




Beijing at 10

Women of Southern Africa

Voices



Compiled
and
produced
by
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PREFACE

As the world reviews 10 years of commitments to effectively promote the status of women in all spheres of endeavour, much has been said in current reflections on what has happened and what it means to truly achieve women's full equality. This publication aims to contribute to this process.

It is safe to say that 1995 will go down in history as the year when a paradigmatic shift occurred on the gender equality and women's rights landscape, during the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China.

The world was urged to "look at the world through women's eyes." Further, a renewed commitment was made to transform the world using women's experiences as one of the key drivers for crafting a new development agenda, and placing the dignity and worth of women across class, age, ethnicity, political affiliation, religion and any other social orientation, at the centre of all efforts to qualitatively change society, whilst simultaneously achieving women's full equality.

Crafting a new "women-centred" world agenda required many minds, hearts, and energies, and southern African governments and gender activists played their role in the build-up to Beijing and post-Beijing conferences. They contributed to the global agenda and defined their points of entry in response to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPFA). This culminated in six thematic areas identified in southern Africa in response to the BDPFA.

The thematic areas for southern Africa focus on:

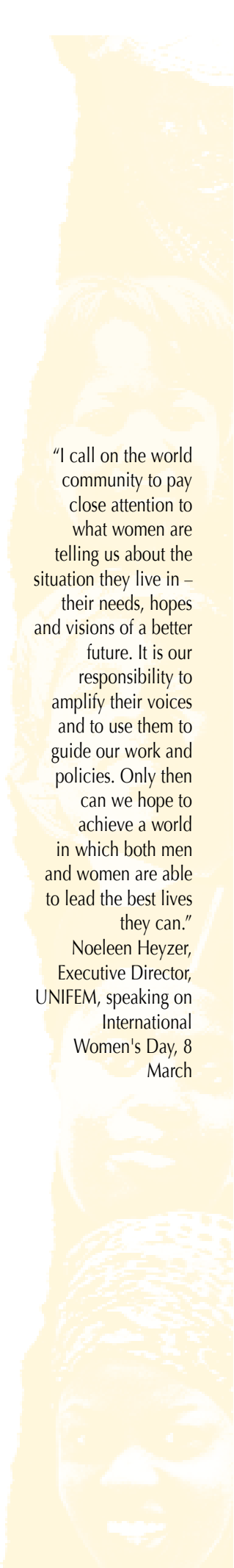
- women's participation in the economy;
- strengthening institutional mechanisms for women's advancement;
- women in politics and decision-making;
- protecting the rights of women and girls; and,
- capacity-building and networking.

This includes addressing the gender dimensions of HIV and AIDS, which became a top priority for the region in the last decade.

There is nothing more powerful, in the current 10-year review of Beijing (Beijing +10), than making more visible the voices of some of the women who played a role in southern Africa in shaping an agenda for change in the last decade.

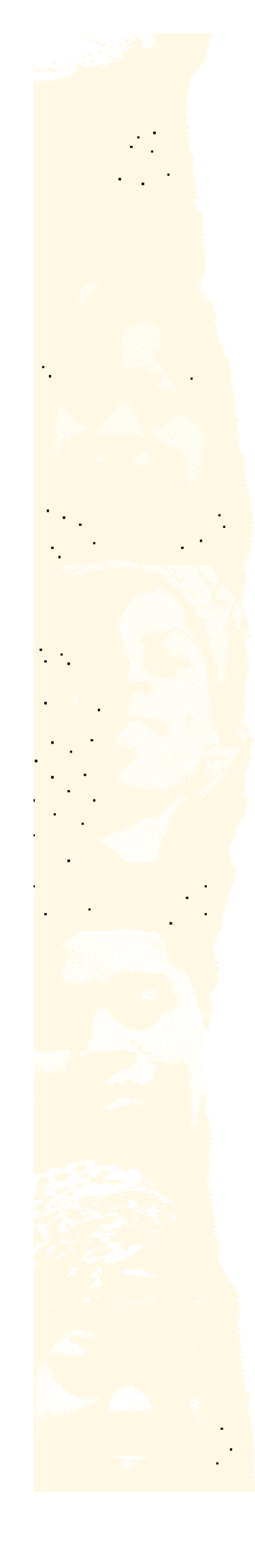
This publication seeks to highlight their dreams, hopes, fears, and vision for the future of women's empowerment in southern Africa, in the context of the Beijing process. It is easy sometimes, to lose the authenticity of an individual message or voice in a consolidated "women's agenda". In this booklet, therefore, we have sought to make visible and record some of the thoughts and reflections on Beijing from gender and feminist activists working in the region in various capacities, particularly on issues of progress and limitations in achieving full equality, and the meaning of these processes for the future.

