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FORUM '95

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FWCW kicks off

Vatican to stick by Cairo

By Yvette Collymore, IPS

Delegates from 180 countries open a landmark conference on women here Monday, with diplomatic haggling over the wording of a platform for action to improve the lives of women - and how it will be funded.

Domestic politics overshadow the funding of the action program. The diversity of the social and political systems represented at the Sep. 4-15 Fourth World Conference on Women here made it almost certain there would be dispute over the language of the document.

Secretary-General of the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) Nafis Sadik sees some signs that most of the major donors of the world and some developing nations are moving on commitments made at last year's International

Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo which bear a particular relevance to current global talks.

Sadik pointed to Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, and the Nordic nations as among those countries moving to place more resources towards the plan adopted in Cairo for population and development. She told IPS the United States was the only "unknown country", meaning its position was undetermined.

"Policies count," Melinda Kimble, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the U.S. State Department offered Sunday. "For the Platform of Action, more policy changes are needed than additional resources".

But Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Beijing conference, nailed the problem Sunday when she stressed the different levels of capacity among nations.

"While I look for water to

wash dishes, my friend... is looking for a dishwasher", she said. "If you bring a dishwasher in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), it would not work because water is not in the pipe".

The United States danced around pre-Beijing discussions that sought to place issues like structural adjustment programmes meted out to indebted countries at the centre of poverty discussions. Washington is holding the line that the annual 55-60 billion dollars in transfers of net development assistance from the North can be "better utilized."

Brackets

On the wording for the document, a handful of countries were so adamant that certain language be scratched that they reopened discussions earlier this year in New York on issues many thought had previously been tied up.

"Brackets" - UN parlance

for disagreements - remain around parts of the draft programme of action. Countries could not agree on wording for text relating to 12 critical areas.

Regardless, NGOs monitoring the talks here are allowing themselves some hope. There have been assurances from the Vatican delegation that it will stand by the issues they and other nations have already agreed to.

Fundamentalist Christian and Islamic states had led the offensive on the document's language, charging that Western countries were pursuing an agenda that was driven in part by pro-abortion groups as well as gay and lesbian furries.

In Cairo - and at preparatory talks for the Beijing conference - the Vatican, Guatemala, Honduras, and Malta led the assault on terms like "gender" vs "sex" and "equity" vs "equality". Other countries including

Ecuador, Sudan, Iran, Egypt and Benin also put up roadblocks.

Even the word "gender" created a storm at preparatory meetings. A few delegations and right-wing groups charged that the conference was trying to promote homosexuality.

The UN has attempted to clarify the term. A "contact group" that was set up at UN headquarters in New York reached agreement that the word has been understood in its "ordinary, generally accepted usage" in other UN forums and conferences.

The usage in the Beijing draft platform is meant to highlight women's social roles compared to their biological functions.

Also in dispute has been language for "sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights" which countries had worked out in Cairo. (IPS)



Photo Stephenie Hollyman

Leaping the wire

By Veronika Sarkany

The Women's Circus and Amnesty International Australia are joining together at the Fourth World Conference on Women to highlight the human rights violations suffered by women throughout the world.

The Women's Circus will present a number of performances based on the stories of women from 11 countries of the world. Through their performance, the Women's Circus will aim to cross cultural and language barriers to reach participants at the Conference and Forum with the message of human rights.

Women are invited to participate, learn and exchange performance skills. Performances and workshops will be in the Parasol Area next to the Kuumba Stage.

Check there for daily updates in the performance/workshop times.

EDITORIAL

Irony in the UN system

It is an ironic situation that while the UN is sponsoring a world conference on the advancement of women, with the slogan equality, development, and peace, it is so slow in implementing equality within its own organization.

One improvement during the last 20 years was the change in priority for the women's conferences from peace to equality.

But within the UN system itself, the equality process is very slow, both for women and for the small nations. There are not many criticisms against the UN from the women's organizations recently because there are many other more important causes they have to fight for.

Perhaps the UN should deplore this fact. The lack of criticism can also be a sign of indifference, and nothing could be worse than that.

In the last few years, the focus of criticism was on the lack of influence by the small nations. The UN system seems to be remiss in its responsibilities to the small nations and its people, men and women.

One nation, one vote was the ideal UN concept. Equality between people and nations should be ensured. Reality shows that 185 of UN members are small nations, but the real power in the UN belongs to a few rich and developed countries.

WEDO, Women's Environmental and Development Organization, with the ever active Bella Abzug as the driving force behind it, has drafted an alternative platform of action, which in many ways goes to the root of discrimination, both of women, the world economy and the UN system.

Erskine Childers, a world-known writer, has made a critical study of the UN system and has found some answers

as to how it could be more democratic and effective, including in serving the needs of women.

From the very beginning, the UN with its general assembly should be the main actor and initiator in macroeconomics. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), where most women's organizations have their influence, should initiate economic studies and policy which could benefit both north and south, and small and big countries alike.

Very soon, and specially through the Bretton Wood treaty, the main economic organizations, the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Development Agency (IDA), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) were dominated by the richer countries. Some call them neo-colonial.

The UN General Assembly and ECOSOC did not really have an influence on all these important economic organizations. Through the security council and the high level policy to control the world powers, little was left of real power to the small and poor. As women, we do not have illusions on equal distribution of resources.

At least 25 % of the UN's budget is dependent on the United States. If one is to believe Childers, the US is using its economic power to control the UN by threatening to withdraw support if it does not get what it wants.

In the failure of real democracy within the UN system lies the roots of the failure of equality policy for women.

Birgit Wiig



Illustration: Manjula Padmanabhan

Plotting progress on women's rights

By Sakiko Fukuda-Parr

How far has gender equality been achieved? What should be the criteria for progress? What kind of yardstick do we use?

The Human Development Report 1995 introduces two new indices which measure progress in gender equality.

The first is the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) which is the Human Development Index (HDI) adjusted for gender disparity. The GDI measures progress in human capabilities but says nothing about whether progress was equitably shared between women and men.

Message

The GDI sends a powerful message that gender equality is a key ingredient of human development.

The GDI shows, for ex-

ample, that achieving 81% literacy rate for both women and men in the Dominican Republic is vastly more satisfactory than achieving the same 81% in Bolivia with 89% for men and 73% for women. It goes further. It measures whether Bolivia's 81% unequal achievement is better than Haiti's lower but more balanced achievement of 41% for women and 45% for men.

Rapid progress

The second index is the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) which measures gender inequality in national economic and political decision making. The GEM includes male and female shares of parliamentary seats, administrative and management positions, professional and technical positions, and earned income.

GEM and GDI results show there has been rapid progress

in human capabilities - education, health, for both men and women combined with increasing equality since 1970. Gender gaps in basic capabilities have narrowed but still remain throughout the world. GDI is lower than HDI in every single country in the world, showing that gender inequality is universal.

The priority for gender equality action should focus in the next decades on equal access to political and economic opportunities, shifting away from equal access to opportunities for developing capabilities.

GDI and GEM need to be supplemented with qualitative analysis to capture those elements that cannot be measured or are not measured.

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr is Director, Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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Forum '95 is located in Building 12 (Middle School No. 1 Library). Tel. 962 0324 and 962 0326. Fax 962 0328.



Open Forum

Forum '95 welcomes Letters to the Editor. Please be brief and bring your letters to the newspaper offices in Building 12, 3rd floor. The Editors reserve the right to shorten letters for space reasons.

Look at the word gender

At this conference, a major controversy has arisen regarding the use of the word gender in the Plan of Action. Some say there is no need for this word since we already have sex to differentiate men from women.

No one denies the fact that there are only two biological sexes and that their joining is necessary to produce the next generation. Women bear children and they can nurse them. Most women enjoy caring for children, as do many men.

But there is no biological

reason why women have to get less education, earn less, have their work dismissed as not worth counting, or be subservient to men and suffer their beatings.

The word gender only came into prominence recently in the women's movement. Before that time, most of us only heard about gender when we studied language. English speakers were surprised to learn that in Spanish, French, Latin, German and other languages, words and objects were masculine or feminine

and must have the proper article. Learners had to remember that a pen, for example, was "la plume", a feminine article and object.

We learned that it was "el sol", masculine and "la luna", feminine. Spanish men sailed on "el barco", a masculine boat, but English men also sailed on gendered boat, as in "She sailed the ocean blue". These assignments of gender are arbitrary, perhaps based on ancient mythological beliefs. But as far as tasks in the home and on the farm were

gendered, it was always to keep men in power.

Today's women are doing gender analysis to determine what factors prevent them from getting credit, education, jobs or power over their own lives. Gendered roles are preventing their full participation in society. Gender is arbitrary; biological sex is not.

Margaret Feldman, Ph.D.
Staying at Hua Du Hotel,
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Women of color meet as US Delegation

Women of color in the United States are creating a new voice to collectively address the intersectionality of race, ethnicity and gender discrimination.

A series of caucus meetings of African American, Asian American, Indigenous and Latina women has forged a unique coalition.

Their principal goal is to craft language for the Platform of Action that speaks to the multiple forms of discrimination faced by US racial and ethnic minorities.

The coalition is scheduled to meet with the US delegation on Tuesday to press their concerns.

The Platform of Action is replete with bracketed language that neglects to recognize the intersection of racial and gender discrimination, notes Barbara Amwine, executive

director of the Washington DC based Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and an organizer of the Women of Color Coalition.

"That we as women of color are building a united front to impact on the document is a very historic exercise that we hope will carry us beyond Beijing and benefit women of color from the entire hemisphere."

This is the first such coalition at a UN meeting. The four caucuses have individually and collectively identified priority concerns around issues of economic security, the rights of immigrant and internally displaced women, health care, violence against women, environmental justice and the broadening of the definition of discrimination to include language discrimination.

Gwen McKinney

Communicate

Hundreds of workshops and discussions have started. When we held ours it was happily not limited to Japanese; other countries were represented. We were ready with an interpreter who speaks English and Esperanto. Our interpreter, whose native language is English, interpreted "foreign" English with difficulty and noted that the people found it difficult to express their profound feelings. By using Esperanto our exchanges were more lively and more equally understood than in any

other group I had been to. The problems of women are multitudinous. Why should we insist that they spend time and money studying a difficult national tongue? We need to be able to exchange information with deeper understanding. We need to direct our attention to the problems of language discrimination. Let us organize discussions to create a better way to facilitate true international communication for the coming 21st century.

By Aihara Misako

Working group for Openness

Since the beginning of the NGO Forum, NGO delegates have experienced problems with security, surveillance, access, freedom of expression and association, communication and transportation. The Working Group on Openness, which emerged from the Women's Human Rights Caucus, was formed to address these problems. The Working Group raised these problems with the NGO Facilitating Committee and submitted a detailed list of incidents.

At Friday's press conference, members of the NGO Facilitating Committee announced that the COC had agreed to ensure the rights of the participants at the NGO Forum.

Members of our group will be attending regional and thematic caucuses to encourage broader participation in the Working Group. We urge you to send your representative(s) to this meeting. A member of the group is on the Equipo and will act as liaison. The Working Group on Openness will continue to meet throughout the Government Conference.

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Teach me how to dance!



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Men speak out for women

By Veronika Sarkany

Will women's gains in gender equality lead to a zero sum game for men? That was a question which occurred openly and repeatedly at the workshop on Men for Gender Equality yesterday. Maybe, at the beginning, but certainly not in the long run, was the answer. The only woman on the panel was organizer Winifred Fitzgerald, assistant director of Harvard Centre for Population and Development Studies. The invited male panelist spoke about how to encourage men's participation and commitment to gender equality.

"It is necessary and timely to dispel the perception that gender equality is a goal advocated by and for women only", said Ms. Fitzgerald. It is an issue that many men support and its benefits would accrue to everybody. The Harvard Centre's initiative calling for Action for Gender Equality launched a few months prior to the Beijing conference has been signed by almost 400 individuals and groups of different countries.

