

Mapping Progress

A WEDO Report Assessing Implementation of the Beijing Platform

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Mapping Progress is based on information from governments and NGOs on successes and setbacks in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. WEDO's survey, *Assessing Implementation of the Platform Midway to the Year 2000 Review* (printed on page 214), went out to all governments that adopted the Beijing Platform as well as to countries across the world for independent assessments of government performance. The NGO responses bring a critical voice to monitoring efforts absent from official reports by governments and United Nations bodies. As with previous progress reports, WEDO approached governments through their permanent missions to the UN and also contacted relevant government agencies in country capitals.

The survey covered five broad areas: means and mechanisms to implement the Platform, participation of civil society, specific policy changes and outcomes, budget for women's programs, and impact of macroeconomic policies such as structural adjustment, privatization and trade agreements on women's rights. In focusing attention on the gender impact of macroeconomic policies, WEDO sought specific information on the effects on women's rights and access to land, property and credit, employment, the environment, education, health and housing. Women's perspectives on these areas are covered in the following sections.

Means and Mechanisms

The national action plan, the first time-bound commitment in the Beijing Platform for Action (paragraph 297), is a lynchpin that holds the hefty Beijing document together and is key to translating its objectives into feasible actions defined by national priorities. To date, 70% of countries that attended the Beijing women's conference report that they have drawn up national action plans or drafts. In some countries - Egypt, Israel and the United Kingdom, for example - NGOs report that although the

government does not have a document officially titled a national action plan, it has either instituted gender-aware policies or integrated women's policies into its economic development plan.

For governments, even in countries with constitutional guarantees and longstanding policies and programs for women, the national action plan can be an extremely useful tool with which to reassess strengths and weaknesses, set targets, identify civil society partners and plot future directions in ensuring women's empowerment. For NGOs, the process of drafting and implementation provides a means of constructive engagement with policymakers by allowing them a place at the table. Additionally, by monitoring and evaluating national action plans, NGOs remind governments that "[they] have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action" (paragraph 293). A focus on the action plan by governments and NGOs thus reinforces the need for political commitment at the highest level.

Time-bound targets, resource allocations and national machinery with powers to legislate are some baseline indicators of political commitment that help distinguish serious action plans from mere declarations of intent. Here the record of most reporting governments is patchy. With the exception of Senegal, which identifies specific targets in female illiteracy and girls' education to be achieved in the next three years, most responding governments have the year 2000 as an all-encompassing goal to achieve objectives in key areas of concern.

Twenty-seven (31%) of reporting countries say the budget for women's programs has grown since the Beijing conference. Increases range from 6% in India to 25% in New Zealand to 34% in Luxembourg. In an almost equal number (28), the budget has remained the same.

Eight countries (9%) report a decrease. Budget cuts since 1995 range from an average of 20% (Germany) to a crippling 60% (Guatemala). In Canada, the national budget for women's programs has been cut from \$12 million before 1990 to \$8.1 million today, less than \$1 per woman and girl. For the most part, the budget for women's programs is a small percentage of the national budget, ranging from an average 1-3% (Honduras and Lithuania) to an invisible speck of the whole (Dominican Republic, The Philippines).

Some governments, the U.S., the U.K. and New Zealand among them, have pointed to the difficulties of assessing the budget for women's programs because of the lack of gender-disaggregated data and/or 'mainstreaming' policies that call for gender-responsive expenditures by all ministries and departments.

On the other hand, a sectoral analysis of government spending can be quite revealing of real priorities. In South Africa, budgetary cuts to the department of land have had a negative impact on land reform, affecting women the most. The agriculture budget continues to support commercial farmers at the expense of micro-farmers, who are mostly women. Over half of the energy budget went to the Atomic Energy Corporation rather than electrification of communities.

Yet elsewhere, as in Mexico, the women's ministry is part of a larger social development structure and not in a position to command a proportionate share of the budget for women's programs. Compounding the tendency of many governments to accord a low priority to 'women's issues' are fiscal austerity measures undertaken by countries across the world as part of IMF and World Bank-imposed restructuring programs, which call for a reordering of government priorities and spending patterns.

