

## **SUMMARY**

This paper is a proposal for a regional framework, modalities strategies and measures to implement the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and the outcome document of the twenty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS).

It builds on the significant achievements already made in the region toward building such a framework. It is based on the following principles:

- That the most important factors in achieving gender equality, development and peace in the Asian and Pacific Region are those of political and social will.
- That much of the work necessary to establishing such a framework has already been done, but that often there is a nexus between policy and implementation.
- That the framework must be a Human Rights Framework
- That a regional framework is essential to achieve gender equality development and peace.
- That a regional framework must be both comprehensive and yet flexible to accommodate the diverse nature of the countries in the region.
- That national frameworks are essential components of a regional framework and that these must be holistic and take a "whole of government approach"
- That national frameworks must contain enough similarity of structure and intent to enable them to be incorporated into the regional framework.
- That the allocation of adequate resources is an essential component of both national and regional frameworks
- That the establishment of measurement tools such as common modes of data collection, indicators of social well-being, benchmarks and measures of inputs, outputs and outcomes are crucial to both frameworks.
- That the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document in the Asian and Pacific Region requires co-operation between governments, non-governmental/organizations (NGOs), civil society, the corporate sector, donor countries and other funding bodies

With this in mind a framework is suggested which has the aim of capitalizing on work already done by focusing on implementation, and the development and adoption of measurement tools which are integral to the process.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1995, the United Nations held the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, from 4 to 15 September.

The stated objectives of the Conference were:

- to evaluate the work already done in the implementation of the 1985 Nairobi Forward- Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,
- to address the key issues which have been identified as representing a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of the majority of women, such as effective participation in decision-making, poverty, health, education, violence, women's human rights and peace,
- to create impetus in society for women to move forward, well equipped to meet the challenges and demands of the twenty-first Century for political, economic, scientific and technological development.

(United Nations Guidelines to Governments and NGOs in relation to preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, issued September 12, 1993)

The major outcome from the Conference was the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (BPA), a blueprint for raising the status of women worldwide. The BPA was agreed on and signed by all member states of the United Nations, although some nations placed reservations on certain paragraphs of the Declaration.

**In June 2000, 189 government delegations and 4000 representatives from non-governmental organizations gathered in New York for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (also known as “Beijing plus Five”). This meeting was the culmination of four years of work building on the BPA.**

The sections of BPA were systematically reviewed at the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) from 1996 to 1999. In 1999, governments were called upon to present self evaluations of their implementation of the BPA, NGOs were invited to submit shadow reports, and expert group meetings were convened by CSW to focus on particularly contentious issues. The five regions of the United Nations also held high-level governmental meetings to complete regional assessments of the implementation of the BPA. The regional meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was held in October 1999.

The result of all these deliberations, and the analysis of the country and NGO reports, resulted in a draft document, the draft outcomes document for UNGASS, which was presented to governments for discussion at a special meeting of CSW following the regular committee meeting in March 2000. After intensive deliberation and amendments, the outcome document was finally adopted at UNGASS on 6 June 2000. The outcomes document maintains in full all of the commitments in the BPA. It also lists challenges and obstacles faced by governments and other key stakeholders in the implementation of the commitments made in the BPA, it addresses new issues which have affected the status of women since 1995, and suggests a range of strategies and actions to be taken to address these.

In preparation for this paper an analysis was done of the outcome document listing the major obstacles and challenges identified for each critical area of concern with a summary

of the actions and strategies suggested to address these. The actions are purposively broad, to enable governments and other key stakeholders to design appropriate local implementation strategies. This is seen as both a strength and a weakness, as some recommendations are perceived to be so broad as to be meaningless, merely token attempts to acknowledge issues without real commitment to addressing them.

Since the First World Conference on Women in 1975, governments have made commitments to developing and implementing a wide range of strategies aimed at reducing the gap in the status of women and the status of men in the world. During this period, many innovative and effective strategies, programmes and projects have been introduced. Some of these have been successful and some have failed. Some failed because they were ill-conceived or poorly implemented, others because governments have apparently lacked the political will to address the issues, and legislation, policies and programmes have been merely token. At times, governments have genuinely lacked resources to implement policy. Natural disaster, conflict and events such as the economic crisis which swept through Asia in the 1990s have severely impeded implementation, even when policy has been formulated with the best will in the world. (Social Watch 1999 in Progress of the World's Women (PWW) 2000)

## **PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER**

The purpose of this paper is to provide input into deliberations about modalities, measures and strategies to meet the challenges of gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century in the Asia and Pacific Region.

The expert group meeting is convened to identify priorities, and to develop a regional framework to implement the Outcomes Document with clearly identified priorities and suitable modalities and strategies to approach urgent issues pertinent to the Asian. A framework will be proposed to identify short and medium term strategies for governments, nongovernmental organizations, private sectors and other key stakeholders to implement the outcome document. Strategic alliances and partnerships between these various stakeholders is essential as globalization has seen a dramatic increase in the power of non-state institutions which can play a critical role in promoting or hindering the progress of women.

