

Negotiation Kit for Beijing + 10

Women and the Environment

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OVERARCHING CONCERN

Despite the Beijing Platform for Action, integrating gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programs for sustainable development has not been accepted, much less, implemented. While recent community-based management programs have explicitly included women as stakeholders, they are often treated as a vulnerable group on whom to pass the principal care for the environment as one more task on their long list of many. Women have yet to be recognized as equal with men to share with them joint responsibility for sustainable development and care for the environment.

GAINS

- The importance of women's roles and gender equality in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development has been acknowledged.
- A new paragraph on "ensuring gender equality and gender justice" was successfully integrated in the Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific in 2001 as a result of organized lobbying by women.
- Overall, women as a group gained visibility as one of nine major groups promoting sustainable development.

GAPS

- Women's participation in decision-making has been nominal and often upholds traditional women's domains reinforcing gender stereotypes. Indigenous women, women in rural areas, and urban slum dwellers are the most deprived in decision-making processes, in spite of their important roles in safeguarding the environment, community and family.
- Women's de facto rights of access to land and other natural resources have been hindered because of customary practices.
- Gender disaggregated data about the direct and indirect as well as short- and long-term effects on health have not been properly collected and analyzed.

EMERGING ISSUES

- Globalization led by multi-national mining, logging and agribusiness enterprises, extract natural resources vital for the life of poor women and contaminate rivers and seas. Multi-national businesses also dominate public goods such as water, air and land through activities such as privatization of water supply and production and distribution of genetically modified seeds. These adversely affect poor women and their households and violate their fundamental rights and livelihood.
- The huge power gap between multi-national enterprises and poor women and their communities results in the lack of accountability of these enterprises, and impedes women's access to empowering information and training.
- Warfare and conflicts inflict continuing and intensifying damage to people's lives and the environment.
- Unsustainable lifestyles of hyper production, consumption, and disposal, as well as the extensive use of chemical substances, are spreading on a global scale. In waste management measures, the gender dimension has often been neglected. When women are involved, their roles are often limited to home and community.

RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE

De facto socio-economic rights of women

BPFA para 246.

Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and to natural resource management

BPFA para 256 a.

Evaluate policies and programs in terms of environmental impact and women's equal access to and use of natural resources.

BPFA para 256 g.

Develop a strategy to eliminate all obstacles to women's full and equal participation in sustainable development and equal access to and control over resources.

BPFA para 253 c.

Encourage the effective protection and use of the knowledge, innovations and practices of women of indigenous and local communities and promote their wider application in addition, safeguard the existing intellectual property rights of women under national and international law.

Agenda 21 para 24.2 f

Formulate and implement clear governmental policies and national guidelines, strategies and plans for the achievement of equality in all aspects of society. This includes the promotion of women's literacy,

education, training, nutrition and health, and their participation in key decision-making positions and in the management of the environment, particularly as it pertains to their access to resources. Facilitate better access to all forms of credit, particularly in the informal sector, taking measures towards ensuring women's access to property rights as well as agricultural inputs and implements.

Agenda 21 para 24.5.

States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should review it and suggest amendments by year 2000, with a view to strengthening those elements of CEDAW related to environment and development. They should give special attention to the issue of access and entitlements to natural resources, technology, creative banking facilities and low-cost housing, the control of pollution and toxicity in the home and workplace.

Plan of Implementation (POI) of WSSD para 11 a.

Improve access to land and property, to adequate shelter and to basic services for the urban and rural poor, with special attention to female household heads.

POI para 67 b.

Promote and support efforts and initiatives to secure equitable access to land tenure, clarify resource rights and responsibilities, through land and tenure reform processes that are enshrined in national law. They must provide access to credit for all, especially women, and enable economic and social empowerment, poverty eradication and efficient and ecologically sound utilization of land; they must enable women producers to become decision makers and owners in the sector, including the right to inherit land

Peace

BPFA para 246.

Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy peaceful and productive life in harmony with nature.

BPFA para 247.

Hurricanes, typhoons and other natural disasters inflict damage to the environment; however, the destruction of natural resources, violence, displacement and other effects associated with war, armed and other conflicts, the use and testing of nuclear weaponry, and foreign occupation also contribute to environmental degradation.

POI para 5.

Peace, security, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development and respect for cultural diversity, are essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that this kind of development benefits all.

POI para 62

Create an enabling environment at the regional, subregional, national and local levels to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Support African efforts for peace, stability and security, the resolution and prevention of conflicts, democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, including the right to development and gender equality;

POI para 138.

Good governance is essential for sustainable development. Sound economic policies, solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people and improved infrastructure are the basis for sustained economic growth, poverty eradication, and employment creation. Freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, and the rule of law, gender equality, market-oriented policies, and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies are also mutually reinforcing.

Genuine equal participation in decision-making

BPFA para 253. a.

Ensure opportunities for women, including indigenous women, to participate in environmental decision-making at all levels (e.g., as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects).

Agenda 21 para 24.2 b

Increase the proportion of women decision makers, planners, technical advisers, managers and extension workers in environment and development fields.

POI para 7 d

Promote women's equal and full participation in decision-making at all levels, mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and strategies, eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and improving their status, health and economic welfare. Ensure women and girls' full and equal access to economic opportunity, land, credit, education and health-care services;

Gender Justice

BPFA para 248.

Through their management and use of natural resources, women provide sustenance to their families and communities. As consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators, women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. Governments have expressed their commitment to creating a new development paradigm that integrates environmental sustainability with gender equality and justice within and between generations (chapter 24 of Agenda 21).

Thematic Focal Point for Women and Environment
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