The booklet by no means seeks to be the definitive position on women's voices in southern Africa, but aims to make a small, and hopefully meaningful, contribution to reflections on what we can learn from the past and how it can inform the future, as said by women who have influenced the gender



"I call on the world community to pay close attention to what women are telling us about the situation they live in – their needs, hopes and visions of a better future. It is our responsibility to amplify their voices and to use them to guide our work and policies. Only then can we hope to achieve a world in which both men and women are able to lead the best lives they can."

Noeleen Heyzer,
Executive Director,
UNIFEM, speaking on
International
Women's Day, 8
March



agenda in various ways in this region. When we put questions to them, we asked the women to reflect on issues that made the deepest impression on them in the past 10 years, the key successes, setbacks and challenges, and their dreams for the future and how these can be realised.

In terms of the approach to presenting these thoughts and reflections in the booklet, we begin by restating the significance of the Beijing process for shaping an agenda for change in the circumstances that have deepened gender inequality and women's disempowerment globally and in southern Africa. We then proceed to discuss what has been achieved, what the challenges have been, what the future holds, and recommendations for concrete action. The hope is that this booklet will lend some authenticity in the crafting of an agenda for the next 10 years to achieve women's full equality in southern Africa.

SARDC

The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) is an independent regional information resource centre, which seeks to enhance the effectiveness of key development processes in the SADC region through the collection, production and dissemination of information, and enabling the capacity to generate and use information. SARDC has five main areas of focus, which are pursued by specialist departments for environment and water resources, gender, governance, regional economic development, and human development. SARDC has offices in Harare and Maputo, and partners in all SADC member states. Founding Patron was the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere.

WIDSAA

Women In Development Southern Africa Awareness (WIDSAA) is the gender programme of SARDC. The programme was established in 1994 to serve as a catalyst and information service to the SADC region's governments, parliaments, NGOs and agencies, the media and the public in the formulation of policy affecting women. WIDSAA's objective is that SADC women are empowered and advanced, and that all structures are engendered to facilitate gender equality and equity.

UNIFEM

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation, and economic security. UNIFEM works in partnership with UN agencies, governments and non-governmental organisations and networks to promote gender equality. It links women's issues and concerns to national, regional, and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) that was held in September 1995 in Beijing, China was a watershed in the struggle for gender equity and equality, and particularly, for women's empowerment at national, regional and sub-regional levels. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the build-up to the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPFA) proved to be fertile ground for consolidating a number of issues and approaches to accelerate the status of women in southern Africa.

This publication gives a snapshot of the achievements, challenges, and agenda for the future regarding the Beijing process, interwoven with the voices of some of the women activists in southern Africa. The FWCW, dubbed the "Beijing conference", is significant for producing the most thorough document on the subject of women's rights, equality, and development, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) — a comprehensive framework for changing the way in which action towards women's equality is articulated and implemented.

The BPFA is a set of principles and strategies for action which outlines 12 critical areas of concern identified as key obstacles to women's advancement.

The BPFA provided guidelines for action to eliminate the barriers to achieving gender equality worldwide on the part of governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society. In addition, the Beijing conference concluded that the decision-making systems of all countries would increasingly take account of women's views. This was with the

understanding that, whether they are fit or physically challenged, young, elderly, from a minority, clerks or university professors, women's voices would greatly contribute to the reduction of existing inequalities between women and men.