Although a number of governments and NGOs report that departments and ministries have 'mainstreamed' gender concerns in their policies, this is a particularly difficult area to evaluate in the absence of gender-sensitive policies as evidence of such mainstreaming.

Nearly half of the national machinery structures set up for Platform implementation report to parliament or the national legislature and have the authority to initiate legislative actions. Thirty-one (35%) of the reporting countries say they do not report to legislatures and an almost equal number (30) do not have the authority to initiate legislative actions.

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Participation of Civil Society

The Beijing Platform calls on governments to consult with NGOs in planning, implementing and monitoring strategies to advance the Platform (para 297). Government responses to this question were sometimes at odds with those from NGOs, suggesting that notions of the scope of consultation can vary greatly. In some countries, governments have looked to NGOs as a resource in drafting key women's policy documents and involved women's activists with definite areas of specialization as resource persons in implementing and evaluating programs. NGOs in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Senegal are among those that report a satisfactory participation in the drafting of national plans. In the U.K. the government women's unit's efforts to reach out to women's organizations through dialogue and a website have left some NGOs unimpressed.

At the other extreme, NGOs in countries as diverse as Guatemala, Mexico, Russia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia and Egypt, to name a few, have found themselves either peripheral to or shut out of government deliberations on national action plans. Yet others report meetings a few times each year, that involve no more than cursory consultation or, as one South Korean NGO puts it, occur in settings that are "too formal" for frank interchange. In Bulgaria, Poland and Zimbabwe, changes in the political environment since the Beijing conference have cooled the government's ardor for NGO partners.

There is no structure for the involvement of women's NGOs in implementing the national action plan in Croatia. The government did not accept suggestions from women's NGOs concerning the new family law. Women's NGOs have no representation in the committee for equality. Nonetheless, women's groups are willing to cooperate with the committee. - Be Active, Be Emancipated (B.a.B.e.), Croatia

While some governments and NGOs specified sectors and areas of expertise by which NGOs are selected, the majority left unanswered the question of selection criteria - a critical issue that determines the credibility, openness and seriousness of 'participation.' Korean women, for instance, point out that government appoints all the NGO members on the national committee.

NGOs have given the Kim Youngsam administration a "D" for its overall performance on women's policies. It got the highest marks for the enactment of the Special Law on Sexual Violence, and the lowest for the incomplete socialization of maternity protection costs and the failure to correct a social environment that encourages sexual violence. NGOs believe that the appointment of women as cabinet ministers and in other senior positions is an easy way out of the women's question. What is challenging is the setting up of an effective national machinery to implement the Beijing Platform, with legislative authority and resources. - Korea Women's Associations United.

The majority of reporting countries (74%) said NGOs were consulted in the formulation of the national action plans. Fourteen per cent said NGOs were not consulted, while 12% did not reply.

On the question of opinion polls to gauge women's views of whether and how women-oriented policies have actually changed their lives, more NGOs than governments have shown initiative. Information gathered from women's NGO networks in Sri Lanka show that there is an increased awareness of women's issues and concerns, mainly as a result of increased coverage of activities related to the Beijing women's conference. In Ghana, baseline surveys show an increased interest in gender and development issues among women. A poll in Benin found women more conscious of their rights and seeking better access to resources and credit. In Iran, women polled were poorly informed about the Beijing conference. A survey in Tokyo

on attitudes to domestic violence found that 30% of women polled did not seek help in situations of violence.

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Equal Participation in Decision-Making

The Beijing 'process' has sparked and/or provided momentum for women in a growing number of countries to enter the political arena. Since 1995, women have been visibly present in elections in a number of countries - the United Kingdom, France, Kenya and Iran, among them. Elections in the U.K. in May 1997 brought a record 121 women into the House of Commons, nearly doubling the number of women MPs (from 63), with almost 85% of them elected from the winning Labor Party. Six women were appointed to Prime Minister Tony Blair's cabinet as ministers and 14 in other posts.

There is a lot of rhetoric about women's issues. Yes, women are there in [the U.K.'s Labor] government and the policies are being stated. But we need to monitor their effects carefully. Let us say we are hopeful, but that the 'jury is still out.' - Women's National Commission, United Kingdom

In another first, two women were elected as representatives of Northern Ireland's Women's Coalition to the peace talks in May 1996 after the Coalition transformed itself into a political party to become eligible for inclusion in the negotiations.