Much progress has been made in achieving gender equality, but the agenda remains unfinished. This is seen in many different areas. Men in most countries of the world think that family planning is for women only. "More than that! Most family programmes have no male components" - adds Nick Danforth, chairman of Man in Reproductive Health.

The women's movement has done a lot to make women aware of reproductive rights and health. Professor Juan Guillermo Figueroa-Perez of Mexico said a similar learning process for men would be much needed. "30% of the men in my country do not know how many children they have", he said. "As people say in my country: men have reproductive responsibilities, while women have reproductive rights", he adds.

Family planning was a brand new concept at the beginning of this century. Gender equality is a new concept born close to the end of that century. One of the best known advocates of family planning and contraception was Margaret

Sanger. Her grandson is Alexander C. Sanger, the president of Planned Parenthood of New York. An advocate of gender equality, Mr. Sanger has brought his 13 year old son, Andrew, to the women's conference to carry on the family heritage of commitment to the cause of women.

Alexander C. Sanger, president of Planned Parenthood of New York and his 13 year old son, Andrew, attend the women's conference.



The sad plight of Japanese women workers

Maria Elena Hurtado

Half a million government workers in Japan are illegally employed as 'temporary' workers, with no benefits and low pay. Several have taken the government to court, but to no avail.

Some of the affected women appealed for support for their plight at the convention center. Their cry: "Don't let the Japanese government exploit and throw away women workers".

The case of Kuniko Yazaki is typical. Yazaki worked for eight years, five days a week as a librarian at the University of Osaka. Only when she was dismissed and took her employers to court did she find that, officially, she did not exist.

For eight years, her wages had not been paid out of the university's salary budget but out of an account for buying office stationery.

Civil Service law in Japan defines temporary workers as those who are hired to do short-term, seasonal work for less than a year. To circumvent the law, government offices

employ people for one day less than a year and then hire them again and again.

These temporary workers, mostly women, are totally unprotected. Yazaki, for example, is crippled by repetitive strain injury as a result of handling 200,000 books a week. She cannot work any more, got no compensation and has to depend financially on a sister and her parents.

Fed up with the exploitative system, Michiko Kitada, also in Huairou to report on the temporary workers' plight, tried to form a union. Unions are allowed in the Japanese Civil Service but they cannot go on strike.

She was dismissed for doing so after having worked for four years full time as a laboratory technician. She also lost her case in the Supreme Court.

"We came to Huairou because we wanted all the world's people to know what the Japanese government is doing to Japanese workers," she said. "If we do not publicize it, nobody will ever know because the government is saying one thing and doing another."

To cope with increasing competition for Japanese products, the private sector is also increasingly using temporary workers. "We are the control valve that allows employers to expand or shrink the labor force according to need," said Kitada.

Women are also paid much less. The latest statistic from the Labor Ministry showed that in 1992, the ratio of men's to women's salary was 51%. The 1986 Equal Opportunities Bill failed to include a clause on equal pay.

The Women's Labor Union of Japan is organizing a petition to force the Japanese government to implement a 1994 International Labor Agreement agreement, signed by Japan, which states that temporary workers should have the same basic rights as full timers.

"From past experience, we doubt that the government will implement the agreement," Yazaki said. "So we are remaining vigilant and campaigning actively for women workers' rights."



Bosnia

Rina Jimenez-David

"Muslim women supporting the women of Bosnia!" proclaims this banner borne through the streets and camp sites of the NGO Forum area Saturday. The women were marching to express solidarity with their Muslim sisters in the war-torn Eastern European country beset by war, ethnic cleansing and sexual violence.

Sisterhood is the common theme of this and other street marches throughout the Forum site, from Indian village women to Japanese peace activists calling for compensation for Comfort Women and revision of history textbooks, from Brazilians dancing the samba while waving green banners, to people with disabilities demanding better conditions on-site. All part of the spirit of democracy and freedom of expression that prevails here at NGO Forum '95.

Educating Girls: Money Needed Where Mouth Is

By Sara Ann Friedman

Girls are beginning women, says Carol Bellamy who assumed her new post as executive director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in April 1995.

She has brought a combination of private and public sector experience in banking and the Peace Corps to the challenging task of heading one of the UN's most energetic and multi-sectoral agencies.

Working in 140 mostly developing countries, UNICEF supports and initiates a broad range of integrated programmes that fall under the umbrella of survival protection and development of children.

They include water and sanitation, health, education, children in armed conflict, street children, elimination and prevention of economic and sexual exploitation and, of course, the advancement of girls and women. A tall order, but UNICEF has been growing in size and spirit, responding to each new and more complex

challenge since its creation in 1946 as a relief agency for the war torn countries of Western Europe.

This broad experience, says Bellamy, is reflected in UNICEF's involvement in more than 25 workshops at the NGO Forum. She stresses: "But key to UNICEF policy, key to our work at the Forum and key to all the other work we do is education of girls."

Education of girls reduces illiteracy since two thirds of the world's illiterate people are women. It results in smaller families, later marriage, a reduction in infant and maternal mortality, and of no small importance, improvement in the economic status and participation of women.

All of these benefit entire nations and societies, which governments have committed themselves to ensure in Jomtien at the World Conference on Education for All and at the 1990 World Summit for Children.

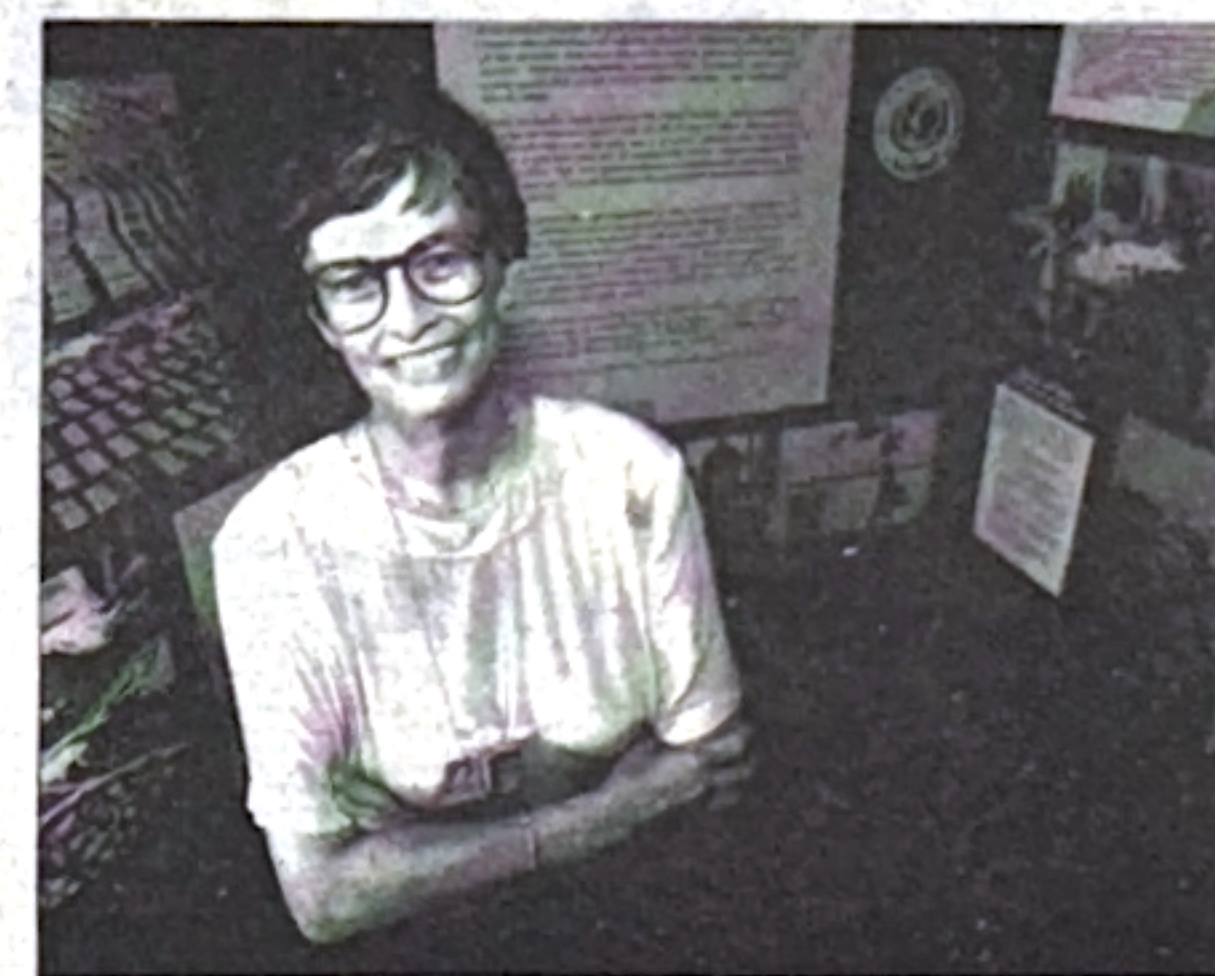
"We want them to put their resources where their pens and their signatures are," she adds.

But as a former legislator, nobody knows better than Bellamy the limits of the law. One of the most shocking events in her life, she acknowledges, was leaving the legislature to become an administrator and realizing that there were still problems, even after the laws were passed.

Getting girls into school is a complex social, political and cultural challenge. It requires building schools closer to home, hiring more women teachers, creating support systems for parents and convincing them that it is safe and worthwhile to educate their daughters.

"The world community has made tremendous headway on that front," says Bellamy.

But getting girls to school is only one step; keeping them there is another. That means confronting issues of teenage pregnancy and poverty, making



"Key to our work at the Forum and key to all the other work we do is education of girls."

ing sure that books and curricula and teachers are girl friendly. Education is really about much more than education, she observes.

Girls were totally invisible in the agenda of Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi. In the past two years, UNICEF and NGOs working together in Africa, South Asia and the West have helped to incorporate girls into every section of the Platform and add a 12th new Critical Area of Concern: the Girl Child.

What happens at the Conference is important, Bellamy believes. But it is a beginning, not an end.

She says: "The closer we look at the issues, the more evident their complexity and inescapable linkages: education to violence to child marriage, health, nutrition, sexual exploitation, and all of these to economic and social disparities."

There are no quick fixes and in the end what happens beyond Beijing is what really matters.

Ads offend, aggressive ads offend absolutely

By Rina Jimenez-David

Whenever the subject of violence in the media is discussed, the images that spring to mind are those of action films and TV shows chock-full of car crashes, gunfights, blood spurting from bullet holes, and people going at each other with all sorts of weaponry, including bare fists.

But for women living in underdeveloped Third World economies, said a Chile-based media researcher, media violence takes on other forms.

Maria Elena Hermosilla, former director of Ceneca, a media awareness and research group working with grassroots communities, said that for women attending their workshops, "aggressive television advertising, especially of expensive food products," is a form of media violence.

Speaking at a "Workshop on Women and Media Violence" sponsored by the World Association of Christian Communicators, Hermosilla said the women found such advertising violent because "they were

then living in a situation of deep economic recession" and they found such advertisements deeply offensive and intrusive.

A valuable tool in awakening media awareness, said Hermosilla, was an exercise in which the women were asked to "create their own commercial, to create their own daydream that consumers can achieve." Often, she said, the women would arrive at a "collective discovery" of what advertising was all about.

Meg Hogarth of Media-watch Canada made a brief presentation of her organization's activities, and their impact on advertising practices and policies.

A telephone survey they conducted on women's attitudes towards television, she said, showed that 73 percent of the women silently boycotted products whose advertising they found offensive.

When they also proved that women make the majority of buying decisions, including 55 percent of car-buying decisions, in Canada, Hogarth said,

their research resulted in a shift in advertising strategies of car companies.

Hogarth also mentioned the successful campaign against violence in the media launched by the younger sister of a Quebec woman who had been brutally raped and murdered. The young woman was able to gather 1.3 million signatures for her petition calling for government action to check the proliferation of violent images in the media, Hogarth said, though compliance to the resulting code on violence was purely voluntary.