The 12 Critical Areas of Concern

Box 1

- The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women.
- Inequalities and inadequacies in access to education and training.
- Inequalities and inadequacies in access to health care and related services.
- Violence against women.
- The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation.
- Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources.
- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making levels.
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women.
- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women.
- Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media.
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment.
- Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child.

Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration, United Nations, Department of Public Information, New York, 1996

Significance of Beijing conference

"Beijing was a milestone in the recognition of women's rights as human rights, and many positive developments that we are witnessing in the gender arena flow from that meeting," said Sr. Auxillia Ponga, of the Gender in Development Division in Zambia.

" The SADC Declaration sends strong signals to stakeholders that the gender agenda has taken root."

Delphine Serumaga, the Executive Director of People Opposing Women's Abuse (POWA) in South Africa, said the Beijing conference played as a catalyst to a significant shift in thinking around development issues by governments.

"The BPFA recommended the mainstreaming of gender in all structures and this made our governments recognise the importance of taking gender on board in all development programmes, structures, forums and platforms."

Since Beijing, the paradigm has shifted and women's experiences in various sectors of human development are seen as key concerns in the framework of internationally recognised and universally held human rights. In this approach, women possess rights that they can actively demand and fight for.

In the 10 years since the Beijing conference, stakeholders in SADC including governments and the non-government sector, have focused their programmes and activities primarily on six thematic areas.

SADC's Six Priority Areas of Concern Box 2

- Strengthening mechanisms to promote women's advancement.
- Addressing inequalities in power-sharing and decision-making.
- Inequalities in access to economic resources.
- Protection of the human rights of women and the girl-child.
- Women in the context of armed conflict and peace-building.
- Gender capacity-building, training, networking, and information dissemination.

SADC Gender Monitor, Issue 1, February 1999

The significance of Beijing to southern Africa can be felt in many areas. Since Beijing, the region has been motivated to:

- mobilise national, local governments and NGOs to take action on major gender concerns, for example, almost all SADC governments now have gender or women's policies;
- establish a Declaration on Gender and Development for the region, with a special focus on violence against women and children (1997/1998); and,
- set in motion processes whereby governments make commitments and report regularly on progress towards meeting the BPFA.

What has been achieved

Christine Warioba, a Senior Programme Officer in the Gender Unit at the SADC secretariat, said that women of southern Africa benefited from the outcomes of the Beijing conference in many ways. A number of institutional frameworks established within the SADC member states around gender can be attributed to the BPFA, including the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and the 1998 Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children.

"Though not legally binding, the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development adopted by Heads of State and Government, and subsequently the Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children, sent strong signals to all stakeholders that the agenda for gender had formally taken root in the region," added Warioba.

The SADC Declaration on Gender and Development acknowl-

edges a rights-based-approach to tackling the challenge of women's advancement, through affirming that, "gender equality is a fundamental human right." Further, the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development realises that achieving gender equality will deepen regional integration, and calls for "closer regional co-operation and collective action" to achieve the set out goals.

"Beijing enhanced the visibility of women in many areas. Women are major players in civil society organisations and there is hardly a civil society organisation that organises a major event without ensuring that women are invited and participate," observed Hope Chigudu, a development consultant in Zimbabwe.

The significance of Beijing can also be attributed to the new Africa-centred women's rights frameworks adopted in the last few years. "The adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by the African Heads of State and Government is a key success and opportunity in the implementation of the BPFPA," said Matrine Chuulu, the Acting Regional Coordinator for the Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), in Zambia.

"For the first time, African women's rights and the African woman's essential role in developing the continent were affirmed and recognised through an African-grown protocol which is forward-looking, revolutionary and comprehensive. What is even more empowering is that the protocol stresses Africa's bid to end the oppression of woman and restore their dignity and respect," Chuulu added.

The post-Beijing era has increased the attention given to for-

mulation of National Gender Policies (NGPs) and implementation plans, with some countries having prepared sector-specific gender policies. Some countries have also made great strides in putting in place policies and gender-responsive legislation.


