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Women's Empowerment = Peace and Security

Commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence

November 25-December 10, 2007

"DEMANDING IMPLEMENTATION-CHALLENGING OBSTACLES: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN"

Every year Sunday 25 November is designated as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Governments, international organisations and NGOs are encouraged by the General Assembly to organize activities designed to raise public awareness to the problem on that day. The date came after the brutal assassination in 1960, of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic. Women in all countries and from all social, national, ethnic or religious backgrounds are victims of some form of violence, and women from religious, ethnic or class minority groups are at an even greater risk. Gender based violence takes place in the public and in the private sphere, and the severity and type varies ranging from economic inequality to sexual violence and gendercide. Categorically for all types of gender based violence is that it is violence suffered by women, because they are women.

This is a truly significant international campaign linking women's groups across the globe in solidarity to act and speak out together on the call to address violence against women. In Fiji, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) has been organizing events around this campaign since it began in 1991 and this year, FWCC Coordinator, Shamima Ali has pointed out of the very real need for campaign advocates and activists to be vigilant and alert especially in the current political climate in Fiji: *"We need to keep alerting people to the fact that violence against women is a critical issue affecting our nation and this becomes more so when there is a political crisis - we need to be extra vigilant to ensure that services for women continue to respect their rights and do not contribute to the violence perpetrated against them"*, said Ali in a press release from the FWCC late last week.

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Hear what women in Fiji and Solomons are doing for the 16 days of activism global campaign (Page 4—8)

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And the final word on Financing for Gender Equality (Page 18—19)

This is a significant reality for women not only in Fiji, but in other conflict ridden countries, where peacewomen and human rights defenders are working to realize the transformation from a life of violence and armed conflict, to one where all people enjoy political, social and economic security, including the benefits of development.

Economic security or women's economic empowerment whether it is a result of viable sustainable livelihood programmes or the opportunity to earn an equitable wage (because there are jobs) is clearly linked to conflict transformation, because it provides the platform from which women can negotiate for greater opportunity to define their future and that of their family and community.

At the opening of the recent International Women Leaders Global Security Summit in New York, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General (UN DSG) Asha-Rose Migiro reiterated the critical link between sustainable peace and security and women's empowerment: "Study after study has shown us that when women are fully empowered and engaged, all of society benefits; Only in this way can we successfully take on the enormous challenges confronting our world – from conflict resolution and peacebuilding to fighting AIDS and reaching all the other Millennium Development Goals," she stated, referring to the ambitious set of anti-poverty targets the world has pledged to achieve by 2015.

She recalled that at the 2005 World Summit, leaders declared that gender equality and human rights for all are essential to advancing development, peace and security. Five years before that, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. But while global goals and commitments on women's empowerment are in place, "we still have far to go in implementing them fully – from school enrolment to women's economic independence and representation in decision-making bodies," she stated.

The Deputy Secretary-General noted that in almost all countries, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions; their work continues to be undervalued; and violence against women and girls continues unabated worldwide: "Changing all this requires all of us – women and men – to work for enduring change in values and attitudes," she said. "It means working in partnership – Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. It means men assuming their responsibility. It means ensuring that women and girls enjoy their full rights, and take up their rightful place in society."

As UN-DSG Migiro clearly points out, strategies to counter poverty must reflect the reality of the feminization of the poverty; otherwise women, young women and girls, and other marginalized groups, such as persons with disability will not be factored into any post conflict recovery economic strategies, especially in post conflict situations, including those in our own Pacific region.

Institutional violence, especially economic policies, which are inextricably linked to many of the root causes of violence and conflicts, must be addressed, especially as women are becoming more invisible from the national development agenda, and continue to face the brunt of the negative impact, especially as a result of poverty. Women are more vulnerable to exploitation because of their poverty.

But in Fiji, who is going to bring about these positive changes especially when there remains a political fragility that is further marginalizing women from national, as well as local decision making processes. Aside from their civil society leaders, who is championing the cause of gender equality right now? Do we have champions within the civil service (facing their own issues of vulnerability!) who will rise to the occasion of ensuring compliance with CEDAW?

Case in point is the recent 2008 National Budget Announcement by the military led interim government in Fiji.

Does anyone really believe that \$300,000 is sufficient to bring about the full implementation of the revised National Women's Plan of Action?

What has happened to the lessons learnt and recommendations following the review of the Department of Women?

Oh yes, of course, the coup happened and all those plans have been severely disrupted.

Herein is one of the real costs of our political instability which needs to be addressed aside from only the macro-level economic power and perspectives.

So while there are mixed reactions from the representatives of the financial and business sectors, the response from the broader women's movement will take a while to collate especially as we have not been able to yet again substantively engage given as a result of the coup, refraining or restrained by Fiji's political realities.

To offer at least a women's perspective on the current issues, femLINKPACIFIC will update our documentation of women's realities in a series of local level Community Media Exchanges over the next month, commencing in Labasa on December 4th and 5th.

However, if the previous documentation and community radio broadcasts are anything to go by, financing for gender equality and empowerment needs micro level realities to be equitably addressed urgently.

It is more than just about giving \$300,000 for the implementation of the National Women's Plan of Action. The question must be asked and the women of this country must demand, that gender analysis and inclusion is practiced as part of the process of conflict transformation, and this should not just be limited to the social sector.

For example – where is the gender and social analysis factored into the deployment of troops on peacekeeping missions?

Just how much of the available micro-finance programmes will be available or accessed by women and young women?

Does the budget for family planning procurement truly reflect the needs of the women of our country?

Will the reduction in food prices really bring economic relief to a family struggling to survive on less than \$100 a week, or are there hidden costs we need to be aware of?

Just how will the \$402,400 allocated to the implementation of the People's Charter ensure a gender inclusive approach to a return to parliamentary democracy?

What this requires is that the road map to parliamentary democracy must value and therefore enable women's realities – whether we choose to come to the 'formal table' with the interim administration, or through other more informal spaces for dialogue, because a road-map to sustainable peace cannot be a reality if it only serves to perpetuate the structures which continue to isolate and marginalize women in all our realities.

