judicial, legal, medical, social, education, police and immigrant personnel on dealing with violence against women. In Kazakhstan (Central Asia), for example, most of the limited training is carried out by women's NGOs. But when the police fail to investigate and take legal action against perpetrators of violence against women, they often engender a climate of impunity, as in Bangladesh (South Asia).

The trafficking of women and children into bonded sweatshop labor, forced marriage, forced prostitution, domestic servitude and other kinds of work has become a larger global concern since Beijing, but the reports give little indication that governments are making significant efforts to combat these crimes or to protect the human rights of the women affected by them. Generally there are few government-sponsored prevention programs and, where anti-trafficking legislation exists, penalties are weak. Often, trafficked persons are treated as immigration offenders and detained and incarcerated prior to deportation.³

There has been a dramatic rise in the number of women being trafficked from the CIS to North America and Western Europe, and up to 175,000 women from Eastern Europe and the CIS are being drawn into the sex industry in Western Europe each year.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Security Council Resolution 1325

In line with the Beijing Platform, Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in October 2000, marking the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women.⁴ It calls for an end to impunity for gender-based abuses during and after conflict, the integration of a gender perspective in peace-making and peacekeeping, and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making and in all stages of peace processes and reconstruction. It calls for action from a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General and all parties to armed conflict.

The power of the principles codified in Resolution 1325 continues to give women worldwide an authoritative resource to draw on as they struggle to rebuild their war-torn societies and become powerful participants rather than powerless victims.⁵

Public awareness

Across most subregions, there is as yet little public awareness of Security Council Resolution 1325, but this is changing as more and more

public education activities are mounted by NGOs and governments.

In war-torn Central, Eastern and West Africa, women have embraced the Resolution. Working with other civil society groups inside and outside the regions, they have organized an array of actions to promote it including training workshops and consultations, campaigns and cross-cultural exchanges. They are also using media—the “Voices of Women” radio program, broadcast in Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Senegal, aims to increase women's awareness and participation; a website launched by the Mano River Women's Peace Network features testimonies, case studies, drawings and poetry; a community women's peace-building manual has been developed for use in a “women in peace building institute” in West Africa.

Actions are also being mounted by women elsewhere. In the EU, women in France are circulating a petition on 1325 urging citizens to mobilize for implementation, and a network of women in Germany advocates for implementation and monitors the Government's work as a member of the Security Council. Women's groups in Georgia (CIS) created the Women's Peaceful Council to popularize the resolution among women and governmental officials.

On the island of Mindanao, Philippines, women launched a peace offensive with the slogan: Look at Peace through Women's Eyes 2000, to counter increased hostilities between the government armed forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Southeast Asia). A 1325 training in El Salvador (Latin America and the Caribbean) brought women's organizations together with representatives of the judiciary, the media and human rights groups. International women's groups based in the U.S. use Security Council Resolution 1325 to advocate for women's participation in peace processes, although the resolution is not applied to national processes.⁶

There are a few examples of progressive government action. Sierra Leone has introduced ‘peace teaching’ at the university and at the primary school level (West Africa). Japan has assisted women's participation in post-conflict peace building in Afghanistan; while in South Korea, some measures have been taken to empower women in the reunification process with North Korea, but gender perspectives are absent in the process (East Asia). Although Arab governments strongly endorse 1325 for the rights of Palestinian women, West Asia governments have taken no steps towards implementation.

The EU report criticizes Member States for their apparent reluctance to take a leadership role in promoting world peace. The European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the Participation of Women in Peaceful Conflict Resolution, which focuses on the EU and compliments SCR 1325, but there are no common standards for the behavior and conduct of soldiers and peacekeeping forces, including humanitarian aid workers, acting on behalf of the EU in areas of conflict and war.

In general, governments have been slow to take action towards implementation and have made little effort to integrate gender perspectives in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Women are rarely present at the decision-making tables to negotiate peace agreements or post-conflict reconstruction processes, and very few

The principles codified in Resolution 1325 continues to give women worldwide an authoritative resource to draw on as they struggle to rebuild their war-torn societies and become powerful participants rather than powerless victims.

are involved in foreign policy. Defense force peacekeepers are not trained in gender analysis to assess their activities. Few women participate in peacekeeping missions. The absence of women in diplomatic positions and decision-making posts remains an obstacle to women's participation in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace-building and post-conflict resolution and reconstruction.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Internally Displaced

Governments have failed to provide the “protection, assistance and training to refugees and internally displaced women” agreed at Beijing. Women and children constitute 75 percent of the 36 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide.⁷

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, almost nine million people have been internally displaced by ethnic conflict and civil war (CIS). In West Asia, an estimated five million Palestinians, six million Iraqis and 15 million Lebanese, forced to flee their homelands due to foreign military occupation (Palestine), war and internal civil war (Lebanon) or war and political oppression (Iraq), are living as refugees in various parts of the world.

The accounts set forth in these regional reports point to the absence of legislation to address the special issues of refugee women and girls separately from that of refugees in general. They paint a picture of women and children living in precarious circumstances, lacking both aid and support. Homeless or in camps without adequate sanitation, health care, water and schools for girls, they are exposed to rape and other forms of gender-based violence. Being impoverished and without financial resources, they have difficulty obtaining legal assistance or securing employment. In some countries, women refugees are registered as dependents of their husbands, thus limiting their freedom of movement.

The EU does not have commonly agreed standards and guidelines to assist policy makers to facilitate women's access to asylum.

The International Criminal Court

In terms of gender justice the most significant gain for women with the passage of the Rome Statute of the ICC was the broadening of the definition of war crimes to include rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity (Article 7).

The statute also requires that “fair representation of female and male judges” be taken into account in the selection process, as well as fair representation of females and males in the selection of staff in the Office of the Prosecutor and in all other organs of the Court. Incredible mobilization and advocacy around the nominations and elections brought over one third women—seven out of 18—on the panel of judges.⁸

Ninety-seven countries have ratified the Rome Statute to establish the Court, but the U.S. has actively sought to undermine interest

Box 3. Getting the Balance Right In National Parliaments

Top 15 countries reaching 30% critical mass*

Rwanda	48.8 percent
Sweden	45.3
Denmark	38.0
Finland	37.5
Netherlands	36.7
Norway	36.4
Cuba	36.0
Spain	36.0
Costa Rica	35.1
Belgium	34.7
Austria	33.9
Argentina	33.6
Germany	32.8
South Africa	32.8
Iceland	30.2

*Employing quotas, proportional representation and campaign subsidies.

The Dirty Dozen: No Women in Parliaments

Bahrain, Kuwait, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Guinea-Bissau

and efforts. Though the Clinton administration signed the Rome Statute in 2000, the Bush administration later withdrew its signature in 2002, making the U.S. the first nation in the world to “unsign” a UN treaty. Since then the U.S. has continued to campaign against the ICC, using its economic power to coerce other nations into backing away from their commitments.