"We can celebrate that finally all countries in the sub-region have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In tandem with the Protocol on the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, CEDAW must provide the cornerstone for our strategic actions and support so that realisation of women's rights is indeed fully achieved," said Nomcebo Manzini, the Regional Programme Director for UNIFEM in Southern Africa.

Seodi Venekai-Rudo White, the National Coordinator of WLSA in Malawi, noted, "the key success has been the adoption of NGPs as strategic tools for development in many countries."

The lack of resources to speed the implementation of NGPs and plans however, remains a daunting task. The practice of a gendered approach to national budgeting has been emerging slowly with only a few countries, such as South Africa and Tanzania, taking the lead in initiatives to mainstream gender in all national budgeting processes.

Reviewing Beijing at 10

The 10-year review of the BDPFA was an opportunity for women in southern Africa to assess their status in the region and identify obstacles they face, as well as the policies, programmes and strategies that are needed to realise women's empowerment and gender equality.



" Gender equality is a fundamental human right."

"The key success has been the adoption of national gender policies as strategic tools for development."

One reality is that not all stakeholders have easy access to the kind of information they need to develop their positions and make choices on the issues to address, in order to achieve full equality for southern African women. This booklet aims to widen information dissemination on the achievements, challenges, and the way forward in implementing the BPFA in southern Africa.

At the sub-regional level, SADC, in collaboration with the Southern Africa Office of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), organised a conference in Zambia April 2004, to review 10 years of implementing the BPFA. This was part of the worldwide evaluation ahead of 2005, the year marking the tenth anniversary of the FWCW.

Participants to the Lusaka meeting included representatives of National Gender Machineries (NGM), and experts in the ministries of finance, planning, industry, commerce and trade, foreign affairs, health, and agriculture from Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Other participants included representatives from intergovernmental organizations in southern Africa and gender and women's empowerment NGOs.

Delegates to the Sub-regional Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts for the Decade Review of the BPFA in Southern Africa outlined achievements and challenges, which largely reflect the situation in the region. The outcomes of the Lusaka conference were endorsed by a meeting of ministers of gender and women's affairs and presented at the global Beijing +10 review, which was organised by the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2005.

Achievements

Institutional mechanisms

- Adoption of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development by SADC Heads of State and Government in 1997; and the Addendum on Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children in 1998.
- Establishment of various gender structures, including the National Gender Machineries (ministries and departments that coordinate gender activities), gender commissions, gender councils or committees; gender forums and women's NGO coalitions.

Economy

- Establishment of institutional mechanisms targeting women's economic empowerment through easy access to credit.
- Introduction of gender budgeting processes and the production of gender planning and budgeting checklists, with financial support from UNIFEM.
- Formation of microfinancing and credit projects to assist women through loans, including business training.
- Engendering of national budgets, mainstreaming of gender in and within the framework of Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs).

Education and training

- Significant rise in the enrolment rates of girls due to various policies such as the 50/50 enrolment policy at primary level, removal of stereotyping in school curricula, revision of national education policies to allow re-entry for school dropouts due to pregnancy and free primary education for girls and boys.

- Affirmative action at tertiary level in fields of medicine, law, science and technology, accounting and revision of the educational curricula.

HIV and AIDS

- Voluntary tracking of HIV and AIDS and enhancing of reproductive and adolescent health programmes to prevent parent-to-child transmission.
- Introduction of AIDS levy in some countries.
- Increased numbers of trained traditional midwives to work in rural areas where health facilities do not exist or are inadequate.
- A review of the SADC HIV and AIDS Framework and Programme of Action 2003-2007 to make it more gender responsive.

Legal reforms

- Ratification of CEDAW by all SADC member states. Some countries have ratified CEDAW with reservations due to traditional cultural aspects while others have initiated measures aimed at domesticating its provisions.
- Enactment of Domestic Violence Bills/ Acts and Sexual Offence Acts that included criminalizing of marital rape and the wilful transmission of HIV and AIDS.
- Increased processes to reform the justice sector including the review of justice delivery to respond to the needs of survivors of gender violence. The reform also addresses issues of delays and sensitivity of service provision to survivors of gender violence.

