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GENDER MATTERS

THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION
IWDA PARTNER PERSPECTIVES
20 YEARS ON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) recognises partnership and collaboration as fundamental to development effectiveness. As we work with partners, we build our capabilities and strengths to advocate for gender equality. Together we create space for women's voices to be heard and amplify these through networking, advocacy and research.

We acknowledge with respect, the collaboration between IWDA program managers and partners that enabled us to gather and translate the stories, insights and wisdom from across 16 organisations within our network. We also acknowledge the research team that developed the 'Individual Deprivation Measure'.

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Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development
Live and Learn Environmental Education
Palaung Women's Organisation
West Are 'Are Rokotaniken Association
Wide Bay Conservation Association
Women's League of Burma
Workers Information Centre

IWDA's research partners in the 'Assessing development: designing better indices of poverty and gender equity' project: The Australian National University, Oxfam GB (Southern Africa region), the Philippines Health Social Science Association and the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Disclaimer

Gender Matters explores issues that IWDA believes are important for the development sector to consider and discuss. The authors take responsibility for any errors and gaps.

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing. This conference attracted seventeen thousand registered participants representing 189 nations. A parallel NGO Forum was attended by thirty thousand women and men. They celebrated their achievements, built relationships and networks, and encouraged and learned from one another. It enabled governments and civil society organisations to share ideas and develop strategies for women's empowerment and it marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. **The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted unanimously by 189 countries, was a visionary agenda.**

The Platform for Action is a commitment, made by the governments gathered in Beijing, to dedicate themselves unreservedly to addressing the constraints and obstacles preventing the further advancement and empowerment of women all over the world. It sets strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality.

However, the Beijing Platform for Action is not a binding treaty. Unlike UN conventions and treaties, it does not provide a mechanism for the redress of wrongs, nor is there any enforcement mechanism. Its implementation depends on the commitment of national governments as well as the continued activism and advocacy of civil society organisations.

In this issue of *Gender Matters*, IWDA and our partners reflect on the outcomes, 20-years later, of the lessons learned, the hope generated and the solidarity forged at the Beijing Conference.

The impact of the Beijing Conference is often assessed through the Platform for Action's 12 Critical Areas of Concern, ranging from 'Women and poverty' to 'The girl child'. It seems that the principles recognised or reinforced in Beijing, the questions asked and the agreements made, are still relevant for a new generation of women. There is pressure to demonstrate and measure change, at individual and national levels. While some changes towards gender equality can occur quickly, others take many years.

'In the last 20 years we've seen a lot of changes in relation to gender equality,' one of IWDA's partners writes, 'the progression towards realising women's

rights is not linear, there have been many backward steps.' Another partner tells us, 'It is clear that we have not got where we need to be yet, and we need to continue.'

"The lack of implementation of the Platform for Action means that the lived realities for women are difficult, despite progress at the legal and policy level. At the global level it is a fierce new world. The international context is not the same conducive environment that we saw in 1995. It is a struggle to maintain those rights we fought for in 1995, let alone other more progressive agendas, especially relating to sexual and reproductive rights and sexual orientation and gender identity. This is due to a combination of market fundamentalisms, religious fundamentalisms and other complex international trends."

Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji

Many of IWDA's partner organisations have been actively engaged in the Beijing +20 review process. Some partners attended the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment or contributed to consultations within their own countries. Other partners coordinated civil society organisations in their country or region to discuss key issues and agree on joint positions to take to the regional conference.

"The high point for us during the lead up to the Beijing +20 meeting has been Pacific governments' solidarity on women's rights, including SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) in the various preparatory sessions in the Pacific and Asia Pacific Region. FWRM (Fiji Women's Rights Movement) worked to ensure Pacific delegations had a united regional position during negotiation of the outcome statement of the UN ESCAP Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review."

Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji

"The Director of Alola participated in the Beijing +20 meeting in Bangkok in November. Alola coordinated a group of women's rights NGOs to discuss key issues to take to the meeting, and lobbied the government to include these in their statement."

Alola Foundation, Timor-Leste

“ALFeLa has been engaged in consultations in Timor-Leste.”

ALFeLa, Timor-Leste

Some partners however, have not had the opportunity to contribute to the review process in any way. For some, this is due to the lack of recognition and consultation by their government:

“Bougainville Women’s Federation (BWF) has been frustrated by the lack of involvement of a wide range of women’s voices in Bougainville in the Beijing +20 processes. Local representatives do not consult BWF on issues facing women in Bougainville, so we do not feel as if we are part of the process, despite BWF being the peak agency for women in Bougainville.”

Bougainville Women’s Federation, Bougainville

For Bougainville Women’s Federation and others, this publication may be their only opportunity to comment on progress made against the Beijing Platform for Action and for their challenges and recommendations to be heard. IWDA adds its voice by capturing some key findings in our partnership journey.

This publication is organised around the 12 Critical Areas of Concern but consistent with the comprehensive nature of the Beijing Platform for Action. The issues and perspectives shared here are inter-related. Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment requires a comprehensive and consistent focus. Women’s organisations continue to have this as a core demand.

WOMEN AND POVERTY

Critical Area of Concern A

"In order to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, women and men must participate fully and equally in the formulation of macroeconomic and social policies and strategies for the eradication of poverty."

Platform for Action, Critical Area A, Paragraph 47

Two decades after the Beijing Platform for Action called for better gender statistics, it is still not possible to know if women are poorer than men or vice versa—despite persistent claims that women and girls comprise the majority of the world's poor. What we measure matters. Changing how poverty is measured is essential to transforming poverty and gender inequality.

The Platform for Action recognises the central role that women play in the eradication of poverty and stresses the need for their full and equal participation in the formulation and implementation of policy. Yet the persistence of women's poverty in many countries continues to be underpinned by delays to legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to health, education services and economic resources including ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies.

Headlines

- Measurement of poverty with a gender lens has not been possible until the development of the new gender-sensitive Individual Deprivation Measure.
- Despite laws allowing women to own land, unequal access to credit and customary practices allowing land grabbing by male relatives has meant that women who have been abandoned or widowed still have little claim to assets.
- Women continue to have much more limited access to credit than men, especially in rural and remote areas.
- Women-led savings clubs in the Pacific are creating an enabling environment that allows women to build and maintain sustainable livelihoods.