Public awareness of the ICC's operations and provisions is extremely low. Most regions report there have been few public education initiatives. In Southeast Asia, NGOs are seeking to organize national coalitions and subregional networks in support of the Court and establish a dialogue between governments and human rights and peace advocates. South Korean women's groups are exploring ways to relate past crimes against women to the Rome Statute to gain justice for the victims—called ‘comfort women’—of Japanese sexual slavery in World War II (East Asia).

POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Representation

Governments at Beijing promised women equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. They also proclaimed their intentions to establish the goal of gender balance, set specific targets and implement measures to substantially increase the number of women to 30 percent in all governmental and public administration positions. Ten years on has anything actually happened? Not much.

Those countries that have made gains have used affirmative action measures, such as quota systems. The number of countries that have achieved 30 percent—the UN-designated “critical mass” required to maintain the impetus towards 50/50 female/male representation—remains low, increasing from five in 1997 to 10 in 2000, to 15 in 2004. At the same time, it is promising that in every region there are countries that have achieved this target. The world average of women in national parliaments has increased from 11.7 percent in 1995 to 13.8 in 2000 and to 15.6 in 2004.⁹

Women have better chances of being elected to local governing bodies, and many do start their political careers at the local level before moving on to the national stage. However, very few countries have local legislative bodies in which women make up 30 percent or more. Among those that do are India (South Asia), where a third of the Panchayat (village) seats are reserved for women by law, and Namibia (Southern Africa), where women hold 42 percent of elective local positions.

Obstacles stem from deeply rooted patriarchal structures and societal attitudes. Across all regions, women are often still considered unequal to men—in the workplace, at home, in government—and assigned roles accordingly. Political parties, electoral systems and legislative assemblies create systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in government.

Electoral systems, in particular, are an important predictor of women's representation. All of the countries in which women occupy at least 30 percent of parliamentary seats use a form of proportional representation. Campaign financing laws pose further problems for women—although many women candidates do better at the local level with the support of financial contributions from and the voluntary participation of women supporters. For those who are elected to local or national legislatures, the male-dominated structures and processes can often prove too formal and rigid.

Acknowledging these barriers in Beijing, governments committed to review “the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women,” and to consider reforms. An examination of those countries where women have gained at least one third of seats in parliament, as designated by the Platform for Action, reveals three common features for overcoming structural barriers and achieving critical mass—quotas, proportional representation and campaign subsidies (see box 3). In Latin America and the Pacific Islands, for example, the growth in women's representation is attributed to the adoption of affirmative action measures and proportional electoral systems.

The reports also attest to women's lobbying and networking, nationally and regionally, as largely responsible for increased awareness—in West Africa, a network of women parliamentarians and ministers works with NGOs to counter stereotypes and build support for women's increased participation; in CARICOM, a network of NGOs trains and supports women for local office; in the U.S., NGOs are increasingly taking charge of efforts to recruit and train women from both parties to be political candidates; and in Aotearoa/New Zealand, a number of women's organizations have helped increase women's formal political activity and the representation of Maori.

Though many governments have made significant strides, actions could use some stepping up. For instance, EU institutions are structured around quota systems for decision-making positions and the European Treaty commits to gender equality, but these criteria are rarely applied to nominations or election rules. In Canada, unpredictable, inadequate and piecemeal government funding has jeopardized the capacity of Aboriginal women's organizations to act as national representatives of Aboriginal women. In the U.S., both major parties court women voters through well-funded get-out-the-vote programs, but few concrete measures are taken to increase the number of women candidates or promote women's leadership. In West Asia, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia still deny women the right to vote and to be elected in national decision-making bodies, and in most countries in the subregion women still cannot work as judges.

Impact of Women's Representation

The reports bear out the notion that when women are represented in critical mass in policy-making bodies, their perspectives and experiences are more likely to be taken into account and their concerns given higher priority.

In Uganda, women have influenced the setting up of the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, the creation of universal primary education and adult literacy programs, and a Gender Department and in measures to increase enrolment of more girls to the university (East Africa). The Ministry has established gender desks and focal persons in all the key ministries. In Japan, the adoption of a 1999 law for a gender-equal society, the revision of a law on spousal violence in favor of the victims and the insertion of a clause on gender equality in the newly revised Official Development Assistance Charter in 2003 are successful example of women's involvement in policy-making (East Asia). In South Africa, women parliamentarians

led efforts to secure budgets based on gender analysis of government expenditure (Southern Africa). In Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, countries that have traditionally supported women in decision-making, the state provides opportunities for women to combine work and family obligations and actively promotes greater male involvement in family care (EU).

After Beijing, in keeping with the Platform for Action, countries in all of the subregions developed national machineries devoted to advancing women, working out state policies and strategies related to gender, developing action plans, and coordinating gender mainstreaming into all national policies, strategies and programs. These machineries were meant to engage with all branches of government—legislative, executive and judicial—as well as civil society, but most are strapped for resources and lack political commitment. They are often departments of women and family within ministries of social affairs, where they are vulnerable to being politically marginalized and viewed as having narrow mandates related primarily to supporting women as mothers. There is poor linkage between these and other sectoral ministries. Another weakness at both national and regional level is that there are few agreed upon benchmarks and targets, as well as limited monitoring and evaluation tools to track progress on gender equality.

POVERTY ERADICATION

In the Beijing Platform, governments committed to: ensure macroeconomic policies and development strategies address the needs of women in poverty; revise laws to ensure women's equal rights; eliminate all forms of employment discrimination; develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty; and advance women's access to employment and appropriate working conditions and to a variety of services and resources. Significantly, governments also agreed to promote the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men, reflecting the necessity for transformation of traditional and cultural gender norms if gender equality, women's empowerment and poverty eradication could be achieved.

Recognizing the limits of the Beijing Platform to address the scope of macroeconomic challenges, at Beijing +5 governments gave the issue wider consideration, agreeing that “the impact of globalization and structural adjustment programs, the high costs of external debt servicing and declining terms of international trade in several developing countries have worsened the existing obstacles to development, aggravating the feminization of poverty” (para 37). Excessive military spending, low levels of official development assistance, unequal distribution of unremunerated work between women and men and persistent harmful traditional and customary practices were also described as barriers.

Since Beijing, women's livelihoods for the most part have worsened, with increasing insecure employment and less access to social protection and public services. It is widely agreed that the majority of the world's poor are women, who also comprise the poorest of the poor, though there are still inadequate means to measure the extent of poverty, including women's poverty. Some 70 percent of Southern Africa lives below the international poverty line of US\$2 per day, while 40 percent—or 76 million people—live in extreme poverty of US\$1 per day or less. Despite lack of government figures, women's groups in the U.S. found that women were 40 percent more likely to be poor than men. Overall, during 1991-2000, the income of women in Latin America amounted to only 39 per cent

of the income of men. In St. Lucia (CARICOM), women's income has significantly decreased as a result of the decline in the agricultural sector.