The content of this paper is influenced by the word “modality” which is defined as a modal quality or state, but also carries with it notions of confidence in what is being proposed and some logical analysis of the truth of the proposition to fulfil the desired outcome and the possibility of it being achieved. This was taken to mean that what is required is not merely a description of a range of measures to be undertaken to fulfil the commitments in the BPA. It is also an analysis of the “do-ability” of proposed actions and strategies, the social and political aspects and the resource implications. Implicit in the word modalities is something much bigger and more complex than a “framework”. It would have been relatively easy to provide a prescription, nominated a series of programmes and projects for each of the actions and strategies listed in the outcome document and to suggest a measurement for each. This has already been done and it is suggested that it is not the most effective way of advancing issues such as improving the status of women. Instead, this paper is proposing a workable framework, or frameworks for implementation, and for a commitment to consult and collaborate with those people who have already developed or suggested programmes, with local and regional experts in the various fields.

While every attempt has been made to ensure that the framework proposed in this paper is pragmatic and firmly grounded in achievable reality, occasionally it strays into the realms of the ideal. While recognising that this is the case, it is acknowledged, and founded on a belief that if we do not dare to dream, we never achieve anything. There is some value in even acknowledging rhetorically what is not immediately achievable. Once spoken it becomes a possibility. If left in silence, it will disappear forever.

### **Why A Regional Framework**

The Asian and Pacific region is arguably the most diverse of the five United Nations regions. We have 60 percent of the world's population, some of the most affluent nations, and some of the poorest, colonisers and the colonised. We are a region divided on religious, cultural and ethnic lines; a region in which both the discourse of the north and the discourse of the south vie to be heard. At the United Nations, the countries classified as "Asia and the Pacific" often politically align themselves in different camps, developing countries with G77 and developed countries with JUSCANZ. Yet despite these differences we are a geographic region, and we have much to gain economically, socially and spiritually in working together as a regional group.

A regional framework will require commitments from governments to a common set of goals, implementation strategies and measures of success. These will have to be broad enough to be adaptable to the diversity of the region, and yet rigorous enough to address the common and cross cutting problems, and to stand up to international scrutiny – indeed to provide a model for other regions of the world.

The question could be posed as to why in such a diverse region we should be attempting to find a common framework. A perusal of the various country reports to the United Nations detailing the achievements challenges and obstacle to the BPA, and the shadow reports submitted by the NGO sectors provide the answer. The region shares many common problems, such as the negative effects of globalization, the feminization of poverty, trafficking, migrant workers, HIV/AIDS, and the sequale which flow on from these.

In searching for answers for these common problems, solutions and ideas can be shared, and cooperation between governments, NGOs and funding bodies can help share the load of programme development. A second argument for a regional framework is the fact that so many of the issues in the region are linked. Trafficking occurs both inside and between many countries in the region. Migrant workers move between countries, and the tragic and ongoing consequence of conflict, both civil and between nations, includes the destruction of infrastructure and environment and the forced migration of huge numbers of people.

Globalization with both its positive and negative effects brings countries more closely together than ever before. These linked problems need linked solutions. No country can tackle them alone and a framework has to be developed and agreed to encourage and allow this to happen. The affluence of the developed countries in the region is often predicated on the poverty of some of the poorer nations. A commitment to equality and development and peace across the region and not just within nation states will result in a unilateral examination of the effects of practices such as these and a search for a common and equitable solution.

## **PROGRESS SO FAR**

### **Country Reports**

We must begin by acknowledging the great efforts made by so many governments in the region to enhance the status of women and to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. There have been many innovative strategies put in place, resources have been allocated and changes made in national infrastructures to address the gender issue. These examples of best practice have been incorporated into the proposed framework. To ignore the many steps forward would be to negate the work of dedicated women and men across the region who have fought for women's rights and recognition in domestic law and policy.

A significant number of countries in the region have established a country equivalent of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. While these vary in name and composition, they are similar in their function, which is to promote the status of women in the country, and to implement the commitments made in the BPA. For the purpose of this paper these will be referred to generically as the Department for Women

There is a direct correlation between countries who have established a Department for Women, and a National Plan of Action based on the BPA. While varying from country to country, these plans provide a blueprint for action for government and the non government sector. It is usually the Department for Women who have prime responsibility for encouraging the implementation of these national plans. The governments who report the most effective measures towards fulfilling the promise of the BPA are those who have both a DFW and an action-based National Plan of Action.

Many governments in the region have an expectation that the NGO sector will take prime responsibility for the implementation programmes addressing the BPA. Some countries have established formal consultative process and invite NGO participation in policy making and program design and implementation, and to bring a grass-roots perspective to the process.