And as a final word— gender inclusive economic strategies are not only the responsibility of national governments, but also the responsibility of financial institutions, and later in this bulletin, an article by Allison Stevens, the Washington Bureau Chief of WE-News highlights how and why activists are pushing the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to stop "short changing women who are the majority of the world's poor" and change the lens through which they view gender's role in development

The Section J Spot: Community Media Exchanges planned for December

A series of Community Media Exchange programmes will be hosted by femLINKPACIFIC in December commencing with a series of meetings and a consultation with 30 local women leaders drawn from the greater Labasa Community on December 5th.

This series of women's media based consultations will serve to inform femLINKPACIFIC about rural women's perspectives on key national issues such as the recent announcement of the 2008 National Budget, as well as provide a space for women to share their stories and information about critical national development issues including ensuring women's realities are part of the road map to the return to parliamentary democracy, including the implementation of the Look North Policy, specifically for Vanua Levu.

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Claiming the Right to Live a Life Free of Violence:

femLINKPACIFIC's Generation Next team members Ana Rakacikaci and Elenoa Kaisau took to the streets of Suva and visited members of the women's NGOs to ask them about this year's campaign theme, here's what women of Fiji have to say:

Adi Ema: Vinaka o au o Adi Ema Matararaba. Noqu nanuma e da dau vakararawataki kina na marama ni so na gauna e dau sega vei keda na yalo malumalumu. Me da dau vakarorogo vakabibi mada ena noda vakarau ena noda matavuvale. Kevaka beka e dua na marama e cakacaka na nona lewe ni vale e sega ni cakacaka. Koya na marama qo o koya ena vaka e tiko vua e dua na ka me vaka o koya e kaukauwa beka baleta o koya e rawa i lavo ni cakacaka e rawa kina ni na tukuna o koya ni o koya e dua na ka mai vua na watina ena nodratou matavuvale ni rawata mai o koya na i lavo vaka ni sega ni cakacaka na watina. E so na gauna e vakavuna kina na nodrau veivala. Ni na kaya tikoga o koya na marama oqo, o au cakacaka au rawata mai na i lavo e kana kina na matavuvale e vuli kina o ira na gone kei na vei ka tale e so. Na turaga ena vaka e rarawataka na ka e tukuna ya ena dua na gauna ena yaco na veivala. Io vaka i vola tabu mada ke o cakacaka se o mani sega ni cakacaka ni o marama e cakacaka nomu leweni vale se sega ni cakacaka ni o marama e dodonu ga mo vakamalumalumutaki iko mo vakarorogo vua na turaga. Ia na gauna oqo sa laurai tiko ni so vei keda koya sa boletaka na ka e rawata mai na i lavo ka sa vaka me beca kina na i liuliu ni matavuvale baleta ni rawa ka o koya mai vua na nona lewe ni vale.

Ana : Na cava na nomu nanuma eso na kena i wali ?

Adi Ema: Na noqu nanumi o au na kena I wali ga meda dau vakarorogo o keda mada na marama meda vakamalumalumutaki keda na kena I matai oya na kena I karua noqu nanuma meda dau veiwasei meda veitalanoataka na ka me rawa kina ni wali eso na veika dredre e da dau sotava, dau laumoku beka se da dau lauvacu o keda na marama n eda sega ni dau wasea na veika e leqataka tu na lomada. Da tikolo voli ga ena veigauna e muri ka qai dau yaco sara kina me dau vakayacora eso na ka ena noda bula baleta ni da dau sega ni veiwasei. Meda wasea na veika dredre e da dau sotava vei ira na noda I liuliu ni matavuvale.

Elenoa: She just told us about her opinions on the theme. She said that as women we need to be humble, and respect our husbands especially. Most of this is caring in the family. She says when the woman gets educated and she earns more money she considers herself higher or someone who's respected more than the husband which causes the husband to be angry about those stuff. Like when she gets higher pay or higher education and then when the man is not

working and there is a possibility in one time she'll be accusing her husband of all these things. This is one of the reasons why women are always suffering from all forms of violence. In response to those problems that women encounter she suggests that as women we must maintain that humility and respect for our husband even though the husband may not be working like according to the Bible the woman should maintain her status even though the husband may be without jobs or anything but as I said according to the Bible the man is to be respected and the woman should have that respect in order to get respect from the husband. This is one of the solution as she suggests in order to avoid the violence that women encounter in society today so despite the education and despite the stages that women can go up to if we as women maintain that respect for the husbands and consider them as leaders and open the door to communication like communicating the issues with the husband then these issues can be resolved.

Ana: And now we're talking to Vasiti

Vasiti: Au vakabauta ni so na gauna o keimami na marama keimami dau yalokaukauwa beka eso na gauna keimami dau vakayacora kina eso nai valavala e sega ni taleitaki. O koya na I liuliu ni matavuvale dau vakavuna na kena rarawa e dau vakavuna sara na neimami vakararawataki na marama dau so beka na vosa e dau tau e dau vakavuna na nodra rarawa na turaga sa ra dau laki vakayaco ka sara kina me lako beka na ligadra mera veicaqe tu o koya gona e dau vakavuna mera dau vakararawataki kina na marama. E so beka na I tautau ni vosa e dau yaco e rogoca na turaga ena daligana sa dau vakavuna na nona rarawa sara dau vakayaco veivakararawataki kina vei keimami na marama. Eso talega na gauna o ira na turaga eso vei ira era dau lako tu beka mai era sa dau lako tu ka sega ni vakaiyalayala tu na nodra lako ni ra sa lesu mai vale sa tau yani eso na vosa ni cudru ena nodra lako tu mai sa sega beka ni kila na ka me tukuna mai sa kena I sau mai na ligana me rawa ni galu kina o koya na marama. Au kila qo eso na ka e dau yaco au kila na kena i wali ga e dodonu ga me da dau duavata toka na matavuvale, marama tina kei turaga tama ena nodrau dau walia vata na nodrau leqa. Me vaka eso na ka e sega ni vinakata na turaga e dodonu me vakamacalataka vei marama o marama na ka talega e sega ni taleitaka e segani dodonu me vakamatata taka vei turaga me rawa ni rau veikilai yalo toka kina. Qai kena i kuri ga me lako tiko na veituberi vakayalo me rawa ni vinaka tiko kina na yalo vaka yadudua sara baleta ni yalo ga o koya dau vakavuna tiko na leqa. Ke da yalo kaukauwa ena vakavuna na leqa ke da yalo malumalumu eda na vinaka kina.

