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

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

Summary of the WomenWatch online working groups

Contents

I. Executive summary

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

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

CROSS-CUTTING OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

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

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

LESSONS LEARNED

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

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

SELECTED WORKING GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

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

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

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

Described how women are creating alternative healthcare services…

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

Are finding new ways of addressing conflict…

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

Are crossing ethnic divisions to build peace…

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

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

Organized and creative, women in the informal labour sectors (street vendors) have bonded, and together with men, have organized groups to dialogue and lobby for protection. In Cebu, People's Organizations (PO's) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have formed in -110.Oce ape n. o25 andh mencelmerging.h1d1

Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About this report

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

Each chapter features selected **lessons learned**, illustrated by a "case in point" or direct quotation from a Working Group participant. Since it is impossible to represent all the messages received, quotes were selected to represent as much as possible the range of points discussed and to represent members from different regions. Some quotations have

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III. Critical areas of concern

A. Women and poverty

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**End Women's Poverty
Online Working Group**

12 October - 23 November 1999

Total membership: 971

Messages were posted from 63 members in 21 countries (see Annex I), 61% from the North and 39% from the South.**

- 54% NGOs
- 1% government
- 5% intergovernmental organizations
- 16% researchers or academics
- 24% other affiliations

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

**See note in text box on page 8.

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Since the adoption of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** in 1995, there is a growing need to curb increases in poverty occurring in this rapidly changing economic environment. Participants in the *End Women's Poverty Online Working Group*[3] expressed particular concern over systematic discrimination based on gender that exacerbates poverty among women, potential negative effects of trade liberalization and a continuing lack of political will needed to make lasting change. Overall, the agenda for the dialogue focused on causes and experiences of female poverty, macroeconomic and social policies, development strategies to alleviate poverty, access to credit and savings for women and gender-aware research. Promoting government-NGO partnerships, fostering the use of new services to improve the lives of women living in poverty and developing better understanding about the effects of economic instability and trade liberalization on women's lives were among the emerging issues for the group.

1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

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

2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

The contradictory effects of macro-economic and social policies.

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[3]

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

3. LESSONS LEARNED

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

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

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

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

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

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

<u>Case in point:</u> *It is important to ensure that women use and have control over the money. Skills training and training in business management should be a part of*

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

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

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

3. LESSONS LEARNED

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

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

- *The formation of mothers' committees or PTAs to dialogue with parents on the necessity of sending girls to school.*
- *Free reading-writing materials for girls and children of marginalized groups.*
- *Mid-day meal for all children, to ensure that the girl child gets her share at school.*
- *Ensuring women's/mothers' representation on Village Education Committees which oversee the functioning of the school.*
- *Appointment of additional women teachers and ensuring that each school has at least one woman teacher.*
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- *Periodical Achievement tests and monitoring of girls' achievement.*
- *Weeding out gender bias from textbooks and ensuring gender-bias-free textbooks (e.g. equal representation of girls in illustrations, protagonists, examples, girls/women not always shown in subordinate positions, textbooks incorporating dialogue with students on these issues).*
- *Ensuring equitable representation of women in all levels of project staffing, school staffing. (India)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

The low priority given to women's health at the national level is leaving women underserved.
The dominance of men in positions of decision-making power was cited as a major obstacle to enacting real changes in women's health. The low priority assigned to women's health is evident in examples from India, Tajikistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and the Philippines, where availability of health care services and

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

Case in point: *Reproductive heath has been announced as a priority in Cambodia*

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

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

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

hotlines and decentralized centres. A referral system has been established with

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

Case in point:

E. Women and armed conflict

**Women and Armed Conflict
Online Working Group**

11 October - 19 November 1999

Total membership: 614

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

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

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

**See note in text box on page 8.

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2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

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

<u>Case in point:</u> *It is difficult for rape to even be recognized as a political weapon in such situations where the conflict itself is disguised or unacknowledged. Secondly,*

Strategies for peace-building

♦ Support national, local and grassroots peace building initiatives through a coordinated plan of action.
♦ Strengthen the institutional capacities of women and other key players engaged in peace building related activities through training in adult education and gender.
♦ Mitigate negative aspects of