A small number of countries reported on the establishment of specific budget allocation for the development of women. This initiative was evident in countries which could be classified as the most affluent and also in some of the poorest countries. The common element appeared not to be the level of per capita national income, but the level of commitment from the particular government to enhancing the status of women. The notion of a quota of the gross national budget dedicated to women would appear to be a measure of a country's commitment to the issues.

The major issues which came from the country reports were an emphasis on:

- The importance of legislative measures addressing all 12 critical areas of concern to support a policy framework for the advancement of women
- The importance of "capacity building" for women, women's groups and non-governmental organizations to enable them to participate fully in the design of programmes, the implementation and monitoring process

- The ratification of United Nations conventions and treaties and the incorporation of these into domestic law and policy
- The importance of gender and development, women in development (GAD/WID) and mainstreaming policies to ensure that women's issues are adequately addressed in national policy
- The importance of all aspects of education and research
- The crucial role of comprehensive and disaggregated data to measure the status of women
- The reform of existing practices to incorporate a gender perspective

A number of governments established internal bodies to monitor the implementation of the BPA, while others have encourage NGOs to take on this important role. Several countries have committed substantial resources to ensure that women at the grass-roots level are involved in understanding and monitoring the commitments made in the BPA. In general little detail is provided of the programmes and strategies employed by governments and the NGO sector and it is suggested that this is an invaluable resource which could be shared across the region.

### **The Non-Government Sector**

National and regional NGOs worked together extremely effectively in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women and "Beijing plus 5". Comment was frequently made that the NGOs from the Asian and Pacific Region were the most organized and effective regional NGO presence at these meetings. This is due in part to the fact that regional NGOs already have effective national and regional networks in place. In many countries, NGOs compiled and submitted shadow BPA evaluation reports to CSW. Following a large regional Symposium hosted in Thailand in 1999 a regional NGO Report, "Voices 2000" was compiled and became the major lobbying document used by regional NGOs. This document identifies regional priorities, obstacles, challenges, actions and strategies for the BPA. NGOs were successful in ensuring that many of their concerns are reflected in the outcome document.

After Beijing plus 5, regional NGOs and major funding bodies met together to share ideas on possible future strategies for monitoring and implementing the BPA. Regional NGOs can play a critical role in linking national and local level efforts with international level strategies. NGOs also acknowledge the necessity of the NGO sector working closely with government and other key stakeholders. The areas in which the regional NGOs identified themselves effectively working in or identified as areas where further work was needed included:

**Monitoring:** such as data collection; base line reports; media monitoring; working with government organizations (GOs) and NGOs to monitor policies, laws and programmes; develop sustainable and specific indicators (e.g. indicators for human rights; qualitative, psychological indicators); systemize monitoring

**Research:** It was noted that there is a lack of funding available for research, especially that which is cutting edge; research methodologies need to be feminist, action-oriented, feedback to the community and include intercountry comparisons where useful.

**Information collation and dissemination:** This includes documentation, publication, media, collating national level information at the regional level; focusing on selectiveness of information to prevent overloading; expanding the reach of dissemination to other NGO and GO networks to the mainstream.

**Linking stakeholders:** Maintaining and strengthening links between NGOs and GOs, and links between events (e.g. Beijing Plus 5, World Conference Against Racism); links between monitoring / research and advocacy / lobbying and links from the national to regional to international level.

**Evaluation:** NGOs should undertake more programmes and organizational evaluations to assess impacts of initiatives undertaken; funders should consider the provision of funds for evaluations.

**Capacity Building:** This includes training in lobbying, advocacy, monitoring, research methodology; use of the new information and communication technologies for networking and information-sharing.

**Lobbying and Advocacy:** Developing regional level lobbying positions and papers; training and preparing lobbying teams; providing spaces for national level NGOs to develop national level lobbying positions which can be fed into regional and international level lobbying advocacy efforts; linking funds and expertise from around the region with national and regional level advocacy efforts; in a timely manner.

**Mapping:** Identifying existing resources and initiatives which have been undertaken; identify other NGOs, GOs and international organizations with whom links need to be sustained; developing regional level strategic plans for future activities: with the aim of ensuring that there is maximum cooperation and reinforcement at the regional level, rather than unnecessary duplication and division (SEAGEP 2000).

These activities are all key elements of a successful regional framework. A major problem identified by NGOs across the region is much of the discussion of these issues stays at the rhetorical level. Legislation and policy are often introduced, but implementation does not occur.

