

Snapshots of Group Work



Drafting Committee

CONCLUDING SESSION

Chaired by H.E. Mr. Q.A.M.A. Rahim, Secretary General SAARC

Presentations by Groups and Discussion

Closing Remarks by Delegates

Drafting of "How to move forward: Bhutan Forward Moving Strategies"

Presentation, discussion and adoption of "How to move forward: Bhutan Forward Moving Strategies"

Vote of Thanks by Ms. Neten Zangmo, Cabinet Secretary, Royal Government of Bhutan & UNIFEM

Group Discussions on Regional Concerns and Future Plans of Action

Participants were divided into three working groups, with each identifying critical issues of concern and developing a list of key areas of collaboration, best practices and strategies for collaboration. The Group Work was shared with the larger group leading to the working group considerations being further developed and incorporated into a comprehensive and common regional framework entitled, "Bhutan Forward Moving Strategies." The three working groups identified the following:



Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar in conversation with Dr. R. V. V. Ayyar

#### Areas of collaboration

- Sharing of technical expertise across countries
- Water management system
- Gender disaggregated Data Collection and Census
- Gender Budgets
- Institutional strengthening at national level
- Use of CEDAW as a guiding framework
- The impact of globalization, feminization of poverty, poverty reduction programs

#### Areas of Collaboration between Governments, NGOs and Civil Society and Key Strategies for Gender Equality

- Gender training
- Mechanisms for information sharing on gender related matters
- Law Making
- Preventing and combating trafficking
- Research and database
- Media Campaign
- Public awareness on CEDAW and BPFA
- Trafficking
- Migration
- Action Programmes

#### Best Practices

*Bangladesh* One-Stop Crisis Centre

*Bhutan* Legislation in favour of women, viz., Marriages Act 1980 amended in 1996, whereby, the father has to pay 20% of his income for the maintenance of a child born out of wedlock; in case of a divorce, the husband's income is to be shared according to number of children from the marriage; Non-formal Education

*India* - Zero Violence Zone, Census Exercise (incorporation of gender issues)

*Nepal* Government-NGO collaboration in CEDAW and other international instruments

*Pakistan* Political empowerment of women

*Sri Lanka* - Peace Process

#### Issues of concern:

- (1) Initiatives on disaggregated data and gender budgets have not gone down to the local bodies
- (2) Sharing of water resources, particularly with regard to discussion within and between countries on water management

#### Key Strategies for Collaboration

- Integrate gender training in all training, thus institutionalizing gender training
- Exchange training modules
- Exchange good practices
- Set up joint Government and NGO committees to review progress (as in Nepal)
- Capacity building of women's ministries and gender focal points
- Engendering the budgetary process
- Involvement of civil society in law making
- SAARC monitoring mechanisms to monitor progress
- Regional task force of SAARC on trafficking.
- Establishment of SAARC POL
- Mapping at SAARC level, including migration
- Protecting the rights of trafficked victims
- Setting up and sharing of a database of good practices, resource persons, traffickers and intelligence
- Special attention to women and children in conflict areas and involvement of women in peace building processes
- Recognition of trans-border anti trafficking committee at the local level (Govt. and NGO)
- Initiatives on Girl Child, like the Balika Samridhi Yojana and Rajalakshmi Yojana of Government of India

Civil society representatives observed that accountability lies with the Government, civil society and the international community and that people were here together not to criticize but to identify areas of consensus.

Dr. Pam Rajput observed that South Asia is the only sub-region, which has carried the Beijing torch, facilitated by UNIFEM. She said it was unique because governments and civil society collectively reflected on the progress made on the BPFA. She felt that this could be more useful if more members of civil society could be involved. For all governments who endorsed the BPFA, it was like a contract that the governments had signed with the women of their country, and it was important to reflect periodically. Efforts were ongoing to move the agenda forward. NGOs need to formalize monitoring and government initiatives need to be taken to the grassroots. Similarly, grassroots initiatives and voices need to be brought up to the national, regional and international levels. UNIFEM could play a crucial role in this. Asia-Pacific Women's Watch needs support from government and other agencies.