Accounting for women's work

In all regions, the lack of recognition for women's unremunerated work remains a major problem, and still no measures exist to create conditions of equity in sharing family welfare and household responsibilities. Women's unpaid work includes, among many other things, managing food for the family; fetching water; protecting the environment; caring for children, older persons and people living with HIV/AIDS and other diseases; and providing voluntary assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups. Women's work in these areas continues to be unmeasured and absent from national accounts. In the EU, women reported that no coherent and effective policies have been implemented for reconciling family and working life for women and men. However, women reported that the Central Statistics Office of Trinidad and Tobago (CARICOM) is developing measures to value women's unpaid work, and in Ethiopia (East Africa) women and men share family welfare responsibilities on an equal basis by law, though in reality implementation is weak in some regions due to tradition and patriarchy.

Due to economic liberalization and the effects of globalization, paid work for women is increasingly insecure, flexible and without social protection. Furthermore, many formal sector jobs have been eliminated, pushing women further and further into informal and often precarious work.

Generally, more women are concentrated in informal sector employment than men. Sixty percent or more of women workers in the developing world are in informal employment (outside agriculture), excluding Northern Africa, where they are 43 percent.¹⁰ Informal sector employment counts for 90 percent of women working outside agriculture in India (South Asia) and Indonesia (Southeast Asia), nearly 75 percent of women in Zambia (Southern Africa) and 66 percent in South Korea (East Asia).¹¹

In the U.S., the temporary help industry is among the fastest-growing segments of the national economy. While remunerated, women's work in the informal sector—from home-based work and street vending vegetables and handicrafts to prostitution—often goes unrecorded. A recent study in the CIS on the informal sector reported that women were forced to sign undated letters of resignation, enabling the employer to fire them without paying maternity leave should they become pregnant.

Box 4. Governance, Trade and Investment in Africa: Gender and the Role of the State

BY ZO RANDRIAMARO

Research by the Gender and Economic Reforms in Africa (GERA) program on the gender dimensions of trade and investment policies was completed at the end of 2001. The findings confirmed that economic and trade reforms mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO) have undermined the capacity of States to meet their obligations towards their citizens, especially women and other disadvantaged groups, and to pursue policies that can ensure sustainable human development and social equity.

The research was undertaken by multidisciplinary teams led by African women researchers who conducted a six-month study of selected communities and groups in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. Since the 1980s, all these countries have experienced a considerable reduction of public expenditure under structural economic reforms—involving the privatization of strategic sectors and public assets—coupled with the burden of debt servicing. Typically, budget cuts have mainly affected public spending on social services that

are vital for women and other vulnerable groups. Under the WTO regime, reduced revenue from import and export taxes has further hindered the achievement of social development goals, while increasing States' dependence on external resources.

The economic and trade reforms have led to a considerable loss of sovereignty and a shrinking policy space for African governments, with policy choices determined by aid conditionalities and international trade agreements and rules. A cross-cutting issue is the inability of States to provide for adequate social protection and a shifting of the burden of the social costs of trade liberalization to communities, households and individuals, especially women. In addition, the research shows that the effects on women workers have included loss of jobs, forms of employment and workplace practices that are far below international labor standards, the flexibilization and casualization of work, and numerous cases of violations of labor and women's rights.

The findings from all the countries covered by the research confirm the absence of women in trade and investment policy and decision-making. Gender consider-

ations and women's issues are considered by most policy makers to be irrelevant to trade and investment processes. The lack of women's participation in governance in the multilateral trading system helps perpetuate a number of gender biases against women in institutions at the national, regional and global levels. Gender biases that exist in formal institutions such as state departments and banks, and also in informal institutions such as social norms and perceptions, contribute to gender inequalities and women's marginalization.

The GERA research confirmed the observations made in other regions that under trade and investment liberalization, there has been a regress rather than progress in the fulfillment of State's obligations under international conventions and the Beijing Platform. In particular, these findings pinpoint that gender biases cannot be addressed without the effective engagement of the State and the necessary policy actions to make trade and investment policies work for women and other disadvantaged groups.

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Employment Patterns

Women's share in the labor force in some regions continues to rise, and women are making substantial contributions to families through both productive and reproductive work. In South Asia, for example, women migrant workers as well as domestic workers contribute to national economies from overseas through remittances. More and more women in the CARICOM region are selling produce on city sidewalks and working in hotels and other sectors, work that takes them away from their communities and that increases costs related to transportation, meals and childcare. More investment in labor-intensive industries has increased the number of employment opportunities for women in low-paid jobs in the Pacific Islands. In Northern Africa, the stabilized wage-earning class has declined while female seasonal work has increased.

Access to the labor market is even more difficult for certain groups of women, such as disabled women, migrant and ethnic minority women, and older women. Labor market segregation and discrimination, as well as cultural and political mechanisms, too often relegate ethnic minority women and migrant women to certain sectors of low waged and low skilled labor in the EU. While overall poverty in Canada has been declining since 1997, 42.7 percent of Aboriginal women live in poverty and in 2002 earned 69 percent of the average annual income for non-Aboriginal woman.

Increased unemployment has deeply impacted women's livelihoods in many regions. In Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia), unemployment among women ages 30-49 reached 65 percent in 1999. According to 2002 data, 43 percent of women over 15 years old in urban areas in Latin America lacked their own income. A large number have faced unemployment and social exclusion, while another significant number have only unstable, precarious and badly paid jobs. These shifts have had a more profound impact on women than men, given their more unfavorable and vulnerable situation. In Jamaica (CARICOM), women's main reasons for entering the sex trade were unemployment and low wage earnings.

In the Pacific Islands, the exploitation of female labor and erosion of labor standards, livelihood displacement, sudden unemployment and mass lay-offs coming from mobile international companies are other concerns for women.

Women's Economic Rights

Legislation to protect women's economic rights and uphold the commitments in the Beijing Platform are addressing fewer women as

well, given the expansion of women's work outside the formal sector and also within the care economy. Some countries have yet to create legislation to protect women's equal rights in the workplace. In the Pacific Islands, unions and employment associations provide limited services but laws are lacking on equity in employment, sexual harassment, and conditions for part-time and casual workers. When legislative measures have been enacted to guarantee equal rights for women and men in the labor market, governments rarely enforce them. Often traditional and cultural gender norms outweigh legislative gains, making them largely ineffective.

While legislation exists in most regions to protect women against discrimination in the work place, but there is no policy to reevaluate women's work with a view to adapting hours and working conditions to take account of family responsibilities and needs, or integrating and supporting women in non-traditional sectors. In Japan (East Asia) and Kenya (East Africa), although employment discrimination is illegal, its application is almost non-existent as enforcement mechanisms are lacking. Kenya reported that there are no laws and policies in place to eradicate legal, institutional and cultural barriers that discriminate against women. In CIS, prevailing economic trends have fueled discrimination against women workers, who are often compelled to agree to terms and working conditions that are highly detrimental to both their rights and their health. The drop in social and employment benefits that has taken place in more recent years has left women with considerably less support for efforts to balance family and professional responsibilities. In the U.S., equal employment opportunity laws for women exist but are not adequately enforced.

The percentage of women employees who took childcare leave in Japan (East Asia) increased from 57.9 percent in 1996 to 71.2 percent in 2002 among enterprises with over 30 employees. Almost no men took leave according to a survey by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. In the CIS, the privatization of pension benefits has put women at a disadvantage due to breaks in employment for maternity leave and childcare.