Elenoa : She suggested that some of the ways women suffer these forms of violence is because of their pride like there is no communication between the husband and the wife especially, sometimes the women are proud and some of the ways in which they communicate tend to arise the circumstances that is not favorable to the husband causing them to fight. Sometimes the men who roam around who don't stay home for long, when they come home they are very frustrated and they take their frustrations to their wife causing them to ignite fights and as a result women suffer from all these forms of violence. The solution that she suggested is to encourage unity between the husband and the wife in the family and also open the door to communication like allow the wife to talk about the issues to the husband but most importantly she suggested that there should be prayers done, more prayers on behalf of the family members especially from the woman. She said the spirit to have humility instead of the proud spirit they would be able to be receptive to corrections and would be able to open the door to communication so that these issues can be resolved and to avoid the violence which can arise so instead of being violent we try to develop a humble spirit, and this can only be done through the holy spirit if we continue to pray more about our families especially with the wife. And there will come a time when the husband will change his attitude and they will be more united.

Ana: And with me here is Tara Chetty who is the Communications Officer for the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Tara what would you think of this years theme?

Tara: Well I guess this year's theme is sending out quite a strong message. It's demanding implementation so it's not asking for it or evaluating it but rather this year we are demanding implementation of the legal processes and various mechanisms in society to address violence against women. Our organisation was set up 20 years ago around the theme against rape, calling for an end to rape. And we grew out of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre which has been working for over 20 years on violence against women. As you can see, we still haven't managed to reform the Penal Code in that area but we're still working on it. So I guess this year's a good point for us to demand implementation of existing legislation and also call for removing obstacles such as archaic legislation which still stands in the way of us addressing violence against women.

Ana: And here with us is Naeemah Khan who is the Programmes Manager.

Naeemah: I think Tara's covered a lot of what the organisation does in terms of the type of work we do. However generally in terms of the theme it's a very strong theme. I think what we need is to create more awareness of the importance about the 16 Days of Activism amongst the community. I understand that, that's what FemLINK is doing. And I think the other organisation like the Crisis Centre and FWRM and Women's Action for Change should all come together around this time to do a lot of work in the area of violence against women or creating awareness about it. But what I feel about the theme is that it should be in a way integrated into our everyday work. It shouldn't just be like 16 Days we look at it I know everyone does it everyday but in terms of the build up to the 16 Days I feel that there should be more awareness of the actual campaign than there is today.

Ana: And here with me is Unaisi Valenitabua who is the Human Rights Training Officer for FWRM.

Unaisi: I think this year's theme is very important it's also very strong in the sense as Tara has mentioned- It's demanding implementation. We've heard of the No Drop Policy that Fiji Women's Crisis Centre campaigns about, they advocate about. And this is very important because violence against women is a common problem today and we've heard about it in the news, the media. The problem is, one issue is implementation but the other half of the problem we have to do is enforcement and how do we make sure that violence against women, that we end violence against women and how do we change the mindset of people in society to look at violence against women as a crime.

Ana: With me here is Asela. Asela what would you think of this year's theme?

Asela: Bula vinaka I'm Asela Naisara and I'm the first vice President of the National Council of Women Fiji and I find the theme for this years 16 Days of Activism as very appropriate as it also acknowledges the efforts of women's groups to end violence against women. And appropriate in the sense that the theme calls for on us especially leaders whether at national and community level to take concrete steps and measures to end violence against women. We need to solidify our efforts and strengthen our links. The National Council of Women Fiji has had its share of challenges and obstacles in terms of addressing gender equality. But we are not hampered by this efforts and we hope that this next 16 Days of Activism will remind us of the challenges that women face and the obstacles that they face in terms of violence that they face in their communities particularly in the domestic front so we feel here at the Council that we need to network, we need to strengthen our ties especially as women's groups to try and bring about behavior change in the community. Also the Catholic Women's League an affiliate of the National Council of Women continues to advocate for violence against women in terms of workshops and trainings and trying to change attitudes. We also understand that this is a prolong

process but we are not hampered but we still look forward to the next 16 Days as a call to remind us that we need to solidify our efforts in trying to bring about behavior change in the community to end violence against women.

from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre:

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre kicked off its annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based violence campaign earlier than normal this year with a workshop targeted at police officers working on the ground and who are often the first point of contact for victims of crimes of domestic violence and sexual assault. "The global theme for this year's campaign is focused on implementation", said Shamima Ali, Coordinator of FWCC. "This training which is being held in Savusavu fits in well with the global theme because police officers are key implementers".

The 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women begins on November 25 which is International Day of Action against Violence Against Women and ends on December 10 which is World Human Rights Day. "We have been organizing events around this campaign since it began in 1991 and its good to see that now there are many activities being organized around these important dates", said Ali. However, Ali points out that activism has become really critical especially in the current political climate in Fiji. "We need to keep alerting people to the fact that violence against women is a critical issue affecting our nation and this becomes more so when there is a political crisis - we need to be extra vigilant to ensure that services for women continue to respect their rights and do not contribute to the violence perpetrated against them", said Ali.

A key feature of FWCC's activities is the rural workshops around the country. "Some of our staff from Suva and our branches in Nadi, Ba and Labasa are supporting activities of the Women's Interest Assistants in the conducting of workshops in Kadavu, Rakiraki, Ba and Labasa. There are also awareness sessions being conducted in villages in Ba and Vanua Levu."

The FWCC is launching its media campaign with television and newspaper advertisements as well as radio talk shows.



From Lisa Horiwapu, femLINKPACIFIC Correspondent at Vois Blong Mere Solomons:

In Honiara, the 16 days of activism campaign started on the 25th of November with a candle lighting service in the evening.

About a hundred men, women and children attended.