Ms. Chandni Joshi, RPD UNIFEM stated that a few critical concerns need to be identified and prioritized, being simultaneously time bound.

The Concluding Session was followed by a Press Conference, which was attended by all heads of government delegations, and representatives of UNIFEM Headquarters and the UNIFEM Regional Office. The Bhutan Forward Moving Strategies were shared with questions raised on follow-up actions and commitments made during the meeting.

## BHUTAN FORWARD MOVING STRATEGIES 2003 ACCELERATING ACTIONS AND RESULTS

We, Ministers, Secretaries and senior officers of the governments, NGOs, women's groups from South Asia - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka gathered at Paro on 19-21 May 2003, at the Fourth Beijing Biennial Regional Ministerial Meeting jointly organized by UNIFEM, South Asia Regional Office and the Royal Government of Bhutan.

The objective of this meeting was to continue the process of regional sharing and learning and to take stock of insights and recommendations made in the Maldives Forward Moving Strategies 2000 and re-examine progress and come up with practical, time bound action plans & strategies within the regional context.

While recalling and reaffirming the commitments on women's empowerment and gender equality made in the Beijing Platform for Action 1995 and all other related follow-up documents adopted:

- I. We note that the last five years have been witness to considerable development in the following areas:
  - Drawing up of national plans of action and national policy instruments to implement the PFA.
  - Moving towards gender justice through legal reforms and proper application of laws.
  - Increased awareness, dialogue, commitment and development of plans of action to combat gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children and in addressing risks and vulnerabilities of HIV/AIDS.
  - Progress made in sex-disaggregated data in national statistical systems.
  - Increased NGO activism, networking and mobilization of the women's movement around some key gender concerns.
  - Increasing consensus in favour of and efforts at affirmative actions to secure greater representation of women at local levels.
  - Consensus in favour of increasing resource flows to women in national budgets.

II. In spite of such achievements, we recognize continuing challenges in the following areas with respect to the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Despite stated political commitment, insufficient human, technical and financial resources to implement national plans of action and address gender concerns.
- Inadequate mechanisms and tools to coordinate and monitor progress of women including sex disaggregated data, country and region specific indicators.
- Invisibility of women in higher levels of governance, political leadership and civil administration.
- Continuing gaps in education and health, with high maternal and child mortality rates being of particular concern.
- Gaps in knowledge, awareness and action on issues relating to rural women, ageing women and gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS.
- Increased incidence of gender-based violence including female foeticide, trafficking in women and children, sexual abuse and sexual harassment.
- Slow compliance in implementing CEDAW and lack of awareness and capacity on using CEDAW to claim women's human rights.
- Inadequate implementation of laws that are supportive of women's rights

III. In the light of the above analysis of achievements, shortfalls and challenges, We agree to direct our efforts in the coming years towards the following priority concerns:

#### Human Rights and Feminization of Poverty

- Strengthen the implementation and monitoring by Governments, civil society and corporate sector of gender equality and rights based policies and programmes with a view to eradicating feminization of poverty as a priority, particularly rural women.
- Accelerate actions to address the main determinants of persistent gender inequalities such as illiteracy, deprivation and stereotypical socialization patterns and adverse cultural practices.

#### Monitoring of Progress on the Implementation of CEDAW and BPFA

- Strengthen national processes to review the progress on full implementation of CEDAW, the BPFA and the B+5 Outcome Document.
- Hasten ratification of Optional Protocol
- Facilitate Government and NGO collaboration at regional and national levels for CEDAW and BPFA awareness, assessment and monitoring linking it to reporting on Millennium Development Goals.
- Initiate a process for development of appropriate indicators at national and regional levels to facilitate monitoring and implementation of CEDAW and BPFA.