Despite measures to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace, the problem remains prevalent. In Suriname (CARICOM), the lack of a place to report complaints has resulted in non-existent or insufficient measures taken against perpetrators.

Modest improvements toward equal pay for professional women have been reported. However, even when there are equal pay for equal work mechanisms, they are often not adequately enforced. Thus in all regions women still earn less than men, with the majority concentrated in underpaid and unpaid sectors. In Japan (East Asia), women earn 64.9 percent of what men earn. In the U.S., full-time employed women only earn 76.2 percent of every dollar earned by men. Women's employment rate in the E.U. has only slightly improved and the gender pay gap has only marginally decreased.

Macroeconomic Policies and Development Strategies

Despite the Beijing Platform commitments to "review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty" (strategic objective A1) and the acknowledgement at Beijing +5 that "the importance of a gender perspective in the development of macroeconomic policy is still not widely recognized" (para 21),



Box 5. Quality Public Services, Gender Equality and the MDGs BY NORA WINTOUR

The privatization of public services has increased the inequalities between men and women, both as users of services and as workers. If health, education and care services are reduced or are non-existent, women's opportunities to work outside the home are limited and they also bear the extra burden of care.

These outcomes are vividly depicted in two recent publications. *Dumping on Women*,¹ an analysis of how the privatization of waste management affected three municipalities in South Africa, reveals a sharp decline in service quality combined with poorer employment conditions and an increased burden of work for women. *Corrosive Reform*,² which documents the impact of drastic cuts in expenditure on health services in Central and Eastern Europe under the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, shows that health professionals now earn below poverty level salaries and women have had to take on the work of caring for the sick and the elderly.

Public Services International (PSI) is a global union federation made up of more than 600 trade unions and representing more than 20 million public service workers

around the world. Women make up 60 percent of its membership and 50 percent of its decision-making bodies. Ensuring women's access to quality employment, extending social protection to women in precarious forms of employment, protecting the rights of part-time workers, campaigning for improved publicly-funded childcare and after school care, making maternity protection a reality, detecting and eliminating discrimination at the workplace on the grounds of gender, race, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or religion are now clearly part of the public sector union agenda.

For example, public sector trade unions in Brazil are initiating research and action plans to detect and eliminate discrimination in pay based on gender, race and other factors. In Zambia, the local government workers' union is working with the street and market vendors' association to develop a common platform of demands to extend public services to workers in the informal economy. In Latvia, the health workers' union is demanding increases in health sector funding to improve the quality of the service and end the out-migration of nurses. In the UK, the public sector unions are promoting the introduction of equality

plans and other innovative schemes such as the Agenda for Change, which seeks to re-value women's work in the National Health Service.

In order to meet their commitments under the Beijing Platform and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), governments need to recognize the positive role of public services. Together with the international financial institutions, they should promote alternative economic models to the prevalent market orientated approach, which has exacerbated regional and national inequalities and inequalities between men and women. PSI is convinced that the provision of quality public services is essential to any successful poverty elimination strategy, which is first and foremost a strategy to eliminate women's poverty and to achieve gender equality and equity in employment.

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Notes

1. M. Samson, *Dumping on Women: Gender and Privatization of Waste Management, Municipal Services Project, Athlone, South Africa and South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), Woodstock, South Africa, 2003*

2. Carl Warren Afford, *Corrosive Reform: Failing Health Systems in Eastern Europe*, Geneva, International Labour Office, 2003

economic, trade and finance policies from the national to global levels remain gender blind. Several regions report that there continues to be insufficient or lack of gender-impact analysis of economic policies, and women's contributions and concerns continue to be ignored in financial markets and institutions, further perpetuating gender inequalities (Aotearoa/New Zealand, East Asia, EU, South Asia, Central Asia). As a result, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, for example, there are no measures in place to ensure that national policies related to international and regional trade agreements do not have an adverse impact on women. In Japan (East Asia), since women make up 55.8 percent of the agricultural labor force, government support for the agreement on agriculture under the World Trade Organization (WTO) has caused serious problems for women working on family-operated farms.

As a result of shifts in macroeconomic policies, most economies in Latin America have witnessed a growth in poverty that contributes to maintaining sharp inequities in income distribution. Under the pressure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, CIS countries have deregulated economies, decreased the role of the state in monetary and fiscal policies and linked national economies to world economic processes. "Shock privatization" has led to a growing number of inefficient organizations, decreased economic activity and, in many cases the plundering of privatized assets. Rising poverty and unemployment have spurred prostitution and trafficking in women

and children. Almost half of CIS women consider themselves poor: in Moldova and Ukraine, the figure is close to 70 percent; and in Kyrgyzstan, where high unemployment rates caused by the privatization of state enterprises have affected women more than men, women made up 56.8 percent of the total number of unemployed in 1999.

Resources to achieve the Beijing Platform and ensure social protection and public services have been stymied by debt burdens and increased concentration of military spending in national budgets. The debt burden of the Philippines (Southeast Asia) grew from \$30.6 billion in 1990 to \$53.9 billion in 2002, and since 1998 it has consumed at least 60 percent of its gross national product (GNP) and more than double its export earnings, while the defense budget registered a double-digit percentage increase from 2000. In Pakistan (South Asia), defense expenditures and debt repayment are always the largest items in national budgets.

Gender mainstreaming in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the E.U. was reported to have little impact on macroeconomic policy. In East Africa, women's poverty issues are still confined to the welfare sphere rather than the ministry of water, agriculture or trade. Many countries there tried involving women in the Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSPs) at the formulation stage but this had little effect when it came to budgeting and allocation of resources.

Women in East Asia are not included as decision-makers in poverty alleviation planning, and for Pacific Island women, lack knowledge of

economic systems and management leaves them with limited confidence to demand their rights.

Access to Public Services and Resources

Women's access to services such as health care, education, sanitation and housing directly impacts their income-generating activities and economic empowerment. In rural areas, these services are often weak or non-existent to begin with. In other instances, when services shifted from the public to the private sphere, women's access decreased and they were forced to bear the brunt of the burden to meet the needs of themselves and their families, often at the expense of income-generating activities. Overall trends to privatize and reform health services in Southeast Asia were not influenced by the Beijing PFA's objective of increasing affordability of services. Privatization escalated the cost of health services in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, including the cost of childbirth services and medication in Indonesia, increasing barriers to accessibility. Philippines reported that a decline in public services directly impacts the amount of work women do in the care economy, as they strive to provide services that the government should be providing, such as health and day care. In terms of access to health care in Southern Africa, the reintroduction of user fees due to structural adjustment programs has led to an increase in infant mortality rates.

In addressing women's economic empowerment and autonomy, governments have increased programs granting women access to loans and credit, particularly in rural areas. In West Africa, such initiatives include support structures for micro-projects favoring women, development of micro-finance and creation of women's savings and loans banks. However, governments often emphasize micro-credit as the solution for addressing women's poverty, while failing to adequately address the systemic impact that macroeconomic policies and frameworks have on women's livelihoods and thus national poverty. And while micro-credit programs have significantly increased since Beijing, they have produced mixed results. For example, in Bangladesh (South Asia), while micro-credit is touted as a form of economic support to women, it is actually used by male family members while women have the responsibility of repayment.