The service was attended also by government dignitaries including the minister and the Permanent Secretary of the Women's, Youth and Children's ministry, Ethel Sigimanu and other stakeholders. It was coordinated by the Gender based violence

project of the SPC, and was dedicated to the memory of victims especially children who bear the brunt of family based violence.

Specials prayers were said for the victims, children, women and girls and advocates as candles were lit, quietly melting in the evening breeze. The service was led by the Solomon Islands Christian Association rep, the United Church of Solomon Islands Bishop Philemon Riti.

The 16 days campaign program was officially opened on Monday November 26th by Ethel Sigimanu, who urged all women to work harder to combat domestic violence and make the campaign theirs and see this as their business and commitment. She said that the government through her ministry is at the moment embarking on formulating a national policy on eliminating violence against women and children. She admitted that this is supposed to be done a long time ago, has been on the government's plans but did not eventuate until now. The government, she said recognizes that the policy must take the right approach because violence against women and children is against human rights. She noted that both CEDAW and the CRC had been ratified by the Solomon Islands government including the optional protocol. Mrs. Sigimanu said Solomon Islands has so far made some progress even though many victims would not see this. One of these, she said is women are now being provided an avenue to speak out openly about issues affecting them and their children. She also said that today many organizations have committed themselves to advocating against domestic violence and have it as a priority. Many communities according to her are now openly addressing and talking about domestic violence as a pressing issue. She reminded everyone that remaining silent is just like supporting a 10 year old girl being raped or forcing a 15 year old to marry a 50 year old man with 10 kids. The campaign will continue with awareness from another of the stakeholders, the Family Support centre in the suburbs of Honiara and a number of campaigns out in the nine provinces. The 16 days will end on the 10th of December.

Take Back the Tech: 16 DAYS OF RECLAIMING TECHNOLOGY IN ACTIVISM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In Uganda, a SMS campaign called Speak out! Stand Out! is organised by WOUGNET to collect messages against VAW - In Quebec, feminists and communication rights activists are creating short video clips and comic postcards on VAW - In Malaysia, Burmese refugees are creating audiocasts on issues related to VAW and women's rights together with Centre for Independent Journalism. From 25 November to 10 December, get ready to pull out the mouse, flex your SMS fingers and engage full energy in activism to end violence against women (VAW). APC Women's Programme (APC WNSP) calls on users of the radio, television, internet, emails, mobile phones and all kinds of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to Take Back The Tech!

What is the campaign about?

Take Back The Tech is a collaborative campaign by ICT users, advocates, collectives and organisations that take issue with the prevalence of VAW in our diverse realities. Initiated by APC WNSP in 2006, the campaign is part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence initiative. It is our right to shape, define, participate, use & share knowledge, information & technology, and to create digital spaces that protects

everyone's right to interact freely without harassment or threat to safety. Take Back The Tech aims for this & calls all user of ICTs – especially girls & women – to take control of technology and consciously use it to change unequal power relations.

How can you Take Back The Tech?

16 daily actions: Simple daily actions throughout the 16 days that uses ICTs strategically to counter VAW. From sending SMS, making digital postcards, snapping pictures, playing with radio to remembering forgotten names in the history of ICT development, you can take action with the tools and platforms that you have access to.

ka-BLOG: Explore and thicken the knowledge around ICTs & VAW by joining the 16 days blogathon. New to blogging? This is the perfect reason to start your own, or at least, click that 'comment' button to have your say. Daily topics will be posted on the campaign site to stir conversation, as well as instructions on how to set up a blog.

Local initiatives: Start your own Take Back The Tech campaign. As seen above, independent and creative initiatives to Take Back The Tech are taking off in different parts of the world, translating content and action to address local needs and priorities. Use the campaign website to highlight your action, or find information and resources. There are tech tools & tips, articles & links, portable applications, images & graphics, and if you don't have an online publishing space, you can have your own page on the site. Email us to let us know how we can support your action.

Digital stories, audiocasts & more: Learn by listening to the experience and stories of women and men affected by VAW. The campaign website will feature created digital stories, audiocasts, video clips and postcards. If you have something you would like to share, just log on to the campaign site and submit your story.

Suggest an action: Help shape the campaign by sharing your experience & ideas. If you have thoughts, email us or log on to the site, and make it part of the campaign. Check www.takebackthetech.net daily from 25 November to 10 December, and take action. Reclaim technology to end violence against women. For more information: send an email to jac@apcwomen.org, or ideas@takebackthetech.net

"Take Back the Tech" is an initiative of the APC Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP), a global network of women who support women networking for social change and women's empowerment, through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) especially internet, founded in 1993. The APC WNSP is part of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). <http://www.apcwomen.org/about/> <http://www.apc.org>

from UNOHCHR, UNDP Pacific Centre, UNIFEM and UNICEF: Women, Men and State Must Work Together to Eliminate Discrimination against Women

[Port Vila, November 21] – Developing mutual understanding, cooperation and respect among women, men and the State is important in eliminating discrimination against women. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Hon Edward Natapei made this comment at the conclusion of a three day workshop on the implementation of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

“Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women cannot be solely achieved without the inclusion of men,” Hon. Natapei said speaking to some sixty participants at the Pacific Sub Regional Workshop for the Implementation of CEDAW, jointly organized by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for the Pacific, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“It is my hope that the Governments and the people of the Pacific move forward progressively to ensure that men and women respect each other as well as their children and help build the Pacific as its name indicates: peaceful.”

Hon. Natapei said that the workshop was a significant milestone for the social development of the people of the Pacific. “These three days have been an important step forward for our common objective: to discuss the concluding comments from the UN CEDAW Committee and to develop strategies to drive each of our countries forward in implementing the concluding comments as recommended.”

The Chairperson of the CEDAW Committee, Ms Dubravka Simonovic, who attended the workshop was encouraged to see the participation and dedication of the high level government and non government delegates present. “We have seen a lot of political will to see the full implementation and incorporation of CEDAW. I hope that the countries here can encourage other Pacific Island Countries to proceed with their reports and obligations under this convention.”