## **CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Political and Social Will**

A framework for implementation for the BPA and outcome document must be placed within a social and historical context if it is to be effective. In many cases, social attitudes and broader social discourses will have to change before change is brought about in the status of women. Neither covenant, law nor policy will result in social change programmes and services unless there is a will from the law and policy makers for it to happen and from the people to receive it. A major challenge is to convince many men and some women that an improvement in the status of women will bring about an improvement in the whole of

society. It will not just be at the expense of the right and privileges of men, although undoubtable the balance of power will shift over time. Passing the law, and formulating the policy are the easy steps. The challenge comes with implementation. To illustrate the argument let us consider the issue of violence against women. We are asked in the outcome document to identify the root causes of violence against women. Complex strands of social injustice contribute to the implicit sanctioning of much violence against women. Many of these are based in ideologies such as patriarchy and the capitalist system of production, in some forms of cultural practice and in some religious practice. Many of the strategies in the BPA and the outcome document are designed to address the elements of these root causes. However, if key players with power over legislation, policy making and implementation are not willing to acknowledge and address the power of ideology, violence against women will continue to be perpetuated and accepted.

A specific example is that in several country reports it is perceived that it is “trafficked women” who are at fault, and who are “the problem” and not the traffickers, those who receive trafficked women and the systemic problems which produce all of these players. Until this perception changes it is unlikely that measures taken to eradicate trafficking will be successful.

A further political challenge is that in some countries in the region, the decentralization of government makes policy monitoring and consistent budget allocation more difficult. In some cases it is also leading to the reintroduction of traditional cultural practices which discriminate against women.

### **Lack of an holistic, integrated approach**

The 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action are 12 pillars of the larger structure of gender equality, development and peace. They have to be seen as parts of a whole and they need to be addressed simultaneously if the promise of the BPA and outcome document is to be fulfilled. If problems are addressed individually, they will not achieve the larger goal. In this case it is very true to say that the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts. It is the interaction between the parts which will produce positive results. Addressing the parts in isolation can conceivably even weaken the fulfilment of the whole.

For example, one of the most exciting new initiatives in the outcome document is the acknowledgement of the important role of women in the peace process, and the inclusion of a number of measures to ensure that this occurs. This has been echoed by the Security Council which adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). It is true that many women do have both the experience and knowledge to contribute significantly in this process, but it is also acknowledged that to place women inexperienced in the public arena into positions of power and participation without providing the necessary information and training can disempower the women involved and undermine the entire aim of the exercise. If women are treated as tokens, if they are not equipped to deal with the structure and process of involvement, the benefit of their contribution will not be effective. Sadly the interpretation of occurrences such as these are usually to say that women have nothing to contribute, even when they are given the opportunity to do so.

## **Lack of Effective Mechanisms to Promote the Status of Women**

The lack of effective mechanisms for the promotion of the advancement of women is a major challenge to the implementation of the BPA and the outcome document. Some countries do not have a Department for Women. Others have such a department, but they are often placed in low status government portfolios, such as those addressing cultural and social issues, rather than senior portfolios such as foreign affairs, which would address issues of women in the peace process and treasury, which would address budgetary concerns. In some countries, gender focal points are appointed in various portfolios, but these are often powerless to influence policy, and there is a marked lack of interaction between these focal points.

## **Resource Issues**

A major reason given by many governments for the non-implementation of the BPA has been the resource implications. This has been particularly pertinent in the Asian and Pacific region because of the economic crisis of the late 1990s. Off the record discussion at Beijing plus 5 heard many governments expressing the fear that commitments made in the outcome document would tie them to promises that they could not afford to fulfil. This must be acknowledged and addressed and the pattern established by many governments of working closely with the non-governmental sector, the corporate world, donor countries and other funding bodies to identify resources must be strengthened and incorporated into national and regional planning. As discussed above, this is not merely a matter of dollars. This issue is also predicated on social and political will and an acknowledgement that resources spent on improving the status of women ultimately improve the status of a whole society.

It is also important to note that the introduction of a gender perspective across government policy does not necessarily mean the introduction of a huge range of new and expensive programmes. There are of course some budgetary implications, but emphasis should rather be on the reconceptualisation, re-focusing and revision of existing programmes as part of the ongoing process of policy formulation and implementation. Policy is not static, it is part of the dynamic process of government (Considine 1994). It presents opportunities to meet the challenge of incorporating a gender perspective as an integral part the structure and infrastructure of government and governance.

The overall aim of the outcome document is to improve the status of women worldwide. While not denying the profound impact that poverty has on the full achievement of the commitments across each of the 12 critical areas, nor that some of the freedoms promised in the documents are more easily achievable with access to resources, we must take care not to confuse issues of gender status with issues of affluence. Many women in the world live an affluent lifestyle but enjoy very low status in relation to the majority of the areas of critical concern .

## **Monitoring/Measuring/Evaluation.**

There appears to be a fear by some governments of the requirement to monitor or measure the implementation of measures such as the BPA. These fears seem to be based in equal part on being “set up to fail” by the establishment of indicators which are seen to be impossible to achieve, and a fear of losing national sovereignty by agreeing to be measured by an internationally agreed standard. These fears have to be addressed in any measures

established. They have to be firm enough to ensure that positive steps are taken to improve the status of women and provide a cohesive framework across the region. They must be realistic and flexible enough to address the situation of all countries. They must be manageable and achievable.