Women's access to land, water and other natural resources is crucial to poverty eradication, though governments have been slow to address this issue. One key challenge to women's access to and control of a variety of resources has been the growing shift towards privatization, which is increasingly infringing on people's rights and livelihoods around the world, most severely those of poor women and girls. Like public services, when water and other natural resources are scarce or unaffordable, traditional gender roles place the burdens mainly on women to ensure family needs are somehow met. In the capital of Papua New Guinea (Pacific Islands), when water was privatized many found safe drinking water unaffordable, forcing women to pick up the slack. Southern Africa is undergoing radical changes in policies

Box 6. Budget for Human Needs vs. Billions in Military Spending

The Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the World Policy Forum and the World Game Institute estimate that for the year 2003, funds needed to address human issues are as follows:

	Billions
Provide shelter	21
Eliminate starvation and malnutrition	19
Provide clean safe water	10
Eliminate nuclear weapons	7
Eliminate landmines	4
Eliminate illiteracy	5
Refugee Relief	5
Prevent soil erosion	24
Total	95

These figures are set against global military spending of \$900 billion.

Source: "Resources to Meet the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs)" by Saradha Iyer, Third World Network, 2005.

related to land and water through instituting and clarifying rights to land, with an emphasis on property rights, and considering water as an economic good instead of a social service. In Latin America since the early 1990s, when States began yielding the management and use of lands and irrigation systems to market forces, women have confronted difficulties in accessing water rights, as well as agricultural support services such as credit, new technologies and training. Further, privatization, demographic pressure and the dissolution of traditional forms of land tenure have reduced the amount and quality of lands available to rural communities.

EDUCATION

International Agreements

The Beijing Platform calls on all governments to ensure equal access to education, eradicate illiteracy among women and improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education. It also calls for the development of non-discriminatory education and resources, and the allocation of sufficient resources for monitoring the implementation of educational reforms. Governments agreed to promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.

In 2000, 191 governments endorsed the Millennium Declaration; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were issued in 2001 and seek to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (Goal 2). Since then, educational opportunities are being equalized in many countries around the world and will most likely be met by 2005, except in sub-Saharan Africa and West Asia.

Achieving the education goal has meant that governments have had to confront a variety of issues, with varying success, including school enrolment and education costs. If governments are to ensure full success with respect to women's education, however, they will also need to take steps to address retention rates and secondary school education, neither of which are included in the MDGs.

An outcome of the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 was the Education for All (EFA) initiative, whose six goals deal with early childhood care and education; universal primary education; youth and adult learning; literacy; gender; and quality. According to UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report, 41 countries—mostly in Europe and North America—have achieved the goals or are close to doing so. Thirty-five countries—22 of them in Africa—are far from reaching the goals.

Public Policy

Most regions have created national education policies or plans to ameliorate gender gaps in education. For example, West Africa has demonstrated strong political will by developing strategies in almost every country for girls' school enrolment. In Eastern Africa, positive policies and strategies on girls' education have been put in place in countries such as Kenya and Uganda, where school fees have been

abolished. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Ministry of Education set forth National Education Guidelines, which included the goals of achieving “equal educational opportunities,” “non-sexism” and a “gender-inclusive curriculum.”

However, despite progress in policy-making, many countries struggle with implementation. The main obstacle in West Africa is lack of financial resources. Education is critical for poverty eradication, and improvement in other areas—such as access to clean affordable water and adequate social services—are imperative to achieving universal access. In Eastern Africa, lack of education continues to contribute to women’s poverty.

National literacy programs have been introduced in many countries throughout Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. In Southeast Asia, Vietnam implemented a nation-wide literacy program covering 100,000 people annually, of which 38-40 percent are women and girls. A Dominican Republic (Latin America and the Caribbean) project called EDUCMUJER promotes equal opportunities for women and girls in education and the elimination of sexist stereotypes from educational materials. This project has managed to initiate gender awareness and training programs for teachers, and a revision of curricula for basic and secondary education.

However, in many cases, literacy programs are not having the desired impact. For example, in Northern Africa, literacy programs for girls are supported by national structures and international organizations, but school dropout rates and illiteracy rates for girls remain high in all three countries—Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia—and particularly in rural areas. In East Asia, inadequate funding jeopardizes Mongolia’s once high literacy levels and, despite the enactment of a number of education laws in China over the last decade, women account for 70 percent of the illiterates over 15. Several countries in West Africa have seen little or no progress in female literacy, largely because programs are not designed to accommodate women’s multi-tiered day. In West Asia, 62 percent of adult illiterates are women.

In many countries, policies to protect women and girls from sexual harassment in schools have been inadequate. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, while girls and women have access to equitable and quality education, little has been done to address sexual harassment or provide gender awareness through education. In Japan, however, strong measure for the prevention sexual harassment at college have been promoted through the National Network Against Sexual Harassment on Campus in 1998 and the “Ministry’s Regulation for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Ministry of Education” and the guidance for its implementation in March, 1999 (East Asia).

In the U.S., Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in all federally funded education programs and activities at all levels and protects women and girls from sexual harassment in schools, but it does not cover the elimination of sex stereotyping in curriculum. Despite the existence of Title IX, young women remain significantly disadvantaged in their classrooms.

Access and Changes in Practices

The world has moved closer to gender parity in basic education but girls and women still face inequality, particularly when it comes to access to higher levels of education. Over the past decade, Southern Africa has recorded a significant rise in the enrolment rates of girls at the primary level. However, at secondary level only four member states have

net enrolment rates in the range of 80 to 100 percent.

While enrolment rates indicate that women’s education is moving forward, the statistics do not tell the whole story. Enrolment statistics and policy do not necessarily measure whether girls’ are actually attending school or completing education.

While there has been progress in access to basic education, the next step is in secondary and tertiary education. In East Asia, the gender gap exists at the tertiary education, and in Korea and Japan there are gender biases in majors. However, the gender gap is reversed in Mongolia, where the female rate among bachelors degree students is 62.7 percent. Tertiary enrolment rates are below 50 percent in most member states. In Tanzania, policy initiatives have included targets to enhance girls’ enrolment and retention and performance improvement to enable more access to higher levels.

In the Pacific Islands, most countries are reaching parity in enrolment in primary schools. But there are worrying dropout rates for girls in secondary schools in some countries. Also, even when girls do well in school they are less likely than males to go on to tertiary level, reflecting lack of funding, entrenched views of women as being wives and mothers who do not need careers or further education, economic or labor needs in the household and concern about the physical safety of girls.

The situation is more positive in Central Asia, where equal access to education is in place; in some States, girls outnumber boys. Typically, more women have higher education than men. Access to education has deteriorated in a few countries like Tajikistan, where there has been a drastic decrease in the number of girls in schools after the mandatory grade-9 level.