In the June 1997 parliamentary elections in France, 63 women were elected to the 577-member National Assembly. This is only 11%, and women senators account for only 5.6%. Overall in Europe, with the exception of the Nordic countries, women are poorly represented in government and parliaments. Women's presence in parliaments in the former Soviet Union and eastern European countries which averaged 30% under the communist system has fallen drastically during the course of political transition, and is down to three per cent in many of the newly independent states. Despite highly visible and effective campaigns, women presidential candidates in elections in Liberia and Kenya lost to the incumbents, sparking allegations of irregularities.

The entry of women in greater numbers to electoral politics is a sign that it is the beginning of the end of tokenism. In many parts of the world, with remarkable success in parts of Africa, women have organized caucuses that have played a catalytic role in consciousness-raising and encouraging more women to stand for elections.

Cameroon's Women's Caucus, the Senegalese Council of Women, South Africa's Parliamentary Women's Group, Uganda's Forum for Women in Democracy are

notable examples of diverse coalitions of women seizing the political initiative. In a growing number of countries, governments are being challenged to act on their commitments by women's caucuses, formed along the lines of WEDO's Women's Caucus that mobilized thousands of women during the UN conferences.

Women have also made use of quota systems in political parties and national and state legislatures to enter politics in greater numbers. Thanks to South Africa's African National Congress 1992 resolution of a 30% quota for women among its candidates, women, all but 20 of them from the ANC, occupy 111 out of 400 seats in the National Assembly (28%). In Mali, the introduction of a multi-party system during the 1996 elections enabled women to pressure all political parties to field women candidates. A record number of 18 women were elected to the National Assembly, up from three in the previous house. Women also hold six ministerial positions, handling not only women's and social welfare portfolios, but industry, communication and urbanization.

NGOs held workshops and staged skits to sensitize the public on the question of greater women's political participation. People laughed at us when we demanded that all parties put women on their lists. But we were serious, and had a strict selection process for the 170 women candidates. Eighteen were elected. The 30% quota system is not a law but no political party now dares to flout it. - Naminata Dembélé Sissoko, Technical Advisor to the Ministry for Women, Children and the Family, Mali.

For the most part, quotas are unevenly applied. NGOs in Senegal, for example, point out that the ruling Socialist Party's 25% quota for women is not respected in practice. Political parties either tend to field men rather than women in safe seats, thus failing to guarantee the election of a specified number of women candidates, or disregard quota obligations, as in recent elections in Costa Rica, despite its mandatory 40% representation of women in party lists. Perceptions of the benefits and disadvantages of quota systems differ greatly among parties and women. Yet there is little doubt that quota systems have challenged male resistance to women in politics and broken down women's socio-cultural inhibitions about entering a predominantly 'male' domain.

Twenty-two reporting countries (25%) have adopted laws and policies to advance equal participation of women in decision-making. Pakistan has a 5% quota for women in public and private sector jobs. India's constitutional amendment setting aside 33% of all seats in local self-government for women came into force in 1993, although a similar move in parliament and state assemblies has encountered stiff opposition from virtually all political parties. Peru has made a 25% representation of women in party lists mandatory, as have Mozambique's Frelimo Party (33%) and Uganda (30% in local government seats).

In the push for gender-balanced and gender-*responsive* political representation, there are two encouraging trends. The first is the emergence of influential women leaders as gender advocates in countries of the South. Some notable examples are Iran's vice-president in charge of environmental protection, Massoumeh Ebtekar, who led the country's delegation to Beijing, and Fatima Hashemi Rafsanjani, member of parliament and head of a women's NGO; Guinea's Kaba Saran Daraba, a dynamic spokesperson for women at the Cairo and Beijing conferences and now minister for women and child development, and Mali's Afoussatou Diarra Thiero, who headed the national coordination of women's associations and is now minister for women, children and the family. Second, women parliamentarians with strong ties to the women's movement are forming alliances and using their advocacy skills to advance women's rights in the policy arena, especially in health and violence, as in Mexico, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.

These trends notwithstanding, women remain grossly underrepresented, even invisible, in decision-making positions in many parts of the world, except in the Nordic countries, although they constitute half or more of electorates. Worldwide, women are no more than 11.7% of parliamentarians.