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

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

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

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

> Case in point: *Rwandan Women Committees, grassroots structures consisting of ten women who are elected in women-only elections to represent women's concerns at each level of government, have already been targeted by the donor and NGO community as conduits for development assistance. The government gave each committee the responsibility for setting up, contributing to and managing Women Communal Funds (WCF), still in the nascent stages of development. The WCF are intended to help start economic activities at the commune and sector level while allowing grassroots women to participate in funding decisions affecting their lives. This is accomplished in part through micro-credit activities, in which the WCF provide small loans at minimal interest*

4. W

F. Women and the economy

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

6 September - 15 October 1999

Total membership: 982

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

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

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

**See note in text box on page 8.

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The five years since the Beijing Platform for
Action (PfA) have seen rapid and widespread
changes in global and local economies
worldwide. Globalization, economic transition,
trade policy liberalization, and an increasing
focus on micro-finance have become part of the
debate as well as of women's daily lives.
Against this backdrop and within their particular
regional, national and local contexts,
participants in the *End Women's Economic*

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

3. LESSONS LEARNED

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

> Case in point: *In our programmes we have advocated monitoring how the profit*
> *Case in point:*

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

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

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Case in point:

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

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

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

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

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

•

- Use multi-pronged strategies that address cultural, legal and structural obstacles and a "lifecycle approach" that takes into account tTj/TCt.9(courols iof women.TJ0F3 1 Tf11.18-1.123TD0.Tc

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

Correspondingly, the same constitution provides that women must occupy positions in all government institutions, parastatals, commissions and any other

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Building leadership skills in young women

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

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institutions so as to enable them to voice their interests and demands. This policy has resulted in many women occupying public positions in many institutions; with Uganda being the only African country with a woman Vice President! (PAWLO, Uganda)

Case in point: *The Colombian Congress recently passed a quota law that requires that women make up 30% of the highest government positions and, for example, that at least one woman be in each 'terna' (three candidate list of nominees presented to the President or other high officials from which they may name their appointees for higher offices). The law is not yet in effect and many believe that it will be vetoed or declared unconstitutional before ever actually going into effect. (Bogota, Colombia)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

> <u>Case in point:</u> *UNDP in Viet Nam is working with the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) on a project titled 'Capacity Development for the Implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women.'*
>
> *This project organized a four day Training of Trainers course focusing on leadership skills, followed by six local leadership training courses for 144 women candidates who stood for election for the Tenth National Assembly in July 1997. There was a focus on campaigning and presentation skills, and the preparation of proposals for action.*
>
> *For a 27 year old health worker, this training session was the first time she had ever spoken in front of a group. During her first few attempts at presenting, she stood in silence. On the last day, with support and coaching from the other participants, she made a five minute speech. She is now one of the youngest members of the National Assembly.*
>
> *The project organized a press conference before the elections to promote positive images of women in leadership and to push for greater representation of women in government. The result of the elections was an increased representation of women from 18% to over 26%. (UNV/UNDP/UNIFEM Gender Specialist, Viet Nam)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Develop means to open and maintain regular dialogue between constituents and women and men in decision-making positions, whether through direct meetings,

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

**National Machineries for
Gender Equality
Online Working Group**

8 February- 19 March 1999

Total membership: 428

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

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

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

**See note in text box on page 8.

Mandated by the Platform for Action to be the "central policy coordinating unit inside the government" with the main task of supporting "government-wide mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policy-areas" (paragraph 201), national machineries constitute the institutional mechanism for implementing the critical areas of the Platform. With this new and additional responsibility, national machineries are developing effective strategies for policy coordination, gender mainstreaming and prompting political action in support of gender equality. The agenda for the *Working Group on National Machineries*[10] centred around these new challenges; namely: implementing gender mainstreaming, coordinating policy inside government, providing technical assistance to mainstream gender and initiating and guiding organizational change. Strategies for creating political will and accountability, developing new tools such as gender budgeting, and cooperation with NGOs were also major topics covered during the dialogue.

1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

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

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

2. DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

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

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[10] The advisory group for the National Machineries for Gender Equality discussion included Christina Janssen and the members of WomenWatch.