Partner Perspectives

"In a region where most rural women do not have access to a bank account, LLEE (Live and Learn Environmental Education) has overseen the establishment of 18 women's savings clubs with a combined wealth of close to \$1,000,000 Solomon Island Dollars saved by members."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association is an indigenous women's savings club that serves almost 1000 members across 12 rural zones in West Are'Are, Malaita and one urban zone, Honiara. We are working to address women's economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"Many girls and women, as well as boys and men are driven by poverty and a lack of decent work opportunities, leading them to seek work outside of Cambodia."

Gender and Development for Cambodia, Cambodia

"Women are turning to prostitution because they have been left by their husband and return to their homeland where they don't have land or resources."

Eastern Highlands Family Voice, Papua New Guinea

"Widows are likely to be targets of sorcery-related violence. Women who don't have men looking out for them are quickly accused of sorcery."

Eastern Highlands Family Voice, Papua New Guinea

"Savings clubs have overall improved the standard of living of many families."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"In Cambodia, wages in the garment industry are among the lowest in the region. The wages often are not sufficient to support their families and ensure a basic standard of living. This is despite the fact that the Cambodian Labour Law requires a minimum wage that provides workers with have 'a decent standard of living compatible with human dignity'. This has a detrimental impact on women's health, and given many women workers are of child bearing age, risks the future of their children."

Gender and Development for Cambodia, Cambodia

“The Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM), developed by an Australian-based international research partnership, involving IWDA, is the first measure to be based on how poor women and men define poverty. It incorporates previously ignored areas that are especially important for poor women and recognises that escaping poverty requires more than just money. It is the first measure to assess the situation of individuals not households, and can reveal differences in deprivation within households. By measuring on a one to five scale, the IDM identifies who is poor, in what ways and to what extent. And because **the IDM identifies differences between men and women in overall deprivation and in each of the 15 dimensions** (see below diagram), it enables a further innovation: construction of a gender equity measure relevant to poor people.

“Poverty measures are used to advocate for and allocate scarce resources, to evaluate the impact of policies and programs, and to analyse the

determinants of poverty. Most poverty measures do not reflect the perspectives of poor people who have the most direct knowledge of poverty. They define and measure poverty as though it were the same thing for women and men and fail to consider aspects of life that are specifically important to women or to men. They also categorise people as either ‘poor’ or ‘not poor’, masking the depth of poverty. This makes it impossible to identify exactly who is poor, to what extent and in what ways—and to ensure that ‘no one is left behind’. We can’t know how access to resources and decision-making vary among household members, yet we know inequality exists within households. This makes it impossible to know whether women are disproportionately poor, female-headed households are poorer than others, or whether a specific household member is experiencing overlapping deprivation, such as a woman with disability facing deprivation in education, health, sanitation, water, family planning and voice.”

IWDA, Australia



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Critical Area of Concern B

"Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Women should be enabled to benefit from an ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills beyond those acquired during youth. This concept of lifelong learning includes knowledge and skills gained in formal education and training, as well as learning that occurs in informal ways, including volunteer activity, unremunerated work and traditional knowledge."

Platform for Action, Critical Area B, Paragraph 69 & 73

IWDA's partnerships recognise the important role of education for women's and girl's empowerment while acknowledging that this Area of Concern goes beyond formal education to informal skills building or training that embraces the concept of lifelong learning.

We work with our partners in Asia and Pacific regions to build skills and knowledge in all areas including: leadership and political participation; advocacy for justice; women's rights awareness; management skills and financial literacy; computer literacy and communications technology. We respect that ongoing acquisition of knowledge and the skills for women will benefit the individual, their families, communities and nations.

Headlines

- Access for girls to formal education is improving—but slowly.
- Persistent preference for education is given to boys over girls.
- Traditions and norms continue to restrict access to higher education but awareness activities are having an impact.
- Cost of education and lack of formal or technical schools in rural areas disadvantages local girls and women.
- The life that follows schooling continues to be shaped by discrimination.

Partner Perspectives

"Education empowers women and girls, enables them to make informed decisions and advances her community."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"Parents continue to favour providing education to boys over girls."

Amara, Cambodia

"The gender imbalance in higher level education can be linked to the gender imbalance in Cambodia's civil service."

Amara, Cambodia

"An increase in scholarships for women to tertiary institutions in the provinces is needed to overcome disadvantage."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"Gender parity at the senior level of schooling is still a challenge."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"Some men, even among the educated, do not allow their wives to come out and participate in politics. There exists an entrenched belief that women do not have the capacity. Politicians say, 'We don't want women coming and learning, they must be ready to compete not to learn'."

ALola, Timor-Leste

"[We must] find the balance between empowering women and not threatening men. Solomon Islanders (80%) who mostly reside in rural communities still strongly believe that leadership positions are only for men."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

WOMEN AND HEALTH

Critical Area of Concern C

"Women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life...Women's health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being and is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives, as well as by biology."

Platform for Action, Critical Area C, Paragraph 89

Ninety-nine per cent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries and the common risks to women's and girl's health are violence, malnutrition, adolescent pregnancy and disease. Given this, IWDA's partnerships across Asia Pacific are closely associated with the sexual and reproductive health rights of women, and sexuality and awareness of the economic and public health crisis caused by gender-based violence.

Headlines

- Of all the 12 Critical Areas of Concern, the least amount of progress has been made in the area of women's reproductive health.
- A gender lens on worker's rights is integral to healthy work places and well-being for women.
- Inequalities in the provision of health care still result in inadequate health services for rural women.
- The provision of crisis and referral services and safe houses for survivors of gender-based violence remains imperative.
- Work within the community and through women's human rights defenders networks is crucial to ensure safety and greater awareness of women's rights in relation to violence.

Partner Perspectives

"Community work of human rights defenders and their 'It's NOT okay' campaign on violence against women and children has been very important."

Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, Bougainville

"Despite significant gains in the area of HIV in Cambodia, there are still around 70,000 people living with HIV and more than half are women."