Still, the examples discussed by Hermosilla and Hogarth show that the effort to sensitize the media to their role in society is not entirely fruitless.

Other speakers at the workshop were Margaret Gallagher, a leading researcher and writer on women and media issues, who spoke on "Some Issues in the Gender and Media Violence Debate," Melody Walker of Women's Media Watch in Jamaica, and Jacqui Nolte, of the Community Arts Programme in South Africa.

"Misbehaving" Policy

Seona Smiles

The "persistent problem of misbehaving policy" is the area being tackled by six young women from Sussex and East Anglia universities, United Kingdom.

"This is where you get feminist ideas and gender policy accepted by development organisations, yet at the implementation level there is often a deviation in the way the policy works," they explained.

This happens mostly in two ways, they said. The resources designed for changing women's traditional roles and gender policies get channeled into welfare and social type activities.

The other way is using women's issues as a tool to achieve other policy goals, for

example, when the education of girls is good for population control, or credit for women good for poverty reduction.

Both these things are true, but if people lose sight of the goal of women's cognitive emancipation or financial improvement, they lose the emancipating potential.

They group, most of whom are with the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex, are running a number of activities including a workshop on Monday 4 September at 1pm in 20-T55.

They said they had made it to the Forum by "scrabbling" and self funding, but were grateful to British Overseas Development Aid for supporting their workshop.

Internet links Huairou to the world and beyond...

By Edie Farwell

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) has gathered a team of 40 women from 24 countries to provide the Internet, e-mail and electronic information dissemination services in the Business and Press Centers, Building 17.

Full Internet services to all participants and the press corps are via two 64 Kilobyte lines. Women and men around the world can access information coming directly from the NGO Forum and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (WCW) via e-mail, electronic conferences, gopher and 'worldwide web' pages.

18 languages

APC expects that more than 30 million people worldwide will have access to information coming directly from China for the duration of the WCW. APC has also developed e-mail query tools so that people from countries which do not have Internet access can also easily access the information generated by the WCW and the NGO Forum.

Collectively, the APC team of 40 offers technical, user support and training in 18 languages. In addition to the official conference languages, languages offered include: Wolof, Sinhala, Mandarin, Hindi, Russian, Portuguese and Czech.

APC's team includes an all-women's technical staff who were here early last week installing the system to be ready

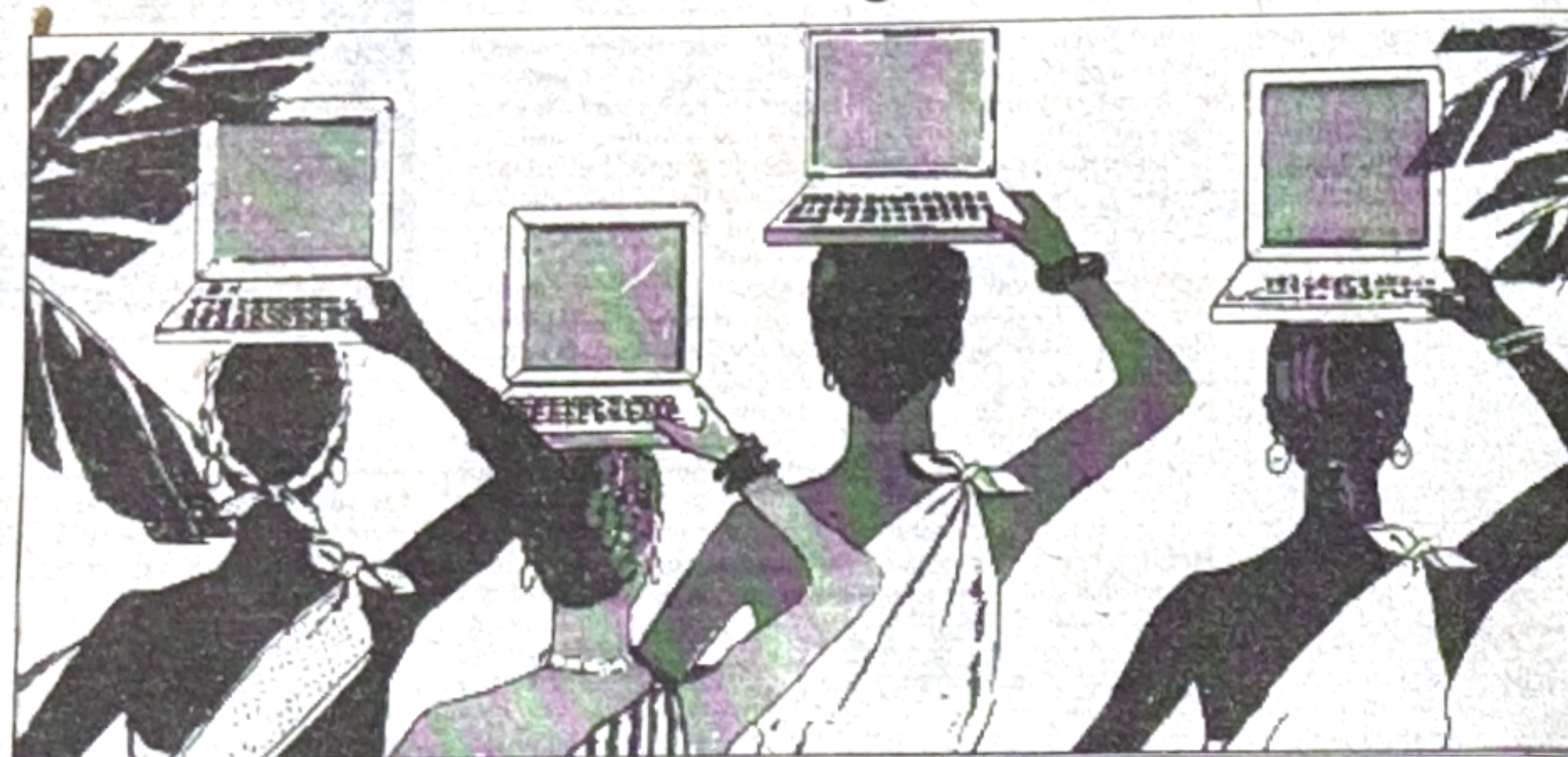


Illustration: Computer News Note

for Forum participants on opening day. This is the first such technical team at a UN or NGO Forum conference.

Throughout the world, there is a significant gender gap between men and women who use and operate computers. Two years ago, APC initiated a Women's Networking Support Program to address this gender gap, both within the NGO community and within APC's own staff.

This effort has paid off as evidenced by APC being able to provide an all-women's team to prove that computer networking is appropriate for women and can be operated by women; and by the tremendous level of daily activity in

the Business Center where the Internet and e-mail services are based.

Over the last two years, APC's Women's Program has directly helped hundreds of women's organizations in more than 30 countries to incorporate the use of computer communications in their preparations for the World Conference on Women, while thousands more have been able to access quality information on the Conference.

The Women's Program has focused on demonstrating how this technology can be an effective tool for information sharing and coordination. Several hundred women on all continents have received training in

use of the system and over 50 more have been trained as technicians and trainers.

The APC Women's Program has ensured that most of the key documents relating to the World Conference and NGO Forum are rapidly made available on the network, which has greatly increased the possibility of women making informed input to the preparatory process.

Many of the lobbying proposals for the UN Platform for Action that will circulate during the NGO Forum and World Conference have been made possible because women had rapid access to successive versions of the draft document and to the proposals of other

NGOs. APC is a non-profit association of computer networks dedicated to providing low cost communications services to NGOs and individuals working for peace, environmental sustainability, development, education, health, social justice and gender equality.

APC has provided services during all UN World Conferences and parallel NGO Forums since the Earth Summit in 1992.

APC Huairou Business Center & Press Center - Building 17
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Email for NGO Forum '95 newspaper: <http://www.women.net.apc.org/Beijing>

NGO's interface on the issues

By Walter Hutchens

Walk among the tents and meeting sites of the NGO Forum and it is likely your bags will soon grow heavy with brochures, pamphlets, and other materials. There is so much information, and much of it looks interesting.

The torrents of available publications are only one of the ways NGOs harness computer technology. NGOs also use computers to communicate without printing, to manage their membership information and to facilitate their overall

operations. A number of groups are here to help women use or learn about these uses of computers.

Many NGOs are using the Internet and other computer networks. Often, NGOs find that e-mail and other means of electronic communication are cheap and fast and that they encourage borderless collaboration.

Haymee Perez, a Cuban economist living in Angola founded Angonet, a network serving NGOs and academic institutions.

Health, education and sanitation issues are discussed on

Angonet, both inside and outside the country. Problems with the phone infrastructure in Angola and the expense of international calling make the Internet especially useful. Perez told an eight-woman panel on "Linking Women in Diverse Contexts" on Friday.

In the same meeting, Anna Syomina from the Gluk network in the Ukraine described her experience in Mama86, a women's group training women in computer networking. More than 2,200 participants are using e-mail and the computers here at the Forum each day, many to send information back to their home groups.

Another NGO here is demonstrating a computer program designed to train engineers to be concerned with the effects of their technologies on women. The program is demonstrated at the Once and Future Pavilion at the International Women's Tribune tables.

Delegate Sarah Hirschman created the program, which poses a series of design problems from around the world and asks the user to create an appropriate tool to solve the problem. To automate mailing lists

and manage finances, general business software can be used. Desktop publishing only requires a computer, software, a printer and copier, so it remains a cost-effective solution for many NGOs wanting to disseminate information.

To use e-mail or get a general introduction to computers, visit building 17-1 where Apple Computer and the Association for Progressive Communication provide services.

Next door, the Once and Future Pavilion provides additional information about how individuals and NGOs can use computers.

Cultural traditions hinder women's emancipation

By Wandi Jiang

This seminar brings me back to memories of my mother, who was a victim of the feudal cultural tradition of China, said Wang Xiaofeng, a middle aged Chinese teacher from Nanjing in south China.

Wang remembered that her mother's marriage was arranged by her parents and that she was deprived of the right to school though she was very smart. Her father was a businessman, who did not care much about her mother but whose only concern, it seemed, was to have babies. They had 16 children altogether. Her mother died at age 49 of no disease but just because she became being too weak and overworked.

"I hate the tradition which dominated China for thousands of years and really discriminated against women, and I chose the way of living by my own when possible," she said. "I graduated from university, I managed to be an English teacher in Nanjing Aeronautic and Astronautic University, and I chose my husband myself."

These remarks elicited a loud applause from Forum participants, drowning out her last sentence.

Wang was just a passerby at the seminar like most of the audience. The room for the seminar, entitled "Traditional Cultures and Women," could accommodate 70 people but almost 200 turned up. People squeezed in every inch of the room with many standing outside.

Co-hosted by Chinese and Korean scholars, the seminar was mainly about what are cultural traditions and the oriental ones, in particular, and how they influence the history of women's development in different countries.

As most of the participants had expected, the dominating point of view at the workshop was critical of traditions, arguing that most of them are still blocking the pace of women's liberation and development.

Ma Yinan, associate professor with the Department of Law in Peking University said, "Generally speaking, the traditional legal culture of China was completely a discriminating one against women. For example, marriage of women

should be arranged and decided according to betrothal gift, and a husband was allowed to have several wives according to the ancient law."

She believed that even though the Chinese marriage law forbids these practices nowadays, these transitions are still casting a shadow over the mind of Chinese women.

During the past 10 years when China was being transformed into a market economy and the income disparity was widening, it was not a rare case that many young women would like to marry just for money while some even prefer to be a concubine of a rich person.

Dr. Chang Pilwha, associate professor of Ewha Women's University of Korea, focused her speech on Korean women in patriarchal tradition. She said that the family trouble between mother-in-law and her son's wife, which has persisted since the ancient time, is derived from the patriarchal system in history.