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

3. LESSONS LEARNED

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

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

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

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

Strategies for building and nurturing political will

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

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

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

Develop a sound rationale for gender

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

J. Women and the media

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

1. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

- Persistent negative or stereotypical portrayals of women in the conventional media that are perpetuated and accentuated by new media, for example video games, the Internet and music videos.
- Lack of media images depicting minority or disabled communities.
-

pervasive. Some groups of women are simply invisible, including those from minority populations, women and girls of colour in some countries or women who are disabled. Women's issues are circumscribed to features on home or beauty. Moreover, the increased commercialisation of every medium has intensified the visibility of negative

K. Women and the environment

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Strengthen Women's Roles in
Environmental Sustainability
Online Working Group

6 September- 15 October 1999

Total membership: 503

Messages were posted from 51 members
in 26 countries (see Annex I), 46% from
the North and 54% from the South.**

        49% NGOs
        15% government
        9% intergovernmental
        organizations
        21% researchers or academics
        6% other affiliations
        ---------------------
 The archive of the dialogue is available at:
  http://sdnhq.undp.org/ww/women-enviro/

**See note in text box on page 8.
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Enhancing and increasing women's participation, including through involving indigenous voices and knowledge, gender impacts of environmental degradation, partnerships for environmental action, and gender-analysis in natural resource management featured among the key themes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Empower the Girl Child
Online Working Group**

8 November – 17 December 1999

Total membership: 934

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

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

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

**See note in text box on page 8.

Violence:

- The low societal value of girls that results in the denial, acceptance and tolerance of violence against girls.
-

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

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

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

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

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

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

> ➢ **Girl-only clinics that demystify science and technology and link girls to career**

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

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

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

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Annex

Countries represented in the working groups

Poverty	Education	Health	Armed conflict	Economy	Power and decision-making
Australia	Argentina	Armenia	Angola	Bangladesh	Argentina
Bangladesh	Australia	Australia	Australia	Belgium	Australia
Barbados	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Burundi	Cameroon	Belgium
Canada	Belgium	Belgium	Canada	Canada	Canada
India	Brazil	Cambodia	Croatia	Costa Rica	Chile
Japan	Canada	Canada	Cyprus	Dominican Republic	Colombia
Kenya	China	Hong Kong, China	France	Ethiopia	Cuba
Malawi	Finland	India	Georgia	Fiji	Ecuador
Mexico	Germany	Nepal	Germany	Hong Kong, China	Eritrea
Netherlands	Guinea	Netherlands	India	India	Ethiopia
Nicaragua	Hong Kong, China	Nigeria	Ireland	Jamaica	India
Nigeria	India	Philippines	Kosovo	Japan	Indonesia
Russian Federation	Indonesia	Russian Federation	Nepal	Korea	Jordan
South Africa	Mexico	Sudan	Netherlands	Netherlands	Kenya
Spain	Norway	Switzerland	New Zealand	Nicaragua	Liberia

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

End violence	Institutional mechanisms	Human rights	Media	Environment	Girl child
Armenia	Argentina	Afghanistan	Argentina	Australia	Argentina
Australia	Bangladesh	Albania	Australia	Bangladesh	Australia
Bangladesh	Belarus	Argentina	Belgium	Bolivia	Bangladesh
Belgium	Canada	Australia	Cameroon	Brazil	Cambodia
Bulgaria	Chile	Azerbaijan	Canada	Canada	Canada
Canada	Costa Rica	Belgium	China	Chile	China
Croatia	Fiji	Bhutan	Costa Rica	Côte d'Ivoire	Colombia
Fiji	Georgia	Canada	Croatia	Denmark	Dominican Republic
Finland	Ghana	Croatia	Cuba	Ethiopia	Germany
Gabon	Indonesia	Cuba	Czech Republic	Fiji	Ghana
Georgia	Jamaica	Denmark	Ecuador	Iceland	India
Germany	Philippines	Georgia	Fiji	India	Indonesia
Ghana	Poland	Germany	France	Jordan	Israel
Hong Kong, China	Russian Federation	Hong Kong, China	Guatemala	Kenya	Kenya
Hungary	Spain	India	India	Korea	Malaysia
Iceland	Switzerland	Indonesia	Indonesia	Mexico	Mexico
India	Trinidad and Tobago	Islamic Republic of Iran	Italy	Namibia	Nepal
Italy	Uganda	Israel	Republic of Korea	Pakistan	Netherlands
Kenya	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Kuwait	Malaw0374811.9(ea)112.8(03ouMa)-(h Afi)-10.5o92 AfiuTo		