Gender and Development for Cambodia, Cambodia

"Cervical cancer has been identified as the main cause of death of women in the country."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"There is little health awareness within rural communities in Solomon Islands. WARA is working on preventive programs that promote women's health such as training on personal hygiene, home management, mother's health and nutrition."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"We act at the level of local government, advocating for support of women's rights particularly in regard to violence."

Voice for Change, Papua New Guinea

"The Workers Information Centre in Cambodia works directly with women garment workers to build networks and share experiences through six drop-in centres providing services related to worker's health and wellbeing."

Workers Information Centre, Cambodia

"Sexual and reproductive health and rights are the final frontier for Women's Rights now - these issues (abortion, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights, sexuality education etc.) cause the most moral panic, and therefore require the most vigilance to maintain what we have already achieved and progress towards better outcomes for women and young women. A rights-based approach - involving men and women, boys and girls - is critical to challenging these barriers."

Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Critical Area of Concern D

"Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Platform for Action, Critical Area D, Paragraph 112

Violence against women and girls, whether it be physical, sexual or psychological remains universal and present at all stages of life. In Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Cambodia there are new laws against domestic violence with one underway in Burma and a new Family Protection Bill in Solomon Islands. After 13 years of lobbying, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement have seen the Family Law Act implemented at home, while supporting other Pacific countries in doing the same. However, insufficient and poorly trained police, judiciary, a lack of understanding of the law and the rights of the woman and a persistent cultural normalisation of violence towards women has meant that little has changed in women's and girl's lived experience.

Headlines

- Progress in legislative development or reform to protect women is promising.
- Effective implementation of laws is rare and gender-sensitivity within the judicial system is a significant challenge.
- Violence continues unabated due to impunity.
- Violence is becoming more severe and taking new forms.
- Men's attitudinal change and community education on women's rights remain essential to ending violence against women.

Partner Perspectives

"Changes have started but they are very slow – and there may be a sign of change for one case in a thousand."

Women's League of Burma, Burma

"The court gives suspended sentences. However, there is not a mechanism to control or monitor suspended sentences, so the perpetrator thinks they are completely free. This makes the woman feel like it is not worth taking their cases to court. Sometimes the Public Prosecutor asks things like 'Did you enjoy the sex or not?' This makes the woman feel immediately shy and embarrassed."

ALFela, Timor-Leste

"When violence is reported, local authorities who often have little understanding of relevant laws, frequently encourage victims to stay with their partner and undergo informal conflict resolutions processes rather than formal legal proceedings."

Gender and Development for Cambodia, Cambodia

"Recently there was one case in Shan state where the rape perpetrator was handed over to the civilian court and he was sentenced to 13 years prison. This was good because this was the first time a case of rape has been handed over to the civilian court. It is usually handled through the military court because there is no transparency."

Women's League of Burma, Burma

"Violence against women is worse than before. In our culture, at least three out of four women have experienced violence. Burning, guns and bush knives are now being used ... and sorcery related violence is increasing. Widows are likely to be targets of sorcery-related violence. Women who don't have men looking out for them are quickly accused of sorcery."

Eastern Highlands Family Voice, Papua New Guinea

"In Cambodia, high levels of violence are directed at lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people. There are no laws or policy frameworks for homosexuality that protect the basic human rights of LGBT people in Cambodia."

Gender and Development Cambodia, Cambodia

WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Critical Area of Concern E

"Peace is inextricably linked with equality between men and women and development."

Platform for Action, Critical Area E, Paragraph 131

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent supporting resolutions, reaffirm the crucial role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peace-keeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.

Civil society organisations have continued to play a vital role in helping to promote equality and increase women's engagement with the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the grass roots, national and international levels and continue to hold Governments to account on obligations under UNSCR1325 and the implementation of National or Regional Action Plans, where they exist. IWDA's program partnerships are all located in fragile states or in communities or nations that have experienced conflict and post-conflict negotiations.

Headlines

- Women's organisations understand the drivers of conflict but are not at the negotiating table.
- The knowledge, expertise and influence of women's civil society organisations continues to provide leadership on peace and security in conflict settings.
- National and Regional Action Plans on Women Peace and Security are in their infancy—but increasing.

Partner Perspectives

"Bougainville is in the post-conflict phase now. Even so, there are still weapons that are being used from time to time to threaten communities including women and girls. Women in some areas report living in fear because of this where their security is seriously compromised and reporting such activities may further compromise their security."

Bougainville Women's Federation, Bougainville

"WLB's staff face intimidation and threats and there is no one to take care of our security. These threats are not only from the military but also the local people and who have authority and weapons ... international governments or donors no longer want to hear about the ongoing human rights violations. They want to engage with the government—they don't want to damage their relationship by drawing attention to human rights violations raised by local people."

Women's League of Burma, Burma

"The military are everywhere and above the law. Unless they are brought under government control through the constitutional amendment, it will be impossible to remove all the military from the ethnic areas and for the ethnic armed groups to stop fighting and enter into political dialogue."

Women's League of Burma, Burma

"Women leaders and girls who are accused of sorcery are being tortured and killed. These crimes, even though they are reported, are not addressed as criminal activity. The perpetrators are not brought to justice. We have reports of women in these districts being frightened to speak out about this issue for fear of reprisal. The criminal justice system is very weak in Bougainville. Strengthening law and order would have a positive impact."

Bougainville Women's Federation, Bougainville

"Palaung Women's Organisation (PWO) is constantly watched by local government authorities. Even though PWO staff work under these conditions, they are afraid, but they think—if we don't start now, when will we start? Before 2012 we could not talk about human rights, women's rights or politics because people worried they would be punished."

Palaung Women's Organisation, Burma

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Critical Area of Concern F

"Although many women have advanced in economic structures for the majority of women ... continuing obstacles have hindered their ability to achieve economic autonomy and to ensure sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their dependents."

Platform for Action, Critical Area F, Paragraph 156

IWDA's partnerships have contributed to a deeper understanding of what women's economic empowerment looks like. Women's ability to have power, agency and access to economic resources and non-traditional choices for work is linked to stronger national economic performance but is also shrouded in risks for the individual. Unpaid household and care work is still not assigned a monetary value, but if it was, it would contribute between 10-39% of GDP.