Of the 180 ambassadors to the UN, only eight are women (4.4%), and women account for just 24% of staff at the permanent missions of member states to the UN in New York. Only a fifth of them (36 out of 180) are gender-balanced, with no more than 60% and no less than 40% of either sex. 'Gender apartheid' reigns in 48 missions, which have no women on staff.

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Safety

The Beijing Platform's sections on violence against women, women and armed conflict and the human rights of women reflect the considerable progress made by the international community in its understanding of and attitudes towards this most pervasive of human rights violations. In addition to the various forms of violence against women elaborated in the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Platform specifies acts of violence such as forced sterilization and forced abortion, coercive/forced use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection. It also recognizes the particular vulnerability to violence of women in minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants, and women in detention.

Violence continues to be an oppressive reality for millions of women, however, whether in the streets or at home, in refugee camps or in state custody. The perception

of domestic violence as something that occurs in the 'private' sphere and is largely immune from legal sanction, the social license accorded to wife-beating, and women's economic dependence on men have led to women being brutalized at the hands of husbands, partners, fathers and other 'guarantors' of their safety.

Against this background, the enactment of any laws to curb domestic violence is a tribute to the power of women's rights campaigns and the commitment of political will. Twenty-eight of reporting countries (32%) in this survey have adopted laws and policies against domestic violence, the greatest number in any category. In almost all of them, notably in Latin America, the laws are a direct result of women's intense and sustained campaigns to raise the profile of violence against women among politicians and the public. Women activists have negotiated with governments, made strategic allies of women parliamentarians, helped draft legislation, monitored its enforcement by the police and interpretation by the courts, and lobbied for support centers for victims of violence.

Women activists in Mexico and Germany have succeeded in getting marital rape recognized as a penal offence. In the U.K., life sentences will be automatic for those convicted of crimes of sexual violence and the Family Law Act has introduced civil measures to improve women's safety when under threat from violence. China's Changsha province has introduced the country's first set of rules to curb domestic violence and spousal abuse. Malaysia has made domestic violence a criminal offense with penalties, and 90% of its public hospitals have set up one-stop crisis centers for battered women. An amendment to Sri Lanka's penal code has increased penalties for rape and criminalizes incest and sexual harassment. New Zealand's Domestic Violence Act widens the meaning and scope of violence with provisions that cover psychological abuse such as threats, intimidation and witnessing violence, and enable all family and household members, in heterosexual as well as homosexual relationships, to apply for protection orders.

PULL QUOTE - In Costa Rica, women victims of violence can now seek an immediate protective order from a judge to get a violent partner or husband to leave the home or stay away from children. ===

By contrast, law and enforcement authorities have abdicated responsibility almost completely in the arena of armed conflict where the most egregious crimes against women are committed with impunity. Women are suffering horrific violence at the hands of the army or militants in several strife-torn parts of the world, such as Algeria, Afghanistan, East Timor and Sudan, to name just a few examples.

An abhorrent aspect of the transnational global economy is the globalization of the commercial sex industry. With the opening of borders and markets, and the

accentuation of inter-regional and inter-class disparities, growing numbers of women, and increasingly very young boys and girls, are falling victims to an ever-widening and deeply entrenched flesh trade. After Asian women, women from eastern European and former Soviet Union countries are the latest to be bought and sold in a highly organized and lucrative sex business that now spans the world. The criminal exploitation of women fostered by the forces of economic globalization makes a mockery of their hard-won recognition as equal partners with men in development and peace. Prostitution and violence against women are also on the rise in areas where there is a strong military presence, as in Chiapas in Mexico and areas covered by the UN Protection Force in Croatia.

As in the case of domestic violence, it is the unflagging efforts of women's and child rights advocates that have led to the criminalization of sexual trafficking in varying degrees, especially in the Philippines and Thailand. In Japan, neither the Criminal Code nor the Child Welfare Law recognizes sexual offense as a serious crime. Women parliamentarians from the majority party are leading a project to introduce laws to ban child sexual exploitation, as a follow-up to the Agenda for Action of the 1996 Stockholm Congress Against Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children. New Zealand's Crimes Amendment Act of 1995 makes the sexual exploitation of children by New Zealanders overseas an extra-territorial offense. In Cuba, reforms to the penal code in 1997 impose penalties for all those who profit from prostitution and do not penalize prostitutes.