Under this system, after a woman became a mother-in-law, she would assume her status and power in the family from her son, and thus begin



According to Professor Zheng Bijun, a Chinese historian with the Peking University, the cultural tradition of a country contains both good and bad things. For example, she does not agree with the opinion that the Chinese cultural tradition is completely negative where women are concerned.

She emphasized that the progress of a nation is always based on its cultural tradition, and also on women. Therefore, the most important task of scholars and women here is to continue the good ones while discarding the rest.

The seminar attracted not only people from oriental countries but a number from the West. Among them were Dr. Britt-Marie Lundback from Sweden and Jane Fladd from the United States, who are all working for Amity Foundation and have studied the cultural traditions of the oriental countries for years.

trying to control and give orders to her son's wife.

Most of the participants were interested in defining the relationship between traditions and modernization and finding solutions to related problems.

Betty Friedan on personhood

By Seona Smiles

Sexual politics were inadequate and even diversionary, one of the world's earliest and best known feminists, American Betty Friedan, said on Saturday.



Women had attained personhood and now needed to concentrate on being persons in community, she said. It was time to get into a new paradigm, beyond women versus men.

Ms Friedan was speaking on an informal dialogue panel arranged by the International Association of Women in Radio and Television. She arrived a little late because of difficulty finding the right tent, and had to "climb over the wall" to get in because of the large crowd which had gathered to hear her.

She warned of the backlash of rage against women, in an economic situation of globalisation and downsizing of jobs, and more wealth being concentrated in the hands of a few.

Just at the time women were moving into their personhood, being educated and having careers and not just being defined by marriage and motherhood, unemployment was increasing.

In some places, men were beginning to say that women should go home again.

The backlash against women was real, Ms Friedan said, and

Friedan's tree in Nairobi: 10 years ago

poor women were the scapegoats of the rage caused by the economic situation.

She chastised the women's movement for not confronting the polarisation of wealth. "There is paralysis in the women's movement. We do not hear the voice of feminists loudly enough in protection of poor women."

"Power feminists were not exactly what we meant by empowering women."

Ms Friedan said that the politics of rage and violence against women, and against children and men, was symptomatic of a deeper sickness. There needed to be a new vision, a new context from a base of equality, to give new meaning to community.

"I only know there is a need for this vision, but I have few concrete suggestions for action," Ms Friedan said.

Finland's 90th

By Seona Smiles

There are women worrying about the future for the girl child, women concerned with aging, women working on culture, women dealing with gender issues, violence, human trafficking, and many other difficult topics. But at the entrance to the Global Pavilion area on Saturday, Pirkko Jyvakorpi was just sharing happiness. "Women in Finland got the vote in 1906, and next year we celebrate the 90th anniversary. We have done fairly well with the number of women elected to our parliament, and in other ways. I just wanted you to know," she said, pressing a small pamphlet about women in Finland into the hands of passers-by.



NGO Forum Video Festival

PLEASE NOTE the Videos scheduled for 2-M3 (Shanhu Hotel) have been relocated. Please come to the Global Pavilion for more information.

TIME ROOM 9-M21b

9:00-10:30 Nobody's Girls, Inc. - "Nobody's Girls: Five Women of the West"
10:35-11:15 Banoo Publication - "Iranian Women Hand in Hand towards Beijing"
11:30-12:00 Femme pour les droits de l'homme - "Femme Violée"
12:05-1:05 Bangladesh-The Society for Enforcement on Human Rights and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association - "Song on Human Rights" & "Beloved Wife"
1:10-1:35 Women Ittihadia Morocco - "Morocco Women in Action"
2:15-3:45 Salvation Army - "Amongst the poorest, the lowliest and the lost-work among the people of Southern India" and "Mother with AIDS tells her story"
3:20-3:50 Haitian American Women's Advocacy Network - "Haitian Female Workers-Women Working for Better Conditions"
4:00-4:05 National Youth Organization - "Health & Social Activity"
4:40-5:10 Women Kind - "Surviving Today"
5:15-6:10 Kvindernes U'landsudvalg - "Radio Earth is on the Air"
6:15-7:00 Sunday Ehomu Osaluwu - "Song and Dancing and Video Coverage"
7:05-7:30 Token Productions - "Waves of One Sea"
7:35-8:05 Qi Lai Productions - "Images of Dai Minority Women"

Cultural Program Updates

OPEN MIKE

Location: T-47 (Art & Culture Tent)
Times: Sept 6, 7:00 - 9:00pm, Sept 7, 7:00 - 9:00pm

Changed Activities

Women's Voice
New Time: Sept 5th, 2:45-3:45pm
Previously Scheduled Time: Sept 5th, 3:00-4:45pm
Visions Dance Company
New Location: Coffee/Tea Area

New Activities

Fashion Design by Nemale Pauline Mirielle of Cameroon
Nemalé Pauline Mirielle
Time: Sept 4th, 8:00pm
Location: T-47, Art & Culture Tent

Who Am I?
Tehrik-E-Niswan
A one woman performance about women's power and position
Time: Sept 5th, 5:00-6:45pm
Location: 4-M12

Exhibition on Fashion and Hairdos on Ghanaian Women
Council of Indigenous Business Association (CIBA)
Time: Sept 5th, 7:00-8:45pm
Location: T-47, Art & Culture Tent

Theatrical Presentation
Philippine Education Theater Association (P.E.T.A.)
Dramatization through movement, mask and music theatre on folktales, and legends indigenous to Asia and the Pacific region
Time: Sept 5th, 8:00-9:00pm
Location: Long Shan Auditorium

Solo Dance performance
The Purple Moon Dance Project
Time: Sept 5th, 12:00-12:30pm
Location: Coffee/Tea Area

A Celebration of African and African Descent Women
Gail Maynor/Latanya Mapp
Time: Sept 6th, 4:30-6:00pm
Location: Coffee/Tea Area

Road To The Top
Working Women Association-Pakistan
A performance workshop based on case studies of successful women
Time: Sept 6th, 5:00-6:45pm
Location: 4-M11

Russian Souvenirs
The Women's Union of Russia
Exhibition of Russian souvenirs with songs and dance from Russia
Time: Sept 7th, 5:00-6:45pm
Location: 4-M10

Ritual - Women Unity for Transformation
The Women's Circus
Time: Sept 8th, 7:30-7:45pm
Location: Coffee/Tea Area

Schedule Update - Cancelled and Changed Activities

Changed Activities

Time Title
11:00 A New Paradigm: Beyond Polarization Please note: This workshop is led by Betty Friedman

Canceled Activities

Time Title
09:00 Launch of the Population Book
09:00 Children of Romania: Special Schools for Motor Handicapped Children
09:00 Methods of Prenatal Diagnosis & their Consequences
09:00 Taking Charge: Women, Money and Power
09:00 Women & Traditional Culture: Women's Experiences of Northeast Asia
09:00 Women and Traditional Culture: Women's Experiences of Northeast Asia
09:00 Women's Independence & Sharing of Functions between Male & Female
11:00 Caravanes Multidisciplinaires: Rapprochement des Services des Femmes Rurales
11:00 How Far Have We Come? Future Directions
15:00 Women & Environment
15:00 Women's Education in Africa
17:00 Empowerment of African Women

TIME ROOM 9-M22b

9:00-9:30 Women Education Development Sadan - "Oppression of Dalit Women"
10:00-11:20 Women's Action Forum - "In the Continuum: Voices of Pakistani Women"
11:00-11:30 La Mitad Del Cielo Leonor Benedetto - "Story for a Little Girl"
12:05-12:35 Western Samoa Women Committees Development Organization - "Preparation of Kava"
12:15-4:35 Women's Federation for World Peace, Int'l - "Project World Peace"
12:40-1:20 Union National des Femmes - "Tindouf, l'enfer des Femmes"
1:45-2:25 Wayang - "Weaving for Alternatives"
3:20-4:20 Kvindernes U'landsudvalg - "Making Ourselves Heard: A Documentary About the Experience of the Feminist Radio"
4:25-4:40
4:45-5:45 Greek Orthodox Family Services - "Litrosi"
5:50-6:10 Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) - "Women bounded labour in Nepal"
6:25-7:55 Women's Resource and Publication Center - "Women in Pakistan"

Important Notices

Room Venue Changes

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the following venue changes should be observed. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

From room	To room	From room	To room
9-M20	16-M71	20-T52	18-T4b
16-M71	9-M20	20-T57	20-T51
20-T51	18-T4a	20-T62	20-T47

NGO Map Correction

The Coffee/Tea Area noted in the the Program Map is wrong. The new Coffee & Tea Area is near the Regional Tents.

Available Meeting Rooms

When no workshop is assigned to a meeting room, the room is available at that time for public use.

Schedule Changes

Important: All schedule changes must be given to the Activities Desk at the Global Pavilion. No changes can be accepted at the NGO Daily newspaper.

If you want to cancel or add an activity to the existing Schedule of Activities, you must go to the appropriate desk in the Global Pavilion. The Activities Desk is open daily from 9am to 5pm. You must give in changes for the next day by 12 noon. You can give in changes for the days after by 5pm.

Organizing Group

Centre for Our Common Future
Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team Ladies
European Network of Childbirth Associations
Equity Institute Inc.
Research Center For Asian Women, Sookmyung Women's University
Korean Women's Institute, Ewha Womans University
Japanese Association of International Women's Rights
Nouvenant Nondial Des Neres: Tunisie
Art Culture & Technology Friendship Ambassadors Foundation
The Kuwaiti Union for Women Associations
Action for Development
United Nations Population Fund

Room	Cap.
12-M63	50
19-T22	30
19-T35	30
10-M50	50
10-M39	50
10-M29	50
20-T75	45
19-T37	30
19-T44	30
10-M38	50
9-M26	60
9-M25	150

Schedule Update - New Activities

(Also please refer to the Global Pavilion bulletin boards for new and changed activities for today, Sept 4th)

