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# CHRISTIAN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

## "Beyond Beijing" Workshop
## (Draft Final Report)

CCRDA

December, 1995

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# OUTLINE OF THE 'BEYOND BEIJING' WORKSHOP

The workshop entitled **'Beyond Beijing'** took place on December 5th and 6th 1995. It was held at Africa Hall, Addis Ababa where 102 organizations were represented by 160 participants.

This workshop, which was organized by **Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)** and sponsored by the **Netherlands Embassy** was the first of its kind to take place as a follow up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing.

Its aim was to formulate strategies so as to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The main concerns which were addressed in the workshop were:

**Women and Health**

**Women and the Environment**

**Human Rights of Women**

**Women's Empowerment**

**Education of Women/Girls**

**The Girl Child**

By uniting the activities of governments, NGOs, international agencies and other organisations, it tried to find ways of improving the situation of Ethiopian women, particularly rural women who are the most marginalised sector of society.

The 'Beyond Beijing' workshop is only the beginning. The group discussions and recommendations of this workshop, by prioritizing problems, which women in general and Ethiopian women in particular face, aims at establishing other similar follow up programmes.

CRDA would therefore like to thank the Netherlands Embassy for making this workshop possible and for the continued support it has promised to give in the future.

Our appreciation is also extended to all individuals, organizations and agencies who have supported CRDA's efforts in organizing this workshop.

CRDA would also like to thank all participants who showed a great interest in the workshop, thereby confirming their commitment to improving the lives of Ethiopian women.

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# INTRODUCTION

***By Wz. Kibre Dawit***
***African Village Academy***

Your Excellency Wz. Tadelech Haile Micheal,
Head of Women's Affairs Bureau in the Prime Minster's Office,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to this two day workshop, **"Beyond Beijing",** which shall focus on the NGO Forum and the Fourth UN World Conference on Women.

This workshop was preceded by a workshop entitled "Ethiopian Women NGO Forum". Held on the 9th of August 1995, it was organized by Ethiopian Women NGO Forum interest Group, in preparation for the Beijing Conference. The Group felt the need to discuss and share experiences of major international conferences that have been held throughout the world. Obtaining such information was believed to be vital in that it will strengthen the group's position during the Women's Conference.

The objective of the Ethiopian Women NGO Forum, was thus:

- to discuss priorities and areas of concern of Ethiopian women which could be addressed at the NGO Forum,
- to be familiar with, and obtain updated information on the Fourth UN Conference on Women,
- to exchange ideas that could be applicable at the development of the NGO Networking held after the Beijing Conference.

During this workshop, the Platform for Action and twelve specified areas of concern, were our guidelines and our recommendations were in accordance with those areas of concern. During discussions, the empowerment of women in the economic, social and political domain gained priority for future implementation strategies.

The "Beyond Beijing" workshop is designed to share the experiences and knowledge gained at the Conference and to formulate strategies for the implementation process.

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The objectives of this workshop is:

- to share information and exchange experiences on the Fourth UN World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum;
- to devise strategies for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration;
- to asses and design strategies on how best to orient NGO activities with a view to addressing the needs of women;
- to create and strengthen networks among NGO, between the government and NGOs and with other concerned groups.

We might not be able to work out detailed plans but we will however start taking major steps in that direction. Apart from the resolutions we are going to make, we should take this opportunity to form committees that would consider the social, economic and political issues in conjunction with both our potentials and the resources at our disposal. These committees will be instrumental in following up our progress from here on.

Our many thanks therefore goes to :

- the Netherlands Embassy, for its continued support,
- CRDA and its Gender Working Group for accommodating us and supporting the women's cause,
- the NGO Forum Interest Group and Task Force for their efforts in organizing both workshops and
- all who are here to participate in this workshop which indicates your concern and commitment to the cause of women.

This is without any doubt a very important workshop. We urge all NGOs, governments and international organizations and all participants to participate fully and come up with recommendations that will make a difference in the lives of both Ethiopian women and men.

Thank you.

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Efforts to promote the common position were made by both delegations at every opportunity. Their voices were heard at plenary sessions, working group meetings and informal discussions. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to applaud the efforts that delegations, both governmental and non governmental, exerted as a team in their efforts to promote national as well as regional interests. The need to continue to work together with the same zeal and determination is equally important during this period of implementation. Collaboration by both sides has continued during the preparatory stage which is a good sign for the future. This is a time when the sharing of resources will help to work towards implementing strategies at both national and global levels.

As more and more of our members are implementing gender sensitive programs, CRDA is very keen to support efforts in this direction. We recognize that self reliance through sustainable development can only be achieved by ensuring that the roles of women include participation and leadership. The transition from relief to development which we are all striving towards cannot be gained without the empowerment and full involvement of women in the decision making process.

It should, in this regard, be noted that the Beijing Declaration recognizes women as a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution, and central to the promotion of lasting peace at all levels.

The development of such potential, and the successful implementation of the Platform for Action will require commitment by governmental and non governmental as well as international organizations. It will, as the Beijing Declaration indicates, also require the successful and adequate mobilization of resources at national and international levels. We must search for new and additional resources from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources to contribute to the advancement of women. We therefore, need to act soon in order to muster our resources and mobilize essential outside support to keep pace with fast moving world trends and efforts.

As indicated above, the major focus of the Ethiopian delegation was:

- promoting the African common position, and influencing the outcomes of the conference which are clearly indicated in the Beijing Declaration.
- informing other delegates about efforts made at the national level, both by governmental as well as non governmental organizations.
- learning from the experiences of others, as well as creating better links and networks with a view to fostering closer working relations.

The NGO delegates have, since their return from Beijing, met repeatedly to assess the outcome of the Beijing Conference, especially in those specific areas that the African

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# WELCOMING ADDRESS

***By Dr. Mulatu Baffa***
***Chairman of the Executive Committee, CRDA***
***and General Secretary, KHCDP***

Her Excellency, Wzo. Tadelech H/Michael,
Head, Women's Affairs Bureau in the Prime Minster's Office,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Members,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of CRDA membership and myself, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you gathered here today to attend the "Beyond Beijing" Workshop.

The aim of this Workshop is to prepare the way forward for NGO WID activities based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

It may be useful at this stage to recall the preparations which were made prior to Beijing. The government delegation prepared a national position paper and negotiated its acceptance and inclusion of its main features in the African Platform for Action. Parallel to this, the NGO community turned inward and looked at what it had done in the past and what it could do in the future.

These preparations were enhanced by the Exhibition/Bazaar/Workshop organized by CRDA which critically assessed the efforts of our members to promote women's interests. This raised the awareness of the NGO community of new trends and developments. It instilled a spirit of great expectation and enthusiasm for future developments in women's activities of our members. Many of them are successfully operating in the free market of Ethiopia.

On the other hand, the Workshop dealt with such questions as sustainability, feasibility, viability and the empowering capacity of WID projects. This was based on a CRDA commissioned inventory survey, which was further developed to incorporate the views of those participating in the Workshop. Strategies for common activities for the future were developed and this served as a basis for the position the NGO community was to adopt prior to Beijing.

The need for a united voice at Beijing was recognized by African NGOs and government agencies. This was expressed in the African Platform for Action. This document clearly indicated the issues of prime importance.

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Platform for Action identified as areas of major concern. Many hours have been spent debating and prioritizing issues and deciding on the best means of presentation at this Workshop.

The subject that speakers will address in their presentations, and topics selected for group work sessions will not only interest us, but also generate a lot of discussion and debate.

It now remains for me to thank the organizing committee and the CRDA Training and Workshop Department for their untiring efforts to make this workshop a reality so soon after the Beijing Conference. The Royal Netherlands Embassy and CRDA deserve special praise for their commitment to promote Ethiopian women's interests in general, and for sponsoring this Workshop in particular.

I hope you will find the Workshop useful and instructive, and I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.

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# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

***By Wz. Tadelech H/Micheal***
***Women's Affairs Minister***

Mme, Chairperson
Your Excellencies
Participants and Colleagues,

Allow me first to congratulate the Ethiopian Women NGO Interest Groups and CRDA organizing this workshop which is a follow up to "The Fourth U.N. World Conference Women".

The Beijing Conference was a unique conference to be held at global level because was a Conference of commitment by concerned sectors i.e. women themselves.

Women from all over the world participated in this conference to evaluate what had be done in the past. They were able to design and adopt a Plan of Action and a Declarati to serve as a guideline for the promotion of gender equality by government a international communities. The document of the Beijing Platform for Action will becor a new program for global social development.

This Document consists of 361 paragraphs, which provides a detailed guide to concre actions. It identifies twelve areas of critical concern in women's lives which include:

- the persistent and increasing burden of poverty;
- the unequal access to education and training, and to health care;
- the unequal access to participation in power sharing, decision making a shaping of economic policies (which affect them so, fundamentally);
- the unequal voice in environmental decision making, at ali levels and
- the violence against women and the girl child in the home, in society a in situations of armed conflict.

Most particularly, the Platform for Action giving more consideration to the girl chi commits itself to her future. In general, the Document calls for strategic actions whi can accelerate the advancement of women and the achievement of equality betwee women and men of the world.



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As we all remember, the Conference focused on two themes regarding the sta women as highlighted by the United Nations Commission:

1. inequality in women's access to and participation in the economic structure and polices and the production process and,

2. insufficient institutional mechanisms to promote the achievement of women.

Therefore, in order to implement the Beijing Platform at national level it is a prerequisite to have the political will, the policy and the structure to support the main stream activities.

In Ethiopia, all the three elements exist especially the legislative support.

Gathered here today, it is inspiring to see representatives from many NGOs, both national and international. Their willingness to continue the revolutionary momentum and contribute to the strategic plan for the implementation of the Platform for Action in Ethiopia is encouraging.

There can be no doubt about the important contribution which NGOs made to the formulation of the Platform for Action adopted at Beijing. Nevertheless for its implementation, their commitment together with governments and governmental bodies, must be sustained and translated into concrete policies and actions. It is our belief that NGOs will play a crucial role with governments in doing this.

Ethiopia's National Policy on Women has already set important structures in place, at national and regional level, which should greatly assist in the effective implementation of the Platform for Action. Every Line Ministry must strive to ensure that gender issues are given priority and incorporated in its policies and plans. It will be necessary to examine carefully how to achieve the objectives of the Platform for Action. The Women's Affairs Office is undertaking several strategic studies to establish its priorities and ensure the maximum use of limited resources.

Similarly, each NGO represented here will have its own priorities within the context of the Platform for Action. In launching into this two day discussion it should set strategies according to the national priority so that our effort will be focused and not thinly spread.

However there are some vital questions that should be considered for instance, how can we best go about the socio-economic transformation of our rural communities, at grass roots level, in order to fully integrate gender and developmental issues in the transformation?

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In my view, it is essential to focus our action on the most critical area of concern at national level, which is poverty. Tackling poverty in Ethiopia means giving women access to land, securing food for their families, building their capacity through training and accessing credit facilities, empowering them with information on their reproductive health and HIV and alleviating domestic labor constraints (through investment in labor-saving technology and infrastructure) etc.

Translating the constitutional rights of women in Ethiopia into action is the basic strategy in which we shall all participate. It will serve as a common goal in order to alleviate or eradicate poverty in Ethiopia.

As we develop our strategy to implement the Platform for Action, what contributions can NGOs and other organization such as religious groups, make? What resources can they tap and mobilize?

Though implementation is primarily the responsibility of governments, a new unity of purpose and action needs to be established with international organizations, bilateral and NGOs. This will contribute to the provision of effective, coordinated support for national action. The need to reinforce mutual feedback and coordinated advocacy between governments and NGOs should be empasised. Moreover establishing accountability mechanisms and using available resources efficiently is no doubt essential.

The close partnership between the various institutions and organizations will enable an indepth review and analysis of options for the national priorities to be carried out. This two-day meeting is a concrete manifestation of this partnership and the efforts it shall make.

In conclusion, I welcome wholeheartedly the efforts of the Netherlands Government, and NGO members of the CRDA, for their endeavor in working towards the realization of the Platform for Action, in line with the National Women's Policy and the Constitution. The set of action set out in the platform for action "should lead to fundamental change."

Thank you.

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# Presentation

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# An Overview of the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women and Summary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

*By Mebo K.Mwaniki*
*United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.*

From September 4 - 15, 1995 an estimated number of 30,000 people, representing approximately 190 countries, met in Beijing for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action commits governments to accept the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and their equal participation as agents and beneficiaries of sustainable development.

The Beijing Declaration states that *"Women's rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedom. "* It makes strong advances on a number of contentions and important issues. It recognizes productive rights of women as human rights and condemns the discrimination against the girl-child. The Declaration also addresses, in the strongest terms, the issue of violence against women including the use of rape as a weapon of war.

The Beijing Declaration reaffirms the commitment of governments who participated in the Fourth World Conference of Women to:

i. promote the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men;

ii. recognize women's rights as human rights;

iii. fully implement the human rights of women and the girl-child and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence inflicted against them;

iv. empower women and promote their advancement on the basis of equality in all spheres;

v. ensure equal rights, opportunities and access to resources for both men and women;

vi. encourage the involvement of women in economic and social development and their full participation as agents and beneficiaries of sustainable development;

vii. explicitly recognize and reaffirm the rights of all women in controlling all aspects of their health and, in particular, their fertility;

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viii. eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of women's poverty through changes in economic structures.

The Platform for Action, while not legally binding, provides an important guide for the decade ahead and will be a useful tool in assisting governments and NGOs to structure their policies and programs. It outlines specific recommendations in twelve critical areas of concern. These areas relate to:

- women and poverty;
- education and training of women;
- women and health;
- violence against women;
- women and armed conflict;
- women and the economy;
- women in power and decision-making;
- institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;
- human rights of women;
- women and the media;
- women and the environment and;
- the girl-child.

These critical areas of concern identified by and adopted in the Global Platform for Action are of significant importance to Africa since they relate to the African Platform for Action. The Global Platform for Action calls for the integration of gender perspectives in all policies and programs and focuses on concrete measures to address the twelve critical areas of concern world-wide.

To ensure effective implementation of the Platform for Action, governments, the UN and all other relevant organizations and institutions should promote active and visible policy of streamlining gender perspective. Above all, they should focus on the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programs which will enhance the advancement of women at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels.

At the national level, governments have the primary responsibility of implementing the Platform for Action. Commitment at the highest political level to implement strategies is essential and thus governments should take a leading role in coordinating, monitoring and assessing progress of the advancement of women. Governments should establish effective national machineries which contribute to the advancement of women at the highest political level.

Non-governmental organizations working within the various regions, should be supported in their efforts to develop networks by which they coordinate the dissemination of information on the Global Platform For Action and the respective regional Platforms for Action.

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Some of the most socially significant commitments made at Beijing were by African governments. The following are some examples:

- **Cote d'Ivoire**: ensure 100 per cent girl's enrolment in schools by the year 2000.

- **Congo**: ensure a review of all existing legislation to improve women's status by the year 2000.

- **Equatorial Guinea**: ensure the enactment of laws that will protect women in marital separation, widowhood, inheritance, family planning, forced marriage and childlessness.

- **Eritrea**: ensure improvement and expansion of mother-child-health care services.

- **Gambia**: ensure the formulation of a new national policy on women.

- **Lesotho**: ensure the enactment of laws removing restrictions on women's access to credit.

- **Namibia**: ensure school attendance of 94 per cent of all primary school-age children, by the year 2000.

- **Nigeria**: ensure the establishment of women's university.

- **South Africa**: ensure the ratification of the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women and build new shelters for battered women.

- **Zambia**: ensure the enrolment of girls and boys in schools, by the year 2000.

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A document listing the key commitments was put together and widely distributed. *"We will keep reminding them of their commitments and monitoring the pace of their implementation"*, said an NGO representative taking part in an NGO caucus held in a building adjacent to the conference center.

Mrs. Mongella, too, was quick to remind the delegates of their commitments. *"The world will hold us accountable for the implementation of the good intentions and decisions arrived at in Beijing"*, she said. *"I charge you, my dear friends and sisters, to reassemble in your ranks, sharpen your focus and march. Let us ensure that we carry the torch which was lit in Mexico city, and rekindled in Copenhagen and Nairobi, further forward from Beijing."*

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE NGO FORUM ON WOMEN, BEIJING '95: LOOKING AT THE WORLD THROUGH WOMEN'S EYES

*By Wz. Zenebeworke Tadesse*
*Consultant*

## Background

The NGO Forum on Women, Beijing '95 was a world historic event by any account. Given women's absence from public arenas, be it at the local, national or global levels, the awesome number of participants was noted as a significant social transformation. Beyond the number of participants, the numerous activities, the enthusiasm , the passion and diligence of participants were other features worthy of note. Nonetheless, the international press tended to focus on logistical problems faced by participants, i.e. torrential rains that destroyed tents where meetings were taking place, harassment by Chinese authorities, inconvenient distance between the official conference and the NGO forums, etc. However participants quickly came up with creative solutions and went on with planned activities.

As has been duly noted the world has indeed gone through major economic, social and political transformations since the first International Women's Conference which took place in Mexico city in 1975. It is only with a recognition of these transformations that we can have a comprehensive appreciation of the NGO Forum on Women, hereafter referred to as the '95 Forum. Deepening world economic crisis, the end of the cold war and the resultant political instabilities, accelerated globalization of the world economy, transformation of communication technology, democratization and phenomenal growth of NGOs are some of the noteworthy events that explain the concerns that dictate the strategies of the '95 Forum.