In many regions, women who live in rural areas face specific obstacles to access to education. For example, in West Asia, woman’s access to education in rural areas is still determined by her family. In Northern Africa, the admission of women into the educational system is less widespread and systematic in rural than in urban areas. In rural areas in Central Asia, representation of girls in senior classes is much lower.

Additionally, more attention must be placed on women’s and girls’ access to education in countries emerging from conflict. For example, Somalia represents an extreme case in which 14 years of civil war have left the country unable to provide compulsory education and without any mechanisms for promoting access to education for girls or women.

While steps have been taken in some countries to improve women’s access to technical professions, it is still a restricted area. In the EU, equality between men and women in access to vocational training is enshrined in European Community texts, but scientific and technical careers are still a male preserve. In addition, the skills gap between women and men remains a significant problem. Men still outnumber women in many of the subjects that lead to the best-paid jobs. In





West Asia, women still do not enjoy equal access to technical and skills training.

Many countries around the world have changed their curricula to include a gender dimension. However, some regions require more work in this area. In contrast to the quantitative achievement in education, problems remain in qualitative aspects, especially education for gender equality. Most responses are negative about governments' will to promote gender equality through education. In Latin America and the Caribbean, no specific proposals exist to change the contents of curriculum guides to reflect gender issues. In addition, in some countries, women are still being presented with stereotypical gendered messages in textbooks.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

The Beijing Platform calls for women to be actively involved in environmental decision-making, for gender perspectives to be integrated into policies and programs and for national, regional and international mechanisms to be established to assess the impact of environmental policies on women. Beijing +5 also emphasized women's right to own land. The extent to which these mandates have been implemented varies greatly throughout the world but, despite country differences, women everywhere are mobilizing around the issue of access to and control over natural resources.

Participation and Decision-Making

Women are major contributors to the well-being and sustainable development of their communities and nations, and to the maintenance of the earth's ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources. Across the globe, women are working to become more involved, and more adequately represented, in decision-making on natural resources. Worldwide there are 14 women ministers of the environment and three deputy ministers. In 2002, a network of women ministers of environment was formed, currently led by South Africa and Sweden.

In China, women occupy leadership positions in the Department of Environmental Protection at all levels (East Asia). There are also two vice-chairwomen of the Committee of Environment and Resources of the National People's Congress, and women make up a third of the 20,000 plus scientists and researchers working for some 400 environmental research organs.

In those areas where governmental representation is low, women still work at the grassroots level on environmental issues. In Kenya, most community-based organizations working on environmental conservation are women-led (East Africa). Wangari Maathai, Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources and the Chairperson of the Greenbelt Movement, won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to the environment, sustainable development, democracy and peace.

Women in the Pacific Islands have been developing partnerships with national and international agencies, using a community-based approach to raising awareness. For example, rural women in Fiji worked with the World Wildlife Fund for Nature on a wetlands conservation initiative. Women in CARICOM countries are also highly involved in civil society organizations that work on environment and the ministries and departments of gender affairs have played a part in supporting these initiatives.

Despite these gains, gaps in participation and representation continue in many of the subregions. In Southern Africa, women are not adequately involved in the management of the environment, and most environmental policies lack a gender perspective.

In Bangladesh (South Asia), women remain largely absent at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making in natural resources and environmental management, conservation, protection and rehabilitation, and their experience and skills too often remain marginalized in policy-making and decision-making bodies.

The case in Aotearoa/New Zealand is similar, as the Government generally fails to consider the gender dimensions of access to and control of natural resources. Neither the Environment Act (1996) nor the Resource Management Act (1991) mentions women or includes a gender perspective. And though Maori women actively voice their concerns about biodiversity, indigenous people's rights and genetic resources, their views are often dismissed and excluded from government discussions.

Despite good overall EU legislation on the protection of the environment, a gender perspective is absent from environmental policy. No legislation has been adopted that deals with women and the environment directly, even though there is increased knowledge that environmental hazards impact women and men differently, such as the possible link between breast cancer and high levels of toxic chemicals in women's bodies. In the CIS, there are no female environment ministers, no gender units or specialists under the environment ministries, and no state strategies for increasing women's access to and control over resources.

In the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the U.S., women's participation is not highlighted and is scarce. Despite being head-

As the primary caregivers of the family, women bear the worst consequences of policies that ignore principles of sustainability since they must cope with the increased difficulties of the day-to-day survival of their families.

Box 7. Gender and the Environment: Strong Voice and Human Face BY IRENE DANKLEMAN

In line with the Beijing Platform for Action, which recognized the importance of women and the environment in Section K, the Commission on Sustainable Development has agreed that gender should be a cross-cutting issue in its program of work. Organizations such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and several governments have taken steps to integrate a gender perspective into their environmental work. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organized the first global women's assembly on the environment, Women as the Voice for the Environment (WAVE), in November 2004. A gender perspective was also promoted in environmental negotiations and the implementation of some international agreements, such as the Convention to Combat Desertification.

A major catalyst for all these efforts were the thousands of women and their organizations that undertook local initiatives, collected case studies, shared lessons and pressured governments and institutions to ensure the equal participation of women in matters relating to the environment and the formulation of gender-sensitive policies. In addition, women at regional and international levels have formed specialized

networks such as the Gender and Water Alliance, ENERGIA, Genero y Ambiente, Women in Europe for a Common Future, the Women and Environment Network, Diverse Women for Diversity and the International Network of Indigenous Women. The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) played an important advocacy role at the global level and published, in cooperation with other groups (such as the Heinrich Böll Foundation and REDEH), the Women's Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2015 for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). Women Ministers for the Environment also established their own network.

Many experts and activists from all regions of the world participated in the recent online discussion on women and the environment in preparation for Beijing+10 that was sponsored by UNEP (see: www.un.org/womenwatch/forums/review). Several issues were highlighted that need particular attention in policies and institutional practice. Climate change and other forms of environmental change, disasters, conflict and the environment, sustainable consumption and production (including extractive industries) and environmental health is-

ues all need a specific gender perspective and approach. While women are centrally involved in the use and management of many natural resources, they are also more economically and socially disadvantaged and more burdened by environmental degradation.

Gender equality and equity in the environmental sector has not yet been achieved, and women's interests are not well represented in planning and implementation. In general, gender mainstreaming in the sector is still limited or merely given lip service. The situation of specific groups, such as indigenous women, immigrants and refugees, needs particular attention. A major concern (due to privatization, for example, but also to some conservation practices) is safeguarding local women's access to and control over resources. Women's skills, knowledge and experiences and their practical and strategic needs should be respected, and a rights-based approach to gender and the environment should be promoted.

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ed by several women between 1993 and 2003, it has no visible gender units or specialists, nor have specific gender policies been developed or promoted. And though the EPA focuses on the effects of environmental hazards on children, seniors and workers, there is no specific information presented on women.¹²

Gender Impacts of Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation disproportionately affects women and substantially increases their workload in the informal sector. As the primary caregivers of the family, women bear the worst consequences of policies that ignore principles of sustainability and must cope with the increased difficulties of the day-to-day survival of their families.