Time Title
09:00 Consultation in the Family (in Chinese)
09:00 Global Compliance Research Project: Charter of Obligations
09:00 International Symposium on Women in War and Armed Conflict
09:00 Press Conference
09:00 Sexual Exploitation & Women's Human Rights: Global Crisis & Legal Response
09:00 The Role of Women: Policy & Decision makers in Education of Girls and Women
09:00 Women in Black: A Gathering of Spirits
09:00 Women's Research and Leadership
11:00 Algériennes en Lutte
11:00 Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World
11:00 Gender Equity and Organizational Change
11:00 Organizing & Advocacy Skills for Grassroots Workers
11:00 Solidarity National Independence, Sovereignty & Peace
11:00 Sudanese Women in Income Generating Family Programmes
11:00 The Role of Egyptian Women Writers in Highlighting
11:00 Working Paper: the Work of Migrant Women as Cotton Pickers in Gephra Scheme
13:00 Asian American Women as Leaders and Organizers (Part II)
13:00 Cross Cultural Early Childhood Programs: Australia
13:00 Développement Humain Durable
13:00 Droits et Citoyenneté dans l'Education Civique avec Appui sur Femme et Equilibre
13:00 Estudio Psicologico sobre la Situación de la mujer Refugiada e inmigrante
13:00 Family Planning/Reproductive Health
13:00 How Grassroots Women Learn: Org Rev and Pick Up Pcs. St
13:00 International Panel on Child Abuse
13:00 JWDA and Partners Coming Together: Experiences and Challenges Ahead
13:00 La Convención de las Mujeres
13:00 Presentation of Petition to UN to Promote & Protect the Human Rights of Women
13:00 Press Conference on the Impact of the Muslim Presence at the NGO forum
13:00 Public Education Campaigns to Build Awareness and Mobilize Around Girls
13:00 Training Women for Sustainable Economic Development
13:00 Young Women and Peace (Sea Perspective)
15:00 Access to Education Without Limitations
15:00 Aids and the Asian Woman
15:00 Business Entrepreneurship
15:00 Countering the Feminization of Poverty
15:00 Defining Our Destiny: Young Women's Visions Approaching the 21st Century
15:00 Feminismo y los Estudios Sobre Mujer y Relaciones de Género en America Latina
15:00 Film of Bosnian female refugees
15:00 Gender & Institutional Change in Development
15:00 How to Start a Women's Studies Program
15:00 Income Generation for Women through New and Renewable Sources of Energy
15:00 Institutionalizing Child Survival for the Girl Child
15:00 ISIS International-Manila & International Advisory Council
15:00 Islamic Women's Institute of Iran
15:00 Mujer Cilencia y Tecnología
15:00 Networking for Mobilization of Women
15:00 Planning for Small Pilot Projects in Development
15:00 Promises of ICED
15:00 Science and Technology Priority Issues
15:00 Sharing Power and Decision Making in Organizations
15:00 Strategising to Improve the Education of Women and Girls in Africa
15:00 Taller Valor y Valorando en la Economía Domestica el Trabajo Domestico
15:00 Women & Peace
15:00 Women in Global Economic Restructuring: Organizing Issues, Successes, Techniques
15:00 Women Victims of the Political Conflict
15:00 Women's Concepts, Women's Lives Seven Countries Report on Reproductive Rights
15:00 Women's Rights
15:00 Women's Studies in Asia
15:00 Wow: Winning Opportunities for Women
17:00 Malnutrition in the Age Group 1-5 Years in El Gezira Sudan
17:00 Achieving Unity of Vision in the Family through Proper Consultation
17:00 Domestic Violence-Rethinking Women's Social Change Strategies
17:00 Economic and Political Empowerment of Women
17:00 Family
17:00 Feminist Nationalism Worldwide
17:00 Femmes et Justice
17:00 Good Neighbors: Jewish & Arab Women in the Struggle for Equality for Peace
17:00 How does the Muslim Society View the Family
17:00 Human Rights & Islam
17:00 Leadership for Change
17:00 Lebanese Women and Human Rights
17:00 Legal Reforms Initiated by Women in Muslim Countries and Communities
17:00 Malnutrition in the Age Group 1-5 Years in El Gezira, Sudan
17:00 New Vision, New Deal: Rehabilitation and Disempowerment of Migrant Women
17:00 Pre-Plenaries CLOSED MEETING
17:00 Religion and Spirituality
17:00 Rompiendo El Silencio
17:00 Situation of Women Iran
17:00 Teaching about Women & the Law
17:00 The Girl Child - Woman of Tomorrow Gender Inequality in South Asia
17:00 Voices Heard, Sisters Unseen
17:00 Women as Decision Makers in the Commonwealth
17:00 Women as Entrepreneurs: The Role and Contribution as Small Scale Producers
17:00 Women as Peacemakers & Peacekeepers
17:00 Women in Development
17:00 Women, Work & Family
17:00 Work and Family: Achieving Gender Balance
19:00 Young Women And A Violence-free Society
19:00 Celebrating Womans Spirit: Sharing the Sacred
19:00 Children of Romania
19:00 Comparison of 2 Battered Women's Stories. One with Resources, one without.
19:00 Decision Making in the Family
19:00 Video Portrait of Women in Sri Lanka
19:00 Women And The Economics Of Migration

Organizing Group

Bahai Community Malaysia
Global Compliance Research Project
Korean Council For Women Drafted For Military Sexual Slavery By JP
Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Group
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women UNESCO
United Nations Children's Fund
Asian Women's Human Rights Council
Edith Cowan University Women in Leadership
Femmes Pour l'egalite Les Droits Humains La Liberte Des Algeriennes
Ford Foundation Women's Program Forum
Oxfam America
Women's International Democratic Federation
Sudanese Women General Union
Egyptian Women Writers Association
Ahfad University for Women
Ms.Foundation For Women
Batchelor College, Northern Territory Australia
Comite De Concertation Et De Coordination Des ONG Femmes De M
Comite De Concertation Et De Coordination Des ONG Femmes De M
Alma Tal de 4
Calro Family Planning Association
Autonome Brennesel Women's Communication Centre
Alameda Child Abuse Council
International Women's Development Agency
International Women's Rights Action Watch
Center for Women's Global Leadership
The Muslim NGO Caucus
MS Foundation for Women
Bennett College Women's Leadership Institute
Bahai Community of Malaysia, Office for Youth Development
Disabled Peoples International Women's Committee
National Council of Women's Organisations Malaysia
All Armenian Women's Union
Women and Poverty Project, Wider Opportunities for Women
Nordic Youth NGOs
Universidade Federal Do Rio De Janeiro
Womankind Worldwide
Overseas Development Group
Women's Studies International Educational Project- CUNY
All India Women's Conference
International Center for Research On Women
ISIS International - Manila
Islamic Women's Institute of Iran
Area Interdisciplinaria de Estudios de la Mujer
Women power in the Burgslagen Region
Virginia Gildersleeve Internation Fund for University Women
International Planned Parenthood Federation
UNIFEM
Pathways to Peace
Forum for African Women
Asociacion Trabajadoras Domesticas
Strategic Initiative For The Horn Of Africa
Alternative Women in Development
National Union Saharawi Women
International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group
Alliance For Arab Women
Women's Studies Society of Japan
City of San Diego Commission on The Status Of Women
University of Ahfad for Women
Confederation Of Scientific and Professional Organizations VII
Peace Power Foundation/CASA
International Research and Training Institute for the Advance
Asian Women's Conference Network
FIU Women's Studies Center
Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et technique Acct
Movement of Democratic Women in Israel
Organization D'Education des Genies
Women's Society Of Iran
Winrock International
Lebanese Committee 95
WLUMI-International Solidarity Network
University of Ahfad for Women
Sinhala Women's Organization For Welfare & Advancement of Wome
NGO Forum on Women
Committee of Women and Children
Latinas Hacia Beijing/Centro De Desarrollo de la Mujer Dominicana
The Defence Committee for Women in Iran
Women's Studies International Educational Project- CUNY
Danish Women's Society
Shakti Productions
Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago
United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Women In International Security
Maharashtra State Branch mof
Bahai Community of Singapore
Association of Women In Development
Singapore Council of Women's Organisation
Center for Women and Religion
Ananda Marga Women's Welfare Dept
Nc Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council Women's Organization - Malaysian Bahai's
Centre For Womens Research
International Catholic Migration Commission

Room	Cap.
10-M50	50
10-M29	50
1-M1	1000
10-M39	50
10-M53	260
11-M61	70
14-M69	255
12-M63	50
19-T37	30
9-M23	150
3-M7	60
11-M61	70
11-M57	70
9-M24	60
20-T61	50
19-T35	30
20-T79	45
20-T53	50
19-T43	30
20-T76	45
20-T75	45
12-M62	50
19-T44	30
20-T67	45
19-T41	30
14-M69	255
9-M20	1500
10-M53	260
9-M26	60
11-M60	70
5-M14	350
10-M46	50
11-M58	120
20-T71	45
9-M22 a	200
19-T13	30
11-M60	70
10-M38	50
10-M42	50
9-M25	150
12-M62	50
10-M44	50
10-M47	50
10-M48	50
10-M40	50
20-T80	45
10-M50	50
5-M14	350
10-M49	50
10-M52	50
10-M45	50
10-M43	50
10-M41	50
10-M39	50
9-M26	60
14-M69	255
20-T69	45
20-T53	50
10-M51	50
20-T38	50
4-M13	250
10-M34	50
12-M66	50
10-M35	50
12-M63	50
3-M5	250
9-M25	150
10-M50	50
10-M49	50
10-M28	50
9-M26	60
11-M60	70
10-M52	50
12-M65	50
19-T42	30
20-T61	50
10-M37	50
10-M51	50
9-M22 a	200
12-M67 a	50
11-M61	70
12-M64	50
10-M32	50
18-T4 a	50
20-T53	50
10-M38	50
10-M31	50
10-M53	260
10-M53	260
10-M52	50
10-M44	50
9-M22 a	200
2-M4	50
10-M49	50

Clean politics, green politics pushed

By Rehana Hakim

Half the population, half the women," demanded Ranjana Kumari, coordinator of the South Asia Coordination Committee on Political Empowerment of Women (SACEW), at the second Asia Pacific Congress on Political Empowerment last Saturday.

The SAARC countries constitute one-tenth of the world's population but their showing in the political arena was abysmally low. Bangladesh (10.6%), Bhutan (5.7%), India (7.6%), the Maldives (5%), Nepal (3.5%) and Pakistan (1.8%).

Women were in the forefront of democratic struggles in the region, but they were not given an equal share of power. Speaking on behalf of the 23

countries of the Pacific, Fanaura Kingstone, technical advisor for the women's affairs division in Cook Island, remarked that the situation in her region was even worse: women were either represented by minuscule numbers or they were simply not represented.

In Fiji, for instance, there were only three women members in parliament and while there were none in Papua New Guinea whose population stands at 3.5 million. Solomon Islands (200,000 people) had only one in the upper chamber.

Fanaura maintained that this was in great measure due to the traditional culture and the massive influence the church wielded on family life. She said: "Good wives must submit to the wishes of their husbands or so the pastor told you."

Dr Jung Sook Kim from the Korean Institute for Women in Politics informed the assembly that although there were six women in politics in the Korean Republic, they constituted only 2% of the total numbers, and at least five of them were government nominees.

The participants agreed that women were needed in larger numbers to stop wars and to end the communalization and criminalization of politics. "Clean politics and green politics is what we want," suggested Dr Ranjana Kumari. A participant from Sri Lanka raised a moot point: "Were we doing anything to gender sensitize our women politicians?" A participant from Fiji said they were seeking out future political candidates in order to put them through gender sensitivity training programs.

Fanaura said aside from women, men too need to be gender sensitized. She said: "The process has to begin at home. Women need to train sons to serve, daughters already know that." A delegate from Fiji said that in their region they were keeping track of potential political candidates in order to train them. Also there was a move to raise funds for those women who wanted to contest the elections.

Remedios Ignacio-Rikken, national coordinator of Pilipina, the national organization of Filipino women, dwelt on the theme of holding accountable women politicians who had been elected through women's support. "Don't create this distinction of us and them between yourself and your representative," she warned. "Often, we have this tendency to tell them,

Sister, we have helped you get up there, now perform."

At the end of the day, the South Asian Women's Voice for Equality demanded that the UN declare 1995 to 2000 as the UN Decade for Political Empowerment of Women. It asked the UN to apply pressure on member states to take affirmative action to ensure 50% representation of women in political institutions and all decision making bodies by the year 2005, and that it restructure itself to ensure gender equality in top decision making positions by the year 2000.

As a delegate rightly pointed out: "The UN has to put its own house in order before it asks others to do so."

Cyprus women push peace efforts

Veronika Sarkany

The Bi-Communal Conflict Resolution Women's group of Cyprus is the first time since the conflict in Cyprus began that Greek and Turkish Cypriot women speak out together for peace, equality and development.

As a bi-communal conflict resolution group, it is guided by the values of mutual respect, trust and acknowledgement of fundamental human needs and rights. The group are convinced that the blame/defend model leads to more confrontation, reproduces conflict and perpetuates the status quo at the detriment of both Greek and Turkish communities.

Instead, the Bi-Communal Conflict Resolution Women's Group promotes cooperation to build confidence and hope at the human level between the two communities in Cyprus.

They are holding their panel discussion Peace-building efforts in Cyprus on September 5 at 11 a.m. in Venue 10M - 42

Solidarity in hand prints

By Rina Jimenez David

HANDS, outlined on paper, some carrying messages, others drawings and patterns like tattoos, hang from the walls and from twine suspended above the "Made by Hand" inter-active exhibit at the Women's Alternative Media Center.

The hand tracings come from all over the world, with quite a number obviously sent by fax. Marjorie Kouns, a New York-based artist, says she had gathered over 500 "hands" before the Forum opened, and hopes to imprint the hands of all 30,000 or so participants at the Huairou event.