The workshop concluded with a set of recommendations based on four thematic areas being gender-based violence, political participation, sexual and reproductive rights and health and women in the labour force. The document also included specific recommendations relating to young women, focusing on, among other things, the double discrimination they face.

More Campaign News:

Source WUNRN

Bhutan

Women in Bhutan are deprived of many opportunities including access to business and industry, gainful employment, skill development training, education, health, economic resources, political process and decision-making institutions. Their representation at the policy and decision making bodies is negligible since no woman has ever been appointed to a high post in the government. Just like women in every other country in the world, they are victims of sexual and physical abuse. Bhutan has the highest rates of sexual exploitation amongst Asian countries. Intolerance towards cultural diversity has forced one sixth of the total population of Bhutan (circa 106.000) to live as refugees. Out of these refugees almost 60% are women and children.

Nepal

Nepal’s system of refugee registration distributes rations through the male heads of household, denying women equal and independent access to food, shelter and supplies, and imposing particular hardship on women trying to escape abusive marriages. If they leave their relationships, they relinquish their full share of aid packages; if they marry another man, they lose legal custody of their children. No specific domestic violence legislation exists in Nepal and women are discouraged to report rape through a 35-day statute of limitations and medical reporting procedures. Therefore, the perpetrators go unpunished. The treatment that abused women get by the Refugee Coordination Unit focus on resolving domestic violence with reconciliation, dismissing the personal wishes, needs and safety of the women. Other cases reported in the camps are rape, sexual assault, polygamy, trafficking, domestic

violence and forced child marriage.

India - Jammu and Kashmir

Women in Jammu Kashmir suffer tremendously from physical, mental and structural violence. Among these are: gender based and domestic violence; limited access to legal protection and limited legal status; poverty; trafficking of women and children; restricted economic and social mobility, and gender specific medical problems. Every week one woman in Kashmir dies due to domestic violence. The High and Lower courts in the state report that there are over 100,000 cases pending.

Female refugees from the Pandit community, displaced from their homes as a consequence of political instability, live in very difficult conditions in the camps. A 2003 survey by the Health Department of India stated that: 'one out of every three Kashmiri women in the refugee camps have multiple signs of deteriorating health, including premature aging, unnatural death, higher incidence of serious and potentially fatal diseases and affliction, with multiple disease syndromes'.

In a society where the status of women is inextricably linked with that of their husband, the conflict caused many thousands of women to be left impoverished when their husbands were killed in the conflict between India and militant separatists. The division of Kashmir also left many Indian-controlled Kashmir women with husbands on the other side of the militarized zone. In the meantime they endure official suspicion and harassment and struggle for their daily survival. Also the fact that thousands of women whose husbands have disappeared and have not been reported dead causes numerous problems to these so-called half-widows. The majority come from lower-income families and were entirely dependent on their husbands.

Bangladesh

Gender based violence is a major problem in Bangladesh, especially for poor and underprivileged women. Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world where the sex ratio is skewed in favour of males. In this extremely patriarchal society, women are discriminated against in the public as well as in the private sphere. Acid attacks, Domestic violence, dowry related violence, fatwas as a form of physical or psychological punishment, trafficking, and sexual violence are some of the severest forms of violence women suffer in Bangladesh. Punishment can take the form of beatings and stoning, burning to death, compelling to commit suicide, social ostracism, and prevention of exercising choice in reproductive health amongst others. In addition, women and girls belonging to the minorities are often abducted and forced to convert through forced marriage. It is one of the countries with the highest incidence of violence against women in the world, despite specific legislative protection, such as the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act, the Dowry Protection Act and the Acid Control Act. In 2005, more than 50% of all women reportedly were subjected to domestic violence. In 2006, there were 639 rapes reported and 227 of these were children. Furthermore, female victims often do not receive effective justice due to general barriers to accessing the justice system, police corruption, mismanagement of evidence, ignorance of the law and a lack of proper medical report (which is also a result of corruption). Due to the social stigma and patriarchal norms that prevail in Bangladesh, many victims of sexual violence are ostracized and some consider suicide as the only option after rape.

A Call to Making this goal a reality: Geneva, 22 November 2007: On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - OMCT joins women's groups and individuals campaigning worldwide and calls for full implementation of the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The 25th of November also marks the beginning of the annual campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence", which focuses this year on "Demanding Implementation, Challenging Obstacles" to achieve concrete results in improving women's protection from violence.

The Declaration, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, does not encompass new rights, but rather reaffirms the importance of taking all necessary steps to eliminate one of the most pervasive and widespread human rights violations: violence against women. This is further recalled by the "16 Days" international campaign that since 1991 has symbolically linked the International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the International Human Rights Day (10th of December) as a reminder that gender-based acts of violence are serious violations of the fundamental rights of women. Today, many forms of violence against women are widely acknowledged as amounting to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This assertion is all the more important in that the prohibition of torture is a peremptory norm of international law that applies to all States and from which there can be no derogation. All too often governments pay lip service to the concerns of the international community and citizens as regards gender-based violence. But the issue is too serious to be overlooked. Eliminating such violence takes much more than adopting new laws and making pledges in international forums. Violence against women is so deeply rooted in society that real challenges need to be made to gender stereotypes and to the legitimization of women's subordination through arguments based on "tradition" or "cultural values". Implementation presupposes education and strict enforcement of criminal law. It also requires positive measures to ensure women can speak up without fearing retaliation, repudiation or abandonment. In this respect, needs assessment must be carried out and particularly vulnerable groups identified and protected. The fundamental nature of the rights enshrined in most human rights instruments and recompiled in the 1993 Declaration mean that no budgetary limit can be claimed as an excuse for failure to implement them. Eliminating gender-based violence is an obligation of result. Article 5 of the 1993 Declaration hints at some of the means to achieve concrete results, many of which have been put forward in recommendations adopted by UN treaty monitoring bodies after careful examination of country situations. OMCT calls on States and on all those who endeavor to protect and promote human rights to make use of the 1993 Declaration and the 16 Days of Activism to inspire action, adopt strong policies and achieve concrete results.