Women's economic empowerment does not always look like 'graduating' from work in the informal non-cash economy to better paying work in the formal economy. Informal employment continues to comprise around half to three quarters of all non-agricultural employment. The situation of huge workload and no power has been described as 'slavery' by women in PNG and Solomon Islands.

Headlines

- Women's work is not equitable, just or safe. Women continue to spend more time on unpaid household and care work than men.
- Women continue to be responsible for most of the work in informal and non-cash economies.
- Measuring women's economic empowerment beyond financial indicators remains neglected.
- Women's savings clubs make a difference.
- Migrant labourers require gender specific legal protection of wages and working conditions.
- Women continue to be vulnerable both in seeking employment and in the workforce.
- Work terms and conditions remain highly discriminatory.
- Transport infrastructure and safety is required for rural women to access markets.

Partner Perspectives

"With women demonstrating good leadership in the management of these savings clubs, their leadership potential has been recognised within the communities resulting in women being asked to take on various leadership roles in various village committees such as school board, health committees or education committees."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"Only when a woman is empowered economically and can earn money, she can then manage her own economy and can then gain power in decision-making in everything. If they can have money, they can have power, if they can have power, they can change society."

Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development, Cambodia

"There are no policies that encourage or enable women to be involved in businesses or contribute to growing the country's economy."

West Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands

"Despite potential to increase their businesses and to earn more income, there is little interest among members to produce items in marketable quantities. This is due to the difficulties in accessing markets or managing the link to markets."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"When women first migrate to the cities they know little about the situation, their rights and conditions. WIC shares information about the working conditions of garment factories with women in rural areas, before they migrate to the city."

Worker's Information Centre, Cambodia

"Legal safeguards and policy measures in Cambodia and in destination countries are so important to ensure the safety and basic rights of migrant workers."

Gender and Development for Cambodia, Cambodia

Page 10 shows *The Floating Coconut: understanding women's and men's roles in economies in Melanesia*, Illustration by Live and Learn Environmental Education Australia.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S AND MEN'S ROLES IN ECONOMIES IN MELANESIA



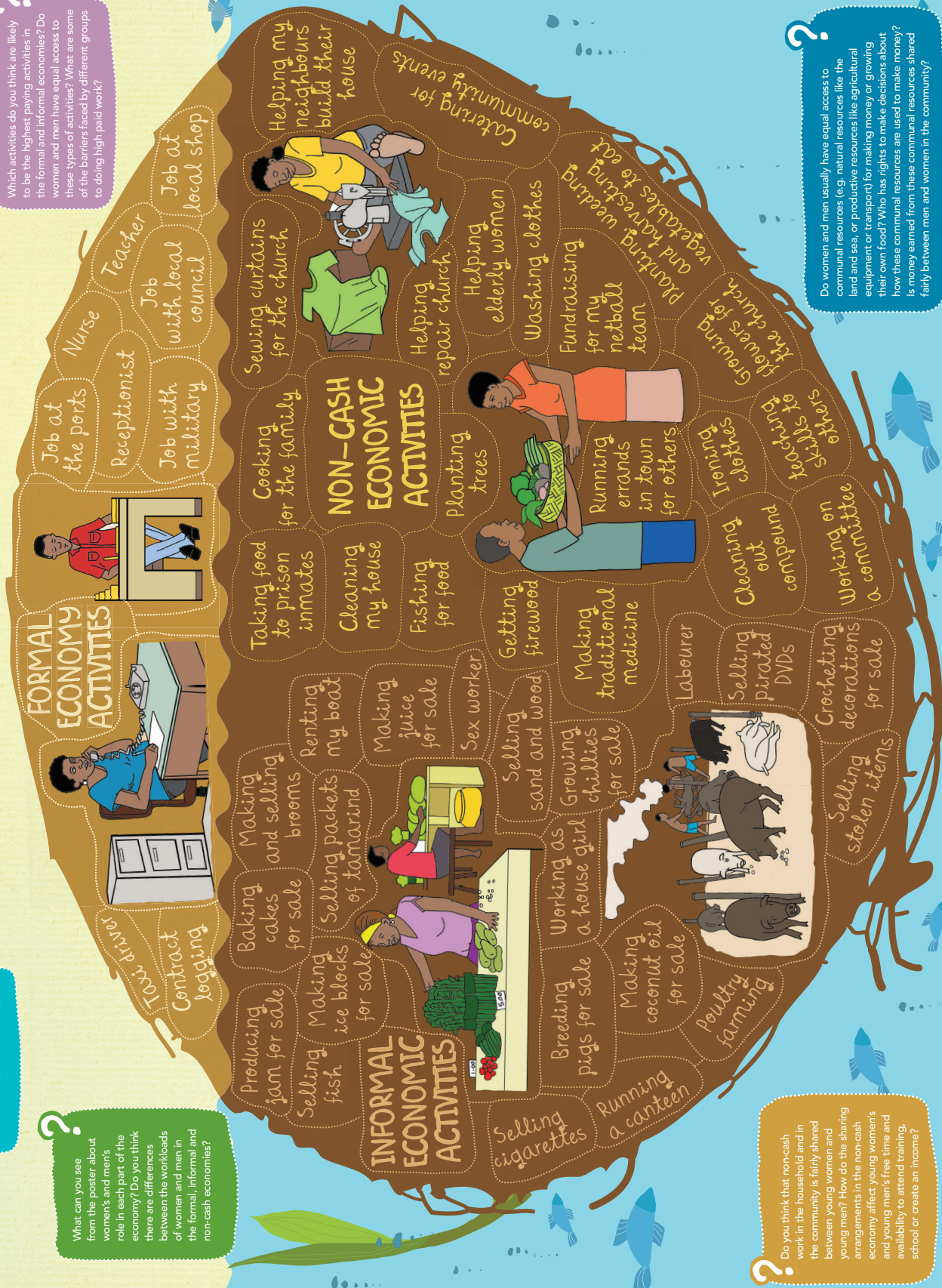
Can you identify the activities that you think would be generally done by women or by men in your community?



What can you see from the poster about women's and men's role in each part of the economy? Do you think there are differences between the workloads of women and men in the formal, informal and non-cash economies?