Why hands? And why time for the women's conference?

As Kouns' hand-out explains: "The hand represents many things to many people. Throughout the world, women have built their whole lives around things Made by Hand. As we enter the information age, we are reminded that this super-highway is accessible primarily by entering code strings onto a keyboard with our hands, thereby unlocking the abundant resources of knowledge at our fingertips. Hands are the conduit for universal life energy, and communication vehicles for both the hearing and vocally disadvantaged."

"Handwriting as well as calligraphy are both Made by Hand. This exhibit places no boundaries on its viewers/



participants. The hands represented in Made by Hand will 'speak' for themselves," she adds.

At present, the hands are plastered over the nook that Kouns has carved out for herself inside the Shooting School extension, and flutter above the heads of passers-by. In anticipation of getting more hands, Kouns has strung twine out the window into the gar-

den in front. In time, she hopes the hands will stretch all the way to the Forum entrance.

Those who agree to leave their hand prints can listen to a sound collage in which voices say the word for "hand" and other words incorporating "hand" in English, Mandarin, French, Spanish and Arabic with background sound of hands snapping, clipping, clapping while they trace their

hands and leave their messages.

It takes very little imagination to envisage the people behind all these hands, indeed holding hands in solidarity, even if only by hand prints on paper. A big hand to Kouns, then, for her singular handiwork!

Women and AIDS: Question of power over self

CARRIBEAN - When Paula first learned she had contracted the HIV virus which causes AIDS she knew for sure she had lost out on an important gamble.

"My husband was the only man I ever had sex with," she says swivelling uncomfortably in an office chair, a half smile crossing her face.

AIDS orphans

Paula had married at age 20, but she has known for years now that her husband was having extramarital affairs. She had hoped somewhere in the back of her mind that his behaviour would not put her and their family at risk.

It was a doomed hope. Her husband, whom she had depended on financially, has died of AIDS, she is now HIV positive and her three young children are on the verge of being made AIDS orphans.

Now she wonders at the at-

titude that had forced her to remain with an unfaithful husband because she had felt it would have been a "disgrace" to leave him.

As a matter of fact women are the fastest growing HIV infected group in the region.

In Barbados there is one woman to every two men diagnosed with the HIV virus.

"It is alarming," says Dr Carol Jacobs of Barbados' National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACA). "What we are looking at these days is the vulnerability of women and the significance of the rise of statistics as far as the female population is concerned."

AIDS infected women who work in private sector enterprises have been losing their jobs once their employer learns of their diagnosis. As a result the National Union of Public Workers have started investigations into several firms' hiring and firing practices.

"There is a fear out there about AIDS which is not only among workers but employers. They feel someone with AIDS would be a threat to themselves and to other workers," says Margaret Gill the union's general secretary for research and education.

In Jamaica to the north, fully 40 percent of the AIDS cases are women, says that country's Health Ministry.

"They are the fastest growing group, women with AIDS," says Peter Weller, clinical psychologist at the Ministry of Health's epidemiology unit, "and it's indicative of the nature of the spread — heterosexual males infecting women."

More than 40 percent of households in the region are headed by women and should these females contract the HIV, the consequences for the family can be dire.

Children for instance might

not be able to find homes with relatives, who might still be fearful of contracting the disease.

In Trinidad and Tobago some 108 children below the age of 14 have been diagnosed HIV positive. Eleven of those children were abandoned in 1993 at the Port of Spain General Hospital.

Social pressures

"Existing children's homes appear to be refusing acceptance to HIV positive children on the grounds that they lack the resources to adequately care for them," says a report from that country's National AIDS Programme.

Health workers say many of the women who contract AIDS do so because of societal pressures and customs.

"Many women feel powerless to protect themselves from AIDS," says Dr Maxine Ankras.

For a very long time men in the region had scoffed at using condoms claiming that real men preferred to "ride bare back" as they put it.

The circumstances surrounding women's susceptibility to the disease and the disease itself will be part of the discussions at the world women's summit to be held in Beijing, China beginning today.

At the last conference held 10 years ago in Nairobi, Kenya, AIDS was not an agenda priority. Then the universal understanding was that HIV/AIDS was a disease affecting homosexual men in the West.

But now statistics show that there are over 11 million infected adults worldwide, about 40 percent of whom are women. It is estimated that in another four and half years, half of all HIV-infected adults will be women. (IPS)

French colony opposed to nuke tests

By Rina Jimenez David

When she was 15, Susana Ounei-Small got into an argument with a French girl in school.

"She called me a dirty Kanak, and at that time, 'kanak' was an insulting term," says Susana.

She was expelled by school authorities as a result of the argument, and Susana has not been able to complete her studies since. But though her formal schooling may have been interrupted, Susana has rounded off her education with almost 30 years of activism, particularly through her involvement with the PCRC, or the Pacific Concerns Resource Center.

The focus of Susana's activism has been her own country of Kanaky, otherwise known as New Caledonia, a French colony. Mururoa Atoll, where the French government is scheduled to conduct nuclear testing, lies a five-hour plane ride away in "French" Polynesia.

But, says Susana, "all of us in the Pacific are affected as well."

"You cannot separate the issue of nuclearization from

colonization," declares Susana. "The only reason the Chirac government is conducting the nuclear tests in the Pacific is that we are their 'territory'. If we were not a colony of the French, they would not be able to conduct nuclear tests in our area."

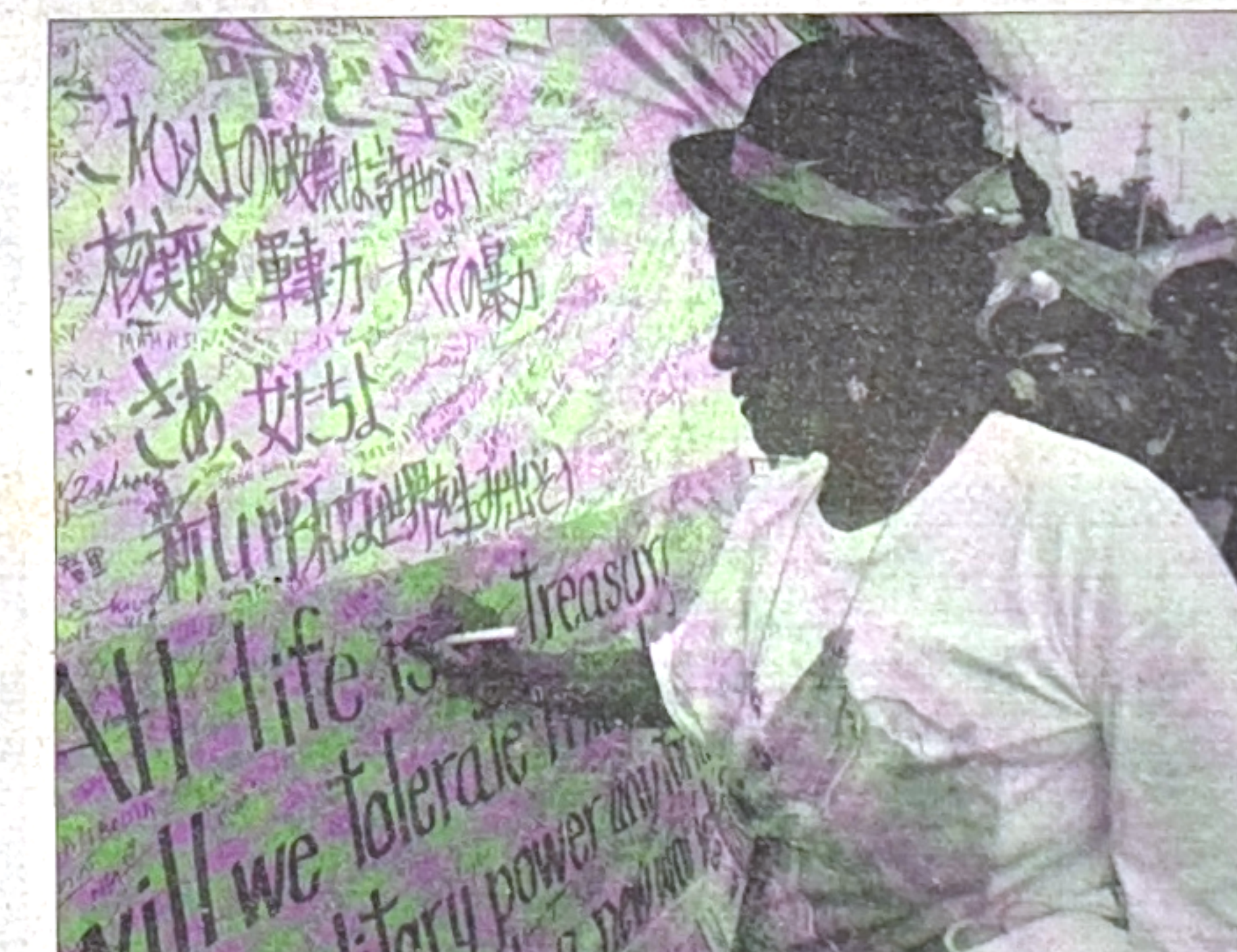
"The only way to put an end to nuclear testing in the Pacific is to de-colonize the Pacific," she says.

But Susana doubts very much if France would ever voluntarily leave their Pacific territories. "The wealth of the French was taken from our natural resources, our nickel, gold, copper, zinc and iron. They are also making a lot of money from tourism, because our islands boast of very mild, very beautiful climate, with lots of beaches."

Just recently in her native island of Ouvea, Susana says 19 Kanaks were executed for various offenses, "this, in an island whose population is only 2,700."

Kanaky's population totals 145,000 but of this, only 72,000 is native Kanak "because a policy of transmigration was put in place to dilute the native population."

So concerned are the French



Sisterhood is global. Bolivian participant signing a protest poster against nuclear testing.

Photo Stephanie Hallyman

about the political implications of their resumption of the nuclear tests that the government has barred activist native women from attending the Conference, says Susana. An

activist from Tahiti was prevented from leaving and she says, "they want to disorganize us and separate us."

Susana decries what she calls French "hypocrisy." She

says: "They came here to talk about peace negotiations and peace work, but they themselves are killing people in their Pacific colonies."

Walking in two worlds with one spirit

Photographs by Stephenie Hollyman

*I*n the icy realms of Alaska's Arctic region live the Inupiat elders. Following traditional ways, they seek to pass on their wisdom to future generations of Inupiat youth. They commissioned these portraits to accompany an oral history project. The three portraits on this page were selected from a total of 120.

A Photo Archive Project Commissioned by the Inupiat Elders Council, Northwest Arctic Borough, Alaska, U.S.A.



Journalists defy constant threat of death

AFRICA— Sihem has dyed her hair and bought a gun. Karima changes her itinerary daily. Lamia has gone underground, often enduring days without a shower.

Such is the life of a woman reporter in Algeria today, where more than 48 journalists and other professionals — including four women — have been killed since 1993 and at least 200 forced to flee the country.

The persecution of journalists and intellectuals — perpetrated by both government forces and Islamist rebels — has taken place against a backdrop of violence that leads back to Jan. 1992, when the Algerian army cancelled a general election the Islamic party was poised to win.

Since then between 10,000 and 30,000 people have died in the political conflict, and the lives of those committed to reporting the atrocities have come to resemble that of a soldier of fortune more than a white-collar professional.

Since Djaafar El Afghani, leader of the Islamic Armed Group (GIA), swore to fight with the sword those who are fighting with the pen, only war-battered Rwanda and Yugoslavia has matched Algeria's grisly record of the number of journalist deaths.

According to Paris-based rights group Reporters Sans Frontiers, 119 journalists were reportedly assassinated in 1994 and early 1995 — "an absolute record".

Amina, who is 35 and has been a journalist for eight years, remembers practising her trade before the advent of terrorism and government censorship: "Before, a journalist was well regarded, she didn't have to keep her profession a secret, and she did her job in all tranquillity," she says, "but now nothing is as it was before."