The Beijing Conference was a reflection of 20 years of accumulated knowledge and experience. During the first Women's Decade, 1975-1985, only certain themes were considered as concerning issues on women, i.e. education, employment and health. These were often relegated to conferences on women only. In addition, these conferences were premised on a naive belief that if women list politely worded sets of "neglected areas", governments and international agencies will immediately address these concerns. Such illusions were shattered in 1980 when it became clear that the 'Forward Looking Strategies' which was the outcome of the Nairobi Conference, was not implemented.

Although most governments and NGOs set up women's bureaux or women's desks and adopted Women in Development (WID) policies, in most cases, particularly in Africa these have been and continue to be what observers have called, 'symbolic policy'. This

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is to say that these policies are meant to provide symbolic reassurance that something is being done although no real change is intended to be achieved. Thus, there evolved a growing need for pressure groups and constant lobbying with a view to monitoring the implementation of gender sensitive policies.

Women's participation in local, regional and global arenas should not be limited to only those areas considered as 'women's issues. Since the Earth Summit in 1992, women activists, women NGOs and other gender sensitive NGO have participated actively in almost all world conferences.

## Maintaining the Momentum

Not only were women NGOs present in relatively large numbers in the Earth Summit of 1992, World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna 1993, World Population Conference, 1994 and World Summit on Social Development 1995, but also at the Beijing Conference which was planned to build on the momentum and commitments generated during the preceding conferences. Women were no longer willing to wait another decade before appraising the achievements made and obstacles encountered since the commitments made at the Earth Summit, the Vienna and the Cairo Conferences.

In Beijing, women's groups focused on the progress of commitments made at those conferences. A case in point was a six hours Global Tribunal on Accountability For Women's Human Rights, held during the NGO Forum. During this Tribunal, 22 women from various parts of the world gave testimonies on human rights abuses with reference to their own experience. A panel of imminent judges provided comments and made recommendations.

The group that sponsored this event presented a petition to the UN requesting a report on steps the UN has taken in promoting human rights of women since the Vienna Conference . The petition was translated into 30 languages and circulated to over 140 counties. It was sponsored by more than 1,500 groups, internationally.

## The Earth Summit Remembered

Similarly the Second World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet was a follow up to the Environmental Conference of 1992. This nine day event was organized by 79 organizations which focused on links between women, environment and development. The marathon event consisted of a tribunal, two days of hearing testimonies given by people from all over the world, a scoreboard on women's empowerment, reports on effects of war on democracy, women and land rights, economy, health, environment and lifestyles, and global dimensions of diversity.

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Having heard these diverse set of testimonies the judges passed judgement on the implementation of Women's Action Agenda which was adopted at the Rio Conference in 1992. What these and other similar events demonstrated was that, all major economic, social and political issues were of concern to women and that their insights were crucial in bringing about solutions to these major world problems. Moreover women expressed concerns regarding trends of backsliding on existing commitments made in RIO, Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen.

In defining the new development strategy that is human centered, women have emerged as critical actors.

## A Glance at the NGO Forum on Women '95

The Forum was based on three objectives:

- agenda setting;
- networking and
- influencing the Platform for Action.

The Forum has been described as the largest and most diverse gathering of women in history. According to official briefings and newspaper accounts, the NGO Forum was attended by 25,000 people. Participants came from all over the world, with the largest contingent being from Asia and the Pacific Region. Of these 4,500 were young people between the ages of 8 and 18 and a total of 1,554 men. While the majority were representatives of national, sub regional, regional and international NGOs, the rest were members of official delegations, representatives of UN agencies activists and scholars who participated in the Conference so as to learn and share their experiences with others.

## Growth and Legitimacy of NGOs

When compared to the Nairobi Conference of 1985, there is a clear difference in the participation rate of official delegations, governments and UN representatives. In Nairobi and even more so in Copenhagen in 1980, most official delegates avoided participation in NGO Forums activities.

However, the increased level of participation at the Beijing Conference is indicative of the growing recognition and legitimacy of NGOs. In addition, it denotes the growing spirit of partnership and participation that governs the relationship between government representatives and NGOs.

There is now a global consensus that the state is no longer the only major actor in development activities. The degree for participatory activities and the spirit of partnership between governments and NGOs varies from country to country. The

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increased participation rate of multilateral agencies at the NGO Forum is a result of a mandate which encourages them to work directly with NGOs.

**Technology to the Rescue**

The NGO Forum was officially opened on August 30 and lasted until September 8, 1995. It took place in Huairou, located about an hour away from Beijing where the official conference took place. The decision by the Chinese authorities to move the conference from central Beijing to Huairou generated a lot of controversy prior to, as well as, during the Conference.

An unexpected positive outcome of this controversy and one which is indicative of the power of new communication technology, was the level of networking which made participation possible through these new technologies. A case in point was the global fax net. Initiated as a lobbying mechanism against the decision to move the conference sight, global fax net became a source of spreading news regarding the NGO Forum and Beijing Conference. An additional service know as IWTC Global Net, made it possible to disseminate each fax net via e-mail and electronically.

In addition to conference rooms, cinemas and hotel rooms, most activities were organized in five regional tents: the Youth tenth, the tenth for the Disabled, the Global Pavilion, the Once and Future Pavilion, the Peace Tent, the Healing Tent, the Market Place, the Kuumba stage and the Exhibition Hall. Each day, major activities of the Forum consisted of over 350 workshops, seminars and panel discussions. There was also a video festival covering a variety of topics on women's lives. Most evenings were left for cultural programs such as music, dancing, fashion show and theatre.

In the exhibition hall there was a display of the various Chinese organizations, UN agencies and NGOs. More than 400 NGOs exhibited. Among the kaleidoscope of posters, banners and literature, one found the UNDP Poverty clock. The clock calculated the growth rate of the world's poor, and indicated that 47 poor people are born every minute in the world and half of them are baby girls. Every year the world sees an increase of 25 million poor people.

In the Once and Future Pavilion there were on going demonstrations on indigenous and newly acquired technologies. These demonstrations were organized by 70 NGOs involved in gender, science and technology. The Pavilion provided a diverse set of programs, workshops and learning sessions which ranged from creating toilets and practical traditional medicine to e-mail and science for survival. These activities were geared towards moving away from mind set barriers to flexible thinking which would enable the fully participation of women in science and technology.

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Participants followed the daily activities through three newspapers, namely Forum '95 the Independent NGO Forum newspaper, an English and Chinese daily published by the China Organizing Committee. In addition, there were information kiosks which had touch-screen access indicating any changes in the daily Forum schedule.

Participants also receive a general introduction to computers and the use of e-mail. The availability of an electronic lobbying infrastructure made it possible for NGOs in Huairou to give inputs to the Platform for Action via e-mail and to the various NGO caucuses attending the UN Conference in Beijing. Using e-mail, Forum participants held "Global Town Hall Meetings" maintaining a dialogue with women in other parts of the world who were unable to attend the Conference.

An NGO known as **Association of Progressive Communication (APC)** had gathered a team of 40 women from 24 countries. These women provided the internet, e-mail and electronic information dissemination services. The services provided information on the NGO Forum and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women to 30 million people around the world via e-mail, electronic conferences, gopher and "world wide web" pages. During the last two years of the preparatory phases of the Conference, APC made several versions of the platform draft accessible to women thus making it possible for them to give an input into the preparatory process.

**Women's Broadening Interests**

The attendance at various plenaries, workshops and panels, showed that areas that were perceived as male preserves were now of great interest to women too. It was reported that the workshops that attracted a large number of participants were those on human and legal rights followed by meetings on peace and human security, education, economy and health, governance and politics. Meetings on environment, race and ethnicity, media, spirituality and religion, science and technology, arts and culture and youth also drew several participants.

Plenaries provided the opportunity for critical analysis to take place e.g. an analysis on the current global forces having major impacts on our lives. The concerns expressed during this period included approaches to governance, questions of citizenship and political participation; obstacles to peace and human security, effects of militarization, violence and poverty.

In numerous workshops women challenged the subject of militarization and the resources allocated for defence. Other concerns like threats posed by globalization of the economy, the impact of technological revolution on work, rise of conservatism in its various forms of religion, racial/ethnic and homophobic, and the challenges posed by the media, culture and communication were thoroughly examined.

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Plenaries also highlighted and discussed initiatives and strategies used by women and women's organizations, over the past decade, which aimed at bringing about changes. What lessons were learnt ? How have women challenged commonly held assumption and beliefs ? What are the new questions being raised ? Do these challenge existing paradigms ?

In addition the plenaries addressed commitments made for the future. NGOs highlighted their strategies for future action and were able to identify who was planning what and provided opportunities for networking by defining ways of future collaborations. The plenaries also provided an intergenerational dialogue between current and future leaders of the global movement during which commonalities and difference were explored and future strategies defined.

**Towards Gender Accountability**

In conclusion, Forum '95 demonstrated that women have become political protagonists. There is an active women's constituency that can exert pressure on governments and one which has become adept at scrutinising international agencies. It is clear that women have caught up with current rhetoric on concepts of accountability, transparency and participatory development. An urgent concern expressed by numerous groups was the need for strategies to make governments and international institutions more "gender accountable". Similarly the meaning of citizenship for women and the strategies to fight for their rights was yet another new concern as well as the question of political representation of women. Why are there so few women parliamentarians? How gender sensitive and gender accountable are these female parliamentarians? How could women campaign for the implementation of all the human rights conventions which governments have signed ?

The Beijing Conference has been referred to as a conference of commitments. Given twenty years of experience regarding commitments at international conferences, the key concern of NGOs is implementation. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action has allocated major responsibilities to NGOs in terms of implementing recommendations as stated in the Platform. NGOs might have the will but not the resources required to implement the major thrusts of the recommendations.

The representation of NGOs operating in Ethiopia (both indigenous and international) at the Beijing Conference was very limited. The few who did attend were not even sufficiently prepared to take full advantage of the opportunities offered at the Forum and the Conference. It is hoped that this workshop will be the catalyst that will initiate the type of enthusiasm and sense of commitment to gender equity that NGOs in other countries pledged to work on in the post Beijing era.

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# A GLIMPSE OF THE NGO PARTICIPATION IN THE FOURTH UN CONFERENCE WOMEN

*By Wz. Mulumbet Merhatsedik*
*CARE*

Accredited NGOs were one of the four groups from among the UN Secretariat, member states and the press, present at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Governments were the direct negotiators and decision makers while the UN Secretariat provided support and facilitation services and the press media coverage.

NGOs took upon themselves the task of influencing the Conference in light of the stands developed during both the preparatory meetings in New York and the NGO Forum in Huairou.

According to some sources, the number of accredited NGOs was more than 3000. This was considered to be the largest number ever to take part in a UN conference. They were organized under a co-ordinating team called 'Equipo', meaning "team" in Spanish. The Equipo consisted of representatives from NGO caucuses and networks and had four sub-committees called Lobbying sub-committee, Logistics sub-committee, Media sub-committee and Crisis Management sub-committee.

The Lobbying sub-committee of the Equipo organized daily morning briefings for NGOs in collaboration with the UN Secretariat. During these briefing sessions, reports on discussions of various negotiating groups and the status of the bracket texts (of the **Platform for Action (PFA)**) were presented by the UN Secretariat, the caucuses and the NGO representatives. The presenters had attended the discussions of working groups, as observers, the previous day. Countries which took a pro or anti stand against the position of the caucuses were identified and NGO representatives of those countries were advised to take up their cases with their delegates.

Similarly, daily briefings were organized for non-accredited NGOs in Huairou and in the theatre hall in Beijing . These sessions have helped the NGO communities to keep track of the progress or regress made at the Conference.

The Media sub-committee fed the press with information about the on going negotiations so as to divert the attention of the press from the amplified problems such as torrential rains, inconvenient placement of workshops meetings etc. that were being reported. In doing so, the sub-committee organized sessions where NGOs briefed the media on the progress being made at the Conference.

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The various caucuses lobbed for particular issues with a primary focus on the relevant bracketed text of the Platform for Action. At the start the number of caucuses was very few. Nevertheless as the process of negotiation progressed, NGO participants felt that certain matters called for the formation of separate and additional caucuses. The number of caucuses active in the lobbying process went up to more than forty. The influx of NGO representatives to the Conference, after the end of the NGO Forum, also accounted for the sharp rise in the number of caucuses. Some of the major caucuses were Africa caucus, economic,justice, human rights, the girl child, environment, grass roots, health, violence against women, and implementation and follow-up caucuses.

All of these groups were co-ordinated by the Linkage caucus of the Equipo. It was set up, as the name indicates, to link the suggestions made at previous major global conferences with those of the Beijing Conference. In order to guide the daily deliberations of each caucus, the Linkage caucus had prepared and distributed an advocacy chart which gave detailed information on the bracketed texts and previous UN suggestions with regard to the stand of NGOs.

The Openness sub-group of the Equipo held the responsibility of accessing information on the on-going negotiation. With regard to the plenary, except for the first two days and the last one day where tickets were required for entrance, NGOs had more or less free access. In addition, some few slots were available at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions. However the plenary session held on September 13 was devoted to NGOs. Among several caucuses and lobbying groups that applied for participation to these few hours of session, around 40 got the opportunity to air their views. Some of these were African caucus of Femnet, Network of African Rural Women Association and Interaction.

However the entrance ticket system limited participation to working groups i.e. only one representative from each caucus had access to the meetings of two Working Groups. This in addition depended on the availability of space. NGOs had no access to the Contact Groups and informal meetings where most critical and controversial issues were discussed. Similarly, access to speeches and presented papers was also very limited. There had been complaints that NGO representatives had also difficulty in meeting their official delegates.

Despite these problems the intensity and quality of information exchange between NGOs and government delegates surpassed previous experiences. The NGO community was not only a lobbying force but as a transnational body; it was also a group being lobbied by governments. Organizing NGO briefing sessions, various governments tried to get their messages across and win supporters from among NGO representatives.

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Some of the major points, the respective caucuses actively lobbied for, were:

- inclusion of 'new and additional resources' instead of just 'adequate resources';
- recognition and improvement of women's unpaid labor and its inclusion in the national economics statistics;
- decriminalization of abortion;
- respect for the property and intellectual rights of women, with particular focus on women and environment issue;
- promotion of the rights of the child;
- respect to the sexual and reproductive rights of women;
- inclusion of government commitments in the final Conference report as an annex;
- formulation of a document/declaration clearly stating these concerns.

In order to show that the Fourth World Conference on women was a conference of commitments, a banner was unfurled in one of the busiest corridors of the Conference center during a press event. The event was organized with the aim of publicizing the various issues of the Conference.

Although the Conference was against the official recording of government commitments, a special committee composed of NGO representatives scanned the speeches of delegates and produced a list of commitments which were recorded on a score board. Out of 150 statements made on September 11, 65 speakers had made commitments. NGO representatives were then asked to independently evaluate the validity of the commitments made by their respective countries. A few delegates reported that the commitments looked admirable on paper but in reality did not meet their expectations. Despite the absence of major commitments, some maintained that compared to other UN conferences, Beijing had witnessed more specific pledges by governments.

The implementation of the Platform for Action was another major interest of the NGO community during the Conference. The daily recordings of commitments made by governments was put up on score board. It was planned to be used as a tool by which NGOs could hold governments accountable. Accordingly the Implementation and Follow up caucuses tried to come up with viable strategies which would ensure the realization of the PFA by governments and also determine the role of NGOs in the implementation process.

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NGOs lobbied for the adoption of their declaration, by government delegates, as an alternative to the one drafted by government delegates themselves. They considered the latter's declaration to be lengthy and unfocused thereby unable to reflect the social and economic justice issues which are crucial to women. Although the NGOs were unsuccessful in their attempt, they had rallied support from groups like the European Union (EU).

Some NGOs' held distinct positions on various matters. Nonetheless the general view upheld by the majority of the NGO community was, support for developing countries. For instance, they lobbied successfully for the inclusion of 'multilateral debt' and supported the need for governments mobilization for new and additional resources which will ensure the implementation of the PFA.

The acknowledgement of the negative impacts of Structural Adjustment Programs and the improved languages on the need to account unremunerated work of women were also considered other areas of success.

During a meeting held with the World Bank President, the NGO community presented a petition signed by more than 1000 NGO representatives, summoning the World Bank to be accountable for poor women and addressing the poverty agenda effectively.

In general, the NGO representatives were pushing for firm, clear and committed actions rather than vague conditions. They struggled hard to maintain, and in some cases, to go beyond the languages adopted at previous UN fora such as those held in Rio, Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen. Together with government delegates, NGOs have tried hard to advance the strongly voiced conviction that women's rights are human rights.

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# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

*By Wz. Kibre Dawit*

This paper will address some of the issues on economic empowerment of women. With regard to global and regional concerns raised and discussed at the NGO Forum the paper will focus on how these concerns affect Ethiopia. Furthermore recommendations on how to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Ethiopian context will be given. This will hopefully invite discussions and lead to the formulation of strategies.

Taking a brief look at the economic picture of Africa with reference to 'Women and the Economy', it is stated that:

> *"In most parts of the world, women are virtually absent from or are poorly represented in economic decision-making, including the formulation of financial, monetary, commercial and other economic policies, as well as in tax systems and rules governing pay."* ***Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Chapter IV, Strategic Objectives and Actions.***

It is often within the framework of such policies that individual men and women make their decisions, inter alia, on how to divide their time between remunerated and unremunerated work. Thus the actual development of the policies of economic structure has a direct impact on women's and men's access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently the extent of equality between them at the individual, family and society levels as a whole.

It is under such negative circumstances that Africa is to restructure its economy and compete in the globalized economic systems.

## 1. The Debt Crisis

In 1994, the total debt stock for Africa as a whole was US$ 313 billion, representing 234% of the value of exports and 83% of the GDP. The corresponding figures for Sub-Saharan Africa countries were US$ 211 billion, which is equivalent to a staggering 255% of the export earnings. This debt burden is the heaviest in the world.