The will to implement is not merely measured by crude input and output measures. The resources allocated to the process by key stakeholders, and the willingness to adapt current legislation policy and practice to incorporate a gender perspective are also prime measures of commitment.

### **Lack of an integrated human rights framework**

In seeking to establish a workable framework through which to measure the progress of commitments made in the BPA, the document cannot be considered in isolation from other international commitments and legal instruments. The BPA is not a legally binding document but instead provides a platform or agenda for the advancement of women. It is the sign post showing the way in which other legal instruments and conventions must be implemented to effectively address the needs of women. Unless the BPA is considered within this broad human rights and legal framework the needs of the world's women remain dangerously at the periphery and will be the first to be sacrificed in times of economic and social crisis. We must not only "imagine women's rights as human rights", we must ensure that all legal and policy instruments hold this at their foundation.

The BPA has addressed human rights as one of the 12 critical areas of concern; a human rights framework is also the umbrella which covers all critical areas. Many governments across the Asian and Pacific region have positive records of both signing and ratifying human rights conventions, treaties and documents generating from international commissions and meetings. Most of the commitments required from the BPA and the outcome document can be linked directly to these conventions and treaties. These links provide the basis for a comprehensive human rights framework and the national plans devised to address the BPA and outcome document should also indicate fulfilment of the reporting mechanisms of these conventions. The targets identified in national plans must be directly linked to the women's human rights framework, as the discourse of rights has a powerful moral force, which the discourse of targets lacks.

The gender blindness of many of the legal and policy instruments must also be addressed (Charlesworth 1994). One of the most pertinent examples of the power of influence of the BPA has been its influence in the development of the statutes of the International Criminal Court, which contain an unprecedented level of gender integration. In 2000 the BPA has had a similar impact within the Security Council with respect to recognition of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. The ability of the BPA to influence other United Nations committees is the fundamental strength of the Platform. In order to address the issue of gender blindness changes must occur commencing with the United Nations system itself. So long as the responsibility for the advancement of women remains almost solely the responsibility of the relatively under-resourced Division for the Advancement of Women, advances for women will remain limited. This is both a resource and a mandate issue and will only be addressed with the support of member states. A similar challenge is faced by many nation states. In many countries the role of the Department for Women remains marginalized from the main action of government ministries. To be effective, each government portfolio must be placed under the "gender microscope."

## **A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

The 1994 Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, convened by ESCAP, clearly identified the elements of a framework for implementation in the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific. In this document five sets of arrangements necessary for implementation are detailed. They are participation, cooperation, priorities, coordination, financial arrangements and monitoring and evaluation. The BPA also spells out a number of institutional arrangements necessary for implementation. These include the strengthening of national machineries for the advancement of women, linking CEDAW to the BPA, and encouraging regional development banks and business associations to contribute and help mobilize resources.

Building on these suggestions, two major issues are to be addressed in the following framework. The first is the lack of implementation of already developed and often agreed on strategies, actions programmes and projects. The major element of this framework is the political and social will to ensure that the implementation occurs.

The second is the importance of systematic and thorough measuring, data collection monitoring and evaluation which has to be seen as a circular process and not a linear model. Measuring progress against a set of agreed indicators both illustrates the scope of the problems to be addressed and measures the effectiveness of measures taken to address them. A national and regional commitment to a common and transparent system of measuring and evaluation would go far to addressing the problem of implementation.

### **Step 1. – National Plans**

Acknowledging that many countries in the region have already established effective and comprehensive national plans of action, the framework would strongly encourage all countries to follow this lead. To fulfil the promise of a regional framework for implementation, national plans would address both national and regional priorities and incorporate sufficient common elements to enable measurement of national and regional achievements.

Ideally, national plans of action would address all 12 of the critical areas of concern in the BPA and outcome document, and establish mechanisms for ensuring that commitments to international instruments were reflected in domestic legislation, social policy and practice. It would oversee the measuring and evaluation of programmes. It would provide a human rights framework.

These must include specific budget allocations for implementation and in the case of government decentralisation, national plans should put in place mechanisms to ensure that gender issues are fully addressed at local levels.

### **Step 2. – A Whole of Government Approach – A Department for Women**

An important part of the framework for implementation would be the establishment of a central office which takes responsibility for the national plan, working in partnership with all relevant portfolios and a branch which provides policy and services which do not fall