Violence

- There have been successful initiatives to involve men and boys as advocates for gender equality, such as Men for Gender Equality

movements and organisations for Men Against Gender Violence.

Partnerships

- Partnerships to promote gender equality have been forged with international, regional and national development institutions through gender mainstreaming capacity-building and economic empowerment programmes.
- Some NGOs have organised themselves into coalitions and partnered with governments, thus becoming important players in implementation of BPFAs.

A vast dichotomy still exists between the possibilities of women's achievements and the reality of the majority of women's lives. "Winning over the rural woman who form the backbone of the nation is key to the women movements' continued progress. Rural women are the majority voters and we cannot talk of increasing the number of women in decision-making when these voters are not part of us," Chigudu said.

Challenges

Gender inequality, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and sexual violence against women are among the main challenges and constraints in implementing BPFAs in southern Africa.

The high prevalence rates of HIV and AIDS and its associated effects have had a greater impact on women than men. Poverty, coupled with negative aspects of some traditions and customs, as well as armed conflict and long-distance truck routes have perpetuated the spread of HIV and AIDS. As a result, health gains that have been made in the past have been reversed.

The effects of HIV and AIDS further compromise and erode the rights of women and girls. Yet women con-



" Gender mainstreaming means taking gender seriously in all aspects of the work place."

tinue to embark on various strategies to cope.

"AIDS is becoming a huge scourge that we never thought we will have to face 10 years ago. We need to do everything possible to fight it. AIDS has claimed the lives of thousands of southern African women of reproductive age," said Everjoyce Win, the Head of Women's Rights with Action AID International.

Other challenges identified at the southern African sub-regional level include:

- Limited, ad hoc, and unsustainable budgetary allocations for gender programmes at national and regional levels. Stakeholders understand gender planning and budgeting differently and as a result, leadership in most sectors is not gender-sensitive, and therefore fails to deliver or produce gender-responsive budgets;
- Lack of or inadequate gender-disaggregated data in all sectors to monitor and evaluate women's progress in relation to men has hampered the advancement of women. Inadequate disaggregated data leaves a gap in measuring the real gains and setbacks; yet such data is essential for developing effective and responsive policies and programmes to bridge the inequalities between women and men;
- Low representation of women in most countries of the sub-region in decision-making including parliament, judiciary, political party structures, and the executive;
- Existence of gender-insensitive policies, which hinder women from accessing decision-making positions. The absence of a critical mass of women in decision-making and support from men in

decision-making is also an obstacle;

- Lack of monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms, for instance, reporting to parliaments, assessing gender budgeting and carrying out gender impact assessments;
- Lack of gender-specific job descriptions, inadequate knowledge of gender issues and low morale among gender focal persons in sectoral ministries in some countries;
- Lack of mechanisms to enforce implementation of policies including inadequate linkages between policies at the sub-regional level and actions at national and grass-roots levels;
- The weakening of the women's movement over the decade, largely due to apathy and absence of adequate sustainable resources.
- Mechanisms for integrating gender equality and women's empowerment remain weak.

"In a lot of areas, governments paid lip service to the gender agenda and provided inadequate resource to implement national gender programmes," said Keboitse Machangana, the democracy and governance advisor with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Regional Centre for Southern Africa (RCSA) Botswana.

"Many governments thought by making commitments on paper for the world to see, they would have achieved what was needed to be achieved regarding women's empowerment or gender equality, even without providing the necessary resources. We need adequate resources to turn all those good policies and intentions on paper into reality."

Gender issues are often treated with rhetoric or as separate women's projects. "While our governments have ratified and adopted conventions like CEDAW and the optional protocol on the rights of women, implementation has remained weak resulting in failure to attain women's empowerment," said Terezinha da Silva, a gender consultant and president of the Women's Forum, *Forum Mulher*, in Mozambique.

"Gender inequality and injustice of whatever kind is wrong and for that reason, we will continue to make this known and have them (inequalities and injustices) removed so that we can live our lives with dignity," Manzini added.