Eighty percent of the World Bank's "severely indebted low income countries" (SILICS) are in Africa, south of the Sahara.

Debt service obligations with respect to multi-lateral debt, increased from 8% in 1980 to 20% in 1994, as access to commercial sources became more difficult for many African countries. Similarly debt service obligations to bilateral creditors rose from 14% in 1980

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to approximately 24% in 1994. Spending on debt service in Sub-Saharan Africa is now on the average, higher than total public spending on education and health combined. On a per capita basis, this accounts for US$ 43 as compared US$ 35 on education and health. Such situations have given rise to unsustainable conditions in some African countries, e.g. it has contributed to an increasing ***poverty*** and ***unemployment*** rate which has diverted huge resources away from investment in development endeavors. It has led to serious economic contractions. (There have consequently been many proposals and initiatives to confront the debt crisis which range from outright cancellation to rescheduling and to buy-back, etc.)

## 2. Trade and Commodities Issues

Africa today has lost half of its export market in the world market due to globalization and 50% of its market penetration. It holds only 1% of the total world trade of this, only 5% of its export is in manufactured goods.

It is generally believed that if present trends in trade and commodities issues persist, Africa will be the only continent that will lose out of world trade as a result of the implementation of the Uruguay Round - The General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT). African countries are primarily producers and thus will not be able to take advantage of the expansion of trade in manufacturing.

Low commodity prices are set by buyers in developing countries. Commodity producers, which are mostly women, do not get appropriate prices for their labor and output. Thus, even if a country produces in abundance the price it earns will still be meager affecting the income level of producers and the nation as well. The insufficient income contributes to only 1% of world trade.

Thus to avert the danger of Africa's marginalization from the new world trade order, steps that ensure enhancement of prospects for Africa's commodities in world markets have to be taken. Africa has to negotiate new terms for its chief commodities.

## 3. The Information Technology Revolution

There are revolutionary advances occurring globally, in information technology. Africa risks being left out of this global trend and left to poverty and deprivation.

Africa should therefore be encouraged to participate in and benefit from this revolution making modern, scientific and technological information accessable to the rural sector. Sustainable human development, international co-operation and mutual support are examples of technological information that the rural sector can benefit from.

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## 4. Structural Adjustment Programs

According to some data, the poverty rate of Africa is on the rise and affecting the population, especially women. Women which are the most seriously affected sector of the population are worse off today than they were a decade ago when **Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)**, which with the encouragement of the World Bank and the IMF, became widespread. SAP were formulated with the aim of increasing investment and savings rates, improving export performances, diminishing debts, creating jobs, bringing about sustainable growth and improving the productive capacity of the poor particularly women. However this program has failed to achieve its intended results in Africa.

SAPs have required that 36 Sub-Saharan African countries, where more than half the population lives in absolute poverty - decrease their domestic consumption and shift to production of cash crops for export. To cut down government spending, state-owned companies and several state-owned services have been privatized. Civil services have drastically dwindled and health and education expenditure has been cut back and restructured. Resources, including credit services have been used by the export sector, while taxes and regulation of export production and marketing have been diminished.

Currency devaluation was a measure taken to reduce export prices for buyers on the international market. The removal of protective tariffs and marketing boards was also believed to increase efficiency and improve market competition.

However these adjustment measures have had the combined effect of diminishing women's access to a wide array of productive and social resources. The further impoverishment of African women has been parallelled by a sharp increase in their multiple responsibilities for production and survival of the family and community. (Source: The Development Gap, "The Ignored Cost of Adjustment", Women under SAPs in Africa)

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## 5. What Has Been The Result Of The External Factors ?

The economic order has imposed severe constraint on states and thus the international capital supported by the World Bank, IMF, Multinational Corporations and the Northern countries need a fundamental process of restructuring.

***Transformation of development*** which is the power to change the economic and political process, is needed in order to address the global crisis. The current global model of economic growth does not create a conducive environment for the elimination of poverty, the creation of productive employment, or the promotion of social integration. It places the interests of international capital before that of people. This structure, including the structure of gender relations, perpetuates poverty, and exploits women by

restricting their access to paid employment, be it within the household or outside.

Recent UN conferences have repeatedly called for improved economic growth which will finance strategies for bringing about sustainability and equity. However, no mention is made of the patterns of effects of growth, no question of who would benefit and who would bear the cost of such growth is raised. According to Dawn:

> *"Over the last fifteen years, the crisis of unsustainability and inequality has deepened. Whilst the volume of world trade has been on the increase, this has not brought about the promised increase in the welfare of peoples on the whole. In fact poverty eradication has slowed down significantly since the mid-1980's so that the absolute number of people living below the poverty line of US$ 370 has increased by 20% over the period 1985-1993, and the number of people living in absolute poverty on a yearly income of less than US$ 300 has also increased. Furthermore, while poverty had previously been considered primarily a rural phenomenon, the trend towards the end of 1980s is that there is growing impoverishment even among the urban population, particularly in the context of massive rural-urban migration."*

While governments continue to be preoccupied with economic growth, ecological and social crises are deepening, resource depletion is increasing and the gap between rich and poor is widening.

1.3 billion people live in absolute poverty, of which 70% are women. Women world-wide produce half the world's food, but own only 1% of the world's land. The number of rural women living in poverty has increased by 50% in the last 20 years, compared to 3% for men.

In addition, women represent the highest percentage of unemployed and their access to remunerative work is limited. Female-headed households are also increasing. Women are therefore forced to enter less protected labor in the informal and formal sectors.

So we may ask, ***"Why do women work the hardest and end up as the poorest ? Why has women's work not generated wealth for them ?"***

Dawn's answer to this question is that women do not obtain the full benefit of their own work. Many women work for the benefit of others. This means, several women work on lands that are not owned by them. They manage homes that they do not own. Despite the fact that their role as resource managers has been lauded in the UN Conference on Environment and Development and other similar conferences, the situation of women has hardly improved.

It is with reference to this context that issues on gender, poverty, and sustainable development are raised. It indicates resource loss, dispossession and impoverishment. However maintaining sustainable livelihood in such a degrading environment, is a gender-based challenge. It has more significant effects on women than on men as their resource base of fuel, water and food becomes increasingly depleted.

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Women's poverty thus cannot be understood by using the same conceptual lens employed for viewing the poverty of men. To achieve sustainable and equitable development, women's right over land, resources, and the means of livelihood must be addressed.

The present economic order driven by powerful forces within or outside our countries affect women the most. This has resulted in women's exclusion from economic and political decision-making, at national and international levels.

With regard to market situations this responds only to those who have the capacity to participate. It does not respond to the poor nor can it, in view of technologies that are now being produced, generate jobs. It creates alienation that leads to social disintegration. This adds to the increasing problems affecting women which are a result of a model of development characterized by increasing poverty, unemployment, alienation, and violence. (Source : Dawn, "Securing our gains and moving forward to the 21st century, 1995).

Women in Africa and all over the world are increasingly becoming aware that the agenda of the World Bank, the IMF and the present economic order is not an agenda that addresses their needs. A major cause of the current crisis is that economic and political institutions are not founded on the realities of situations faced by the poor and the vulnerable. The poor have no secure entitlement to habitat, resource base and livelihood. Therefore, there needs to be more representation of women at all levels of decision-making, such as having more parliamentarians and business executives.

Women must aspire to transform these institutions so that they will serve the needs and priorities of the poorest of the poor, of whom the majority are women. Women want a different world, a world where all human lives matter, where the goal of development is universal human well-being and not the enrichment of only the few people in power. This invites an alternative economic discipline.

With reference to women and poverty, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, under Strategic Objectives and Actions states that the objective is to :

*" Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty".*

***Actions to be taken by government :***

- Analyze the problem of macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, external debt problems, taxation, investment, employment, markets and relevant sectors of the economy from the gender perspective; policies and programs with respect

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to their impact on poverty, on inequality and particularly on women;

- Assess the impact of these problems on family well being, and adjust them so as to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services.

With regard to women's access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions:

- Encourage links between financial institutions and non-governmental organizations and support innovative lending practices, e.g. those that integrate credit with women's services and training especially in the rural sector.

With regard to facilitating women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade:

- Promote and support women's self-employment and the development of small enterprises;

- Strengthen women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men through the support of institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, through non-traditional and mutual credit schemes, and through innovative linkages with financial institutions.

***Actions to be taken by multilateral financial and development institutions:***

These are institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and regional development institutions. In addition, this refers to actions to be taken through bilateral development cooperation:

- Find effective development-oriented and durable solutions to external debt problems in order to finance programs and projects targeted at development and advancement of women,

- Develop techniques of debt conversion which apply to social development programs and projects and which are in conformity with the Platform's priorities. This will be carried out with reference to the terms of debt forgiveness agreed on by December 1994 and which encompasses debt reduction, including cancellation and other debt relief measures;

- Review the impact of structural adjustment programs on social development by means of gender-sensitive social impact assessments and other relevant models. In addition, ensure that these programs are designed in such a way that their negative effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and communities are minimized;

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- Support financial institutions that serve women with low-income, and women who are small and micro-scale entrepreneurs and producers, through provision of capital and/or resources in both the formal and informal sectors.

With regard to saving and credit schemes for women accessed by the help of commercial banks, specialized financial institutions and private sectors:

- Employ credit and savings methodologies that are effective in reaching women in poverty and use methods that are innovative in reducing transaction costs and redefining risk;
- Provide special opportunities for women to borrow, including young women, who lack access to traditional sources of collateral;
- Simplify banking process, for example reducing deposit to the minimum and simplifying other requirements for opening bank accounts;
- Review rules and procedures of formal national and international financial institutions that are not in line with the Grameen Bank prototypes, which provides credit facilities to rural women.

***Actions to be taken by national and international NGOs and women's groups:***

- Engage in lobbying and establish monitoring mechanisms and other relevant activities which ensure implementation of the recommendation on poverty eradication as outlined in the Platform for Action and which aims at ensuring accountability of the state and private sectors;
- Give serious consideration to women's needs when disseminating market, trade and resource information and provide appropriate training for women in these fields.

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# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT TOWARDS ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY

*By Wz. Bayush Tsegaye and*
*Dr. Mare Tsega*

## Introduction

Ethiopia is a country where more than 85% of the population earn its livelihood through agriculture. The great majority of these are subsistence producers whose primary concern is meeting the immediate needs of their families rather than maximizing their profit. Hence, none of them specialize in growing a particular crop. Thus peasant farm holdings are small in size averaging approximately to two hectares and are characterized by complex crop diversity.

Traditional farmers (women and men) in Ethiopia thorough the practice of diversified production have developed various forms of multiple cropping patterns to make use of the diverse micro-environments. Diversification enables the farmers to avoid risks, across space and time and also provides them with multiple output which meets their various needs i.e. food, fodder for livestock, fuel wood, fiber for making clothes, construction materials (houses, fences, small implements), medicine and spices.

Hence, diversity is crucial for small-scale farmers to ensure food and livelihood security. As a result farmers in the traditional sector rely on landraces that are genetically heterogenous and, can withstand adverse growing conditions due to their wide range adaption.

Landraces are heterogenous plants developed and maintained by adjusting to the changes in growing conditions and meeting the socio-economic as well as agro-ecological conditions.

However, landraces are under serious threat and at times facing irreversible losses mainly due to changes in land use (expansion of large scale commercial farms), replacement by newly introduced high yielding varieties and accompanying technological packages (including chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, etc) and drought.

Though the high input packages have the potential to boost production in the short-run, provided that growing conditions are fairly optimal, they create serious challenges to sustain production in the long-run. The high input varieties generally perform poorly when encountering adverse growing conditions such as environmental stresses, pest or disease incidence.

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Therefore, there is an urgent and pressing need for concerted action in genetic resource conservation by all concerned groups i.e. scientists, policy makers, farmers and the public at large. In this regard, it is also equally important to launch a correspondingly wide spread awareness program on the value and status of plant genetic resources. In addition it is equally important to create awareness of the vital role women play in the conservation and utilization of these invaluable resources.

## Features of Women's Life in Rural Ethiopia

Rural women in Ethiopia have multiple responsibilities i.e. being a mother (reproducer of society), producing food and earning the income of the family. The responsibilities she carries as a mother include child care, cooking for the family, processing grain (grinding), fetching water and fire wood, cleaning and washing, milking cows and processing the milk, cleaning barns, etc.
These task are laborious and back-breaking characterized by drudgeries in the level of technology involved.

As the income earner, women are involved in activities like brewing local drinks, spinning cotton or wool, weaving assortment of baskets, petty-trading (vegetables, dairy products) and raising few chicken.

Women also bear the burden of attending social obligations like taking care of the elderly, visiting the sick in the neighborhood and attending to a sick member of the family, attending social occasions such as religious festivals, wedding ceremonies and funerals etc. Although these take much of their time and add to the strain they face, women are often considered as an extension of the household duties.

Fulfilling all these, women in addition play an active role in food production. They take part in various farm operations such as cleaning fields, manuring, planting, weeding, harvesting, preparing the threshing ground, threshing, seed cleaning, storage (which includes construction and repair of storage facilities) and marketing of grains. It should however be noted that these activities are not the sole responsibilities of women. Their participation in some of these activities like weeding and harvesting is higher and these are more labor demanding and at times involve hired labor.

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## How Far is Women's Role in Food Production Recognized?

Overall, women's role in food production is not fully understood and often neglected as marginal.
The main reasons for this are:

- although they perform demanding tasks, what women do is non-

remunerated;

- the task of plowing is wrongly thought as the main part of agricultural production and women usually do not take part in plowing by oxen;
- the cultural norm recognizes only men as household heads and thus the right person to speak on behalf of the family;
- while women are confined to household chores, public forums are considered as men's domain. Hence, women are shy to speak in public and not open to strangers;
- women themselves do not consider the importance of their role and thus do not make the effort in saying much about it. Some think that this is a well known fact and needs no further explanation.

Although in recent years women's contribution to agriculture has been increasingly and being recognized, their participation and the level of poverty they are found in is still difficult to quantify as there is no statistical data which is aggregated with gender issues.

It has been requested by women all over the world that women's unpaid work be considered in the **Gross National Product (GNP)** of a country starting from the last 10 years. In Beijing, more than 900 NGOs representing millions of women worldwide signed a petition that summoned governments to quantify and value the contribution of women's unpaid labor in agriculture, food production, reproduction and household tasks and include it in the GNP and other economic statistics. According to the United Nations Development Project (UNDP), Human Development Report 1995, women's contribution in this respect accounts for 11 trillion US Dollars a year.

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## Women's Role in Food Security

Agriculture is essential to both rural and urban development, and food is a fundamental prerequisite for human and social development. The goals of food and agriculture policies should be to enhance food security, to provide safe, healthy, nutritious and affordable food for all people and to provide adequate income for farmers in order to continue production, and protect the quality and productivity of the rural community and natural resource base.

Further, food sovereignty gives priority to the production of food for domestic consumption over food or other products for trade. It gives priority to locally produced foods and local genetic diversity.

Food security is defined in its most basic from as access by all people at all times, regardless of natural or man-made famines, to food for a healthy life. Food security is best assured where production of local food is a priority and where dependence on imported food is kept to a minimum.

Food self-sufficiency/security is a critical area of concern these days as there are serious deficits and the country is importing large volumes of food grain to fill the gaps created.

The simple solution to these problems is extending area that can be cultivated or using high yield varieties and associated input packages to boost production. However these methods are impractical particularly in a country like Ethiopia, because the agro-ecological conditions are so diverse, farms are so fragmented, farmers rely on rainfall for crop production and the great majority of farmers live in marginal areas.

The unprecedented effects of high technological inputs are crop failures in cases of adversities, replacement of traditional landrace seeds and challenges farmers face in sustaining production through mono-crop (Monocrop culture is usually encouraged at the expense of food security). The high input package creates dependency on external input supply for which prices are continually rising whereas the selling prices of agricultural products are lower. Chemical inputs bring about serious environmental problems ranging from soil degradation, (due to monoculture) to detrimental effects on human beings, livestock, birds and even the smaliest soil micro-organisms thereby disturbing the natural ecosystem balance.

Rural women in Ethiopia constitute half the population, thus, represent a substantial proportion of both producers and consumers. Traditionally, women farmers have particular responsibilities when it comes to food security at household level. After harvest, the produce is sub-divided and separately stored for seed, consumption and sale. The type of storage facility varies depending on the purpose of storage and volume of harvest. Those to be saved for seed are given special attention and are kept in the best available storage facility. The stores are usually sealed air-tight ensuring safety until the seeds are withdrawn for planting.

The time of storage varies from one season to well over a year or more. Women know how and where to store the seeds so that they would not loose viability quickly. They also have developed different ways of traditional seed treatment measures which enables them to cope with problems encountered during storage. Besides keeping viable seeds, good storage helps to lessen consumption for security purpose and bridge gaps in times of anticipated or sudden disaster.

Women farmers in Ethiopia have special wisdom in coping with adverse production situation or serious natural calamities. In cases of severe drought, for instance, families are forced to leave their villages and go elsewhere. It has been a common practice in central and northern parts of the country to bury seeds in pits and/or rock-hewn mortars

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before leaving. When the drought period is over, survivors return to resume production using these seeds. This clearly indicates how farmers value landraces (their own seeds) as a dependable source of planting material and the sacrifices they pay to save their seeds.

In situations of food deficit, the prime victims are women. The mother is responsible to ration the available stock to sustain her family as long as she can. In cases of serious shortages, she gives priority to her husband and children in sharing the meager resource she has. If situations get worse, the husband is the first to leave so as to rescue his life abandoning his wife, children and elderly members of the family.