#### Violence against Women

- Strengthen support services for victims of gender based violence.
- Strengthen the legal system to address issues of gender based violence.

#### Trafficking

- Expedite efforts towards ratification of the SAARC Convention on Trafficking on Women and Children by all Member States.
- Upon ratification, re-examine the Convention on Trafficking on Women and Children to expand its scope, using a rights-based approach.
- Strengthen processes towards regional, bilateral and national dialogue involving NGOs.
- Initiate legal reforms to comply with the SAARC Convention and promote technical exchanges.

#### Globalization

- Support processes to engender global trade agreements and treaties
- Support efforts to promote policies and institutions which give women, especially rural women, ownership and access to economic resources, assets, capacity building and social security
- Continue to strengthen the networks of women workers in the informal sector

#### Gender Analysis of Budget

- To take forward the processes towards gender sensitive governance by developing and applying tools such as gender analysis of budgets, gender audit and engendered planning and monitoring at the national and local levels.

#### Political Participation

- Continue to strengthen processes including through affirmative action to increase women's participation in decision-making and leadership.

#### HIV/AIDS

- Intensify efforts to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS using a multi-sectoral approach and building capacity of individuals, institutions and networks.

#### Media & ICT

- Create mechanisms to increase women's access to media and communication technology, and support the training of media personnel to eliminate gender bias in reporting
- Support processes to engender ICT in all initiatives of BPFA and CEDAW implementation

#### Information Sharing

- Set up a network for facilitating documentation of best practices and sharing of knowledge, especially for the development of monitoring indicators, gender analysis of budgets, violence against women, women's political participation and gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS.
- Develop expertise in the region and share learning of best practices on key gender concerns regionally, nationally and locally.
- Ensure free access to data for all users.
- Establish a website for sharing information and experiences in the priority areas identified in this document

#### National Women's Machinery

- Strengthen the capacity of women's ministries/ departments/ committees and shift their focus from project implementation towards formulation of

gender sensitive policy, advocacy and monitoring.

#### Institutional arrangements

- Continue regional bi-annual meetings of relevant Ministries, NGOs and women's groups to review progress in the implementation of CEDAW and the BPFA to be facilitated by UNIFEM
- Encourage close collaboration between SAARC and UNIFEM towards ratification and implementation of the SAARC Convention on Trafficking of Women and Children.
- UNIFEM is requested to support and facilitate the entire process including the priorities and institutional framework.

The SAARC Secretary General opened the floor for comments on the Draft Bhutan Forward Moving Strategies, which subsequent to deliberations, were endorsed and adopted by all delegates.

Ms. Neten Zangmo, Cabinet Secretary of the Royal Government of Bhutan and Ms. Chandni Joshi, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM South Asia, thanked all the delegates for their generous sharing and for the free and frank discussions, which took place. The emergence of a consensus document provided the new blueprint for actualizing the Beijing Platform for Action.

All participants expressed their appreciation of the biennial regional review process led by UNIFEM and thanked UNIFEM and the Royal Government of Bhutan for organizing the fourth review. This provided an opportunity to share and compare progress as well as identify special areas, which require more attention. They acknowledged that while there has been progress, much more needs to be done. The meeting assisted in identifying many areas, particularly those of regional concern, as priorities for respective governments.

Resource constraints, as well as socio- cultural barriers were identified as challenges that continue to prevail. The SAARC Secretary General observed that all SAARC countries were fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The progress remained slow, not due to a shortcoming in their resolve, but due to practical constraints. Informing that SAARC's work is inter-governmental he observed that the SAARC provides a mechanism to facilitate the translation of commitments into reality. At the meeting, he observed, governments were represented at the highest level, with representatives of civil society, international organizations, individuals and

resource persons, providing an opportunity for a full gamut of views. The consensus document, H.E. Q.A.M.A. Rahim said, reflected the commitment of all sections, both government and non-government.