Everjoice Win described the misinterpretation of the concept of gender mainstreaming as a setback. "We now have 'gender bureaucracies' all over the place with people who have no gender activism in them and who do not understand (or care) what this is about," she added.

Seodi White echoed similar sentiments. "Gender mainstreaming as a conceptual framework has been misconstrued and misapplied and in the end women have lost out. In many cases, gender mainstreaming has been simplistically defined as the social roles of women and men, without any analysis of the unequal power relations within structures which hinder women's effective participation. This interpretation of the approach has led to situations where gender mainstreaming is viewed as the sole responsibility of women, and it is seen as a 'favour', rather than as a strategic means to bring about gender justice and equality," White said.

"Gender mainstreaming means taking gender seriously and taking it into account in all aspects of the

workplace, and work products of the institution."

Gender mainstreaming requires the systematic inclusion of gendered perspectives throughout the programmatic policy, conceptual, and analytical work of an institution or organisation.

Professor Ruth Meena, a political scientist, gender activist and consultant in the United Republic of Tanzania, said "the increased levels of impoverishment, with poverty taking a rural and a woman's face, the widening gap between rich and poor and between women and men, has made the deepest impression in the 10 years of implementing the BPFA.

"There is a lack of political will to transform the patriarchal structures and the corresponding ideology is not there."

She added, "there is a general discrimination and negative cultural attitude towards women borrowers by most banks, while in some countries the financial resources targeted for women are inadequate, with men finding the loop to exploit the situation, particularly where husbands have to be consulted by women in order to gain access to credit."

The way forward

"Post Beijing activities should continue, as they enable us to adopt institutional frameworks and mechanisms to co-ordinate the implementation of the recommendations of the BPFA," said Irene Lomayani, the social affairs officer at the southern Africa regional office of UNECA in Lusaka.

Lomayani expressed concern that there is "limited demonstrated political will to ratify, domesticate and implement regionally and internationally adopted human rights and gender equality instruments to implement the BPFA."

Poverty has
"a rural and a
woman's face."

Recommendations

Governments need to be the front-runners and play a more focused role in addressing the challenges towards improving the status of women in the region. The next decade should not be characterised by a disjuncture between commitments on paper and results on the ground. As Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General pointed out at the global review of Beijing at 10, "there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." Delivering on women's empowerment will also anchor delivery on goals to achieve development, democracy and human rights.

It is imperative that urgent steps be taken to promote and protect the human rights of women. "Women's human rights issues must be a norm rather than an exception. The current scenario can only be achieved if the women's movement maintains the advocacy momentum around women's human rights issues and gender equality," Machangana said.

Emphasising the importance of information, Chuulu said, "in order to realise women's empowerment we need to build support systems and ensure that all women have information on legal rights, poverty reduction strategies, and know where to go for support, and at the same time ensure that governments are accountable and live up to their 'contracts' with women. There should be no negotiation regarding the empowerment of women."

Delegates to the Sub-regional Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts for the Decade Review of the BPFA in Zambia, from 26-28 April 2004 under the auspices of UNECA and SADC, made the following comprehensive recommendations. These were endorsed by a meeting of ministers of

gender or women affairs on 29 April, and subsequently presented to the global review on Beijing +10 organised by the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, in March 2005.

HIV and AIDS

Governments must make gender equality central to all strategies, policies, and programmes to effectively reduce the prevalence of HIV and AIDS.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including, HIV and AIDS, should be recognised as a gender issue and should be taken as a priority concern in southern Africa.

A broad range of female-controlled protective devices such as microbicides and condoms must be provided as contraception and protection from STIs and HIV.

Governments must demonstrate the highest political will, involvement and commitment to address STIs, HIV and AIDS. National health programmes should specially focus on gender issues in the context of high rates of the infection among women and girls.

Access to Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ARV) should be universally available to end-users without monetary conditions, together with counselling and nutritional advice, and post-exposure prophylaxis should be readily available.

Male involvement in addressing family health should be intensified.

The media should be systematically targeted to raise awareness about STIs, HIV and AIDS.

Disaggregated data

The lack of adequate gender-disaggregated data in all sectors must be addressed in order to facilitate effective and responsive policies and programmes.