Therefore, food security and sustainable food production is a critical area of concern with regard to rural women. Efforts should be made towards improving women's living conditions or livelihood. Ensuring reliable and abundant food supply for the long run by focussing on local capacity building will save the lives of many women who live in marginal areas making bare subsistence. These are the most vulnerable groups and the effects of any environmental hazards like a prolonged drought are manifolds.

In this respect, policy makers should take into consideration the existing realities and devise agricultural development strategies that correspond to resource capabilities and technical competence of the country. These strategies should enable maximum utilize of available natural resources. Experiences in the past have shown that what has been achieved in the North can not be applied in the South and necessarily guarantee positive results, for very obvious reasons. A good example is the 'Green Revolution' of the 1970's.

Even though the great majority of women farmers do not read and write, they possess tremendous wealth of knowledge which they develop from what they learn from society and enrich further with their own hands-on experience.

Women farmers are under continuous experimentation concerning the adaption, growth performance and utilization of different crops they grow. They also play a vital role in the generation and maintenance of crop genetic diversity. The indigenous knowledge of women, therefore, represents a valuable resource to be tapped so as to come up with a viable and ecologically sound agricultural production alternatives. It should be noted that any development effort that does not involve women's participation, is a futile exercise.

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### The Challenges Women Farmers Face or Factors That Limit Their Contribution

Some of the major factors that seriously influence women's contribution in the production process are:

1. *Lack of land ownership*

Women are landless laborers and are marginalized further during divorce. There was no legal provision protecting their rights until the new policy on women issues was ratified in 1993. The social norms, however, still remain to be discriminatory and efforts need to be put forward in implementing this policy.

2. *Lack of access to credit services*

Women do not have the opportunity to get credit from formal institutions as they can not offer collateral. Many of them secure loans from informal institutions known as "equib", which is a common cultural system to pool resources. "Equib' is vital particularly for the poorest members of society as it could be arranged with only a few volunteers and doesn't involve interest payment.

3. *Absence of child care centers*

Women are forced to work long hours every day and child care has to be done side by side with their daily household routines. They never have time to rest even while nursing their children. Women work for 13-15 hours a day.

4. *Inadequate access to health services*

Even though women face many health complications resulting mainly from early marriage and malnutrition, health services are generally inadequate and the rates of child and mother mortality are very high. The few health centers available are inaccessible for the great majority of women in rural areas

5. *Harmful traditional practices*

Traditional medical practitioners and herbalists play vital roles in rural societies which do not have the access to even primary health care services. Nevertheless, some of the traditional practices performed as part of socialization process have serious impacts on women's health and lives. Examples of these include: circumcision, infibulation, genital mutilation, early marriage, unspaced child bearing and food taboos.

6. *Inadequate access to education facilities*

Almost all rural women never have the chance to go to formal schools. Aside from the inaccessibility, families prefer to educate their sons to their daughters. In many farming communities, educating a girl is considered as wasted investment. Due to the fact that a girl upon marriage will be supported by the family of her husband, support by her own family is considered as a waste. On

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the other hand sons are more privileged as they bring into the family a helping hand i.e. their wives.

7. *Lack of access to information*

Since men are recognized as household heads, a number of agricultural extension and training services are directed towards them. Information is crucial, yet it is a neglected aspect in many instances. Women household heads have multiple responsibilities in a society but do not have conducive environments that encourages their participation.

**Summary**

Ten years have passed and a world of changes has occurred since the Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi. Here the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000 was adopted.

There have been so many political and economic changes in these years. Despite the steps taken forward, there are still many miles to go ahead. It is necessary to speed up the process of eradicating the obstacles hindering women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life.

Modest, efforts have been made by various NGOs to alleviate the work burdens of women i.e. by digging water wells, developing natural springs, planting flour mills, establishing primary health care centers, building rural feeder roads, etc. Nevertheless, the great majority of women still live in dismal conditions of poverty.

The cultural norms in rural societies of Ethiopia put less value on women's education. The socialization process focusses on defining stereotyped roles i.e. limiting women's roles to that of a wife, a mother and a housekeeper and promoting ideas and norms reinforcing these.

Education is the key to progress and improvement to the lives of girls and women at all stages. It increases their knowledge and understanding of themselves and their environment, and at the same time dispels the myths and traditions which are at the root of gender discrimination.

According to UNDP 1990 estimate, 60% and 65% of the urban and rural population respectively, live below poverty line. From among these, women are the prime victims of natural and man-made calamities.

The recurrent droughts and wars that were prevalent in the country became cause for the rise of hundreds of destitute, abandoned children, orphans, disabled person, female-headed households, etc. who are unable to support themselves and their families. Some

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data show that women and children living in temporary shelters account for more than 70% of the displaced people.

Evidence from Africa indicates that poverty, population growth and environmental degradation are inextricably intertwined. Poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation and is compounded by scarcity and depletion of resources for the initiation, stimulation and promotion of sustainable development for a growing population. In the absence of alternative means of livelihood, poor women exploit the natural resources in order to survive, though they know that such mismanagement will results in environmental degradation.

The realities of women in poverty are specific, complex, diverse and dynamic. Beyond income poverty are other dimensions of disadvantages, deprivations and ill-beings experienced by women such as social discrimination, isolation, physical disability, vulnerability and deprivation.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) initiated a 20 year program which would balance people and resources. The Plan asserts that changes in consumption and production patterns will allow equitable and free use of resources, while stabilizing population growth and eradicating poverty.

Although poverty affects households as a whole, because of gender division of labor and responsibilities, women bear a disproportionate burden in which they attempt to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity. Poverty is particularly acute in the lives of rural women.

Overall, women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services, and minimal participation in decision making process. The productive capacity of women needs to be strengthened through access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, education, health care and recognized status in the household.

Women contribute to the economy and combat poverty through both remunerated and non-remunerated work at home, in the community and in the work place. The empowerment of women, therefore, is of significant importance in the eradication of poverty.

From experience, it has been learnt that efforts made in isolation from the above mentioned facts, can not solve the problem of women. Therefore, NGOs working in different areas need to formulate strategies on activities so as to enhance the betterment of women's groups. To do so they need to work with women by addressing their felt-needs, encouraging them to make their voices heard, recognizing their contributions and creating functional links with other institutions/organizations of similar interest. A

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concerted action of NGOs and government bodies is essential to complement each other and bring about meaningful change in women's life.

The Beijing Declaration and Global Platform for Action listed the following actions to be taken by national and international, non-government organizations and women's groups.

a. Mobilize resources in the aim of improving the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs directed towards the poorest and most disadvantaged groups of women. These groups are rural and indigenous women, female household heads, young women and older women, refugee and migrant women, and women with disabilities. These programs should recognize that social development is primarily the responsibility of governments;

b. Engage in lobbying and establish monitoring mechanism and other relevant activities to ensure implementation of the recommendations on poverty eradication (as outlined in the Platform for Action) aimed at ensuring accountability from the State and private sectors;

c. Include women with diverse needs, in various activities and recognize youth organizations which are increasingly becoming effective partners in development programs;

d. Participate in the development of comprehensive national strategies in improving health, education and social services so that girls and women of all ages living in poverty have full access to such services. This can be accomplished in cooperation with government and private sectors. Seek funding to secure access to services with a gender perspective and to extend those services so they can reach rural and remote areas that are not covered by government institutions;

e. Contribute to the development of educational and training/retraining policies which will enable women to acquire wide range of skills in meeting new demands. This can be accomplished in cooperation with governments, employers, other social partners and relevant parties,

f. Protect women's rights fully and encourage equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and land ownership, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies.

In line with the Platform for Action, key questions like:

- what should be the role of women in achieving food security ?
- what are the major problems women face in securing food ? and
- what should be the means for alleviating these problems?

should be answered.

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# WOMEN AND HEALTH

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## I. Introduction

According to the census of 1994, Ethiopia has a total of 42,616,876 people. Of these almost 50% form the women population. Children less than five years old and women at child bearing age (15-49) years, form 39.2 per cent of the total population (1984 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia. Analytical Report at National Level, 1991). Most health problems in least developed countries like Ethiopia, are communicable diseases transmitted through poor environmental sanitation, poor nutritional status, low socio-economic condition, harmful traditional practices etc.

Mothers at child bearing age and children less than five years form an important segment of the population seriously affected by these factors.

Past records indicate that diarrhoea is one of the major diseases affecting children below five years old in Ethiopia. In many parts of the world including Ethiopia, infection of diarrhoea causes pathogenic organism and poor community hygiene. The rise for such problems is mainly due to lack of education, low income of families and poor access to markets and public goods. These pockets of poverty and disease result in high levels of morbidity and mortality.

Today in most areas of North America and Europe, improvements of water and fecal disposal devices have been credited with improvements in the health status of the population. However most parts of the world still lack adequate sanitation and hygiene resources. In areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America contact with faecal material is unavoidable and safe adequate water supply is scarce.

Even though the provision of water supplies and the construction of latrines have been made possible in some places, the population often has neither the skill nor the resources to maintain them. Many latrines have been constructed for people that have no understanding of their use. because they are not educated in its application as they are built. These and other additional factors become causes for the poor health of children.

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Malnutrition accounts for another serious health problem with regard to children. In most parts of the country due to poverty, food taboos, harmful traditional practices, ignorance etc. children do not get a balanced diet that ensures their healthy growth. This again contributes significantly to their low immunity in resisting infectious diseases like diarrhoea, TB and others.

In addition low socio-economic conditions of communities contributes to the poor health condition of children and mothers. The unavailability of infrastructures like health centers, education and transportation is also another cause. This has a direct and indirect effect on the health of the community. Shortage of the necessary nutritional materials also contributes to low nutritional status of communities which results in malnutrition of children.

**Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP)** like early marriage, female circumcision, milk-teeth extraction, uvulectomy, other skin cutting practices, food taboos are major threats to the health of children and mothers.

At present a world wide demographic revolution has been occurring. The rise in life expectancy which varies from place to place, is mostly associated with a decrease in infant and child mortality (which is often due to infectious diseases). Improvements as such are also due to improvements in community hygiene, advances in medical technology, coverage of basic medical services, rise in education level and improvement in nutritional status of communities.

To determine future investment strategies in the health sector is important to consider the contribution of the different factors and social sectors in specific ecological settings which have been defined as marginal. In different environments which have varying patterns of disease, economic and community structural development and improvements in any of the sectors mentioned above will be an appropriate cost-effective method of improving health status as measured by life expectancy.

Information gathered on the attitudes of mothers with regard to family planning, HTPs and other factors that jeopardize their health, helps policy makers and planners in designing appropriate educational methods.

One of the serious problems of economic development in least developed countries, is the continual rise of population growth (S.H. Ominde and C.N. Ejiogu in 1972, IRD/Macro International in 1992). A solution to such problems as suggested by different researchers, is the establishment of well designed family planning and well organized MCH programs. The major component of MCH programs is health education for mothers.

Children under five and women at child bearing age who make up the majority of the population in least developed countries, need special care services for their well being (International Programs Population Reference Bureaus, 1991). Birth spacing,

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contraceptive use, avoiding early marriage are the common components of family planning programs that have to be initiated to decrease fertility and improve the health of mothers and children (Macro International Inc., 1993).

Several studies indicate that education for women is strongly associated with lower fertility rate and low risks of HTPs. This indicates the importance of health education for mothers. The majority of women in our country especially in rural areas are illiterate and thus ignorant about the use of contraceptive. They are more exposed to HTP.

Therefore parallel to the establishment of various infrastructures, health education for mothers plays an important role in developmental programs. Assessing different health education strategies facilitates planning for the implementation.

The issue of women and health covers a vast area. However this paper deals with basically the relation of reproductive health with HTPs and presents a summary of the strategies and plan of action recommended at the Beijing Conference.

## II. Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Related Traditional Practices

### 2.1 Family Planning:

The issues of population is one that has raised several discussions over the centuries. Our ancestors had understood that limiting the growth of population could be achieved in only two possible means: **emigration** of the population and **lowering the fertility rate.** Confucius and other Chinese philosophers had set themselves the task of solving the problem of the ideal proportion between the earth and population.

As a means of decreasing population growth contraceptive methods have been used since ancient times. An Egyptian writing of 4000 years ago indicates that a cloth pad soaked in arabic gum was inserted into the vagina to serve as a contraceptive. Abstention from sexual intercourse during marriage, coitus interruptus, sue of certain plant extracts, and breast feeding were other methods used as population reduction methods. Certain practices such as abortion and child massacres have also been documented as being used.

History gives quite a number of examples that indicate man has always made efforts in controlling his fertility. In certain societies this has been achieved through sexual taboos. In others, extracts of plants with contraceptive effects have been use. Elsewhere pads of herbs placed in the neck of the uterus as an obstructing or washing after coitus or vaginal douche were methods used.

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Coitus interruptus is a traditional method of contraception applied by many societies and was regarded as an integral part of the social behavior of couples.

Rhythm method and abstinence were also well applied then. Couples carried out abortion from early times on as an alternative in case of failure of contraceptive methods. Induced abortion was a means which has been used to end unwanted pregnancy. Induced abortion was believed to have certain negative consequences on women, possibly causing secondary sterility.

## Contraception in Africa

Historically, the use of contraceptive methods in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, has been very low. However, substantial increases in the use of contraception over time have been recorded in Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe according to the data from DHA (1993). In 1977-1978, contraceptive use for Kenya was very low, with only 5.6 percent of women using it. About one fourth of the methods used were traditional methods such as periodic abstinence or rhythm and withdrawal.

As in many regions of the world contraceptive methods was in more use by women who living in urban areas, and also among the well educated (women who has schooling for more than eight years) which accounted for 37.9 percent 8 years schooling.

*1. Breast-feeding*

The practices of breast-feeding and sexual abstinence after the birth of a child reduces women's chance of becoming pregnant. Breat-feeding of long durations delays the return of women's normal pattern of ovulation.

Cultural norms often prescribe limiting sexual relations after birth. In Sub-Saharan countries, both these practices are utilized and are seen as necessary in protecting the health of the child and the mother.

In Kenya the average duration of breast-feeding was 17.3 months, and the average duration of sexual abstinence was 3.9 months (1977-1978).

*2. Abortion*

Evidence that abortion has been practiced in early times in most countries of Sub-Saharan Africa is non existent. However, Kenyatta Hospital in Nairobi in the late 1970s and early 1980s recorded 2,000 to 3,000 and about 30-60 women a day, or 10,000 women a year who were admitted to the hospital for abortion. In 1989 it was also noted that 1,100 women were treated for abortion complications and four other women for attempting abortion.

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3. *Sexual Abstinence*

In Africa fertility rate has been controlled by social pressure against premarital sex and practice of sexual abstinence that lead to lengthy lactational menorrhea. Scientists estimate that fertility rate in Africa would increase by 72 percent if fertility-inhibiting methods such as breast-feeding and postpartum abstinence are removed.

A study conducted by DHS in Sub-Sahara countries between 1980 and 1986, showed that at least half of the current users of contraceptive methods, in five of the twelve countries, relied on traditional methods such as withdrawal and rhythm. There is little evidence of the effectiveness of such methods. What is known is that they are much less effective than modern methods.

Of the twelve countries only two showed regular use of contraceptive methods i.e. a rate of more that 30 percent. Zimbabwe 36 percent modern and 43 percent all methods combined and Botswana 32 percent modern, 33 percent all methods combined. Kenya showed the next highest rate with 18 percent modern use 27 percent all methods combined. At the time of the survey no other DHA country in Africa had even six percent of women using modern contraceptives.

## 2.2 Other Traditional Practices Related To Reproductive Health

*(i) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)*

Genital and sexual mutilation of women and girls have been practiced by societies of Africa and Middle East for many centuries. It is estimated that around 110 million women and girls are affected by these practice.

There are three different kinds of FGM:

a. **Sunna Circumcision**: removal of the prepuce and the tip of the clitoris (mildest form).

b. **Excision/Clitoridectomy**: removal of the clitoris and often adjacent parts including the labia minora and sometimes all exterior genitalia. Excision is the most frequent operation.

c. **Infibulation**: after the removal of the clitoris and labia minora as well as parts of the labia majora, then the two sides of the vulva are closed over the vagina. This is done by hold together the bleeding sides of the labia majora with catgut. An opening is created by inserting a splinter of wood to allow urination and later menstrual period.

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**Complications Arising from FGM:**

The Hosten(s) report describes that according to facts from medical literature and from midwives and physicians of Africa, the followings damages are results of FGM:

Immediate results: include primary fatalities resulting from hemorrhage, shock (due to blood loss) pain, infection of the wound, septicemia, tetanus, which is fatal, retention of urine immediately followed by the operation trauma to adjutant tissues (the rectum and urethra).

Long range results: urinary problems due to chronic infection, which also may lead to infertility, difficulty in passing urine as well as menstrual blood and painful menstruation. Excision can also result in an almost complete closing of the vagina by the adherence of the adhesion wound. Such problems are commonly reported in west Africa. Lack of orgasm has also been reported.

**Geographical Distribution of FGM**

Excision: is practiced on broad areas across Africa. For example it is practiced in East Africa i.e. in Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania. In the Western coast, from Sierra Leone to Mauritania and in all countries in between, including Nigeria, the practices is widely spread.

Infibulation: is practiced on all females, almost without exception in Somalia and wherever Somalians live (Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti). Infibulation is also performed throughout the upper Nile Valley, including Southern Egypt, in Eritrea along the Red sea coast.