Which activities do you think are likely to be the highest paying activities in the formal and informal economies? Do women and men have equal access to these types of activities? What are some of the barriers faced by different groups to doing high paid work?



Do you think that non-cash work in the household and in the community is fairly shared between young women and young men? How do the sharing arrangements in the non-cash economy affect young women's and young men's free time and availability to attend training, school or create an income?



Do women and men usually have equal access to communal resources (e.g. natural resources like the land and sea, or productive resources like agricultural equipment or transport) for making money or growing their own food? Who has rights to make decisions about how these communal resources are used to make money? Is money earned from these communal resources shared fairly between men and women in the community?

THE ECONOMY IS LIKE A FLOATING COCONUT

We can think about the economy as a floating coconut made up of three parts. One part of the economy is visible above the water and the other two parts are submerged under the water.

Above the water

- Formal economic activities:** wage or salaried work, producing goods or services for sale in a registered company, small business that pays government taxes and licenses fees, government office or non-government organisation.
- Informal economic activities:** paid domestic work, making, selling and on-selling products or services in unregistered businesses that do not have licenses or pay tax.

Below the water

- Non-cash economic activities:** unpaid work, voluntary work, community work, household duties (gardening, caring for children and elderly, housework), reciprocal labour (I help you work in your garden, you help me with my work), family sharing and redistribution, church sharing and giving, community sharing.
- In most Melanesian communities, the main economic activities are agriculture, unpaid house and care-giving work, gifting, voluntary labour, inter-household exchange and unregulated income-generating activities. Self-employed individuals undertake much of this work; cooperative businesses are less common in Melanesia. The availability of formal sector work is often very limited, particularly in rural areas. While all these activities contribute in important ways to sustaining people's lives and creating well-being, many governments (and others) tend to focus on developing and measuring activity in the formal economy – that is, the economic activity above the water. This makes economic activity in the formal sector more visible and appear more important than the activity below the water. In reality, activity in all parts of the economy are important and need to be recognised as such.

Women's and men's roles in the economy

- In every Pacific economy men and women of all ages play distinctive roles that make different but equally valuable contributions to household well-being.
- If you ask men and women to create their own separate coconuts you are likely to discover that:
- Both women and men have very creative ways of putting food on the table, accessing cash and improving individual, household and community well-being.
 - Men often have access to more formal sector work opportunities than women, especially those who are able to travel away from the community.
 - Women often undertake more day-to-day non-cash work than men, especially in the household. Men's non-cash work can be ad-hoc and seasonal.
 - Young men often have fewer responsibilities in the household when compared with their sisters or girls of the same age. This can mean that they have a lot more free time.
 - Women and young people do not always have rights to make decisions about the money that they earn.
 - Non-cash work binds households and communities together and puts food on the table, but it tends to be valued less than cash work. This means that much of women's work is often undervalued.

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Critical Area of Concern G

"The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life ... Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved."

Platform for Action, Critical Area G, Paragraph 181

Women's civil and political participation, that brings access to power and decision-making, continues to be an intergenerational change process. Prejudices towards women as leaders and political representatives remain a substantial barrier to equality. All IWDA program partnerships are associated with increasing women's agency, voice and visibility.

Headlines

- Legislative changes and temporary special measures are increasing women's participation in government.
- Leadership training and support and women's rights awareness at the community level brings substantial results for entry into local government.
- Capacity development and confidence building skills for local activists triggers career progression to political candidature.

Partner Perspectives

"Sixteen per cent of women in parliament is still very low and nowhere near what many Fijian women had hoped for 20 years ago."

Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji

"If women are elected to the commune council, they may be able to move into politics at the district or provincial level. Eventually, women may be able to compete at a national level."

Amara, Cambodia

"Male leaders worry about protecting their positions and are threatened by women having more knowledge. Before, only the men could make these decisions, now she has the power to make decisions within the family on large purchases. These women now have the bravery to participate in commune meetings to protect other women at commune level."

Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development, Cambodia

"Some men champions worked with women to campaign for the only female candidate."

West Are 'Are Rokotaniken Association, Solomon Islands

"Genuine democracy can only be gained through greater representation, especially of women, which the 2013 Fiji Constitution fails to actively provide."

FemLINKPACIFIC, Fiji

"Men hold the power and have the dominant voice across all levels - within the home, at Village Assembly and Council of Elders level, within the workplace and the political arena."

Bougainville Women's Federation, Bougainville

"Women are still not accepted in decision-making roles in their communities and homes."

Palaung Women's Organisation, Burma

"The new law on municipalities says that the Manager of the Municipality must be a level six government worker. There are very few women working at this level."

ALola, Timor-Leste

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Critical Area of Concern H

"National machineries [for the advancement of women] are diverse in form and uneven in their effectiveness, and in some cases have declined. Often marginalised in national government structures, these mechanisms are frequently hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data and sufficient resources, in insufficient support from national political leadership."

Platform for Action, Critical Area H, Paragraph 196

Women's knowledge, participation and power within commissions, departments, committees, divisions or offices of Government can be harnessed through a central government structure with the mandate to advance women's rights and gender equality. These national women's machineries are integrally linked with civil society coordination mechanisms that generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data to inform and drive equitable investment and policy-making.

Headlines

- National women's machineries remain side-lined and under resourced.
- Government machineries ask for more gender disaggregated data and information for planning and investment.
- Women's civil society organisations provide training and advisory assistance to government agencies in order to integrate a gender perspective in their policies and programs.
- Structural barriers continue to prevent gender mainstreaming across governments.

Partner Perspectives

"[In Fiji,] women are already participants and decision-makers in all areas of state and civil society, but their views are minimised, blocked or tokenised when formal processes regarding constitutionality and governance are nationally debated and decided."

FemLINKPACIFIC, Fiji

"The Commonwealth Local Government Forum works with local governments, to improve gender inequality and support the development of democratic values and good local governance through their Women in Local Government (WiLG) Network."

Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Pacific

"Major challenges experienced while progressing gender is the existing gender inequality culture in Solomon Islands which is strongly reflected in institutions such as the church, schools, community leadership structures and almost all works of life in the country. It makes our work quite difficult because we are working against a culture that has been developed for years."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"More women are in politics and in many other areas such as education, health and the armed forces ... but [governments] need to do more than just notionally accept women in government and ensure their voices and ideas are heard."