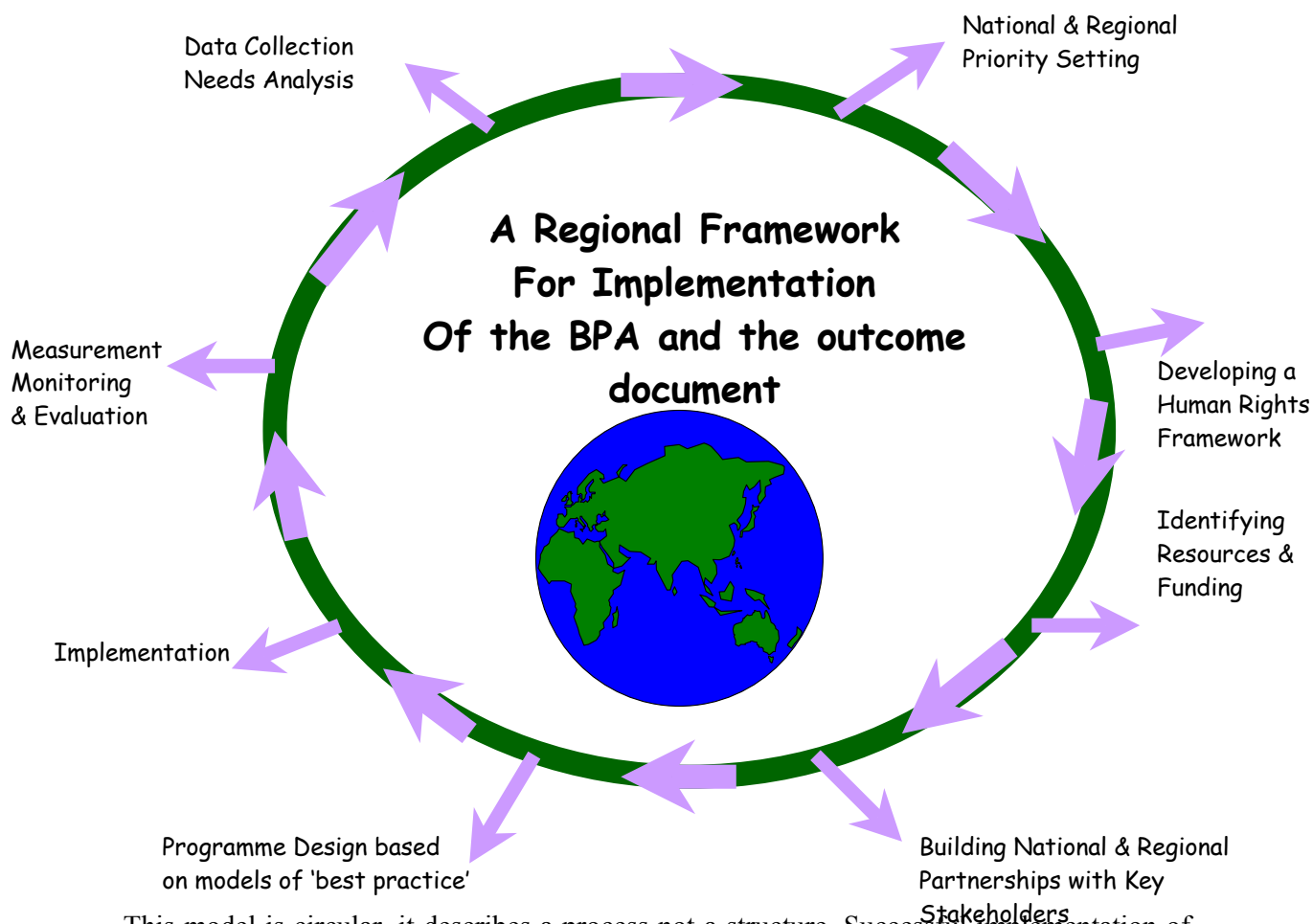
neatly into other ministries. A major role of the office would be to analyse strategies and actions needed to address the commitments made in each of the critical areas and to either suggest new policies or identify places in existing policy where the issue could be addressed. This would be linked to commitments made in other international instruments. It is important that these departments be given real status within governments, linked to economic and international affairs. A focal point, with overall responsibility for gender issues would be identified in each ministry charged with ensuring that a gender perspective was incorporated into all policy and programmes. Strong links should be established between each of these focal points to ensure that work is coordinated across governments.

Integration of gender issues across portfolios has the potential to ensure that in times of crisis, such as economic downturn and natural disasters, funding and other resources for women's issues would not be cut as a first response to reduce government expenditure. This would ensure that women's programmes were affected only to the same extent as all other programmes. Incidences such as economic downturn and natural disasters often adversely affect women and their children more than men. In fact, if the gender perspective was both integrated and the positive implications of this fully understood, it might be the case that in times of crisis it might be more appropriate to increase funding to women specific programmes. For example, when large employers create large scale redundancies it is the small scale economic activity of women that has been shown to be more effective. It is also well documented that 100 per cent of income earned by women will be contributed to the family budget, whereas men routinely withhold some portion of their income for personal expenditure such as alcohol or gambling.