In Somalia, rangeland degradation, marine pollution, deforestation and coastal desertification increase the amount of time women must spend looking for fuel wood and threaten the livelihoods of women farmers (Eastern Africa).

Ecological disasters also impact women in particular ways. The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami made no distinction between men and women in the death toll but, according to the UN, it has produced gender-specific after-shocks, ranging from increasing women's traditional role in caring for the sick to an escalation in cases of rape and abuse.

In Kazakhstan, three quarters of the land is subject to desertification (CIS). Living and working conditions in these areas are ex-

remely hard. In the ecological disaster zone of the Aral region, the incidence of various diseases among children is several times higher than the national average.

Indigenous women throughout the world are hit hardest by environmental degradation. In Canada, environmental contaminants such as persistent organic pollutants (POPs) have bio-accumulated in Arctic wildlife and subsequently negatively impact Inuit women's health through their diet, which primarily consists of meat. In the U.S., POPs disproportionately affect Native American women and children, as toxic run-off from factories near tribal lands poisons water and food sources that are then consumed by women and transferred to their children through breast milk.

Globalization policies in CARICOM countries are playing an increasingly disturbing role in the environment and women's health. In St Lucia, where tourism is the fastest growing industry, pollution from cruise ships affects the fisheries sector. In addition, the poultry and meat industry is suffering due to cheaper imports, which also has a negative impact on women's health and that of their families.

Right to Natural Resources

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, women activists succeeded in winning landmark recognition of women's right to inherit land. Yet throughout the world there are laws blocking women's right to inheritance and ownership.

Women are still being denied their land rights even where the laws call for it. In Ethiopia, for example, there are equal rights for men and women to all natural resources according to the Ethiopian Constitution, but the implementation among the diverse cultures and traditions is problematic (Eastern Africa). In Zimbabwe, access to secondary water is now tied to land rights, disadvantaging women who do not have direct access to land unless they have acquired it through the market system (Southern Africa).

In addition, women's right to property in many countries is closely related to their status in the family. Women almost never inherit the property of their parents, and although widows may be entitled to a share of the deceased husband's land, in reality they seldom inherit it. In Japan, although laws stipulate all children have an equal right to inherit land, women's right to inherit it, especially farmland, has been hindered by custom (East Asia). In Nepal, as well, land rights are tied to marital status; the recent amendment to the Land Act (1964) has allowed women to obtain tenancy rights, but only unmarried women are entitled to the exercise of such rights (South Asia).

HEALTH

Beijing called for quality health services for women that are accessible, affordable and preventative; gender sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health; the promoting of research and dissemination of information on women's health; and increased resources and monitoring of follow-up care for women. Governments' implementation, however, has for the most part been lacking in all areas.

Despite commitments made in Cairo and Beijing, there continue to be significant threats to women's health. Access and affordability remain problematic worldwide, particularly affecting low-income women and women in rural areas. In the case of women's reproductive health, obstacles such as access and affordability are compounded by cultural and religious fundamentalism, which have increasingly used women's bodies as their main point of attack. The HIV/AIDS pandemic more and more often has a female face, and the stigma attached to the disease makes obtaining services all the more difficult.

Access and Affordability

Women around the world continue to face obstacles to full and comprehensive access to primary health care. This is often due to a lack of financial and human resources. In some areas—such as West Africa



and Southeast Asia—access to health care has been compounded by financial crises that have adversely affected health budgets and consumer ability to pay for services and medication.

In addition, subregions that have undergone a transition to a market economy are having difficulties providing quality healthcare. This has been the case in East Asia, where women have seen reduced access to health services as government health expenditures have decreased. As a result, women are less likely to have regular medical examinations than men.

Another alarming trend is the privatization of health care, making quality care inaccessible for many women worldwide. For example, 80 percent of health services in Pakistan are provided by the private sector; subsequently, the medical care provided to lower-income women and those in rural areas is sub-par. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, the privatization of health services has increased health-related costs substantially. The costs of contraceptive pills in Makasar, for example, jumped from Rp1,000 to Rp2,500.¹³

There are also drastic disparities worldwide in the quality of health care accessible to those in rural and urban areas, as well as to different ethnic groups. In the U.S. for example, there are significant differences in the incidence of disease between white women and women of color. Many of these disparities can be linked to the inequality in health coverage: In 2001, 16 percent of white women lacked health coverage, while 20 percent of African American and 37 percent of Latina women lacked coverage.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Maori women's health is generally worse than that of other Pacific Islands women—they have lower life expectancy and higher rates of lung and cervical cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes—in part due to rural isolation. However, alternative health initiatives created by and for Maori women have shown great success in addressing their diverse needs.

Aboriginal women in Canada face similar problems. They have double the incidence of reproductive and breast cancer of non-Aboriginal women, 11 years less life expectancy and higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, tuberculosis and suicide. This disproportionately poor health is due to the effects of colonization, with Aboriginal women more likely to be living without adequate nutrition, housing and sanitation. Additionally, Aboriginal women's organizations are still forced to struggle for inclusion in government discussions on health policies and services.

Women's lack of access to health care is also compounded by social problems such as illiteracy, poverty and inferior legal status. This is the case in West Asia, where in addition to lack of proper services and qualified doctors, women also face logistical and cultural obstacles, such as having to ask permission from their husbands to access many reproductive health services.

Reproductive Health

Both the Cairo outcome document and the Beijing Platform define "reproductive rights" as "the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and *means to do so*." The lack of these "means" is an overarching problem affecting women's reproductive rights.

Women cannot avail themselves of reproductive rights if they lack the financial resources to pay for health services or the transport to get to them; or if they are illiterate or given no information in a language they understand. In a world governed by neo-liberal regimes, sexual and reproductive health rights are entirely subject to the availability of resources.

Box 8. Rights of the Body and Bodily Integrity BY ROSALIND PETCHESKY

The Beijing Platform for Action, together with the Vienna, Cairo, and Copenhagen conferences and their outcome documents five and ten years later, carved out a new normative and conceptual terrain—the rights of the body and bodily integrity. This new level of specificity created a whole new constellation of norms, strategies and institutional sites—a new human rights discourse around the body and its needs for security, health, and pleasure, including:

- Reproductive health, rights and access to services, encompassing access to adequate contraceptive information and supplies, full antenatal care including trained attendants and emergency obstetric services, and access to safe, legal abortion and post-abortion care.
- Secure access to good quality health care generally and more specifically to treatment, prevention, and essential life-saving medicines, particularly for those suffering from or at risk of HIV/AIDS infection and other preventable and communicable diseases.
- Rights of sexual expression, enjoyment and well-being without discrimination based on sexual or gender orientation, age

For example, while policy commitments in Tanzania give women and girls full access to information regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, resource limitation impede the realization of these policy goals in women's actual lives (Southern Africa). And in Kenya, women living in rural areas have limited access to information regarding sexual and reproductive health and family planning, and pre-natal and post-natal services and emergency contraception are difficult to obtain (Eastern Africa).