Cambodia to Launch Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women (21 November 2007):

PHNOM PENH, Nov. 21 (Xinhua) -- The Cambodian Committee for Women (Cambow) will launch a 16-day campaign against gender-based violence to raise awareness of the issue and change the Cambodian 'mindset' on violence and abuse against women, local media said on Wednesday. As part of the campaign, Cambow, an alliance of 34 non-governmental organizations which focus on women's causes, will organize TV and radio spots highlighting true stories of violence and discrimination Cambodian women have endured, reported Cambodian-language newspaper the Sralanh Khmer. The women's rights group will also publish and distribute books and audio CDs relating accounts of violence and how Cambodian laws discriminate against females. It will release a report named Violence on Women: How Do Cambodian Laws Discriminate against Women on November 25, which will focus on how Cambodian laws related to domestic violence, rape, trafficking, and marriage contradict the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): "Thousands of Cambodian women suffer from violence every day. After studying in detail the laws which are meant to protect women, Cambow found that some of the articles of these laws directly and indirectly discriminate against women, which leads to further abuses," said Kek Galabru, chairwoman of Cambow, "Now it is time for the government to reform the laws so that our obligations comply with the CEDAW, which Cambodia ratified in 1992," said Kek Galabru. According to a Cambow briefing released on November 19, thousands of abused women are seeking assistance from the committee. Many countries around the world hold the campaign annually from Nov. 25, the International Day against Violence against Women, to December 10, the International Human Rights Day.

KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation, Lebanon working Towards Legislation for Protection from Family Violence

In keeping with its yearly tradition of marking the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation will be holding a series of events to on the topic of gender-based violence in various locations around Lebanon.

The purpose of these events is to increase awareness of the impact of violence against women, to celebrate a woman's strength to survive and to provide another avenue for her to courageously break the silence that often surrounds her experience. For the first time in Lebanon, Kafa will be introducing The Clothesline Project, which is a visual display of shirts with graphic messages and illustrations that have been designed by women survivors of violence or by someone who loves a woman who has been killed. The shirts are then hung on a clothesline to be viewed by others in the form of a mobile exhibition as testimony to the problem of violence against women.

KAFA will also continue with the Silent Witness Exhibition, which is a series of silhouettes representing women who have been killed in acts of family or domestic violence, each of whose story is recorded on her silhouette.

These exhibits will be accompanied by debates and discussion sessions focusing on the legal dimensions of violence against women, and calling on the government to assume its responsibility in protecting women suffering from violence within the family. The 16 Days campaign 2007 will therefore act as a precursor to the launching of a long-term campaign to push for the legislation of protection of women from family violence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Foundation CURE (Cure meaning Girls in local languages) is a non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit organization that focuses its work on feminist activism, publishing, audio-video and digital production, event management for human rights and social changes, research, all aiming at creating and developing public dialogue about issues essential to a democratic society in BiH. **WEB:** www.fondacijacure.org



UNIFEM and UNIFEM's Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman invite you to join an internet-based global advocacy effort to **"say NO to violence against women."** Widespread participation by people in every country will send a strong message to governments around the world that ending violence against women must be a top priority. The first messages from Ms. Kidman urging individuals and organizations to "raise their voices by lending their names" will be sent on 26 November 2007 to coordinate and promote the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) and the ensuing 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

In addition to raising public awareness, the internet site also highlights the work of the UNIFEM-managed UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which supports innovative initiatives by governments and non-governmental organizations around the world. Violence against women is a problem that has a solution.

Advocacy to strengthen political will for change is a critical component, but equally important are programmes that prevent violence and provide services for survivors, such as those efforts that the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women supports.

The site is designed to allow hundreds of thousands—even millions—of “**say NO to violence against women,**” participants to add their names to a “virtual” book and demonstrate the growing demand to place the issue of ending violence against women high on the global agenda. By simply clicking on the “virtual” book, they can sign their names; the more names collected, the stronger the case for action and support. The site is also a gateway to information on the issue, including how people can get involved. You can pre-view it at:

http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw_25nov/

The UN’s Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Dr. Yakin Ertürk, has already lent her support. She notes: *“One of the greatest barriers to overcome is the silence that surrounds the issue. This is why I welcome this campaign. We must create a culture of zero tolerance for one of the most pervasive yet least punished human rights violations in the world.”* UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, OHCHR have signalled their support and major civil society organizations have signed on as well. Organizations that agree to be “launch partners” prior to 26 November will be mentioned in press material and will be listed on the web site. Others will be added as they join.

Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities - Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), the national peak organization for women with disabilities, has recently published a **Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities**.

This Manual is made up of four booklets:

- ***A Life Like Mine!*** - Narratives from women with disabilities who experience violence (52 pages).
- ***Forgotten Sisters*** - A global review of violence against women with disabilities (112 pages).
- ***It's Not Ok It's Violence*** - Information about domestic violence and women with disabilities (76 pages).
- ***More Than Just A Ramp*** - A guide for women's refuges to develop disability discrimination act action plans (92 pages).

Audio, e-text & Large Print PDF versions of the Booklets are included on a CD-ROM which accompanies the Manual.

The cost of the Manual is \$22 which covers postage and handling costs.

Order Form: <http://www.cnet.ngo.net.au/dmdocuments/wwda%20Order%20Form%20Final.pdf>

femTALK 1325

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Statement:

The 25th of November is *International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. For the last 15 years, from this day until UN Human Rights Day (10 December) *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence* are observed, recognized by the UN since 1999.