For the most part, laws to curb trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of women and children, and pornography are marked by timid half-measures and doublespeak, reflecting the capitulation of many governments to the lure of the tourism industry, the grip of powerful mafia interests, and the commodification of women in the popular media. NGOs in the Philippines, Thailand, Ukraine and Bulgaria point to these disturbing trends.

Pornography was a criminal offense under the Soviet Criminal Code. Since the lifting of restrictions on pornography in the new criminal act in January 1997, the industry has flourished and built a strong lobby. The Duma in 1997 failed to restrict distribution of pornography. The pornography industry will soon reach third place in Russia after illegal weapons trade and drugs.
- Moscow Center for Gender Studies

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Health and Reproductive Rights

Progress in ensuring women's reproductive rights has been at best checkered since the Beijing conference. Twenty countries in this survey (23%) reported new measures to

protect and advance reproductive freedom, again mostly as a result of women's campaigns. South Africa's Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, passed in February 1997, entitles women and girls to state-financed abortion on request during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The Reproductive Rights Alliance, a national alliance of 30 organizations committed to creating and promoting reproductive rights, was instrumental in getting this Act passed. Similarly, in Brazil, the women's health movement campaigned successfully to kill a constitutional amendment that would have criminalized abortion under any circumstances.

In too many countries, however, women's reproductive rights remain hostage to the vagaries of political and/or fundamentalist, pro-life forces. In the U.S., the 1996 Congress set a new record as the most anti-choice Congress in the nation's history. In 1997, more than one half of states in the U.S. enacted restrictions on access to abortion. Women's rights activists in Poland are appalled by the new conservative government's decision in 1997 to reverse the abortion law, liberalized only in 1996. Abortion will now be permissible only in cases of extreme danger to the life of the fetus or the mother, or when pregnancy results from rape.

In Japan, feminists are angered by amendments to laws that reinforce the traditional role of women as mothers and reject the demands of women's groups to decriminalize abortion. In Mexico, where abortion is a crime in the penal code except in extenuating circumstances, provisions to make it available are so unclear as to make it virtually impossible for women to have one, except in very unsafe or very expensive settings. In a number of countries where abortion is legal, services lack quality and accessibility, making abortion one of the biggest causes of maternal mortality.

Measures to outlaw female genital mutilation are slowly gaining ground, overcoming entrenched cultural and religious beliefs surrounding the practice. Egypt's Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in December 1997 criminalizing FGM. The FGM Task Force, a network of development, human rights and women's NGOs and individuals established in 1994, has been instrumental in mobilizing public opinion on the issue. New Zealand and the U.S. have made the practice illegal. In Kenya, women's NGOs are popularizing rituals of "circumcision through words," to save young girls from the dangers of FGM while acknowledging its cultural significance. The Organization for African Unity pledged at a meeting in November 1997 to help its 53 member states take legal actions against traditional practices, such as FGM and nutritional taboos, that harm women and girls.

Aside from reproductive rights, women's access to health care as a whole is endangered by government cutbacks to this and other social sectors as part of debt servicing requirements and/or fiscal austerity measures in developing as well as in industrialized countries. Access to health care is one of the most sensitive indicators

of women's well-being because of women's preponderance among the most vulnerable population groups. Women and girls tend to use a smaller share of household health expenditures than men and boys, they carry a greater burden of health problems, both their own and those of household members they have to look after, they enjoy less freedom in addressing their health concerns, are less willing to go to male practitioners and are less able to seek treatment outside because of the household division of labor.

As part of structural adjustment in Sri Lanka, food subsidies have been replaced by food stamps and not indexed to the cost of living. This change is cited among other factors as resulting in higher levels of malnutrition among poor women, in particular among pregnant women. Malnutrition is manifest in the increased incidence of low birth-weight babies. - Women and Media Collective

Policies that have an impact on health services, such as the introduction of user fees and changing staffing patterns (with more women being retrenched than men as a result of downsizing in state health sectors), therefore affect women disproportionately. These patterns repeat themselves in reports from women in adjusting countries in every region - Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Mexico, among others. In Canada and the U.S., women and girls are beginning to be badly hit by the layoffs of health care workers, reduction in hospital stays and privatization of home care and other health services.