"There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women."

Statistical officers must be empowered with skills in gender analysis to disaggregate data.

Violence

SADC countries must ensure that they make and protect budgetary provisions for implementing measures to protect women and girls from violence.

Stiffer penalties for all forms of sexual violence, including child trafficking, must be enacted to protect girls from child labour.

Sexual offences legislation should be enacted in all countries in the region.

Post sexual-violence medical therapies and services for women and girls must be provided.

Decision making

Special measures to increase women's participation in structures and policy-making processes at all levels must be implemented to be able to meet the African Union's target of 50 percent women in managerial and decision-making positions in all parastatals, public institutions, regional bodies, media institutions, the judiciary, the public service and trade unions.

Women should form no less than 50 percent of all bodies that make decisions on economic policy.

All sectors should mount civic education which aims to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and practices that discourage women from holding decision-making positions, especially in the public sector.

Awareness should be raised on the importance of having more women participating in the decision-making structures and processes for national and regional development.

Studies should be conducted to illustrate qualitatively and quantitatively the differential impacts women bring to decision-making and power-sharing.

Governments must adopt affirmative action to protect women and enshrine this in national constitutions. Electoral reform to legislate proportional representation in political decision-making positions should be accompanied by operational guidelines.

Political parties and the media should be sensitive to gender issues, and should assist in mentoring women candidates through effective training and provision of financial support.

Governments should continue to collaborate with donors on programmes aimed at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. On their part, donors should co-ordinate their activities and establish gender caucuses, taking into account national priorities in the spirit of partnership and mutual trust.

Institutional mechanisms

Institutional mechanisms for advancing gender equality must be adequately resourced and staffed with offices placed at the level of full ministries or in the president's office by the end of 2006. A fixed percentage of the national budgetary allocations must be set specifically for the institutional mechanisms. This percentage should be protected and guaranteed by an act of parliament.

Gender machineries and gender focal points should be institutionalised in strategic positions and their role redefined and strengthened. This will ensure that gender is mainstreamed into line ministries, with a budget for gender mainstreaming.



National gender policies should be legally backed to enforce implementation of the plans of action.

NGOs should make a concerted effort to be key players in providing gender expertise, knowledge, and information to the development of policies and laws in all sectors of society.

There is need for gender research, training, and provision of a continuous support base for women parliamentarians.

Member states should acquire capacity for gender planning and budgeting. Parliaments should be targeted for training to utilise gender equality instruments, which should be translated into local languages.

National gender machineries should be strategically positioned to have the right legal instruments to monitor, coordinate, and evaluate other ministries.

National gender machineries should concentrate on coordination, collaboration, providing backstopping services, and networking with other sectors to assist them to mainstream gender into their macro and sectoral policies. Governments should play the dual role of monitoring and partnering with NGOs.

The mandates, roles, and responsibilities of NGMs need to refocus to enable them to work on engendering macro policy and sector policy frameworks.

Media

Governments and the media must set targets for the advancement of women in the media and independent regulatory media authorities must be set up to monitor the implementation of these targets.

The media must develop editorial and employment policies, which pro-

hibit discrimination against women in the workplace.

The media should develop policies which mitigate against sexist stereotypes, negative portrayal, and the absence of women's voices and perspectives in media coverage.

The media should give a fair and balanced portrayal of women in the coverage of all their diverse roles.

Economy

Gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives should be strengthened and systematically implemented in all sectoral ministries.

Macroeconomic frameworks, sectoral programmes, and budgets should be engendered to ensure that the targeted groups benefit. Tools for budgetary monitoring should be developed and gender-disaggregated data utilised.

All SADC countries should strive to adopt pro-poor, gender-responsive budgeting as the approach for allocating resources at the national and local government levels by December 2006.

All countries in the SADC region should conduct a time-use study and develop indicators to account for the work performed by women as unpaid care work in national accounts by December 2006.

Legal reform

Governments should domesticate all regional and international instruments that are legally binding, and transform declarations entered into by SADC countries into protocols.