ALFeLA, Timor-Leste

"Sometimes women's presence in [community] management committees only fulfils the number criteria and women are not meaningfully contributing to discussions. Because men have always been in positions of power, it is quite new to involve village women in positions of power in mixed groups/committees. However, we are beginning to see positive changes."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Critical Area of Concern I

"The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for Governments and the United Nations and is essential for the advancement of women."

Platform for Action, Critical Area I, Paragraph 213

Promoting and protecting the human rights of women (cultural, economic, political and social) requires the full implementation of all human rights. Especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Frameworks, as they continue to emerge and be reformed against a gender-sensitive analysis, will only be effective if the remedies to violations are accessible and enforceable.

To ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice, a conducive environment is necessary to generate knowledge and understanding about women's rights that is readily understood and accessible to all. This includes being able to use a justice system to exercise one's rights. The progress in coordination between local and regional women's groups, relevant non-governmental organisations, educators and the media has been an important step forward in raising awareness and accountability.

Headlines

- More space for dialogue on women's rights.
- Women's rights organisations are major providers of training in political engagement and leadership.
- Women's rights organisations best placed as monitors of CEDAW reporting and authors of Shadow reports.
- Partners in both the Asia and Pacific regions have been active in the ongoing process of monitoring and reporting to keep their government accountable despite the risks.
- Women's rights organisations are the leading advocates for social justice.
- Increasing awareness of discrimination among younger men of changing gender roles.
- The road to gender equality is long and difficult.

Partner Perspectives

"How can our country develop if women don't have rights?"

Palaung Women's Organisation, Burma

"The way we understand women's rights is very different to the way the government understands them. Even though the Government has signed CEDAW, you can see very clearly that the delegation is led by men. This makes it clear how they understand women's issues and their level of concern. For us, the concern is always women and we have had this concern for a long time. If the government shared our concern they would put all their promises into action - those promises they made to the international community and punish those responsible for human rights violations and bring justice to the survivors."

Women's League of Burma, Burma

"Progress at the international level includes work around CEDAW and how this can be applied at a national level with compliance mechanisms and the increasing ratification of CEDAW across the Pacific."

Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Pacific

"Most cultures in Solomon Islands seem to suppress the rights of women. The fact that most people accept this as part of the culture requires a country wide effort. If people can understand that all humans have equal rights, it would start to change people's mentality in the way they view women and human rights."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"WLB human rights documenting teams recording in Burma are receiving more harassment and threats."

Women's League of Burma, Burma

"It was challenging to organise [human rights/ women's rights] training because no one wanted to come. There is now more acceptance of women's rights training by the government and army and community leaders. Our training is welcomed now. Women are generally happy to support and receive training because they can recognise that they don't have the same opportunities as men in the village."

Palaung Women's Organisation, Burma

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

Critical Area of Concern J

"Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women."

Platform for Action, Critical Area J, Paragraph 234

Empowering and transformative change for women requires eliminating the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organisations. More women must attain positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. Women's full and equal participation in the media must include management, programming, education, training and research.

Huge potential exists for further empowerment by enhancing women and girls skills, knowledge and access to information technology. The ceaseless effort in generating gender perspectives on all issues of concern to communities, consumers and civil society continues to advance democratic processes but is hampered by continuing sexualisation or gender stereotyping of women in the media.

Headlines

- Gender inclusiveness and the visibility of women in the media remains imbalanced.
- Technology is the new frontier in women's rights.
- Online knowledge hubs for gender inclusive policy development accelerate change.
- Investment in experimental women's media organisations has shown exemplary results.
- Social media has become a vital tool for overcoming distance.

Partner Perspectives

"Women are empowered within their communities and are using appropriate information-communication technology to articulate their visions for equality, development and peace. Women also have the means to inform and lobby for their development needs, whether these be demands of governments to address local infrastructure needs, provide better medical services or through contributing to discussions on constitutional and human rights issues."

FemLINKPACIFIC, Fiji

"If there are no women to interview within the government machinery as elected or as senior officials—how do they find the women?"

FemLINKPACIFIC, Fiji

"IWDA is investing in the development of educational and training programmes for women in order to produce information for the mass media, including funding of experimental efforts, and the use of the new technologies of communication, whether public or private."

IWDA, Australia

"Across the Asia and Pacific Region we have used a mixture of online communications tools to share knowledge and learning across teams based in different countries. Skype and multiple Facebook groups are good for resources and skills sharing."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"Both Wide Bay Conservation Association in Papua New Guinea and the Women's Rights Action Movement in Solomon Islands have acted as major knowledge hubs for rights issues in their communities."

IWDA, Australia

WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Critical Area of Concern K

"Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management."

Platform for Action, Critical Area K, Paragraph 246

Extreme weather events and natural disasters in addition to the destruction of resources, violence, displacements and other effects associated with war, armed and other conflicts, the use and testing of nuclear weaponry, and foreign occupation all contribute to environmental degradation. The deterioration of natural resources displaces communities, especially women, from income-generating activities while greatly adding to unremunerated work.

In both urban and rural areas, environmental degradation results in negative effects on the health, well-being and quality of life of the population at large, especially girls and women. Particular attention and recognition should be given to the role and special situation of women living in rural areas and those working in the agricultural sector, where access to training, land, natural and productive resources, credit, development programmes and cooperative structures can help them increase their participation in sustainable development.

Headlines

- Women's advocacy surrounding equitable land usage and resource extraction has increased.
- Education for communities on sustainability has been successful.
- Government policies and planning processes do not enable women's involvement in environmental decision-making.
- Many companies are unaccustomed to consultation with women or indigenous peoples resulting in gender-blind decisions for many communities.

Partner Perspectives

"Any benefits [from land and resources] are mainly for wants of the men, leaving the women to struggle to keep their families healthy. Job opportunities within these development are given to men."

Wide Bay Conservation Association, Papua New Guinea

"While communities and mainly women are still going through the long process of reading and understanding the changes that are taking place, massive development programs were already taking place on the land."