PULL QUOTE - Today women's reproductive rights are still being challenged with devastating violence, as part of an ultra-right wing anti-abortion campaign. In the first eight months of 1997 alone there were 12 cases of arson or clinic bombing. In the last twenty years there have been more than 1700 violent attacks against clinics. - National Organization for Women, United States of America

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Land, Property and Credit

Giving women control in these areas has been among policies that governments admit having the greatest difficulty with. Two bold measures that stand out are India's Supreme Court ruling of 1996 giving Hindu widows full ownership rights over property inherited from their husbands, and Zimbabwe's amendment to the inheritance law in 1997 to favor neither sons nor daughters. NGOs in Zimbabwe who worked hard on this issue report that the law may not, however, easily dislodge society's son preference. The Indian Supreme Court ruling also enlarged the scope of maintenance for a Hindu widow. NGOs have applauded the court's decision that seeks to remove

the considerable discrimination suffered by Hindu women in the area of property rights.

The Dominican Republic, Fiji, Haiti, Honduras, Argentina, Sri Lanka and Kenya report microcredit initiatives to start off women entrepreneurs in small business. NGOs in Senegal, Egypt and India are skeptical of the empowering effect of microcredit schemes in an economic environment that excludes and exploits women. Despite a 90% loan repayment rate, Pakistan's Women's Bank is in jeopardy following a government move to privatize it as part of economic restructuring. Women's groups have stalled the move by challenging it in court.

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Employment

Twenty-two reporting countries (17%) have instituted policies and enacted laws to promote women's equal opportunity in employment. New Zealand's national action plan identifies as key areas for action research on the gender pay gap and a time-use survey to collect information on unpaid work and its contribution to the economy.

Germany, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the U.K., the Philippines and Guatemala are among countries that have improved maternity leave and child care provisions for employed women, some with varying degrees of restrictions. Pakistan, Peru, Honduras and Fiji have instituted affirmative action policies in public and/or private sector jobs.

NGOs in the UK say that the Labor government's proposed national child care strategy is undermined by its 'new deal' for lone parents, which cuts benefits for newly unemployed single parents.

Cutbacks in public childcare and other support services for women, as part of the transition from a command to a market economy in eastern Europe and Central Asia has especially affected women's ability to compete in the job market. Women are a disproportionate number of the unemployed also because of their preponderance at lower levels which are the first to be trimmed for 'efficiency,' the preference for men at higher and skilled levels of employment and closures of factories under privatization. Women's unemployment averages 70% in Armenia, Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria and Croatia. Further, the state's failure to finance benefits under new laws that seek to provide support for mothers and pregnant women in the workforce, as in Croatia and the Ukraine, have made women too expensive to hire.

Cutbacks in expenditures in the public sector, one of the few areas where women have access to full-time and unionized jobs with decent pay and benefits, are having an impact in industrialized nations, too. Women in public sectors have suffered massive layoffs and/or loss of benefits in Canada and the U.S., with women from ethnic and aboriginal minorities hit the worst.

The globalization process has increased job opportunities for women in certain sectors, but women are also the first to experience its negative consequences. Women's access to equal opportunity and equal pay in work, labor and organizing rights have been severely eroded in the global economy. Nowhere is this more evident than in the export-processing zones that have mushroomed in adjusting countries and have a preponderance of female workers. This feminization of employment, often interpreted as a positive outcome of structural adjustment, is in fact a result of international and local demand for cheap and docile labor that can be used in low-skill, repetitive jobs in unsafe and insecure conditions without minimum guarantees. NGO accounts from Malaysia, South Korea, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Egypt and Mexico illustrate the plight of women exploited by the global market. Sri Lanka's NGOs point out that trade relations with importing countries have a direct impact on the employment opportunities of women, particularly those in the FTZs and in industries that produce goods primarily for exports. The increase in taxes for exports to countries such as the United States, for example, makes the situation of these workers very vulnerable.