Proportion of Women and Girls Affected by FGM in Africa

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| ESTIMATE: TOTAL NUMBER OF GIRLS AND WOMEN MUTILATED IN AFRICA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Countries with large % of mutilation | Total population in millions | Number of Women (50% of Total) | Percentage of Mutilated Women | Estimate Total in Millions |
| East Africa | | | | |
| Egypt | 54.7 | 27.35 | 50% | 13.675 |
| Sudan | 25.2 | 12.6 | 80% | 10.080 |
| Somalia | 8.4 | 4.2 | 98% | 4.116 |
| Djibouti | 0.4 | 0.2 | 98% | 0.196 |
| Ethiopia | 51.7 | 25.85 | 90% | 23.265 |
| Kenya | 24.6 | 12.3 | 50% | 6.150 |
| | 165.0 | 82.50 | | 57.482 (mill) |

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| Countries with large % of Mutilation | Total Population In Millions | Number of Women (50% of Total) | Percent of Mutilated Women | Estimate Total in Millions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| West and Central Africa | | | | |
| Mali | 118.8 | 59.4 | 50% | 29.700 |
| Burkina Faso | 8.1 | 4.05 | 75% | 3.037 |
| Senegal | 9.1 | 4.55 | 70% | 3.185 |
| Cota D'Ivoire | 7.4 | 3.7 | 50% | 1.850 |
| Sierra Leone | 12.6 | 6.3 | 60% | 3.780 |
| Guinea | 4.2 | 2.1 | 80% | 1.680 |
| Liberia | 7.3 | 3.65 | 60% | 0.780 |
| Togo | 2.6 | 1.3 | 50% | 2.190 |
| Benin | 3.7 | 1.85 | 60% | 0.780 |
| Chad | 4.7 | 2.35 | 50% | 1.175 |
| Gambia | 5.0 | 2.5 | 60% | 1.500 |
| Central Africa | 0.9 | 0.45 | 60% | 0.27 |
| Ghana | 2.9 | 1.45 | 50% | 0.725 |
| | 15.0 | 7.5 | 30% | 2.25 |
| | 202.3 | 101.15 | | 53.047 (mil |

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### 2.3 Implications of Traditional Practices on Reproductive Health:

Various information show that unspaced child bearing, early childhood marriage and HTPs like FGM are significant factors contributing to high morbidity and mortality rates of mothers and children in African, South of the Sahara.

Poverty, ignorance (lack of basic education and lack of information about "modern" life styles) and lack of education for women and their low status (i.e. participation in gainful employment outside the home), are basically contributing factors which account for the wide spread of HTPs in Africa.

In countries where information is available, the likelihood of departing from HTPs and the tendency to shift to a comparatively more beneficial practices is observed.

## III. The ICPD Programme of Action and Traditional Practices

The **International Conference on Population and development (ICPD)**, was held in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994. This Conference was attended by high level government delegations from all over the world. A consensus was reached on most of the issues raised and issues that addressed people in different cultural contexts and religious beliefs. ICPD defined the reproductive system: its functions and processes. It stated that people have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Reproductive rights embrace human rights that are already recognized by the international human rights document and other relevant UN consensus documents. These rights recognize the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly, the number, spacing and timing of their children. It recognizes the right to obtain information and thereby to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health.

Contraception is a right, the right of individuals and couples to decide on the number of children and timing of having them. Today science has made great progress whereby effective methods of contraception exist and are generally popularized and available for all. Contraceptive methods continue to be improved and options expanded.

As opposed to traditional methods of birth control, modern methods include oral contraceptives, intrauterine devices (IUDS), female and male sterilization, injectable, subdermal implants, condoms, diaphragms and spermcides.

Recommendations adopted at the Cairo Conference address fundamental issues, such as the importance of female education, the right to have access to reproductive health services of all kind, the importance of improving the status of women, etc. The ICPD in addition produced a document on resource requirements in implementing the recommendations.

Africa has always been faced with numerous problems. Priorities of the various governments often differ

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and as such there had never been a top priority. In addition, the per capital allocation of resou implement relevant programs, is not enough to make issues like the right to reproductive health ser reality for most people.

In Ethiopia more than 50 percent of the population does not have access to any kind of modern services, and to a large extent depends on tradition means. Due to an absence of infrastructure the s true for education.

Nevertheless an important task remains: each country should develop specific priorities and goals and up sound strategies and programs of actions which will address those priorities and achieve intended within a given time frame. This should be accomplished in line with available resources and c background.

## IV. Strategies and Actions to be taken

The strategies and actions to be implemented and as decided at the Beijing Conference are summari follows:

1) increase women's access, throughout their life cycle, to appropriate, affordable and quality healt information and related services;

- eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and meet the health needs of gi women of all ages.
- formulate legislation and polices on health, which address the multiple role responsibilities of women;
- design and implement, in cooperation with women and community based organiz strategies that encourage the establishment of health services for rural women and p broad range health -care services;
- provide more accessible, available and affordable primary health care services of high q including sexual and productive health care, family planning information, and p maternal and emergency obstetric care (as agreed in the programme of action at the
- take appropriate measures in eliminating harmful, medically unnecessary or coercive m interventions;
- recognize and accordingly take appropriate measures against unsafe abortion as a major health concern.

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2) strengthen preventive programs that promote women's health:

- build necessary water supplies, latrines to ensure safe environmental condition for women;
- provide continuous health education for women in order to protect themselves and their children from HTPs;

3) undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues:

- strengthen women with alternative employment opportunities so as to avoid prostitution that has a direct impact on sexually transmitted diseases.
- give health education to women in order to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease

4) promote research and disseminate of information on women's health issues;

5) increase resources for and monitor follow-up reports on women's health.

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# WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT

*By Wz. Mulumbet Merhatsedik*
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Several years have elapsed since the issue of women and environment came to the limelight in the development agenda. Women's relation to environment has been labelled distinctive. Women have been prime victims of environmental degradation and at the same time main managers, protectors and defenders of environmental resources. In their role as managers, women, particularly rural women, have been portrayed as the most responsible and yet the least equipped for the task. They are well suited for the task because of their indigenous knowledge. On the other hand, they are least equipped because of their minimal participation in macro and micro level decisions regarding environment.

Despite their indispensable knowledge and contribution towards sustaining natural resources, due to traditional division of labour, women are exploited.

These concerns have been reflected in the deliberations and reports of various international conferences held on gender and environment. The UN Convention on Desertification and more recently the UN Conference on Environment and Development have recognized the potential role of women in the sustainable preservation of our environment.

Women's relationship and linkage to environment and their management of natural resource was one of the eleven critical areas of concern identified by the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women which adopted the African Platform for Action. Recognizing the environmental knowledge women possess and their pressing need for natural resources, the African Platform for Action underlines the need to make environmental programmes gender sensitive with regard to concern, design and management structures. It also emphasizes women's lack of ownership and access to natural resources, as an important issue which needs to be tackled. The Regional Platform has proposed policy and legal measures as well as sensitization and information dissemination actions which will enable women's effective participation.

To build upon achievements made at these fora, the **Platform for Action (PFA)** adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, calls upon member countries to take strategic actions which will address gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and the safe guarding of the environment.

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The PFA acknowledges the limited recognition given to women's experience and skills in environmental matters and their lack of participation in policy and decision making both as professionals and community members. Urging the adoption of an holistic, multi-disciplinary and inter sectoral approach, the PFA stated that,

> *"sustainable development will be an elusive goal unless women's contribution to environmental management is recognized and supported".*

The PFA focuses on areas such as the potential contribution of women to environmental protection both as producers and consumers. It examines the effect of poverty in less developed countries, the unsustainable production and consumption patterns in developed countries, the trans-boundary movements of hazardous wastes and the debilitating effects of human and natural disasters which are causes of environmental degradation.

The devastating long and short term physical and economic consequences of environmental degradation on the members of communities, particularly on women, were highlighted by the Platform. The rights of indigenous women to have their innovations, knowledge and skills respected, maintained, promoted and preserved was also equally emphasized.

With respect to women and environment, the Beijing PFA has three strategic objectives:

1. involve women actively in environmental decision making at all levels, i.e.
   - through increasing women's access to information and education thereby enhancing their knowledge, skills and opportunities;
2. integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes to ensure sustainable development i.e.
   - through the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies;
   - through the promotion of research in all areas regarding women and environment and encouragement of its application;
   - through the encouragement of governments that women participate equally as professionals and beneficiaries in environmental programmes;
   - through an improved access to safe water and environmentally sound energy technology.

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3. strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels that will assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women, i.e.

- carrying out major activities including development of gender sensitive methods of data collection/organization, monitoring and analysis.

Among the major roles given to NGOs in the realization of these strategic objectives are advocacy and information provision. In addition, facilitating women's access to education, skills, marketing services and appropriate and affordable technologies, to enhance their role and involvement of expertise were also considered as being of great significance.

The PFA also reiterates the commitment of countries to implement Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 which calls for action towards the integration of environmental sustainability. This Chapter stresses that such actions need to be carried out with gender equality ensured through the elimination of constitutional, legal and other barriers.

In light of the above mentioned environmental and gender concerns, the situation of Ethiopia is as follows.

Ethiopia is a country situated at the interface of the Sahel and the tropical climatic zone. Due to the mountainous terrain, geological erosion is relatively high. The alarming rate of deforestation, coupled with minimal voluntary tree planting, has been a threat to the soil system. Due to such adverse natural conditions and human actions, the pace of desertification in Ethiopia has escalated in recent years. Studies indicate that currently three quarters of the country is prone to desertification. This has been reflected in the longer spells of drought and famine that come in ever shorter cycles.

Taking into consideratin, the critical situation we are in, the five year development plan of the government has made the protection of environmental resources one of the major components of the rural and agricultural centered development strategy. With regard to the ever declining agricultural productivity, increasing population growth and the resultant severe depletion of natural resources, the Plan has declared the urgent need to halt and eventually reverse this downward trend.

The Plan also recognizes the environmental risks associated with the growth of modern industries and urban centers as well as the indiscriminate application of chemical agricultural inputs. Maintenance and protection of the environment needs to be a major priority development concern.

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In collaboration with the mandated government agencies, many NGOs have been active in the field of natural resource conservation. Extensive soil and water conservation and forestry activities are being undertaken in various corners of the country. Most NGOs claim to have a participatory methodology which involves communities in the designing and implementation of these conservation efforts.

The question which remains to be asked and answered however, is to what extend women's participation is effective, as members of communities who are directly affected by such activities.

The level of hardship Ethiopian women experience in performing their daily tasks is closely associated with the status of the natural resources base around them. Thus, by virtue of their vested interest in the sustainability of these resources they can make meaningful contributions towards its safeguarding.

However, as stated in the PFA, despite government policies and organizational policies of NGOs, which encourage their active involvement, the participation of Ethiopian women in the decision making and implementation process of environmental programmes/projects has remained relatively low.

Although the degree of acceptance may vary from agency to agency, generally the advice and agreement of women members of communities are not sought. More often than not, their specific concerns in natural resource conservation activities are not taken into account during the design stage.

Thus, the challenge faced by the Beijing Conference is devising strategies to adjust organization policies and programmes so that women in the various operational areas of NGOs have the opportunity, access and ability to participate effectively in activities designed to control environmental vulnerability.

The well known Chipco Movement in India and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, are eloquent testimonies to the fact that women are not only victims of natural resource degradation but given the opportunity and resources, can also be successful managers and protectors. This has yet to be provided in concrete terms in Ethiopia.

As rightly stated by the Executive Director of UNICEF,

*"the time a woman spends dealing with the ramifications of environmental decline... is not time spent on activities that are the essence of development:(raising her children and helping them learn, learning to read, meeting with neighbors to learn about health and hygiene, regaining strength after child birth [and] earning money). "Thus, how can we help reduce the time women spend on trekking further and further in search of water, fuel wood and other environmental resources so that time spent as such can be used instead for self and communal development purposes?"*

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It is widely recognized that lack of property rights reduces women's capacity and motivation to conserve environmental resources. It is therefore essential to find ways of ensuring that the recognition accorded to women's environmental knowledge does not remain unproductive but will empower them.

What strategies can be developed to give emphasis to women's entitlement to livelihood resources and their knowledge and responsibilities of the environment?

Institutionalized mechanisms for integrating the interest and expertise of women in the conceptualization and implementation of environmental programmes as well as increasing their access to vital resources is necessary.

The recognition made by the PFA regarding the key role of NGOs in advocacy and information dissemination should be taken seriously. Advocacy efforts can be directed at influencing policy making bodies, giving recognition to the traditional knowledge of women and creating awareness of the whole society regarding women's potential contribution to the achievement of environmental sustainability.

Nevertheless there is a need for caution on how this issue is handled. Overemphasis of women's environmental knowledge and their special relationship to nature can create a stereotype effect. There is danger that the belief, that women as key assets are to be harnessed in defence of the environment, can have a negative impact on women. Such reasoning may add to the long list of women's chores thereby extending their already overcrowded days.

It is therefore important to note that environmental issues should be a common concern to all segments of the society and should not be left to women as their exclusive responsibility. It should also be considered that women's knowledge of the natural environment is not exclusive to them or comprehensive enough to leave it up to women. In areas related to their own domain of work men also possess such skills. In the interest of harmony and greater impact there is need to maintain a balanced view.

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# HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN - FROM BEIJING

*By Meaza Ashenafi*
*Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association*

I had the privilege to represent the newly formed Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association at the Beijing Women's Conference. At this Conference I had the opportunity to learn of women's human rights.

This paper, because of a time constraint, highlights in a very limited way the NGO Forum discussions on the subject of women's human rights. It also refers to the Platform for Action and indicates how some of the controversial issues on this subject were included in the Beijing Document. The paper will in addition also try to point out the emphasis made on the historic deliberation and advances achieved.

The NGO Forum organizers published a catalogue which listed the daily activities and workshops to take place. There were several activities listed to satisfy the desires of all. The catalogue consisted of matters which ranged from controversial single issues to main-stream issues.

I had to make agonizing choices to narrow down to a manageable minimum those workshops I wanted to attend. On the basis of my personal and professional interest as well as on the basis of my Association's Objectives and Program of Activity, I participated in workshops concentrating on the issues of women's human and legal rights.

The various workshops focusing on Women's Human Rights dealt with issues on universality of human rights, cultural and religious diversity, reproductive health and rights, traditional practices affecting the health of women, realizing women's human rights, sexual rights, trafficking of women, media discrimination against women, gender based violence, women's rights in Islam, structural adjustment and economic change from a gender perspective, equality before courts in property rights and other similar matters, access to education, health and politics. There were also country specific and inter-regional information and strategy exchanges.

Although NGOs both from the developed and developing countries came in large numbers, it appeared that western NGOs were more numerous and dominated the agenda setting and issue-framing process. As a result single-issue oriented discussions such as sexual rights, abortion rights, freedom of sexual orientation, were emphasized no less than main-stream cross-cutting problems such as the right to education or health. At any rate the general trend of views on most of the main issues discussed were similar and concurring.

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However there were some issues which divided the audience sharply. One such issue was the issue of women's rights in Islam. Most of the workshop discussions, based on this subject, resulted in intense debates on whether or not the Koran and Islamic traditions and practices sanctioned the equality of men and women. The debate was more intense and acrimonious among the Muslim women participants in particular. Various strongly held and emotionally expressed opinions were stated. From this one could discern three general positions.

The first position held that Koran and Islamic traditions regard men and women as equal and encourages them both to be knowledgeable and literate in carrying out scientific research. It respects the roles that both sexes assume in society, stating that their position is voluntary and not forced.

The second position held that Islamic practice and teaching discriminate against women and as a result, women in Muslim societies are oppressed.

The third position which takes the middle road, declared that the Koran and Islamic theology regards men and women as equals and particularly respects the rights of women as mothers and home makers. The proponents of this position argued that the problem lies in Islamic practice which departs from the true Koran teachings.

None of the controversies could be resolved. Nonetheless participants were satisfied that they were able to get an opportunity to state their positions.

Reproductive health and rights of women was another extensively discussed issue. Discussions focused on controversies surrounding reproductive rights such as abortion on demand. Several participants supported reproductive rights as a key to all other human rights of women. One participant stated that *"when we talk about reproductive rights we are speaking about the empowerment of women"*. Speaking about the dangers of illegal abortions, for which an annual figure of half-a-million deaths was cited, an Israel women summed up the advocates position with the following statement, *"There is no contest whose life precedes until the head emerges."*

There was severe opposition against pro-abortion advocates with totally dismissal of the notion of abortion as being a right. They argue that abortion is against the value of several religions and traditions. They maintained that the issue of women who face abortion is a central issue of rights rather than solely the issue concurring abortion itself. They further argued that abortion is "a career issue" for its proponents.

With regard to the experience and strategy exchanged, reference was made to the achievements of the Norwegian women as reported by their minster for Family Children and Women's Equality.

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The Minister, in one of the NGO Plenary Sessions, described with satisfaction the progress Norway has made with regard to promoting women's participation in the political process and particularly their representation in important decision-making positions. She referred to the fact that in the last general elections, all three major contending parties were led by women, among whom one became the prime minister currently in office.

The minister in addition cited, with a measure of pride, that 40 percent of parliament's membership as well as 40 percent of cabinet members are women. The Minister continued explaining that such achievements, which according to her has made Norway exemplary in Europe, was an outcome of the formulation of a policy of affirmative actions. In this respect she cited in particular the Gender Act, which set a guideline whereby 40 percent of employees in government funded institutions should be women.

Although Norwegian political parties are not legally obliged to follow this guideline, in the interest of broadening their membership, they have found it necessary to follow it. Due to the Norwegian public support of affirmative and other enlightened policies, as well as the influence of women decision makers, the government has currently allocated a larger proportion of the national budget to the Family Children and Women's Equality activities than to the Defence Ministry.

Several NGO Forum meetings have expressed common concerns on several issues such as violence against women, early marriage, female genital mutilation and all other acts which contribute to women's subordinate status in society. Participants formed a stand against all forms of violations inflicted against women, irrespective of culture and tradition reiterating the Vienna Declaration which affirmed women's right as human rights.