Like many of her colleagues, Amina no longer lives at home; the dangers attendant to her profession have forced her underground.

"Fear? Yes I'm afraid. It's only human, and I'm not ashamed to admit it. But it's not death itself, it's the atrocities that go with it that I fear," she says.

According to Amnesty International, rape and death threats in Algeria are commonplace, and women have been killed for both wearing and not wearing the veil.

"After all, journalism, writing, is how I earn my living; it's the only job I know how to do."

"It's in my blood,"

Amina

Yet Amina refuses to either leave her profession or move to a less hostile environment.

"It is out of the question for me to capitulate, both as a matter of principle and out of respect for my colleagues who have been assassinated. And, after all, journalism, writing, is how I earn my living; it's the only job I know how to do. It's in my blood," she says.

"I cannot bring myself to leave, though I would never quarrel with those who have been forced into exile, because this (fear) is legitimate," she adds.

Amina describes the case of Rachida Hammadi, a journalist with ENTV, the Algerian television network, and the first woman journalist to be assassinated, as the scenario they all fear.

"We met covering the hijacking of the French Airbus. She was very ambitious, with a strong character. We spent whole days and nights together watching out for the least scrap of information. Rachid wanted at any price to get her own picture of what actually happened on the Airbus, and she got it," Amina says.

Thirty-year-old Sihem minces no words about the "terrorists" who have several times threatened her and members of her family. She persists, however, in signing her political articles, refusing to hide behind a pseudonym.

"Do you know what I do to shake off the terrorists?" she asked ruefully. "Each time I change how I look, my way of dressing, the colour of my hair, and then they only see my gun. Yes, that's the way to shake off terrorists. All of us have our 'little tricks', even if we know that in the last analysis, when our fatal hour sounds, there is absolutely nothing we can do."

"As for myself," says Karima, 25, a two-year veteran, "I regularly change my schedule and my itineraries, and a little voice tells me joyfully, 'I've shaken them off', but basically it's not funny at all."

The same goes for Ouahla, who describes her daily trip to work as a terrifying ordeal: "I get into a panic, and the last three hundred metres separating me from the press building where the paper I work for is located seem interminable. It's not for nothing that all the journalists call this street 'the corridor of death'," she adds.

The more disillusioned Fazia is of another opinion: "I don't see what sense it makes to always be on the look-out. Besides, how can you be on your guard when you've nothing but your bare hands and you're faced with some guy armed with a Kalashnikov (rifle)."

"And then, why give yourself so much trouble when one fine morning some guy from your own quarter — perhaps he's even one of your neighbours sharing the same landing with you — puts a bullet in your head," she says.

The constant threat is taking a toll on even the most committed reporters, some of whom find their inspiration dwindling under the barrage of stress.

"We can't refuse to give our identity to anyone who asks for it when we go in search of some piece of information. There we have to say in a soft voice to the security guard 'I'm a journalist' if he insists on asking us to show our professional card, which most of us have either destroyed or thrown into the back of a drawer and locked it away," says Samira.

But women journalists must endure the double burden of being members of two groups whose position has clearly deteriorated since the advent of the civil war.

Women's groups like the Paris-based International Democratic Federation of Women estimate that more than 356 Algerian women have been assassinated since 1993 by Islamic extremists.

And in a country where a 'Family Code' — codified in 1984 — grants women the status of minors, forever subordinate to men, a family's restrictions on a woman's movements can endanger her life.

This is the case for Fatiha, 28, who believes her family is acting out of fear more than authoritarianism: "My parents would frown on my taking a hotel room, following the example of male colleagues and certain of my female colleagues.

"They are very attached to the proprieties, and are only too capable of forcing me to choose between my job and our house, should I express a wish to leave the family home."

For others it is the trial of living life on the run that is intolerable. "I often go to ground at my friends and relatives, but it is revolting. Sometimes I feel disgusted with myself, pinned down by my job, having to live in hiding. I don't even have time to take a shower or change," says Lamia, 25.

And the stress of resisting persecution is not limited to the journalist herself.

"My mother," says 26-year-old Farida "sadly bids me

"My mother," says

26-year-old Farida

"sadly bids me good-bye each time I leave the house. I look back and see her standing on the doorstep begging me with her eyes to be careful,"

good-bye each time I leave the house. I look back and see her standing on the doorstep begging me with her eyes to be careful, and I say to myself, 'God, do I have the right to make my family suffer like this?'

One of the journalists' mothers confided, "I am very worried for my daughter, I tell myself that if something happens, I would want them to kill me too, because I could no longer survive without her. I am encouraging her to leave the country, I prefer her far from me rather than dead."

But Algeria's women journalists persist in the face of enormous pressure. "My female staff," one newspaper editor told IPS, "are very ambitious, they never cringe at an assignment, and if you send them out to do a report, even to the remotest part of the country, they'll do it, braving family pressure and the insecurity that exists everywhere in the country."

"Each time I tell them, look after yourselves, you are doubly threatened, because you are women and because you are journalists," he added. (IPS)



Where is Irene Santiago?

By Rina Jimenez David

It couldn't have happened at a worse time.

Irene Santiago, executive director of the NGO Forum, is now laid up in her room after falling and sustaining a hairline fracture on her ankle bone the other day.

Santiago said she was visiting the exhibition area at the Long Shan Conference Center late Saturday afternoon when she missed the last step on the stairs and fell, twisting her ankle.

She was brought to the medical center where an X-ray showed a hairline fracture on her right ankle.

When this reporter visited Ms Santiago in her hotel room, she had her leg raised with an ice pack on the swelling ankle. Friends, staff and family were busy convincing her to go to the hospital and have a cast put on it.

Putting a positive note on her mishap, Ms Santiago said at least it had given her the chance to visit the medical center, the only facility in the Forum site that she had not yet personally inspected.

Echos

Embargo

Des femmes Irakiennes ont organisé une manifestation contre l'embargo auquel l'Irak est soumis depuis cinq ans. Plusieurs participantes au forum ont rejoint la manifestation, dont une majorité des ONGs arabes, et plusieurs groupes d'Amérique latine et d'Asie et d'Afrique.

Afrique

La nuit de l'Afrique tel était le thème du spectacle multicolor présenté la nuit d'avant hier au théâtre de verdure du forum. Des défilés de costumes traditionnels sont passés, sous les chants et rythmes africains. La pluie n'a pas privé le public de continuer sa soirée.

Bicycles turn into hot cakes in Huairou

By Huorong Liu

Bicycles, usually a favorite form of transport for Chinese, are all the rage among foreign delegates to the NGO Forum here in Huairou these days.

"I get to places fast when I ride a bike," said Ana Maria Quiroz from Canada while getting onto her new acquisition for a workshop. "When certain activities are canceled, I can get to another quickly this way."

She rode her bike around the Huairou Reservoir to enjoy the beautiful scenes there. "It is also great exercise," she declared.

But for Stephanie Hollyman, the camera woman of Forum 95, getting around fast was definitely the most important thing on her mind as she has to take many pictures at different places around town every day.

"Besides, I am tired of walking. It gives me a rest," she said.

According to Cao Weihong, a shop assistant at the bicycles counter of the Huairou Department Store, bicycles sell like hot cakes these days.

"We have sold more 150 of them in the past few days and about 60 on one day," she said.

The bicycles she and her colleagues sold to foreigners are mostly inexpensive ones, which cost about 45 U.S. dollars each.

"Because I can't take it home," Quiroz said.

While it is more convenient for the delegates to ride a bicycle to get around, it may have added a little more work

to Wu Jianxiang, a policeman who directs traffic at the crossroads near the Beijing Huairou International Convention Center.

"They may not know our traffic rules very well and some of them ride too fast," he said.

But he admitted that most of the foreign bike riders have been doing pretty well and he has heard of no accident involving a bike.

Wu believes that foreigners buy bicycles because they think bicycles are so popular in China and they need exercise and see more things in town.

"If they take a bus or taxi, they can't see much," he said.

Can they return the bikes when they leave and get some refund?

"No, we don't want those used bicycles because we don't have space for them," Cao of the Huairou Department Store said.

Hollyman, who bought her bike from the store, said she would give hers to a volunteer to thank the volunteers for their work.

But Quiroz, who bought her bike from another store, plans to take it back to the store after it serves her purpose.

"When I bought the bike at the store down there, I saw this note saying that any foreigner who buys her bicycle there could return it and get 40 percent refund," she said, pointing in the direction across the street from the convention center.

"So after I use it during the Forum, I can still get about 20 dollars back and I would spend only a little more than 20 dollars for my transportation all these days. It is a good deal."

Stephanie Hollyman



Self-led workshop

Wandi Jiang

The Workshop on Leadership Skills for Women should have started at 9:00 am on September 2 in the room 36 according to the schedule. Every seat was occupied on time. More than 50 women and men attended the meeting. But the workshop leaders did not show up. Chatting and changing business cards while waiting, the audience did not appear to be impatient until 9:40.

"Ladies and ladies," an American lady stood up speaking loudly, "Why don't we be-

gin our discussion on this matter right now instead of wasting our time waiting. What I would like to put forward is that women should not pigeonholed. We should seek leadership through participating various organizations." Her name is Vernell Crumbaugh, an activist with the social organization called Alcohol/Drug Counseling: Nutrition for Recovery and Adolescents at Risk located in Idaho.

She was followed by Joan Zamora, a teacher from Canada. As though she was in her own classroom, she began

her speech after standing in front of the blackboard. "OK, let's concentrate on what we should have for leadership. Could you list them one by one?" she asked.

"Cause," "active in community," "volunteer," "risk taker," "creative," "persistence," "sense of responsibility," "strong PR ability," "good organizer," "tolerance," "sense of humor," "good mother". The answers came from every corner of the room without a pause. The teacher kept writing until the good characteristics for leadership to over 30. "It sounds as

though she is a perfect person," said Zamora, to laughter from every one.

Some participants argued that financial power is usually the leading problem, and it was worth discussing how women could locate the sources of finance available. Potential sources were listed such as banks, co-ops, national and international organizations, special foundations and public fund raising activities. One person whispered, "It helps to marry rich men."

Participants included people from Bangladesh, Namibia, Ja-

pan, India, Kuwait, China, Canada, the United States, Uganda, Laos, Iran and South Africa. This free-for-all did not end until people for the next seminar arrived.

Crumbaugh, a mother and grandmother, said with excitement after the meeting, "I was born to a family which history dates back to slavery period. For generations black women were not aware of their own rights and they used be silent ones in society. Now we should open our mouths and share talents and opportunities with all the others."

UN on trial

Sara Ann Friedman

It is a daily chore to love my daughter and to protect her from me. I conceived the child of a monster and I never want her to know how she was born or who her father was."

That was Agnes speaking as she recounted her past ordeal. On 9 October, the Ugandan Independence Day, 14 year old Agnes was abducted by three men while on her way home from school. Members of a rebel group, the abductors covered her eyes with a piece of cloth and dragged her on a long journey to their camp, indifferent to her hunger, exhaustion, bleeding feet and stark terror.

Shame

At the camp, Agnes and the other kidnapped girls were forced to serve the commanders in whatever way they wished: to cook, care for the wounded and appease their voracious and daily sexual needs.

"I had no sexual experience," says Agnes, now 29. "He held me down, tied me, beat me and then raped me many times. As I gave up resisting, shame took the place of pain." Many months later, Agnes gave birth to a daughter in the bushes while the rebels were on the run.

She escaped and found her way to a military base where the authorities grilled her for

information, fed her almost nothing and provided no counseling or any support.

"Why is it that those we depend on to protect us are so often those who abuse us?" Agnes asks. "And why do they go unpunished?"

This was one of 22 moving testimonies presented at the six hour Global Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Hu-

"I conceived the child of a monster and I never want her to know how she was born or who her father was."

man Rights held on 1 September at the International Convention Center (Huairou Cinema).