Protecting women's human rights and eliminating violence against women has advanced through the United Nations. Since 1995 substantial work has been done to implement the Beijing *Declaration and Platform for Action* arising from the 4th UN World Conference on Women; 185 countries – more than 90 percent of the UN member states – have now ratified the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW); and, United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* in 2000. Despite this recognition, violence against women is a reality that cuts across borders, wealth, race, religion and culture. Every day women experience extensive violence, particularly in countries at war, in crisis or conflict where women's rights deteriorate and are under pressure:

- One in three women has been beaten, raped, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime; 1
- Every fifth woman is subjected to rape or attempt to rape; 1
- 70 percent of the casualties in recent conflicts have been non-combatants. 80 percent of these are women and children; 1
- Systematic rape, sexual violence and abuse in Darfur, in Sudan, is used as a weapon in the war; 1
- During the conflict between 1991 and 2002, it is estimated that a third of all women and girls in Sierra Leone were subjected to sexual violence; 1
- Since the 1999 war Kosovo has become a major destination country for women and girls trafficked into forced prostitution. Around 15-20 percent of the women are allegedly under 14 years; 1
- In Colombia 3.5-4 million people are displaced. The majority of these are women with many children. There are reports of increased violence against the women; 2
- Every year 14,000 Russian women die as a result of violence in the home; 1
- Every fifth day a Spanish woman is killed by her partner; 1
- One in three Native American or Alaska Native women will be raped at some point in their lives; 1
- Every fourth minute a woman in the USA is raped; 1
- In fourteen countries a man can get mitigation of his sentence or impunity if he perpetrates violence or kills a woman in order to protect the so-called honour; 1

According to law in nine countries a rapist gets impunity if he marries his victim.

Violence against women in war areas has, according to UNDP, reached epidemic heights. The common denominator for the 1990's conflicts and the conflicts in this millennium has been comprehensive sexual abuse, forced pregnancy as a tool in ethnic genocide, kidnapping, intentional infection with HIV/AIDS and trafficking in women and children for sexual purposes. 3

Changes in the pattern of gender roles are one of the consequences of conflict, war or occupation. Violence and aggression becomes integrated into everyday life. When killing becomes legitimate, it also becomes legitimate to rape or buy and sell human bodies; a systematic brutalization of the whole society occurs resulting in numerous and grave assaults on women who are

abused by family members as well as by unknown men, civilians as well as soldiers. Every day and everywhere women are working for respect of their rights and for better conditions. WILPF honours the courage and endurance of women and recommits itself to eliminating violence against women, achieving disarmament and an end to violent conflicts. Since 1915 when it was founded, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has worked to eliminating war and militarism as the best way to reduce and eliminate violence in our societies and in the world. Ensuring that women are active participants in the decisions that affect their lives before, during and after conflicts is the best way to ensure that women's concerns and needs are on the agenda and get the priority they need.

Recommitment to UNSCr 1325 at Global Women's Security Summit

Sunday 18 November 2007

New York

"Women's empowerment leads to increased security for all, this simple sentence means a lot," said H.E. Mary Robinson (former President of Ireland) one of the co-chairs at the International Women Leaders Global Security Summit, which ended in New York yesterday (17 November). This ground-breaking summit brought together a diverse group of participants including from grassroots/community leadership as well as former and current heads of state, to identify and articulate a new model of collective leadership to address critical human security themes including Climate Change, Economic Insecurities, Terrorism and the Responsibility to Protection, and who from the outset noted the interconnectivity of the four conference themes.

During the summit, UN Security Council resolution 1325 advocates including Cora Weiss of the Hague Appeal for Peace, former Finnish Defence Minister Elizabeth Rehn (who co authored Women, War and Peace with current President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) and femLINKPACIFIC's Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, took the opportunity at group and thematic discussions to remind participants, that there was a critical need to ensure the operationalization of the landmark security council resolution on Women, Peace and Security including through the development of regional and national action plans, which will support and ensure compliance to the three "Ps" of the SC resolution - participation, protection and peacekeeping.

Additionally, there was an articulation and agreement of the need to strengthen global women's information-communication-media networks. During the closing remarks, Bhagwan Rolls was able to cite the example of the Pacific regional women's media network on Women, peace and security/UNSCr1325 as well as community radio initiatives, to reiterate the reality that women found moving the Bhagwan-Rolls noted that not only was this about reliance on mainstream media/press (especially in the global north) to cover and communicate issues to support women's participation and perspectives, but more importantly to support women's production of their own media content to improve women's visibility and capacity to participate in and influence formal (policy processes):

"This would not only enable women to highlight our own human security priorities, but also provide consistent and relevant talking points, using evidence drawn from women's grassroots networks, to influence national, regional and global security policy, including

the availability of a database of women's experts." Bhagwan-Rolls also reaffirmed the use of Track II Dialogue, citing the example of "peacewomen" initiatives in Fiji, and a regional project titled Peace Talks to support women's participation in the Forum Regional Security Committee process.

Earlier, in the final discussions on the Economic Insecurities, Carolyn Macaskie of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, reiterated the economic root causes of a vast majority of the conflicts, the PBC is working to manage: "...Ethnicity is very rarely the cause of conflict, it is more often about the disparities in the economic situations," and the working group participants agreed that greater aid effectiveness needed to ensure building government and women's NGO capacities to ensure that women's economic insecurities were also addressed, and capacity was improved to influence policy, especially in fragile states, as Mary Robinson concluded later, "addressing women's economic insecurities means you are addressing future economic insecurities." Additionally, there was an articulation and agreement of the need to strengthen global women's information-communication-media networks. During the closing remarks, Bhagwan Rolls was able to cite the example of the Pacific regional women's media network on Women, peace and security/UNSCR1325 as well as community radio initiatives, to reiterate the reality that women found moving the Bhagwan-Rolls noted that not only was this about reliance on mainstream media/press (especially in the global north) to cover and communicate issues to support women's participation and perspectives, but more importantly to support women's production of their own media content to improve women's visibility and capacity to participate in and influence formal (policy processes): "This would not only enable women to highlight our own human security priorities, but also provide consistent and relevant talking points, using evidence drawn from women's grassroots networks, to influence national, regional and global security policy, including the availability of a database of women's experts." Bhagwan-Rolls also reaffirmed the use of Track II Dialogue, citing the example of "peacewomen" initiatives in Fiji, and a regional project titled Peace Talks to support women's participation in the Forum Regional Security Committee process.

Prior to the conclusion of this inaugural global summit, participants also agreed that there was a critical need to ensure the availability of resources, especially financial resources, to support women's participation, noting that a recent AWID report had noted that there was very limited funds available to support women's human rights: "We need to move resources closer to the women in the communities, to their constituencies, and there needs to be an accessible and flexible fund for women to be on the spot when a crisis erupts," said Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi the Co-Founder/ Executive Director of the African Women's Development Fund, the first Africa-wide fundraising and grant-making organization for African women. She was also the President of the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID) from 2003-2005, adding that funding agencies also need to be more specific in earmarking funds for women: "Women have brought about the peace, even when they are dealing with their own trauma and difficult personal situations," she noted, adding that resources also needed to be mobilized to support women's own security needs.