The social rights of women, particularly their rights to health and education. were emphasized as the key to realize the full potential of women which in turn will help in creating a more viable family and productive society. Social rights in general were outstanding concerns of NGOs in the South as women in developing countries suffer the most from deprivation.

The importance of having women at decision making levels was also reiterated in that this will serve to voice women's issues and to influence policy makers. Thus educating women to use their political rights was pointed out as a means of achieving the principal goal of equality.

The need for having gender neutral and progressive laws, in particular the ratification and justiciary of the **Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** was emphasized by the different forums. This need was also stressed by forums organized by the committee set up to monitor implementation of

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CEDAW. Discussions on these forums singled out the role of governments as, taking all necessary measures to ensure equality including affirmative actions to address the problems of discrimination.

With regard to the UN Conference the diversity of the social and political systems represented at this Conference made it certain that there would be disputes over language and the concept in the draft Platform for Action. It was also inevitable that the Document would be attacked by fundamentalist Christian and Islam traditions. The latter in particular charged that the draft Platform which was the working Document, reflected a western liberal agenda, driven, in part by pro-abortion, gay and lesbian groups.

Among other issues the following proved to be controversial: **Sexual and reproductive rights of women; punitive measures against illegal abortion; parental responsibility over young girls; sexual orientation, as a factor that constituted discrimination; ways of approaching and reducing violence against women in the home, in society, and in conflict situations; inheritance rights; the issue of universality of human rights and the sovereign power of nations in implementing policies and programs of the Platform for Action.**

Most of the differences on the above issues were narrowed down by intensive negotiations that went on in formal and informal meetings. Consensus was finally reached on all of them, although this did not prevent several delegations from entering their reservations, except for one set of documents which was adopted without any cast of a negative vote.

The final document entitled the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recommended in its section on human rights of women:

1. equal rights of men and women and the principle of non-discrimination to be ensured by taking into consideration, more clearly, the systematic and systemic nature of discrimination against women as clearly indicated by gender analysis;

2. governments should play a positive role in addition to refraining from violating the human rights of women, as they had solemnly committed themselves to the universal nature of this right;

3. party states to CEDAW, which form 3/4th of UN member states, should ensure compliance with the Convention;

4. women's reproductive rights and their right to development, be ensured as affirmed by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD);

5. children's rights guaranteed by both the Declaration and the Convention on the Right of the Child;

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6. effective commitment by governments in providing appropriate resource mechanisms and strengthening women's ability to exercise their rights;

7. securing women's equality by becoming parties of CEDAW, by removing incompatible reservations or by revising national laws to implement international standards on women's rights and ensuring their enforcement;

8. equal allocation of economic and social resources thereby protecting the economic, social and cultural rights of women and girls;

9. inclusion of equal status and human rights of all women into the UN system;

10. governments take urgent action to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women as stated in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women;

11. special attention for women who face additional barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights due to discrimination of race, language, religion or disability;

12. the necessity of all individuals especially women in vulnerable circumstances, to have full knowledge of their rights and access to legal recourse with regard to violations of their rights;

13. encouragement, support and access to information from governments to non-governmental organization, women's organizations and feminist groups as they play a catalytic role in the promotion of human rights of women through grass roots activities;

14. active policy of main streaming of a gender perspective in all programmes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action seeks the removal of obstacles that hinder women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life. It lists twelve critical areas of concern, identified as obstacles to the advancement of women and makes recommendations with which the international community can apply. These areas of focus are, poverty, education, health, peace, economic structures, violence, power sharing in decision-making, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women's human rights, media, environment, and the girl child.

Even though this document represents global consensus on human rights of women, it does not carry the force of international law . Nonetheless the language will be helpful to invoke claims towards full participation.

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Referring to the Ethiopian context, the legal obligation to eliminate discrimination and ensure that women have full and equal opportunities to participate in governance of the countries' economic and social development is stated in the Declaration. The new Constitution has ensured the implementation of all international treaties and laws at national level. The standard of the Constitution can be used as a measure for monitoring compliance pertaining to women with commitments made in the Platform for Action and all other global conferences.

The challenge of implementing women's human rights along with all the human rights, treaty laws including CEDAW, the UN Declaration of human rights, the covenant on civil and political rights, the covenant on economic social and cultural rights and in other non-enforceable consensus documents including the Beijing declaration and Platform For Action, the Platform of Action adopted by the 1993 Human Rights conference and the ICPD, should be taken seriously by non governmental organizations, women's groups and all concerned government departments. The goal of the 'Beyond Beijing' workshop should also be to commit ourselves once again to the struggle for Ethiopian women's human rights and justice to all.

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# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

*By Wz. Lebesech Tsega*
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## Introduction

Violence against women is a prevalent problem world-wide, cross-cutting all aspects of women's lives including the household, the work place and communities in general. It is not a recent phenomenon, but

> *"a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement." (Beijing Declaration).*

The major development today is an increased awareness and stronger attitude towards gender based injustice. According to Pillay and Padayachee, *"... what is new is that we no longer accept this abuse against women as a private affair, ... because women have the right to live in peace."*

This paper tries to highlight the issue of violence against women as being violation of human rights, as discussed during the NGO Forum and the Intergovernmental Conference, at Beijing. It is presented in two parts. The first part deals with some definitions, points and recommendations made by different NGO groups. The second part briefly stipulates some of the major concerns and recommendations of the Platform for Action, adopted by the **Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW)**: action for equality, development and peace.

## Violence Against Women

Different people define violence in different ways. However, the essence of all is similar. As quoted by Katarina Tomasevski in her book, **"Women and Human Rights"**, from the organization of American States, violence against women is defined as

> *"any act, omission or conduct by means of which physical, sexual or mental suffering is inflicted, directly or indirectly, through deceit, education, threat (harassment), coercion or any other means on any women with the purpose or effect of intimidating, punishing or humiliating her or of maintaining her in stereo-typed roles or of denying her human dignity, sexual self-determination, physical, mental and moral integrity or of undermining the security of her person, her self respect or her personality or of diminishing her physical or mental capacity."*

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The Platform For Action's definition of violence against women also puts emphasis on similar points i.e. encompassing physical, sexual and psychological violence including battering, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices that are harmful to women, harassment and intimidation occurring in the family, within the general community and violence perpetrated by state.

In general, violence against women is carried out with the intention of deliberate action of hurting and demeaning the victims physically, psychologically and emotionally because of their gender. The economic, social and political situation of women's lives intensifies the susceptibility and vulnerability of women to violence.

Since the UN decade for women, there has been growing awareness of the problems of violence against women. Compared to the Nairobi Conference, the FWCW has fostered increased coverage on violence against women as a human rights issue by many national, regional and international organizations.

Different advocacy and lobby groups, human rights organizations and UN agencies address fundamental human rights violation. They aim at ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable sections of societies of which women are the primary victims.

In some countries, some NGOs responded militantly against gender specific /gender based/ violence by opening centers which help battered and abused women and provide counselling through legal clinics, legal education and health services. They also make the public aware of the gross violations of human rights of women through different media and mechanisms.

The Advise Desk for Abused Women in South Africa and similar centers in some Latin American countries have more advanced experience in this regard. The UN Summit of Vienna on Human Rights, in 1993, had gender based violence as one of its main agendas with the intention of expanding and asserting human rights of women and redressing injustice.

Forms of violence against women include beating which is neither a domestic affair, failure of communication nor a matter between individuals. The other manifestations are maltreatment, harassment, disrespect, stabbing etc.

Sexual violence is another serious violation of women's human rights involving forced sexual relationships (rape), hurting during sexual relationships, kidnapping, beating before or after sexual relationship including sexual abuse of children (sex under a specified age). In general women are tormented enormously and made to live in constant fear and mental torture because of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, harassment (intimidation) or threat.

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In spite of the magnitude and widespread nature of the problem, the scale of violence against women, its forms and manifestations, are not fully known due to lack of responsible institutions and research initiatives. Most importantly, women victims are reluctant to report because of reasons, inter alia, fear of stigmatization or rejection by their friends, relatives and communities.

> *"Women have rarely sought to remedy their rights violations often because they were unaware or did not know where to seek redress or even information concerning available remedies." (Katarina Tomasevski, 1993)*

Furthermore, since violation of women's human rights have not been challenged nor women violators punished, their fear culminates to fear of reprisal or further attacks by the perpetrators. Rape in particular has the worst record in gender based violence.

Depending on the traditional/cultural context, rape is considered to be one of the most remorseful situations a women or a girl may fall victim to. In societies where the chastity and virginity of women has high value, rape is considered as the most disgraceful act.

Victims in such societies lose their self-esteem and confidence to live in their communities. The worst situation is when they conceive and have to care for an unwanted child whose father is not known. There are reports about situations where abused women have committed suicide, abandoned their child or even threw it into a river.

Some societies respond to rape in favour of the violator. As a way of covering humiliation and disrespect of the victim's family, forced marriage is arranged with the perpetrator at the expense of the dignity of the victim. Thus, violators of basic human rights are rewarded instead of being punished.

### Violence Against Refugees and Displaced Women

The problems of violence against women among refugees and displaced have been given particular emphasis in the NGO Forum. Some statistics indicate that, of the global refugee population, 35 per cent are in Africa of whom women and children constitute about 80 per cent.

Over fourteen African countries are involved in armed conflict to varying degrees. The current refugee population has dramatically exceeded that of the previous years. The number of internally displaced population is also enormously increasing. It is estimated that Africa has about sixteen million internally displaced people. Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda and South Africa have over one million internally displaced persons each. (ECA, 1994). These statistics have a significant implication on the degree and magnitude of violence inflicted against women.

The host countries are usually unable to provide basic essential services and the necessary protection to refugees and internally displaced people. Several women are therefore victims of gender specific violence such as multiple rape, harassment, trafficking for slavery, forced pregnancy and other abusive acts while living in such alien environments.

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Children are also victims of sexual abuse and rampant abduction for domestic or sometimes military services. Some of the outrageous sexual violence in refugee areas include insertion of objects into the genital openings, multiple rapes, abuse of small boys and girls (under aged and physically immature children). (UNHCR)

According to the UNHCR, sexual violence among refugees is often committed for political or economic purposes. This is to say, due to resentment or vengeance, disrespect for victims or stimulation by alcohol and drugs, violations of such nature are carried out. The most vulnerable groups of refugees with reard to sexual violence are lone female headed households, unaccompanied women and children and women in detention. (UNHCR)

One of the most appalling situations of gender based violence occur in areas and societies where there are armed conflicts and total collapse of the social fabric e.g. Somalia, Bosnia etc. Multiple rape by armed forces and prison officials, forced pregnancy, general lack of security and protection and torture are frequent experiences of victims. Moreover, women suffer from untold brutality because of the social groups (clan, ethnic, religion or other identity) to which they belong. Such acts are used as a means of punishing or humiliating their communities.

In such situations rape has been used as an instrument of fighting. The Beijing Platform for Action thus stated that,

> *"grave violations of the human rights of women occur, particularly in times of armed conflict, and include murder, torture, systematic rape, forced pregnancy and forced abortion, in particular under policies of ethnic cleansing."*

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## Recommendations Of the NGO Forum

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 by the UN is a major corner-stone in the human rights movement. The Women's Convention was also adopted in 1970 which however was criticized for not sufficiently addressing the issue of violence against women as a human rights issue. With the establishment of a committee for the **Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW,** the Convention eventually addressed violence against women as a revocation of the Human Rights of Women.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also has a charter on Human and Peoples Rights which indicates that member states should eliminate discrimination against women and ensure the protection of the rights of women.

There are other laws in international conventions prohibiting civilian attacks. They include the protection of victims in international armed and non-armed conflicts.

Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which postulates a comprehensive vision for the realization of the rights of all human beings and other charters, conventions and treaties including the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, the enactment and implementation of such laws is dependent on each member country.

However, it was stressed that the elimination of all forms of violence is the responsibility of all concerned individual citizens, communities, NGOs, national and international institutions. Moreover, states and governments have primary responsibility for protecting the rights of all citizens from gender specific violence/abuse by issuing or enforcing legislation and designing appropriate strategies that must be translated into action. They have also the responsibility of ensuring that International Human Rights Laws and Conventions of Women and other pertinent protocols to which they have been committed, are meaningfully operational. Like wise *"States have primary responsibility for ensuring the physical protection of refugees within their territory." (UNHCR, Guidelines on Prevention and Response, Geneva, 1995)*

Some of the specific recommendations include strategies based on Margaret Schulers works and are as follows:

1. addressing the immediate needs of battered women through the provision of services such as counselling, legal education or informing victims of available legal support, sheltering, health services, etc.;

2. working towards the formulation or enactment of legal reforms - lobbying for appropriate measures to be taken against perpetrators;

3. organizing and implementing public educational programs which reflect peoples' attitudes, values and actions as related to gender based violence, civic education (legal literacy);

4. local, data gathering and analysis, researching and investigating the level of abuse (violence against women) for strategizing advocacy and fighting gender specific violence;

5. creating and strengthening networking among pertinent institutions of law, education, public health and other relevant organizations. Opening discussions and dialogue on the magnitude, effects and means of tackling, violence against women by working closely with governments;

6. developing appropriate mechanisms and strategies for the implementation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and other relevant protocols;

7. disseminating information and education on conflict prevention, resolution (management) for the promotion of sustainable peace and in addition developing strategies and interventions for early prevention of conflicts involving larger sections of communities;

8. strengthening poverty alleviation programs and promoting women's active participation in decision making at all levels;

9. organizing local support groups who can be pro-active in advocacy and lobby in fighting violence against women.

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## The Declaration and Platform for Action of Beijing on Violence Against Women

Among the critical areas of concern that the Beijing Platform for Action considers are violence against women, lack of respect for the inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women, the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, and persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

The Beijing Declaration adopted by the FWCW addresses the issue of violence against women and calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. It reiterated that:

*"Women's Rights are Human Rights."*

It also spells out that government and participants in the FWCW are determined to,

> *"ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and the girl child and take effective actions against violations of these rights and freedoms; prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls"*

and that the human rights of women and girls would be promoted and protected.

The Declaration calls for intensifying,

> *"... efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental rights for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people."*

In its Mission Statement, the Platform for Action defines that it,

> *"... reaffirms the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna declaration and program of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and individual part of universal human rights..."*

It also calls for,

> *"immediate and concerted action by all to create a peaceful, just, humane and equitable world based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principle of equality for all people of all ages and from all walks of life."*

The Platform for Action sets forth the need for broad-based and sustained economic growth for sustained social development and justice.

The Global Framework of the Beijing FWCW document upholds the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The framework states that the empowerment of all women is strongly linked to the full realization of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. *"The universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question."*

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With regard to elimination of violence against women in times of armed conflict, the Global Framework suggests that:

> *"The maintenance of peace and security at the global, regional and local levels, together with the prevention of policies of aggression and ethnic cleansing and the resolution of armed conflict, is crucial for the protection of the human rights of women and girl children, as well as for the elimination of all forms of violence against them and their use as a weapon of war."*

Strategic objectives and actions to be taken for the elimination of all forms of violence have been articulated in the Platform for Action. Stating that violence against women is a hinderance to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace, specific actions to be taken by governments, international and non-government organizations were stipulated. These actions encompass:

- condemnation of violence against women;
- preventing, investigating and in accordance with national legislation, punishing perpetrators of acts of violence inflicted by state or private persons;
- reviewing and analyzing legislation to ensure effective elimination of violence against women;
- *"Work actively to ratify and/or implement international human rights norms and instruments as they relate to violence against women."* These Conventions that governments and international agencies must respect and implement include:
  - Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
  - Conventions on the Rights of the Child;
  - Declaration on the Rights to Development;
  - Convention on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts etc.

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Sister Kelly, who is also a member of the U.S. delegation to the women's conference, said that branch campuses have attracted a large number of working adults: 4,000 of New Rochelle's 6,000 students are part-time students.

Those who attend, she said, "are largely women, even though the school is co-ed. It's the woman who works all day, goes home and gets supper for the kids, and then goes to school. Most of the older students come to get a bachelor's degree; some decide to teach, many go on for master's degrees in counseling, either in school counseling or private practice. A number go on to undertake business degrees or use the liberal arts degree for a new sense of themselves and for advancement in the companies they're already working for."

Noting that education is *"a gradual discovery of yourself and your talents"*, Sister Kelly pointed out that *"often minority women are teachers' aides and after about two semesters in college say, 'I think I could be a teacher, too. I never thought of that before.' And we say, why not?"*

Pakistani Prime Minster Benazir Bhutto dramatically emphasized the importance of education in her address at the opening of the conference September 4.

Noting that her country is concentrating on training women teachers and opening up employment avenues for women, Bhutto said that *"it is my firm conviction that a woman cannot ultimately control her own life and make her own choices unless she has financial independence. A women cannot have financial independence if she cannot work."*

*"The discrimination against women can only begin to erode when women are educated and women are employed,"* she said. *"If my father had not educated me or left me with independent financial means, I would not have been able to sustain myself - to struggle against tyranny or to stand here before you today as a special guest speaker."*

From youth groups to local development banks to family planning agencies, non governmental organizations (NGOs) are playing a major role in the Fourth World Conference on Women, for the first time making a significant impact on the commitments of governments at a United Nations meeting.

Representatives of thousands of NGOs around the world held their own forum in conjunction with the women's conference, then moved into the official arena to make their opinions and needs known as governments negotiated policies to advance opportunities and empower women.

As it turned out, the conference on women became the largest and most visible example of the influence that grassroots organizations are beginning to wield on the international agenda.

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Government delegates and U.N. officials alike believe that NGOs are the key to changing women's lives. Those private organizations, not political leaders, will be implementing the conference's final documents, the Platform for Action.