Wide Bay Conservation Association, Papua New Guinea

"As 85% of natural resources in Solomon Islands are customarily owned, it is critically important that environmental policies are comprehensive enough to ensure that women are involved in all processes that include management or exploitation of resources in rural communities, where most Solomon Islanders reside."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"We have supported rural women to become actively involved in environmental decision-making. We established local level Natural Resource Management Community Based Organisations to identify and manage Sustainable Use Areas where excessive logging of forests occurs."

Live and Learn Environmental Education, Solomon Islands

"Training communities to help them understand their rights to land and resources emphasises women's rights to the environment."

Wide Bay Conservation Association, Papua New Guinea

"Working with local communities to increase women's capacity and involvement in environmental decision-making, our partners have cautioned that their efforts will be undermined without the support of environmental policies and programs that integrate women's perspectives."

IWDA, Australia

THE GIRL CHILD

Critical Area of Concern L

"All barriers must therefore be eliminated to enable girls without exception to develop to their full potential and skills through equal access to education and training, nutrition, physical and mental health and related information."

Platform for Action, Critical Area L, Paragraph 272

A positive future for young women and girls requires promoting and protecting girls' rights to adolescent, sexual and reproductive health; equal access to basic and further education and career development; addressing special needs during conflict or displacement; enforcing laws that prevent trafficking or sexual exploitation; and protection from child marriage, violence, labour exploitation or slavery aligned with access to justice and support systems.

Headlines

- The youth population bulge in the region has seen increased investment in young women's empowerment and leadership programs.
- Education of girls is the ongoing focus.
- Adolescent, maternal and child health service provision continues to be resourced and shared by local NGOs.
- Human rights defenders focus on family violence prevention for women and children.
- Education on the rights of the Girl Child is crucial to addressing early marriage or early pregnancy.

Partner Perspectives

"I have learnt that we girls have the right to say what we want and not only boys. Boys need to listen to our decisions as well. We should be treated equally." (13 years old participant)

GiRLS Program Report, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji

"In Bougainville the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation provides services to children who are survivors of domestic violence."

Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, Bougainville

"[girls] will not usually go past grade nine, and must stop studying to support family. In the cultural norm, women always give up their schooling to support their family, to support their brothers to go to school."

Worker's Information Centre, Cambodia

"Most of KWCD beneficiaries [they] send their girls to school, before they do not give opportunities for their girls to go to school, but now they send their girls to school."

Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development, Cambodia

"An outcome of these groups is that women have more knowledge about the concept of gender, and provide awareness to their family and to their children about gender roles and responsibilities."

Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development, Cambodia

"Education of girls has been a focus of the advocacy work conducted by our partners."

Worker's Information Centre and the Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development in Cambodia, Cambodia

"Alola provides national maternal and child health services and education."

Alola, Timor-Leste

"The Fiji Women's Rights Movement runs a program specifically targeted to girls aged 10-14 years. Our 'GiRLS' program is focussed on educating and empowering girls to be future leaders in their communities."

Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji

FINAL REFLECTIONS

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Negotiating the Platform for Action

Government delegates first considered the Platform of Action at a preparatory meeting held at the United Nations in New York in April 1995, but failed to agree on approximately 40% of the draft text. The sections on human rights, particularly women's reproductive rights, were contentious. The sections of text that weren't agreed were 'enclosed in square brackets' for further discussion and negotiation. In contrast to the New York preparatory meeting, the negotiations in Beijing seemed to be more positive and constructive. Working groups established and enforced rules for negotiation, avoiding position statements and new issues, concentrating on the resolution of bracketed texts, avoiding reopening agreed texts, and using agreed language from previous UN conferences where possible.

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) played an active and influential part in the negotiation process, forming NGO caucuses to undertake lobbying of national delegates. Thirty to forty caucus meetings were held each day including regional and national groupings, a Youth Caucus, and caucuses on issues including human rights, economic justice, indigenous peoples, refugees, migrants and displaced people.

During the conference, the Australian delegation met daily with accredited NGOs and provided valuable information on many issues. IWDA and our partnership organisations participated in, and contributed to, the Beijing Conference and NGO Forum. Many women from IWDA partner organisations in Beijing gave us feedback at the time, about their experience and impressions of the Beijing NGO Forum.

"I learned a lot of good ideas from sharing and networking with women from all over the world. I know that I achieved what I aimed to do - by telling and sharing what actually happens here with other people who often had heard only one side of the story from people who had never set foot on Bougainville. Lots of women, so beautiful together in perfect harmony, sharing experiences and expertise! Through global networks we'll become so much stronger."

Helen Hakana, President, Catholic Women's Federation

"My first impression is seeing so many women, of every colour skin from all over the world come together in such a big group to discuss the problems we women face, especially gender issues. Since I have returned home to Cambodia, this continues to give me confidence and makes me realise I am not alone in the problems I face as a Cambodian woman."

Yim Sok Kimly, IWDA Cambodia

"Attending the NGO Forum was a great and valuable chance for me to visit the women all over the world, hear about their problems and successes and tell them about our work and our country and the problem we are facing. The majority of women and men of our community don't understand about the women's movement all over the world. Through the information I got about women's issues, I understand the position, problems and successes of women, so I could tell this to other educated and non-educated women of my country."

Najia Zewary, Afghan Women's Resource Centre

"My next step (when I return to Thailand) will be to educate Burmese refugees about the dangers of AIDS, with illiterate young women as the main target group. At the NGO Forum, I was inspired by the Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Association who use songs with easy-to-understand lyrics to reach out to women in the countryside who cannot read and write, and where there are no normal teaching aids such as books, video tapes or even blackboards. In Shan State (in Burma) there is a long tradition of folk songs including dialogues between two singers. Normally they exchange jokes or love messages; my idea is to convey AIDS education in this way. Every person in the village can understand it and the nature and rhythm of these dialogues makes them easy to remember."

Hseng Noun Lintner, Photographer, editor and translator.

Beneath Paradise Pacific Women's Exhibition: Bags, Billums and Banners

Facilitated by IWDA and supported by AusAID, The Pacific Women's Documentation Project made a unique contribution to the Beijing Conference. Over the three-year period in the lead-up to the Beijing Conference, this project, involved women from twenty-one NGOs in eight Pacific Island countries. They documented women's life stories, strengths, achievements, needs and struggles through a rich collection of stories, photographs, soundscapes, slideshows, testimonials and poetry.