Constitutions must be amended urgently to eliminate the provisions that currently exist for the discrimination of women and girls through customary and personal law.

There is need to harmonise customary and common laws. Gaps in the national constitutions should be

dealt with to harmonise them with national gender policies.

Any cultural and traditional practices that are harmful should be reviewed and eliminated.

Environment

Raise public awareness on the importance of women's involvement and ensure that space is created for the effective participation of women as decision-makers in matters of environmental and resource management.

Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, including as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects.

Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

Establish official channels to give women a voice in environmental decision-making. More often than not, women are not associated with discussions on the environment, and very often the decisions about location of water sources, types of water sources, and who will maintain the operation of the facilities are made without consulting women, resulting in no one taking responsibility.

Gender mainstreaming

A strong review of gender mainstreaming at the continental, regional, national and civil society levels must be undertaken within countries to develop approaches that result in transformation, rather than mere reform of the patriarchal structures.

Education and training

Revise and rewrite all curricula in a gender responsive manner.

Establish scholarship programmes, specifically for girls.

Introduce stiffer penalties to punish teachers who sexually abuse their pupils.

Make special provisions for girls in difficult circumstances, especially those in households that have been affected by HIV and AIDS, to receive education.

Develop public campaigns to build public understanding and attitudinal changes towards allowing the return of pregnant girls to school.

Health

User fees must be removed for all pregnant women seeking health services.

All policies and programmes should mainstream a rights-based approach so that all persons in SADC acquire full citizenship rights.

Women's movement

The resource base should invigorate the women's movement. Training of women in general to be more assertive and gender sensitisation of the media and government officials is necessary. The loss of this momentum by the women's movement due to declines in funding and co-option of committed activities into government structures, leading to erosion of leadership, has led to setbacks in some countries.

Donors

Donors should encourage gender mainstreaming as part of their country programmes. There should be better co-ordination mechanisms among donor gender groups to reduce duplication of efforts and enhance synergies.

Partnership

There should be a strategic partnership between NGOs and govern-



ments to develop and strengthen gender competencies.

NGOs should continue to bring their expertise to bear on government policies.

Governments and NGOs must forge partnership with the private sector to narrow the existing gap with regard to integration.

Governments and regional institutions must build on partnerships and strengthen their advocacy, especially in conducting education and information campaigns aimed at mainstreaming gender concerns.

Lessons and visions for the future

"Being a southern African, a place where AIDS has a stronghold, the suffering of my people, my family, and seeing the role that women continue to play, and the courage they have shown in handling this epidemic, makes me overwhelmed. We need to do something," said Seodi White.

"Rather than just talking about the inadequate capacity in government gender machineries, experts in the NGOs, civil society and independent consultants must be proactive and make their expertise available through initiatives aimed at strengthening technical capacity within the government gender machineries," said Sr. Auxilia Ponga.

Prof. Ruth Meena pointed out that, "the contradiction between the rhetoric and reality is an opportunity for transformation. We need a strengthened women's movement that will create an environment within which women demand accounta-

bility from those managing the state apparatus. This, however, can only be realised through collective struggles that will counteract conservative forces that are on one hand paying lip service to the need to transform while on the other hand, they are putting all possible blocks to frustrate transformation."

Meena added, "we are yet to see real transformation in resource allocation, distribution and generation that takes into account the different needs, interests and contributions of men and women in the total economy."

"I want to see that all women, from rural and urban areas are liberated of oppression from all groups and individuals and institutions," Terezinha da Silva said. "This can be realised through literacy and education with a different approach/participation and conscientisation of our situation."

"My dream is to have a sub-region where regardless of language barriers, religion etc, women link up as a single and co-ordinated women's movement, and pool their individual and collective human and material resources to accelerate the realisation of women's empowerment in Africa," Irene Lomayani said.

"We need to penetrate sectors that we have not worked with. We can't keep dancing with the same organisations, people or institutions," added Hope Chigudu. "We need to form social movements right from the grassroots. We need one common theme that can help bring as many stakeholders on board as possible."

"I want to see that all women, from rural and urban areas, are liberated from oppression..."