Entire economies, such as that of the Philippines, profit from the earnings of women migrant workers overseas, who suffer gross violations of their human rights, ranging from inhuman working conditions to physical violence, and even rape and murder.

The feminization of the labor force begins with women being dispossessed of land and other means of production and being left with only their energy, which cannot be used in their home countries. This marginalization intensifies under the process of globalization and migration, resulting in the feminization of poverty. - Tenaganita, Malaysia

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Education

Since the Beijing conference, education policies have changed in a number of countries to reflect the needs of girls. Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland, made changes in school admission policies to benefit girls. In Pakistan, the introduction of co-education in primary schools in 1996-97 led to sharp increases in girls' enrollment, especially in rural areas. By contrast, in Iran, it is sex segregation policies that have had the same result. Segregation in primary schools has dented the opposition of

parents in rural areas to sending their daughters to school. Today, 95% of female children go to primary school.

As in health and employment, the education sector has suffered drastic cutbacks under structural adjustment, with grave implications for girls. Where primary and secondary school education was previously largely subsidized by the state, the introduction of school fees under cost-recovery programs has meant that families must now choose between work and school for their children, with girls being the majority of drop-outs. Reports from Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Armenia attest to this trend. In India, a 14% cut in the government expenditure on primary education has forced many schools to seek private funds. The growing privatization of schools has made education an expensive proposition for poorer households. At the same time, a 17% budgetary cut for non-formal education has led to the closure of many night schools and adult education programs which have large numbers of working women.

In India, the Integrated Child Development Services program was universalized in 1997, with girls accounting for nearly 50% of pre-schoolers. The education of girls is a focus of government initiatives to increase education expenditure to reach 6% of GDP by 2002. As a special incentive for girls who are unable to attend formal schooling, the ratio of girls-only centers to co-educational ones under the non-formal educational system has been increased to 40:60. - SIDDHI-ENDA, India

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Conclusions

Governments that attended the Beijing conference committed to create national plans to advance the Platform for Action in their countries. Where national action plans remain more plans than action, the reasons for lack of progress are many: the weakness of democratic political institutions, the absence of a vigorous civil society, the resurgence of rightwing forces implacably opposed to women's rights to equality and freedom, profligate defense spending, the devastation of armed conflicts and the aftermath of war, and the constraints imposed by a voracious global economy and austerity measures for debt servicing. Macro-economic policies such as structural adjustment, privatization, export-oriented growth policies and agricultural 'reform' have exacerbated women's inequality in a number of areas, although only a small minority of responding governments acknowledge the fact and fewer still have programs to offset such impact.

At bottom, it is political will - or the lack of it - that will determine the future of the promises made in Beijing. NGOs are aware that political will does not exist in a vacuum. As this report shows, it is pressure from intense advocacy by women

activists that has moved governments to enact laws in the difficult realms of violence, health and inheritance in many countries, and to integrate women's priorities in national policies (in combating poverty and meeting basic needs) in others. The advocacy has been effective to a certain extent in the national context, as shown by women's successes in influencing laws in safety and health. But it has obvious limits when faced with external constraints (such as the debt crisis and structural adjustment) and the forces of economic globalization, which have targeted women for employment and exploitation. As NGO accounts in this report show, the phenomenon of globalization has failed to significantly improve women's economic advancement over the long term. Agreements such as the proposed multilateral Agreement on Investment now in the final stages of negotiation by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development countries take policy-making powers away from governments and hand them to multinational corporations. Policies that favor women's advancement could be considered discriminatory under MAI provisions - a looming threat that women's and other people's organizations need to address.

This report is an effort at strengthening the capacity of the women's movement to demand accountability from governments and other policy-makers for people-centered and gender-aware policies at all levels that affect women. By providing NGO voices an independent forum to critique government performance, **Mapping Progress** opens the space for political dialogue at the national and international levels. Placing NGO critiques alongside government reports is one way of ensuring that government statements do not go unchallenged. A framework for critical assessment helps NGOs build a political perspective and hone their advocacy skills - thus encouraging vigilance by civil society. Finally, the report links international advocacy with national efforts through information, solidarity and effective alliance building. It is therefore a potentially powerful tool to strengthen the capacity of the women's movement to build a political constituency nationally and across borders that is key to creating political will for change.

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