### **Step 3. – A Regional Clearing House**

Acknowledging the richness of the work already done by key stakeholders in developing implementation strategies for the BPA, a "clearing house" of programme models, implementation strategies and actions, models for measurements would be an essential part of an effective regional framework for implementation. This would be held centrally, possibly by ESCAP and available to all governments and NGOs. This clearing house would contain details of best practice from government reports, NGO reports, United Nations agencies, funding bodies and the corporate sector. It would be constantly updated and evaluated. If properly developed and managed, it would have the potential to become a major resource for all countries in the region, and also a major evaluation tool of programmes and strategies. It has the potential to cut down on programme development and evaluation costs (Owen 1998).

#### **Step 4. – Implementation of Strategies**



This model is circular, it describes a process not a structure. Successful implementation of many strategies has already commenced in countries across the region. This circular model acknowledges these initiatives and places them as part of the process. It also incorporates the development and introduction of new programmes and the ongoing evaluation of the whole process of implementation. This framework does not clearly differentiate between short, medium and long term strategies, but acknowledges that these will in some cases overlap, and in other cases, evolve.

#### **Step 5. – Establishing integrated National and Regional Frameworks for Measuring and Evaluation**

An analogy often used to describe our region is that of a rich magnificent fabric, produced by weaving together all of the diverse threads of the region and creating a thing of beauty which is at the same time durable and functional. An integrated regional framework, based on integrated national strategies will produce such a fabric. If we chose to only weave a national fabric, we will only ever have a patchwork of uneven quality and poor design. A similar analogy can be used in the way we choose to measure the progress made by the women of our region. In order to produce a complete picture, both qualitative and quantitative measures are required. Women's stories of lived experience will bring colour to our cloth but will not alone provide a robust framework through which to guide our way forward. Statistics and indicators can be very powerful advocacy tools in holding national

governments and the international community to account with respect to the commitments made to advance the progress of women.

### **Indicators and Outputs: The Short-term Strategy**

If the region's progress in addressing the priority concerns for women is to be accurately monitored it is essential that a comprehensive system of measurements and indicators be developed. A range of indicators has been proposed for monitoring the implementation of United Nations conference commitments. These include OECD Development indicators, regional monitoring initiatives and United Nations Common Country Assessment indicators. However, many countries including some in our region currently lack the infrastructure for data collection disaggregated by sex required to effectively measure the progress of women. One of the key priorities therefore must be to provide assistance to all countries in our region to not only develop an agreed set of indicators or outputs but to implement an effective system of sex disaggregated data collection. This urgent and short-term strategy is critical to the success of any long term strategy through which to genuinely advance women's status. ESCAP currently provides statistical profiles on 19 countries in the Asian and Pacific Region. These country profiles provide information on the situation of women and men in the family, at work, and in public life by analysing available statistical data and information. UNIFEM in the report 'The Progress of the World's Women 2000' have identified a range of national surveys, which can provide useful data, these include; censuses, household, enterprise and labour force surveys. If the needs of rural, migrant and indigenous women are also to be addressed it is important also to obtain data which is disaggregated not only by sex but also by age, ethnicity, class and location. It must be acknowledged however that indicators alone will not provide a complete picture of the situation of women in our region but will rather act as signals or warnings of the direction of change. Any more detailed analysis of the outcomes of strategies and initiatives to advance the situation of women will require both a synthesis of a range of indicators or outputs and specific studies and research initiatives which combine qualitative and quantitative measures (ECLAC, 1999).

The proposed framework is based on an ideal model in which the needs of women are recognized as an integral part of all government policy development and implementation. In this way the gender dimension is fully integrated in all social, development and economic policies. In a truly ideal world issues of gender would be so completely integrated that a Department of Women would become superfluous!! This framework recognises the interrelationship between each of the 12 critical areas and the relationship between the key actions in each critical area and the internationally agreed conventions, indicators and systems of measurement under which responsibility falls.

In preparation for Beijing Plus 5, women across our region worked collaboratively to identify the major obstacles to the advancement of women. These were outlined in "Voices 2000 & Beyond", the Asia Pacific Women's Watch Lobbying Document. These cut across a number of the critical areas of the BPA and provide an important example of the interrelatedness of each of the critical areas and therefore the inadequacy of measurement bounded only by advances related to each critical area.

## **Potentially Useful Internationally Recognised Indicators:**

### **The Human Development index (HDI)**

The HDI measures the average achievement of a country in basic human capabilities. The HDI indicates whether people lead a long and healthy life, are educated and knowledgeable and enjoy a decent standard of living. The HDI examines the average condition of all people in a country: distributional inequalities for various groups of society have to be calculated separately.

### **The Gender-Related Development Index (GDI)**

The GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The GDI is simply the HDI discounted, or adjusted downwards, for gender inequality.

### **The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)**

The GEM examines whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making. While the GDI focuses on expansion of capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

### **United Nations Common Country Assessment Indicators**

“In 1999, the United Nations agencies selected a set of 40 indicators to guide the Common Country Assessments, made in partnership with countries in which United Nations development cooperation takes place, and to assist in monitoring follow-up to the United Nations conferences. The indicators cover income-poverty, food security and nutrition, health and mortality, reproductive health, child health and welfare, education, employment and sustainable livelihoods, housing and basic household amenities, environment, drug control and crime prevention, and gender equality and women's empowerment. This indicator framework measures progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, in terms of political and economic as well as educational indicators and includes a commitment to disaggregate other indicators by sex.” (Progress of the World's Women 2000.)