The women's conference, the largest meeting ever sponsored by the United Nations, it also the largest in terms of individual NGO participation from all regions of the world, says Kristen Timothy, NGO coordinator. Since the last women's conference 10 years ago in Nairobi, she says, *"we have seen a huge increase in terms of women NGOs joining activities."*

*"We find that what is clearly happening is an educational process taking place and that members of civil society, represented in this case by women and supporters of women's issues -- are finding more and more of a voice at international level. The adage 'think globally, act locally "is growing in its meaning for all as people try to participate and try to have an influence on the international agenda, "* Timothy says.

Some 2,500 NGOs who do not normally participate in U.N. meetings or conferences are at the women's conference, according to Timothy, joining another 500 NGOs who have what is called "consultative status" at the U.N. Altogether, there have been some 4,00[illegible] individuals involved, she says.

**Women and Education in Ethiopia**

It has time and again been declared that education plays an important role in nation building. In other words, it is the most important tool that promotes the welfare of a given society. Thus equal opportunity of education for both men and women is categorical. Without the enlightenment and empowerment of women, national endeavours can easily be emasculated. This is because 50%, if not more, of the labour force belongs to women. Thus development of national manpower resources can not be thought of without the proper consideration of women. This is a rightful attitude that needs to be borne in the minds of policy-makers, managers and other authorities who are directly or indirectly involved in social sectors.

But despite this urgent need, most people in Ethiopian society seem to have negative attitude towards the education of women.

Generally speaking, there is an imbalance in the distribution of educational opportunity between the two sexes. Literacy is very low amongst women. The enrolment rate of girls to boys is also very small in pre-school, formal, non-formal and higher institutions.

According to the 1992/93 data of the Ministry of Education, the participation rate of female in kindergarten, primary, Junior secondary and Senior secondary schools were 50.1%, 40.8%, 47.8% and 45.4% respectively in government & non government schools.

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There are different factors that affect the participation of females in education. To cite but a few:

- The overload of work of women in the rural areas has tied them up in domestic chores as well as other ventures leaving little or no time for the pursuit of education.

- Early marriage in many countries has contributed to the discontinuation of education especially for those who aspire to secondary or tertiary institutions. Although the enrollment of married students is not known, pregnancy and child birth have usually been stumbling blocks to schooling. In short, marriage affects older and primary school children especially in societies where betrothal takes place at very early ages.

In some parts of Ethiopia, 20% of primary school students, as surveyed in a study conducted in 1988, revealed the fact that they've either been engaged, married or divorced. This finding indicates that betrothal and marriage most of the time entails failure and discontinuity of education. This very fact can be verified from a simple look at numbers attending during any of the academic years.

Lack of exemplary role models is another weak point for the enhancement of girls' education in Ethiopia. Studies show that female teachers' participation in the kindergarten, primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary schools were 97.1%, 25.6, 10.6% and 9.0% respectively.

To encourage girls' education some positive steps are being taken. Recruitment of would-be teachers can be cited as an example. The Ministry of Education has developed a new set of criteria. Accordingly, a favourable climate has been created. The following are worth noting:

- girls can compete equally with the opposite sex. The competition is open for both,

- if two competitors get equal points, priority is given to the female competitor.

- institutions reserve 20% of the admissions for female trainees.

Based on their recruitment criteria, the participation of girls in teacher training institutes has risen from 32% to 35% in the country. The final objective is to create equity between female and male teachers.

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The participation-rate gap between women and men at University level was much wider compared to that at senior high school level. Furthermore, much fewer women than men were enrolled in all the fields for degree and diploma programmes. This clearly demonstrates the fact that Ethiopian women have not been benefitting and reaping fruits from educational opportunities as much as Ethiopian men.

**Hindrance for Participation of Girls in Education**

High priority is given to education for it is the one that serves as a means to promote manpower resources that could alleviate socio-economic problems of the country. But the following practices and situations have been hindrances:

- Girls are forced to quit school in order to be married or do not enrol at all due to many other obstacles.

- Traditional norms force girls to be fully absorbed in domestic household chores or be married at an early age. Parents prefer the marriage of their daughter to her pursuit of education.

- To assist them in their work, rural women are helplessly obliged to depend on their daughters who consequently get drawn into the same pitfall of life as a result of which they too fail to obtain the same educational opportunities as boys.

- The curriculum is not geared to the gender balance.

- The social frame of mind continues to encourage males to high aspirations. Social customs make greater and unfair demands on girls rather than on boys. Eventually, by the time the female child reaches womanhood, her orientation towards herself and her position in society is more negative than it should be.

- According to the Ministry of Education. 1992/93, the percentage of girl students becomes lower as the level of education increases both in the government and nongovernment sectors.

- Boys and girls in Ethiopia have equal access to vocational training both in law and practice. But social and domestic constraints operate unfavorable in the case of girls.

- Most girls who attend school spend only a few years at the primary stage and leave school without practicing the skills of reading and writing. What is more , after they leave school, they soon relapse into illiteracy.

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## Strategies that Work

### 1. *Locate Schools Closer to Communities*

Although it is evident that girls have benefitted from the general educational expansion in the supply of schools, it is also clear that girls have not benefitted as much as boys. Reducing the distance from home to school and making the school environment more culturally appropriate for girls may decrease parental concern and thereby increase demand for girls' participation.

Bringing schools closer to communities through such approaches as community, cluster or satellite schools has worked well in many countries - for example, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

Creating culturally appropriate facilities, by providing either different facilities for girls and boys or at least separate facilities within the same school, also increases acceptance. In areas where gender segregation is pervasive, single-sex schools may provide the only alternative acceptable to parents and the community. Single-sex schools have been used effectively in Ghana, India Nepal, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

### 2. *Promote Hiring of Female Teachers*

In many cultures of South Asia and the Middle East, the presence of female teacher often reduces parents' concerns about their daughters' morality and security and therefore increases girls' participation in schools.

To increase the supply of potential female teachers, particularly in rural areas, recruitment from the local community is essential. Combined intervention of lowering the minimum qualifications and providing intensive pre-service and in-service training and closer supervision may be used. Decentralized teacher training and incentives, special housing arrangements and lower age restrictions, also attract women to the profession. A combination of these interventions is more likely to succeed than any one by itself.

### 3. *Develop Relevant Curricula*

Because education is perceived as an investment in the future economic well-being of the individual and the family, parents, particularly those who are disadvantaged, will most likely see education as more relevant if it is related to the girls' present and future social and economic needs.

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Curricula are more relevant to girls' daily lives and aspirations when they include instruction on the social, economic, health and nutrition issues and family life, in addition to the traditional literacy and numeracy training. Instruction in the local language during the first years allows girls to focus on basic concepts and not be hampered by language limitations. Environments that encourage girls to study maths and science and provide vocational training improve their job prospects and participation in the labour force.

4. ***Increase Community Participation***

Educational programme are more likely to be successful when there is significant community involvement and participation, particularly from parents, at the school level. Parental involvement allows the programme to reflect the needs and concerns of the community and gives parents more of a stake in the programme's overall success.

Suggested interventions include supporting communities that express an interest in improving education; soliciting the support of community leaders; involving parents and the community in planning, management, decision-making and advocacy; and recruiting teachers from the local community.

5. ***Promote Localization and Decentralization***

Greater participation and involvement by the community and parents in the planning and management of the local education system translates into better knowledge of the educational system, closer links with the school and better understanding of the nature of the teaching/learning process. Decentralization of school management functions to local communities, with the national government playing a supportive, facilitative and supervisory role, is another strategy to improve schools' efficiency and increase parental demand for education.

Effective decentralization first involves giving power traditionally held by central office at state/provincial level to district and the to local management groups, such as education or development committees. These groups can assume responsibility for school planning and management functions. Teacher training institutes and textbook distribution centers can also be located closer to communities.

6. ***Promote Advocacy and Social Mobilization***

Advocacy and social mobilization are essential to raising awareness, demand and support for girls' education. These types of interventions are particularly needed in remote areas where parents have low literacy levels and/or are unfamiliar with the benefits of girls' education in cultures where girls are not traditionally allowed

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to participate in activities outside the home; in societies where attitudes about female education are very traditional; and in areas where severe poverty forces parents to make choices between sending boys and girls to school.

One essential element in successful advocacy and social mobilization is the preparation of a comprehensive action plan, which should be prepared by a representative group of educators, parents and social advocates. Strategies included in the plan should be based on the behaviours and characteristics of the target audiences to change their minds. The messages should be communicated through all available media, from high-technology channels, such as radio and television, to more traditional modes of communication, such as puppet theatres, village committee meetings and community health centres.

7. ***Design Systems that Accommodate the Needs of Female Students***

The more disadvantaged the household, the more value is given to girls' labour which may be crucial to basic family survival. Making it easier for girls to combine school and chores is effective in increasing girls' enrolment and reducing the drop-out rate.

The first step in designing a needs-specific system is to prepare diagnostic studies to identify the specific cultural and other issues constraining girls' participation. On the basis of the findings, planners can design flexible programmes that accommodate girls' needs and concerns.

8. ***Support Multiple Delivery Systems***

To reach the goal of universal basic education for boys and girls, men and women education must be delivered through a variety of mechanisms: the formal schools, which are operated in many counties by both the public and private sectors; the non-formal schools/ training centers, which are less structured than the formal ones; the non-traditional, alternative schools, which are even more flexible than the former two mechanisms and which work around the constraints of out-school children; adult literacy centres.

Schools that focus on reaching the undeserved population and teaching the hard-to-reach children in rural remote areas have proved effective. Respectively, other interventions include establishing regional education resource centres that can provide assistance and resources to several small schools so that graduates of these schools can be absorbed into the formal system.

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# THE GIRL CHILD

*By Wz. Hirut Befekadu*
*OAU*

Africa's greatest assets are its children and over 170 million are girls. They represent more than half the total of female population. Nevertheless African girls are generally disadvantaged in comparison to boys. They are socially inferior, receive less support and are given fewer opportunities. This is cause for development to be impaired. For example, from an early age girls undertake extensive household duties. Soon they become mothers and are burdened with even more responsibility. All tasks they perform in their family and society at large are detrimental to their own health and education and their overall participation in social life.

The price being paid for discrimination and neglect of Africa's girl child is enormous. African girls are over burdened, under powered and under developed. The challenge today is to improve their living conditions by promoting their rights, developing their potentials and reducing their work load.

In 1992 at the International Conference on Assistance to African Children, organized by OAU and UNICEF, African countries committed themselves to review and reform legal codes and legislation to remove all gender biases, strengthen mechanisms for the promotion of women and children, increase resources to meet girls' and women's needs. They also undertook to ensure the protection of the female child from all forms of harmful traditional practices.

Paragraph 41 of the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) states:

*"The girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. The skills, ideas and energy of the girl child are vital for full attainment of the goals of equality development and peace. For the girl child to develop her full potential she needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights safeguarded. If women are to be equal partners with men, in every aspect of life and development, now is the time to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child and to ensure the full enjoyment of her human rights and fundamental freedoms as assured by the convention on the births of the child. Yet there exists world-wide evidence that discrimination and violence against girls begin at the earlier stages of life and continue unabated throughout their lives. They often have less access to nutrition, physical and mental health care and education and enjoy fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than do boys. They are often subjected to various forms of sexual and economic exploitation, paedophilia, forced prostitution and possible sale of their organs and tissues, violence and harmful practices such as female infanticide and pre-natal sex selection, incest, female gentile mutilation and early marriage, including child marriage."*

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Strategic objectives of the global PFA on the girl child issue are:

1. eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child;
2. eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls;
3. promote and protect the rights of the girl child and increase awareness of her needs and potentials;
4. eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skill development and training;
5. eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition;
6. eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work;
7. eradicate violence against the girl child;
8. promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.
9. strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child;
10. take steps to encourage functional literacy programmes, particularly for out-of-school girls, in development programmes;
11. develop training programmes and materials for teachers and educators, raise girls/women awareness of their role in the educational process, with a view to providing them with effective strategies for gender-sensitive teaching;
12. provide social and civic training.

Some actions proposed by the PFA include:

- ensure girls' universal access to and completion of primary education;
- pass and strictly enforce laws on minimum legal age at marriage and raise the minimum age where necessary;
- develop and implement policies to protect the rights of girls and ensure equal opportunities for them;

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- encourage efforts to promote changes in the negative attitudes and practices of society towards girls;

- develop and adopt curricula which will improve opportunities for girls in areas such as math, science and technology;

- protect girl-children from economic exploitation by defining a minimum age for admission to work;

- promote a conducive educational environment;

- develop policies and programmes which give priority to formal and informal education for girl children;

- provide public information on removing discriminatory practices against girls with regard to food allocation nutrition and access to health services;

- protect the safety and security of girls from all forms of violence, including violence in the school and work place;

- take appropriate measures, including legislative and administrative, to protect the girl child at home and outside.

In conclusion emphasis should be given to improving the status of girls which means not only enhancing their well being and productivity but also improving child care and family welfare, reducing birth rates and reducing poverty. In brief ***promoting development***.

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# DISCUSSION

Discussions were held throughout the workshop where participants posed questions and offered suggestions. The following details the discussions that took place.

In opening the discussion delegates were reminded that at the Beijing Conference, support initiatives for women such as the provision of resources to small scale women enterpreners was proposed. Thus, as part of the objective of this workshop, strategies for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration were to be proposed in an Ethiopian context. The necessity for women's desks in government organizations and WID (Women in Development) offices to work in collaboration was stressed. Such co-operation will result in defining and developing strategies for meeting women's priorities. It was noted that Ethiopia's National Policy on Women has already set its task on focusing the national priorities of women to realize the Beijing Declaration. The need to have an awareness of the ***national priorities*** as identified by various governmental organizations, was also called for.

It was asserted that women's participation in the ***agricultural system and extension programs*** is marginalized. They are also denied land ownership and control of production. However, women's participation in these programs especially in the rural sector, is essential since it allows them access to agricultural technology. An increase in the number of women extension agents contribute towards sustainable development. Thus, consideration needs to be given by the government to this issue, and work together with multilateral agencies in this regard.

Responding to women's priorities calls for an improvement in a number of situations. ***Structural adjustment***, which Ethiopia is facing today, has a major impact on the lives of women, especially rural women. Although it cannot be denied that it has its positive side in that it contributes to development programs, structural adjustment adversely affects women headed households. Thus it limits their contribution to the developmental process.

***Capacity building*** is another factor determining women's participation in developmental programs. Reaching rural women for instance, through science, technology and various other facilities like credit, accounts for an improvement of their livelihood. It was stated that lack of finance often results in families being denied a number of things e.g. mothers being unable to ensure the provision of education for their children. Thus the availability of credit in such situations plays a vital role in meeting this need.

***Developmental objectives and direction of programs*** are the determining factors in meeting the real needs of communities. This methodology has been restricted to international organizations and governments, many of whom give little or no regard to community participation. It does not take into account various elements like structural

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adjustment or situations with a negative impact that continue to affect communities from previous governments, e.g. the repayments of debts.

The ***issue of accountability*** of the IMF, World Bank and individual governments was raised at the NGO conference at Beijing. An agreement was reached whereby the implementation of projects must be followed by consideration of how and why they have been implemented and who has been responsible for approval of their implementation. It should be understood that whereas a government's duration is limited, the effects of conditions like structural adjustment will remain with the people of a community regardless of political situations. Thus multilateral organizations like the World Bank should consider these factors while NGOs and the government should work together with communities to determine the path of development.

Undertaking ***scientific research*** at grass roots level was one of the recommendations passed at the Conference. This will enable the acquisition of primary data, thus indicating the direction and impact of the developmental process. The adverse effects of globalization were illustrated with one example: in India women produced local brew until the multinational Coca Cola company made a powerful impact on their trade. The new soft drink was advertised in every corner of the market. This left women with no outlet for their products.

To encourage women's participation in the developmental process, ***women's empowerment*** is imperative. The involvement of women in decision making activities and power sharing is considered to be a key factor in the developmental process. This will necessitate overcoming cultural hindrances which are prevalent throughout the country. Hence it was suggested that the government and NGOs work towards furnishing women with education. Giving them priority in this regard will improve their employment potential and pave the way towards empowerment.

It was expressed that addressing both rural and urban women's needs should be carried out from the very basic level i.e. the family, to higher levels. To do so information should be gathered initially from the grass roots level, thus indicating the existing problems specific to each community. It was suggested that the newly established woreda administrations can play a role in this respect. From the studies undertaken and subsequent analysis, sustainable development can be achieved.

The issue of ***women and environment*** was said to have been given insufficient recognition in Ethiopia. The involvement of women in environmental activities i.e. in its management and protection, plays a crucial role in production and consumption patterns. In this regard the Beijing Platform for Action passed recommendations stating that women's involvement in environmental decision making at all levels is significant. While delegates agreed with the importance of promoting this activity, it was not possible to specify an NGO which focused on this subject.

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Similarly the issue on ***women and health*** called for serious attention. The need for more NGOs to work towards this was stressed. **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** has been defined as one of the gravest threats against women's health and one of the dangerous **Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP)** widely exercised in Africa and in some parts of the Middle East. FGM which has been defined as a baseless practice, is the worst HTP because of its long and short term complications. With the need to eradicate this practice, committees have been established in many parts of the world such as in Canada, Sweden and Australia. In Ethiopia efforts to eradicate this practice are led by the National Committee in Africa. This organization carries out Training of Trainers (TOT) programs and Training Information Campaign (TIC) programs in the communities. In addition it tries to raise the awareness of the public by holding workshops and giving public education supported by films. However, since it still remains a perilous practice more efforts to eradicate FGM are undertaken with the support of NGOs and UN organizations.