The Summit, was jointly organized by the Annenberg Foundation Trust in partnership with the Council of Women Leaders, The White House Project and the Women Leaders Intercultural Forum is the largest gathering of world women leaders addressing issues of global security ever held in the United States. Participants included current and former women heads of state and government, and women leaders from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America Europe, North America, as well as the Pacific.

Activists are pushing the World Bank and IMF to change the lens through which they view gender's role in development. Although women are the majority of the world's poor, activists say, the institutions overlook that when influencing economies.

WASHINGTON (WOMENSENEWS)--After working inside the World Bank as an economist earlier in her career, Elaine Zuckerman is now on the outside glaring in. During three days last month timed to the anti-globalization protests surrounding the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, Zuckerman's advocacy group, Gender Action, staged a series of workshops accusing international financial institutions of discriminatory lending.

Her thrust: that the World Bank--which makes loans to developing countries--and the International Monetary Fund--which monitors global finance and extends credits to stabilize economies--both undermine women's rights by exacerbating poverty, gender-based violence and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV-AIDS.

"Each year, these international financial institutions make tens of thousands of investments in developing countries that claim to empower women but in fact often harm them," Zuckerman told an audience at Georgetown University Law School last month. In 2003, for example, Tanzania accepted loans from the World Bank and the IMF that required privatization of parts of its water utility. That led to irregular service and price increases, making water less affordable and forcing women and girls--responsible for providing water for their families--to walk longer distances to gather water or pay huge markups to water vendors, according to a 2006 report by Gender Action.

Founded in 1945, the World Bank has grown from a single organization designed to make reconstruction loans after World War II to a group of five development banks that make million- and billion-dollar loans ostensibly aimed at reducing global poverty. The International Development Association--the World Bank arm that focuses on the world's poorest countries--offers longer-term and lower-priced loans than can be found on the free market. The IMF also came into existence in 1945 and has a macro-economic mission: to promote global economic stability to prevent a repeat of the 1930s-era worldwide depression. The IMF does that mainly with initiatives to keep national currencies stable and promoting cross-border trade, but it also makes its own loans to help countries pay off debt. World Bank membership is restricted to countries that belong to the IMF.

Countering Claims of Harm

World Bank and IMF officials took strong exception to Zuckerman's claim that the financial bodies' actions hurt rather than help women and girls. Spokesperson Amy Stilwell said the World Bank--now headed by Robert Zoellick, who in July succeeded Paul Wolfowitz, the former deputy secretary of defense for the Bush administration that resigned amid a storm of controversy--is paying more attention to women's issues and has made great inroads on fronts such as primary education for girls and maternal and infant health. In 2006, the World Bank unveiled a four-year, \$25 million plan for gender-specific projects relating to infrastructure, agriculture, private-sector development and finance. The budget has since increased to \$30 million over four years.

Last month, the World Bank pledged to heighten its focus on the farm economy in sub-Saharan Africa, which is managed largely by women and girls. The promise came after an October critique from the bank's internal assessors, who charged the bank with neglecting sub-Saharan agriculture.

For its part, the IMF takes gender equality and women's rights issues into consideration when giving advice to poorer countries on how to improve their economies, said spokesperson Conny Lotze.

"We look at the potential effects of our advice on poverty, including whether women and girls may be disproportionately harmed by cuts in social spending and layoffs in government or public enterprises. Improving health, education and gender equality plays a central role in developing a stable economy and achieving sustainable growth."

Putting Women and Girls in Context

But Zuckerman says the institutions fail to fully consider the implications of their actions on women and girls. The IMF lacks any specific policy on gender and none of its 2,633 employees are gender experts, according to Gender Action. Of the 15,000 employees at the World Bank only 115 are experts in gender issues, she says.

Malcolm Ehrenpreis, a World Bank gender expert, said that data give a distorted view because all paid employees, such as receptionists and administrative staff, are included. He said the bank is not adding gender specialists because it is working instead to make women's rights a mainstream concern.

At the same time, he said, bringing about gender equality is an ongoing mission, and noted that women trail men in formal labor force participation, access to credit, entrepreneurship rates, income levels, and inheritance and ownership rights.

"This is unfair, it hampers poverty reduction and it is bad economics," he said.

Zuckerman says the World Bank, the IMF and other international financial institutions have not rectified systemic problems--such as policy-based loans--that discriminate against women.

Conditions for Receiving Loans

With a policy-based loan, a development bank negotiator might, for example, tie strings to a loan offer that require changes in national policy considered good for the nation's economy's solvency. Such changes have often included privatizing state-owned businesses, cutting labor protections and public-sector wages, liberalizing trade laws and eliminating corporate taxes.

Gender Action Programs Coordinator Suzanna Dennis said such changes often lead to price increases, public-sector downsizing and social displacements that hurt women.

Bangladesh, for example, agreed in 2005 to liberalize its trade laws. The deal exposed the country's garment industry to fiercer competition with China and India and led to job losses in an industry dominated by women, according to Gender Action.

Some loan terms have led governments to cut spending on public schools and hospitals and impose user fees. This can hurt girls disproportionately because they are more likely to be taken out of school if it becomes costly. As caregivers, girls and women often leave school and jobs to provide health care when it becomes too expensive, Dennis added.

Ehrenpreis, at the World Bank, said the bank supports countries that seek to abolish fees for primary school or basic health care.

And he said foreign aid has contributed to "steady improvement" for women and girls, especially in health care and education. The bank is combating HIV-AIDS with programs designed to strengthen women's rights, he added.

"It doesn't happen overnight," World Bank AIDS expert Elizabeth Lule said in a statement about curbing HIV-AIDS. "I think we have laid a good foundation. But much more needs to be done."

Allison Stevens is Washington bureau chief at Women's eNews.



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