Worldwide, poor maternal health and maternal mortality also remain problems for women—more than 500,000 women die worldwide every year from pregnancy-related causes. In Bangladesh, which has the highest maternal mortality rate among developing countries, maternal mortality accounts for 37 percent of all deaths (South Asia). Maternal health and mortality is also a concern in West Africa, where maternal mortality varies between 480 and 1,800 deaths per hundred thousand births.

Abortion is still widely banned. Where it is legal, substantial restrictions impede access and affordability. In the U.S., for example, abortion is legal but highly inaccessible. Eighty-four percent of countries have no abortion provider; parental notification laws are in place in 44 states; and 25 states have mandatory waiting periods for the procedure. In areas where abortion is illegal, there are often no services to address the needs of women who still obtain them, as is the case in Ethiopia (East Africa). In Pakistan, where abortion is also il-

legal, 11 percent of maternal deaths are estimated to be due to unsafe abortions (South Asia).

- Freedom from sexual, reproductive and other bodily violence and abuses, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and sexual trafficking, regardless of whether these are imposed by family members, employers, medical personnel, state officials, military combatants or UN peacekeepers.

Although the phrase “sexual rights” does not appear in any formal UN document or multilateral or bilateral treaty, the Beijing Platform began to articulate such a concept in Paragraph 96: “The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behavior and its consequences.”

The language possible in 1995 was limited

in critical ways—to an explicitly heterosexual framework; to an emphasis more on protection from coercion than on affirmation of pleasure; to responsibility more than freedom. Yet, in tandem with the harsh realities of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it opened the way to broader understandings.

Meanwhile, despite regressive organization by fundamentalist and right-wing movements throughout the world to defeat sexual and reproductive rights, some progress has taken place in a few national settings. In Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Canada and South Africa, gays and lesbians are winning full civil rights, including the right to marry and form a family. Even in the United States, where powerful religious conservatives have dug in their heels to defend marriage as an irrevocably heterosexual institution, widespread popular and judicial approval of civil unions, adoptions, cohabitation, inheritance and insurance rights for gays and lesbians has become a cultural and legal reality. All this was unheard of a decade ago.

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legal, 11 percent of maternal deaths are estimated to be due to unsafe abortions (South Asia).

In addition to these problems, women's reproductive health is also severely threatened by increasing cultural and religious fundamentalism worldwide.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, countries where the Catholic church is strong, taboos regarding women's sexuality remain; women's sexuality continues to be identified with reproduction, and socially the idea prevails that women cannot make decisions about their own bodies. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 4.2 million women each year have abortions in Latin America and the Caribbean, the majority of which are illegal and performed under risky conditions and in secret, which can irreparably damage women's health and sometimes lead to death.

In Japan, discussion of sexual and reproductive health and rights is still taboo (East Asia). In 1999, a sex education book was produced for junior high school students with information about marriage, unwanted pregnancy and contraception. However, after criticism from conservative groups, circulation of the book was stopped, despite the fact that STDs are rapidly increasing among teenagers and the rate of teenage abortions has doubled since 1995.

Samoa, in keeping with cultural values concerning female premarital chastity, will not provide contraceptives to unmarried women and many young women, even in countries where contraception

is available on request, are too embarrassed or ill-informed to seek the service.

In the U.S., women's reproductive health is under attack by the current Bush administration, as well as conservative and religious forces. Due to the increased funding of abstinence-only sex education programs, young women lack medically accurate information concerning their reproductive health; the continued erosion of abortion rights through state and federal legislation has made the procedure increasingly difficult to obtain, especially for younger and low-income women; and stealth "conscience clause" legislation, which allows pharmacists to indiscriminately refuse to fill prescriptions, has put contraception's accessibility at risk.

The policies of the Bush administration are not only harmful to women in the U.S., but to the lives of women all around the world. In 2001, Bush reinstated the Mexico City Policy, also known as the Global Gag Rule, which denies foreign organizations receiving U.S. family planning assistance the right to use their own non-U.S. funds to provide legal abortions, counsel or refer abortions, or lobby for the legalization of abortion in their country. This policy endangers the lives of women by withholding funding, technical assistance and U.S.-donated contraceptives (including condoms) from organizations that refuse to comply.

HIV/AIDS

Recognizing the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS and other STDs on women's health, governments promised in Beijing to "undertake gender-sensitive initiatives" to combat the problem. But despite this commitment, the lack of services along with pervasive social stigmas, have meant that the effects on women have actually become far more severe.

As with all issues of reproductive health, it is impossible to separate a discussion of HIV/AIDS from the intersections of gender, race, class and geography and the macroeconomic constraints that make those intersections a death sentence for millions.

This can be clearly seen in the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa, where over 58 percent of the victims—and nearly two thirds among young people below 24—are women and girls. These women, often invisible, are the casualties of trade inequities in agriculture and textiles, displaced from sustainable livelihoods and forced into casual labor and/or transactional sex; the victims of domestic violence or family ostracism for getting infected; and the wives of long-distance truckers or men who migrate out for work, have unprotected sex and infect their unsuspecting wives.

These connections come to light in many of the regions. In West Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic affects women disproportionately, as their social and legal status makes them particularly vulnerable. In Taiwan, women between the ages of 20 to 39 are at the greatest risk of infection, accounting for 56 percent of all HIV infections among females (East Asia).

In addition, as is the case with women's health overall, some women are affected by HIV/AIDS more than others. In the U.S., for example, African American women accounted for 13 percent of the female population in 2003, but approximately 67 percent of female AIDS and Latinas accounted for 16 percent of estimated cases in the

same year. For African American women aged 25-44, HIV/AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death and is the third leading cause of death for Latinas the same age range.

HIV/AIDS education and services are successful to varying degrees. However, some regions do not take women into account when creating educational and preventative programs. In the Philippines, for example, the National AIDS Prevention and Control Program established targets only for men and women sex workers (Southern Asia). No programs or services target women specifically. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is a gap in public funding for promotion and prevention efforts targeted to women and heterosexuals; HIV/AIDS has been viewed as a predominantly male homosexual issue. In contrast, all CIS countries have launched national programs on HIV/AIDS prevention that include gender concerns, such as prevention of mother-to-child transmission, along with special attention to youth.

Widespread stigma and discrimination still exists in most regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the stigmatization and exclusion of women living with HIV/AIDS undercuts their human rights and substantially increases their difficulties in living in their communities. HIV-positive women suffer societal isolation irrespective of their country's borders. In Cuba, however, all HIV/AIDS services are provided free and are accessible, and it ranks among the countries with the lowest infection levels, with 0.02 percent of its population HIV positive. In China, the strong stigma attached to HIV/AIDS often leads to medical practitioners violating confidentiality rights because of discrimination compounded with a lack of knowledge about national policies and guidelines for HIV/AIDS patients (East Asia).

Even where there are anti-discrimination laws in place, the social stigma of HIV/AIDS counteracts legislation. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, where the Human Rights Act protects women with HIV/AIDS, there is still widespread discrimination in employment, access to housing and public places, and the provision of goods and services.

Authors

Compiled by Anna Grossman, Nadia Johnson, Tina Johnson, Joan Ross Frankson and Jessica Valenti.

Notes

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