The ***violation of women's rights,*** which is an anathema to human rights, was an issue widely discussed. As a prevalent problem, it has gained considerable global attention. It is manifested in every aspect of women's lives and affects their physical and mental capacity. Women are abused, harassed or intimidated in several ways. For instance household maids are often intimidated and harassed by their employers. They are denied access to a number of opportunities e.g. education, and consequently denied a path to any kind of advancement.

Domestic violence, which is an example of violence against women by women, is punishable by law. Despite the fact that domestic harassment is common in Ethiopia, no law enforcement is taken against it. In response to this situation, the **Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA)** has claimed that it will address this issue as its primary concern. The Association carries out educational programs on violence inflicted upon women. It aims at providing legal aid for vulnerable women who cannot afford to be represented by paid lawyers.

The mass media contributes to the negative image of women in which their position is demeaned. Entertainment programs need to be more educational and enhance women's positive role. It was stressed that the mass media has a strong impact in this respect as it can change people's attitude.

To protect the rights of women it is undeniable that laws have to be formulated. However the problem in Ethiopia has not been the formulation of laws but their enforcement. A few examples given were the child convention by which the rights of a child are maintained. The law banning early marriage and prostitution exists for a long time. However the implementation of these laws has not been accomplished and the practices disallowed are still in widely used. It was therefore suggested that, rather than drafting additional laws, it would be more practical to work towards reinforcing the existing laws.

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***Women's Education and the Girl Child*** was a further issue extensively discussed. It is believed that education is the key to women's empowerment.

The access to education for females however was stated to be limited to only the very few. From among these, even a lesser number get the opportunity to complete their education. This is essentially due to the fact that, being overloaded by household tasks, they are left with little or no time to pursue education. In addition, the negative attitude of Ethiopian society and culture towards the education of women, contributes to the continuity of this situation. As a result of these factors, female elementary and high school drop outs are higher among the females than males.

It was therefore suggested that NGOs need to make more effort in creating a conducive atmosphere for the promotion of female education. Female education should be prioritized and special support for primary and high school girls should be given.

In addition to this, it was alleged that the Ethiopian policy on girls' education at higher levels has an adverse effect. For example, with the aim of prioritizing higher education for girls, the ESLCE pass marks are lower for females than males. The negative effects of such a policy is manifested during the first year of higher level education where the record of the rate of dismissals is high for girls. Because of their average performance on the ESLCE, competing with those having higher grades becomes a challenge for which they are not prepared. This further aggravates the negative outlook of society, verifying its belief that females are incompetent.

Contrary to this opinion, it was said that this policy was formulated as an affirmative action. It is believed that it does not create a negative impact on females. Ethiopia today does not have enough resources and capacity to educate the numerous high school graduates. Thus, raising the ESLCE points has been the only solution in ensuring that the most academically competent students are given the opportunity to join these institutions. As a result girls who achieve a grade point average of 3.2 or higher are guaranteed a place at higher learning institutions. It was stressed that these girls attain such points by overcoming several hindrances and hardship. It was in fact proved that they were found to be successful in their higher education studies. The policy therefore encourages girls to strive towards attaining higher grades.

Female harassment at higher learning institutions was another problem said to be common and a contributing factor towards many abandoning their studies. Sufficient measures are not taken to combat this and it was therefore stressed that measures should be taken and be severe so as to avoid the problem of females dropping out.

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- developing an awareness program for parents in which the necessity of education for girls is stressed should be carried out. Giving non formal education to communities, involving parents in the school system i.e. from the building of the school to the preparation of the curriculum with the school authorities, teachers and students plays an important role in achieving this.
- sharing of household chores by all members of the family should be encouraged
- pre-schools should be established within primary schools. This reduces the problem of assigning teachers for pre schools and primary schools separately.
- encourage the employment of more female instructors in order to reduce the perpetuating gender based stereotypes.
- appropriate technologies should be carried out.
- mandatory school attendance by legislation needs to be established. In addition each parent should be charged with the responsibility of making sure that their child stays in school for at least a certain period of time. This will minimize the number of girls dropping out from school. In addition, it will help avoiding the danger of girls becoming a burden to the nation instead of becoming active participants in developmental programs.
- community participation in combating girls harassment and violation of their rights is imperative. Since harassment is one factor contributing to girls abandoning school, the establishment of counselling services is important.
- living and working conditions have to be improved for prospective teachers. These improvements ensure better education.
- the government and NGOs should work towards implementing existing policies that promote the education of girls. For an effective implementation, NGOs should also be involved in formulating policies.
- an advocacy role should be played by NGOs.

Due to the severe constraints faced by the girl child and the negative impacts these have on her, the issue of the girl child has sparked serious attention. Parents and various government institutions like the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, National Children's Committee and above all the legal force of the government, must be held accountable for these problems.

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In general more efforts have to made in strengthening education for women and improving the conditions of the girl child. It is believed that the following recommendations will achieve this.

**Recommendations**

(1) Construct more schools, which are closely located, with qualified teachers . The effort should be by both government and NGOs.

(2) Give specialization training for women working in various capacities and levels within government institutions.

(3) Give non formal education for parents so as to help them develop an awareness of the importance of education for their children especially for girls.

(4) Produce labor saving devices e.g. instead of hand mills constructing wind mills which will help save time for girls to do their studies.

(5) Governments, NGOs and any other institutions' economic and financial intervention in the educational development; assisting in giving incentives for incoming generating activities and making credit facilities available.

(6) Ensuring the follow up of strategies drafted by creating network among governments, NGOs and all policy formulating and implementing agencies.

(7) Policy formulating institutions informing the public of their policies and reviewing current policies to strengthen the vocational training programs.

(8) More consideration and priority should be given to the issue of women by the Ministry of Justice.

(10) Promoting equality standards through training and developing incentives e.g. making efforts by which the positive roles of women are portrayed by authors, actors, mass media etc.

(11) Illustrate the positive role of women in the school curriculum.

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## *Group 2: Women and Environment*

The issue of women and environment is an important one for it is known that women play a vital role as managers, protectors and defenders of the environment. Their extensive knowledge of the environment contributes significantly to developmental process.

Nevertheless the issue of environment and natural resources in relation to women has not been given due consideration. Environmental problems are rarely solved with gender sensitive strategies.

Thus to enhance an awareness of the importance of women's relationship with the environment and natural resources, the following recommendations have been made.

**Recommendations**

1. Environmental problems have a negative impact on the lives of communities particularly on women. Women are the principal victims of environmental degradation. Therefore strategies geared towards solving these problems should be gender related.

2. Environmental problems vary between urban and rural areas and even between rich and poor in specific areas. Thus rural and urban development strategies should be sensitive and responsive to the varying degrees of poverty within each setting.

3. Environmental policies should be comprehensive and ought to include matters of deforestation, soil erosion, preservation of the natural environment and sanitary services both in rural and urban areas. The participation of communities in policy formulation and implementation guarantees an effective implementation of environmental polices.

4. There should be an active partnership between the government and NGOs in terms of funding and planning of projects identified by the community.

5. To ensure sustainable development, participatory approaches necessitate capacity building through training of communities in technical skills. These training programs should be accessible to both men and women on an equal basis.

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6. The programs of NGOs should be geared towards and enforced by an ethic of power sharing, equality, shared responsibilities and accountability. Accountability is a two way process between NGOs and the community.

7. The government and NGOs should promote the ethic of power sharing, equality and shared responsibility with a view to reducing the heavy burden and responsibility women carry in the household and community. For example easily accessible potable water, fuel and sanitation services reduce the burden of women. Promoting equal division of labor with regard to housework, child care and household expenses also vastly reduces women's work and responsibilities.

8. Local government personnel need to be trained in community leadership.

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## *Group 3: Women and Health*

Women's health particularly in rural areas, is seriously affected due to malnutrition, ignorance and environmental factors such as lack of clean water. Above all the application of **Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP)** poses a serious threat to women's health. It also hinders the efforts of women to realize their full potential. As a result, the legislation against HTP is consistent with the new Ethiopian constitution and all other human rights conventions.

Women's health is a sensitive issue which has called for more global attention. As women play a major role in any developmental process, the need to ensure the promotion of their health is unquestionable. Thus, the private sector i.e. individuals within communities, the government and NGOs should make a coordinated effort to bring about positive changes in this. To do so, an awareness of the problems, priorities and strategies is essential.

### 1. Priority issues on women's health in Ethiopia

- Access to health education in order to create awareness especially in relation to avoiding adolescent and unplanned pregnancies, abortion, AIDS and elimination of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs);
- Provision of primary health care as 50 per cent of women do not have access to modern health care;
- Reduction of maternal and infant mortality;
- Provision of pre-natal, peri-natal and post-natal care especially primary delivery service;
- Conducting research on traditional medicine and thereby giving education; and
- Provision of adequate and clean water.

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## 2. The role of government and NGOs in promoting reproductive health

***Government's Role***

I. Education:

- The Ministry of Education should incorporate sex education into the school curriculum to reduce problems of adolescent pregnancy and abortion;
- Education on Family Planning i.e. on birth control and contraception, should be carried out by institutions such as the Family Guidance Association (FGA);
- More effort should be made in using the media to educate the public on AIDS;
- Education on the elimination of HTP e.g. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriages, should be given serious consideration;
- Distinct action should be taken on the issue of abortion :
  - liberalize abortion or
  - encourage contraceptive education
- Research work and education on the eradication of HTP should be encouraged.

II. Building infrastructures (health institutions, roads, etc.) to make modern health care services accessible to women.

III. Encourage more NGOs to become involved in women's health issues.

IV. Provide women with education and employment opportunities to enhance their economic status. This in turn will ensure the promotion of women's health.

V. The establishment of a multi-sectoral approach with regard to the issue on women's health.

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***NGOs Role***

I. Incorporate women's health issues in their programs and implement them at grass roots level;

II. Urge governments to set up better policies and laws regarding women's health;

III. Undertake community health education and training such as family planning, HTPs, child care, nutrition etc.;

IV. Assist in developing income generating activities for women i.e. training women in various skills, credit provision etc.

## 3. Resource Mobilization

***Source***

In order to implement strategies with a focus to promoting reproductive health, budget allocation from various sources is necessary. The following could provide such sources:

- national budget;
- NGOs and
- communities.

*Strategy*

In order to implement strategies :

- encourage the participation of women in decision-making as they can influence policy making;
- encourage NGOs involvement in activities related to women's health;
- encourage communities, particularly women, to take charge of resource mobilization.

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***Coordination***

To ensure successful implementation of strategies it is important to create networking among implementing agencies/bodies i.e. creating

- coordination among NGOs and government institutions. In addition, coordination among NGOs working in similar areas of activities. This is important in mobilizing resources and avoiding duplication of efforts;
- giving women responsibilities;
- involving the community as a whole.

**Recommendations**

1. Educate the girl child;
2. Give health education in schools and communities;
3. Incorporate sex education in school curriculum;
4. Strengthen programs that promote women's health;
5. Follow-up and monitor communities' health trainees;
6. Conduct formal and informal education on the eradication of HTP and on the dymystification of beliefs attached to these practices;
7. Devise policies for decreasing work load of women;
8. Provide clean and accessible water;
9. Incorporate, in the national policy, recommendations on women's health issues as given by the Beijing Conference and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

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## *Group 4: Women's Empowerment*

Empowerment is the process whereby women assert their rights by gradually eliminating existing social gender biases. It cannot be handed out, but is achieved by a process of relentless struggle in overcoming the fundamental gender based inequities.

Women need to assert their rights so as to :

- be treated with respect and dignity as human beings;
- express their feelings, state their needs and set their priorities as individuals;
- be treated equally and fairly before the law.

Empowerment means:

- participating in decision making, policy formulation and planning at all levels;
- access to and control over resources;
- access to education and information;
- reaping equitable benefits from the development process.

Women's empowerment affects the political, economic and social sectors of society. Thus the lack of women being empowered has an adverse effect on each sector. The following recommendations state areas of focus for empowering women.

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### Recommendations

The government and NGOs in collaboration should:

1. strengthen the Women's Affairs Office (WAO) at national and regional levels, i.e. capacity building;
2. encourage women's participation in the decision-making process;

3. encourage women's political participation at grass roots level as very few women are currently active in political activities;

4. enforce the implementation of government policies, currently existing;

5. enforce laws that promote the economic participation of women, i.e. property rights, asset holdings, inheritance laws, credit polices, etc;

6. include the rights of women in the civil code;

7. encourage full participation of women in the formulation and enforcement of laws.

8. enhance women's capacity to achieve self-sufficiency by ensuring access to and control over productive resources, i.e., land, capital, credit, agricultural inputs and appropriate technology;

9. ensure that macro policies are gender sensitive and accommodate the needs and interests of women;

10. encourage women in identifying their needs and interests, designing development projects and implementing them;

11. educate women in credit and loans as well as in financial management and establish financial institutions that specialize in providing loans to women;

12. establish fund-raising committees to mobilize resources so as to make credit available to women;

13. encourage the enrollment of girls at higher levels of education;

14. make schools accessible i.e. build more community schools;

15. ensure protection from any form of violence to school girls on their way to and from school;

16. revise the curriculum so as to incorporate gender issues and eradicate gender bias in the curriculum;

17. tailor non formal education to women's needs to ensure equal employment opportunities in both formal and informal sectors;

18. incorporate civic education in all development programs.

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## *Group 5: Human Rights of Women*

The problem of women's violation has existed for a long time throughout the world. As a result, the issue of the human rights of women has called for considerable global attention.

The rights of women are violated in a number of ways e.g. by inflicting physical and mental abuse. The abuse of women in Ethiopia has been given little or no attention by the law. For example, women are often intimidated by their husbands as they are usually considered to be his inferior. An effort to eradicate such negative attitudes/beliefs has not been made. This practice has instead been assimilated into the culture of society and therefore has been accepted as the standard norm. To make matters worse, women themselves have accepted their position as being inferior to that of their husbands'. Due to ignorance of their rights as women, they do not make the effort of resisting harassment or intimidation inflicted on them. Women have long been and are even still being discriminated by the very fact that they are women.

However, today the struggle is for women to enjoy the basic human rights as equal individuals to men. As they deserve this, there is the need for the formulation of special rights for women especially in a male dominated society.

What are these special rights ? What roles can the government and NGOs play in alleviating women's problems in this regard ? What efforts can women themselves make in confronting this issue ? The implementation of following recommendations will answer these questions and the issue of women's rights. These recommendations are intended to enable women to develop a spirit of self confidence thus contributing to their independence.

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### Recommendations

1. The government should take affirmative measures with respect to enforcing:
   - the rights to property, health etc.;
   - all international conventions and declarations;
   - education (which is a basic right).

2. The implementation of strategies should be carried out with focus on:
   - conducting research with the aim of identifying the problems of women's rights;
   - providing the government with complete information that warrants amendments to existing laws if the need arises;

- educating society at large and women in particular, on the rights of women, with the aim of raising awareness;
- providing civic education.

3. The law enforcing organs should play a role whereby they:

- commit themselves to the promotion of women's special rights;
- make the effort in changing their skeptical attitudes towards this issue;
- make the effort in changing societies' negative attitudes;
- contribute to the empowerment of women;
- make all policies, constitutions and other legal documents that protect the rights of women, accessible.

4. NGOs in support of this issue should play a role whereby they:

- make resources available for activities that work towards achieving the rights of women;
- work towards the promotion of protecting the rights of women;
- make efforts in educating women on their rights.

5. Women's groups should also make the effort of:

- organizing pressure groups;
- conducting research work that lends to the improvement of their lives;
- see to it that research work and recommendations are properly implemented and accepted by the state and all government bodies;
- establishing lobbing groups that continuously advocate the issues of women and gain the attention of both government and NGOs.

6. The government should make an effort of:

- enacting and enforcing laws in line with declarations, conventions and other international documents on women's rights which Ethiopia has ratified as a state;
- enacting and enforcing the national policies on women e.g. the family, penal, commercial laws etc.;
- changing or amending polices and laws when necessary.

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# CLOSING SPEECH

*By Ms. Henriette Bastiani*
*The Royal Netherlands Embassy*

This Workshop has shown that there is a good follow up of the Beijing Conference in Ethiopia. The participation during the workshop has been good. The discussion has been interesting, educational and fruitful.

It is encouraging to have seen both women and men participate in this Workshop. Women's issues are not women's concern only but have an impact on the development of the whole society. That is why issues on women have to be integrated and internalized with all the people, from policy level to grass roots level.

What is most important now after two days of discussion and finalization of recommendations, is the real follow up and implementation for which support is necessary. The need for coordination and collaboration among NGOs themselves and with the government has been expressed today. The participants of this Workshop who are from government and non government organizations, have worked in partnership and are now seeking to work in continued coordination. Some sensitive issues which need further discussion have also been mentioned. I am delighted that the discussion will continue as the exchange of ideas and dialogue is of significant importance.

Speaking from the donors side the Netherlands government gives priority to the Beijing issues. Thus the Embassy, believing in the benefits to be gained from this Workshop, felt it pertinent to give financial support.

The Embassy holds a UN donor meeting on women and development activities every two months. In this meeting donors inquire as to whether the strategies and activities of the Beijing issues are being implemented by the government and NGOs. The 'Beyond Beijing' Workshop, by taking the first step, has given a good example in which it has stated its priorities and coordinated its efforts. Thus, support from the donors side will be one of facilitation.

After six to twelve months I hope the follow up meeting will take place. This meeting will assess what has been done from now untill the time the meeting will take place.

Special thanks goes to the NGO Forum which held several preparatory meetings to ensure the successful organization and impact of this Workshop. I also wish to thank CRDA for their support and commitment in organizing this Workshop. I thank all participants for their attention, input and interest.

Thank you.

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