Organized by the US based Center for Women's Global Leadership, the tribunal will demand accountability from the UN and from the world's governments for their actions and inactions.

Charlotte Bunch, director of the Global Center, explains: "The UN is on trial before the people of the world."

At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, said Bunch, women began to tear down the wall of silence surrounding their human rights violations. Today,

the holes in the wall are still too few and the remaining abuses too many in every corner of the world like mutilation, killing, slavery, imprisonment, and rape.

Mahfouda ALley Hamid and other self employed women in rural Tanzania have experienced economic deprivation because of Structural Adjustment Programs

Thea DuBow suffered years of physical and psychological violence at the hands of her husband, who she ultimately killed in self defense. In her four years in prison, she organized other women inmates who were survivors of domestic violence.

These 22 women speak not only for themselves, but also for the millions of women in every country whose human rights are violated daily and repeatedly. Their perpetrators may be unfamiliar to one another but represent the systemic violence committed and supported by public and private institutions at every level. Sexual abuse is not a private act," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. "Rape and sexual slavery are not normal acts of war. These are myths which must be dispelled."

The force of change is clearly evident as workshops addressing violence against women number in the many dozens.

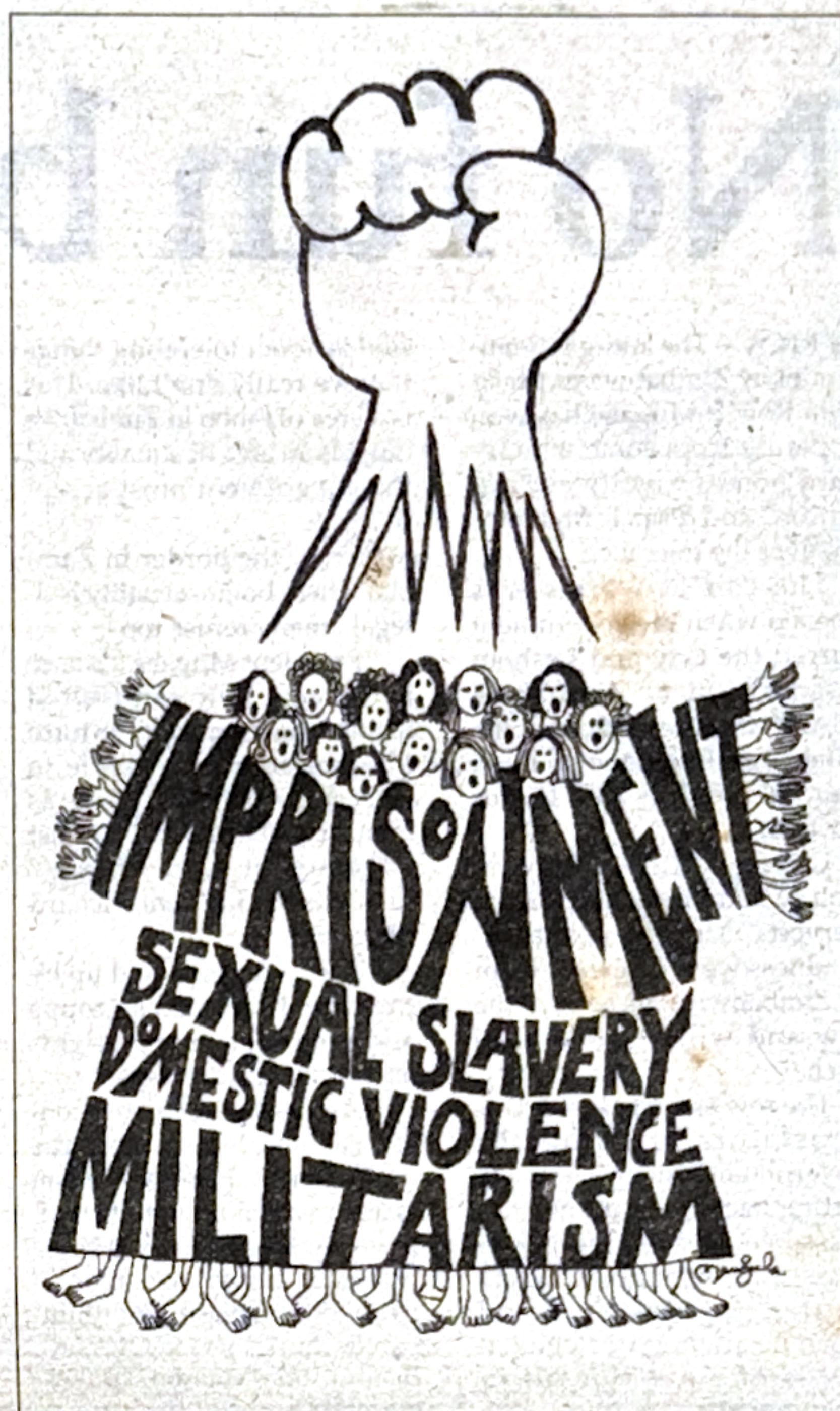


Illustration: Manjula Padmanabhan

On Monday, 4 September, from 1 to 2:45 p.m. at the International Convention Center, a petition will be presented to the UN to demand a report on the steps it has taken to promote and protect the human rights of women since Vienna.

The petition has been translated into more than 30 languages, circulated in over 140 countries and is sponsored by more than 1,500 groups internationally.

Adolescent tips needed

By William A. Ryan

When I got my first period, all my mother told me was, 'Stay away from boys.' The next time a boy tried to talk to me, I hit him."

The young girl was one of a dozen audience members who took the floor to amplify points made by panelists in a lively Saturday session on African youth and reproductive health.

They spoke with passion on the need for better communication about sexual matters and for more support to young women to counter gender discrimination and reproductive health risks.

Education

Three teenagers led the panel, organized by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) with the support of the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and

Family Care International (FCI).

Olublunmi Adeleye of Nigeria addressed health problems linked to early pregnancy, unsafe abortion, HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation. Ireen Lungu of Zambia stressed the value of sex education and peer group programs to counter ignorance and misinformation.

Micheline Mashigo of South Africa noted that social disapproval keeps many adolescents from going to clinics to obtain contraceptives.

Mother-daughter

Their presentations triggered nearly an hour of comments by women and girls, including an 11 year old from Africa.

Several spoke about the inadequacy of communication between mothers and daughters regarding sexuality.

One speaker said that in some local languages, the words needed are considered shameful. Others emphasized the importance of teaching materials, of educating parents, and of teaching boys to respect women.

Next came speeches from experts in adolescent health and education.

Frightful odds

The director of Kenya's Center for Adolescent Studies, Dr. Khama Rogo, pointed out the frightful odds facing young African women today: One in twenty will die of pregnancy-related causes, another 1 in 20 of HIV/AIDS; among adolescents with HIV, girls outnumber boys six to one.

Family life education must begin primary school, he argued, since only 30 per cent of girls attend high school.

No-show Sally

By Seona Smiles

Very few women in Hollywood are flakes," Elizabeth Coit of the NOW Legal Defense and Education reassured us. We were waiting for American film actress Sally Field to speak at a workshop in an auditorium, which was already half full an hour before it was due to begin.

"I have worked in Los Angeles quite a bit, and I know many actresses who are not the blonde bimbos they are perhaps made out to be on the screen or in the magazines," she says.

Coit will fly shortly to Los Angeles for a fund raising dinner, honoring some families who have brought up outstanding daughters in various fields. "And we are getting a lot of support from Hollywood women," she says.

There is a Hollywood Women's Political Caucus where Hollywood women put their money in.

Coit explains: "Barbra Streisand, for instance, backs Bella Abzug, who is here at the Forum. Barbra also puts a lot into AIDS work. Meryl Streep is fighting for better women's part in films."

Sally Field may have been the Flying Nun and Gidget, but she was also Norma Rae the union leader and mother of Forest Gump.

"I have a lot of faith in Hollywood," Coit said.

Unfortunately, Sally Field never arrived to confirm this. A nervous member of the NGO Forum Secretariat announced the cancellation of the workshop. "Ah well," says Coit, "I will just get on with writing an extended letter to my four nieces on the Forum experience."

No fun being gay

AFRICA—The anti-gay sentiments of Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe has won applause from some who regard homosexuality as "un-african" and despair from others over the tolerance.

The can of worms was opened when the government barred the Gay and Lesbian Association of Zimbabwe (GALZ) from exhibiting at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair held on July 28th to August 5th.

Calling GALZ the "association of sodomists and sexual perverts" Mugabe said that, "Madness we will never accept in Zimbabwe ... its against the law and will be treated as such."

The row escalated with U.S. legislators critising the government's stance, Mugabe hitting back by taunting congressmen, and then facing an angry demonstration of South African gays last weekend when he attended a Regional Heads of State Summit in Johannesburg.

GALZ member Andrew Morrison, a university lecturer, believes "Freedom of expres-

sion is about tolerating things that we really don't like. This is a area of taboo in Zimbabwe but it is an area of equality and the government must accept that."

Across the border in Zambia, where homosexuality is illegal, many refuse too.

"President Mugabe's stance is correct... how can United States congressmen try to force Mugabe to be charitable to such an unnatural thing as homosexuality. Its is not just unnatural, it is un-African," says Lusaka resident Richard Mwanza.

His chorus is picked up by the church, women's groups and even some human rights and civic organizations.

"As far as the church is concerned, there is no compromise on the matter. Homosexuality is a sin which must not be allowed to take root in the name of human rights. Society is already decayed as it is," thundered Church of God Overseer, Bishop John Mambo, spokesman for the Foundation of Democratic Progress.

It is male homosexuality that appears to be of chief con-

cern. Lesbianism does not rate a mention on the statute books, but sodomy carries a nine month sentence with hard labour in Zambia and legislators say its extremely unlikely that law will be amended.

"I do not see anyone moving such a motion or introducing a bill to that effect. I honestly do not see it being passed by this parliament in this christian state", notes Deputy Minister in the office of the President, Eric Silwamba.

He said that many members in the country's multi-party Parliament are culturally conservative.

"While they may be open to new democratic ideas or ideals, they are still closed on such matters and I would advise those pursuing them to cool off and bide their time for another generation of legislators", he added.

In Nigeria, the furore triggered by Mugabe over the issue hardly made the papers. It's a subject that remains firmly in the closet.

"The first time I heard of such a thing was in the late 1960's when boys attending

boys-only secondary schools were caught experimenting with sex because of the absence of girls", says driver Isaac Adeniyi.

"I believe their must be homosexuals...but you know these things are hidden because our society does not approve of such deviant behavior", reckons journalist Victor Adekunle.

In Islamic Northern Nigeria homosexuality, however much frowned upon, has a much stronger tradition. "They do not make any attempt to hide their inclination. They sometimes dress and behave like women. It's an old phenomenon here", said one resident of the Northern city of Kaduna.

But in South Africa, feeding on the new democratic culture, gay men and women have been vocal in demanding their rights and discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference is outlawed. According to Patrick Kelly of the Human Rights Committee of South Africa, Mugabe's statements are disturbing for a man noted for his fight for political liberation of his country.

"We need to understand that we are in the 90's. If African countries have a serious commitment to human rights the right to sexual preference is part of that", says Kelly, the HRC National Director.

His explanation for the sudden frenzy over the issue is partly due to the over subscribed but wrong assumption that being gay is "un-African".

South African papers came out robustly in their attacks on Mugabe this week with headlines like: "You're King already Robert, so why don't you let them be Queens."

"Calvinists in particular often play god by seating themselves on the lofty throne of judgement...in the process of deliberately ignoring the biblical injunctions to "do unto others" and to "judge not, lest ye also be judged", wrote newspaper columnist Jon Qwelane (IPS)

SNAPSHOT



Stephenie Hollyman

*Who gave him his visa?
Who booked his hotel?
Who processed his pass?
I think we should be told!*

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