Koila Costello-Olsen, of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, described Pacific Women's experience of taking the exhibition to Beijing:

"Flexibility, patience, humour and persistence were the key ingredients to add to your survival kit if and when you finally made it to China, after planning and preparing for three years ... The Forum site was far from perfect, as buildings were incomplete, tents were still being erected, ramps for disabled people were still being built and workshop venues changing. I was extremely grateful the 'Beneath Paradise' got an exhibition space indoors, in the old shooting gallery. We did all sorts of things—climbed onto window ledges, tying ropes, taping boards together, using creatively whatever fabric, books, t-shirts, craft work, bags, billums and banners we had our booth come alive. When we finally got electricity, you could also hear our tapes playing in the background, so people could connect, they played Pacific music, so people could not only 'See Us' but also 'Hear Us' hear as well."

'Beneath Paradise' became a meeting place and focal point for Pacific Islanders at the Beijing Conference, a place where they could relax a little, have a yarn, and share some food. 'It's so good to see the Pacific represented here!' they said. The team handed out information sheets about women's organisations and projects and also books of poetry by Pacific writers.

The exhibition brought the everyday lives of Pacific women, and the issues that most concern them, to the world's attention and illustrated how gender inequality and violence impact on the daily life

of women. Pacific writers and activists, Lucy Goro in Papua New Guinea and Tina Takashy in the Federated States of Micronesia uses poetry to reflect on the subordination of girls and women through gender stereotyping and violence, and introduce the possibility of change, of women's rights, as something both personally and politically liberating.

Additionally, IWDA organised a workshop for partners to come together to share their experiences and strategies. Forty women attended the workshop representing 15 organisations in Vietnam, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Mozambique, Cambodia, Thailand, Fiji, Pakistan and South Africa. Other organisations who also supported IWDA partners, or were interested in linking with IWDA, also attended.

An IWDA project 'Beijing and Beyond: Strengthening Women's Policy in Vietnam' used Vietnamese participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women as a catalyst for strengthening women's policy. The project, implemented in a partnership between the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) and IWDA from 1995 to 1997, aimed to strengthen the capacity of the VWU to influence Government policies affecting the rights and well-being of Vietnamese women.

The VWU was founded as an organisation for the political education and mobilisation of women, but had become a major service provider in women's health, education, literacy, family planning and micro-finance. Increasingly, it was also taking on the role of a 'women's national machinery,' advising government on policy relating to women's needs and rights and advocating changes to improve the position of women in Vietnamese society.

The Vietnamese Government sent 23 delegates to the Beijing Conference and 142 Vietnamese participated in the NGO Forum. Thirty-five members of the Women's Union were included and played an active role in the preparation for the Conference and past-conference activities.

Comments by senior members of the Women's Union affirmed the positive outcomes of this training:

"It was the first time we had organised a big delegation so I felt it was very difficult. The training provided us with knowledge about the process, so we were able to imagine how to do it. We were able to identify the critical issues in the platform of action and prepare our delegates well ... Because of our training our delegation was confident. We knew what we wanted to do."

Dr Nguyen Kim Cuc, Presidium Member, Chief of International Cooperation Department.

of all nations. International meetings provide opportunities for women's organisations to prove their relevance and raise funds, to strengthen networks and create new partnerships, networks and opportunities.

The fact remains however, that young women and men have not had a chance to engage in the kind of transnational feminism that flowered in Beijing. A Fifth World Conference would be a chance for a new generation to take leadership. Younger feminists would have the opportunity to connect globally and contribute to women's movements in many countries and regions.

Was Beijing the last World Conference on Women?

The Beijing Conference has been followed by five-yearly reviews to discuss progress in implementing its Platform for Action. This publication has been produced to align with the next of these meetings (Beijing +20) to be held in New York in March 2015.

Will there ever be another World Conference on Women? In 2012, the UN briefly debated a proposal to hold a Fifth World Conference on Women in 2015; Turkey and Qatar both offered to host it. A similar debate was held during the 2013 Association for Women in Development (AWID) conference in Turkey.

An article by Anne Marie Goetz and Joanne Sandler suggests that UN Member States did not vote in favour of holding a Fifth World Conference because it was considered too dangerous to re-open international agreements on women's rights. It was feared that reactionary governments and non-state actors would actively obstruct progress, and could seriously reverse progress made at Beijing.

Goetz and Sandler suggest that there is a need to rethink the ways that UN conferences are run: an international conference does not necessarily have to arrive at a consensus document. They argue that although international meetings are expensive, the cost of gender inequality is much greater. The benefits of reducing gender inequality and increasing the strength of the women's movement are of demonstrable benefit to the development

BENEATH PARADISE

Two poems from the women in the Pacific NGOs Documentation Project,
produced for the NGO Forum on Women, Beijing 1995.

SEPIK DAUGHTER

To be a girl...

Does she know

what the future holds?

She knows as soon as she walks.

She knows when she is five years old.

Fetch the water.

Collect the firewood.

Sweep the house.

Mind the baby.

Follow mama ... always!

Does she know, too,

Not in the Sepik alone...

but together with thousands of other little girls.

In other parts of Papua New Guinea,

whether it be coastal

or highlands,

islands or plains ...

It is 'PNG culture'.

Does she know ...

She has a right to education.

She has a right to choose

She has a right like her brothers.

She has the right to go and play

Lucy Goro, Papua New Guinea

A PIECE OF ME

Mine are the tears

that froze with the pain.

Mine are the aches

that have no name.

Mine are the sorrows

that have no bounds.

Mine are the scars

that never fade.

Mine are the hearts

that find no peace.

Mine are the hurts

that never cease.

Mine are the screams

that no one heard.

Mine are the dreams

remaining unfulfilled.

I dream of the moment

that I feel no pain.

I dream of the hour

that I feel no hurt.

I dream of the day

that I shed no tears.

I dream of the time

that sets me free.

Tana Takashy, Federated States of Micronesia,
Describing Grace Molisa's Life, The Life of a
Pacific Woman



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