### **Integration of models**

The selection of indicators in the United Nations Common Country Assessment Indicators was constrained by the availability of national-level statistics. However it nonetheless significantly expands the indicators addressed by the HDI and GEM. It is however recommended that this model build on, rather than replace, the HDI and the GEM.

One of the most important aspects of the HDI is its flexibility with respect to differing country and regional needs. The usefulness and versatility of the HDI as an analytical tool

for human development at the national and sub-national levels is enhanced if countries choose components that reflect their priorities and problems and are sensitive to their development levels. To reflect country-specific priorities and problems and to be more sensitive to a country's development level, the basic components of the HDI appearing in the global Human Development Reports could be supplemented or replaced by other more relevant components. The same methodology used to construct the global HDI could be applied to a set of other components to construct country specific HDIs that both reflect national priorities and are more sensitive to policy changes. For example, unemployment could become a component of the national HDI in countries where it is considered as a priority problem (Human Development Report 2000).

The GEM can be used in a similar manner. For example, “women in [one country] have adapted the idea behind the GEM to the circumstances in their country, constructing for each state different composite indexes of women’s empowerment, based on indicators of women’s relative representation at different levels of the political system, relative exercise of the right to vote, relative literacy rate, relative life expectancy and relative income share” (Jain and Ahmed; Mehta in PWW, 2000).

It is also essential that all data collection recognise those elements which either disproportionately or solely affect the lives of women. This is addressed through maintaining a distinction in data collection between gender-sensitive and gender specific indicators. Gender-sensitive indicators compare the situation of males to that of females, displaying an aspect of relative advantage or disadvantage e.g. the ratio between girls and boys school enrolment rates. Sex-specific indicators recognise that some conditions are experienced by only one sex such as maternal mortality. Knowledge is also needed about absolute levels of achievement as well as gender gaps e.g. women’s average real earnings and men’s real earnings (PWW 2000).

### **Benchmarks**

Countries within the region will differ in their abilities to make progress in addressing their many commitments to advance the status of women. Achievements are heavily dependent on a country’s resources, policy options and competing priorities. The Human Development Report 2000, recommends benchmarks as a useful tool for agreeing on a rate of progress. By setting benchmarks, governments and civil society can reach agreement about adequate rates of progress. The Report identifies the following criteria, which must be adhered to in setting benchmarks if they are to be a truly useful tool of accountability.

Specific, time-bound and verifiable

Set with the participation of the people whose rights are affected

Reassessed independently with accountability for performance

If the methodology proposed below is to be truly useful a series of country specific benchmarks must be included for each of the actions proposed.

### **Measuring Outcomes: A medium to long term strategy**

Often, outputs use counting rules and are easy to measure. Outcomes, the more qualitative measures are much more difficult, yet if done properly these can be inferred from the outputs. Thought can be put into the inclusion of both sets of measures in implementation and can be included in the planning. For example, the number of women entering the

workforce can be seen as an output measure in addressing the feminization of poverty, especially if a dollar amount can be linked to the work. An increase in the number of women entering the workforce could therefore be said to be positive in the fulfilment of the broad aims of gender equality development and peace. However, often women are exploited once they enter the work force, and if they still carry the full burden of home duties, then it is most likely that her overall status will not improve, and she is unlikely to achieve the goals of other sections of the BPA and outcome document, such as improved health, access to education and training and access to power and decision making. This simple example can be replicated with most of the commitments required by the BPA and the outcome document. It illustrates that if we are serious about commitment to improving the status of women, then we need to develop a framework, which is based on integrated strategies and linked actions and programmes.

In the case above, countries would have to make a commitment to the enforcement of workplace conditions as set out in ILO Conventions. They would need to instigate programmes to encourage men to take an active role in household responsibilities and child rearing, Childcare issues will need to be addressed in the most locally appropriate manner, lifetime education and health service would be available and accessible to women in the workforce. Data collection must similarly be integrated, in order to reflect the big picture and not merely isolated parts and this must be linked to a national plan. The transformation of institutional norms and values of business corporations, public agencies and NGOs to reflect the patterns of women's as well as men's lives is essential to creation of an enabling environment for women's empowerment (PWW, 2000). Such an integrated framework is essential if our long term goals of gender equality, development and peace are to be fully realized.

### **Regional Indicators: A Latin American Regional Methodology**

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has produced a set of regional gender-sensitive indicators for each of the 12 critical areas of concern. Their report links the indicators directly to the strategic objectives in each of the critical areas in the BPA, relates these to their region and identifies the instruments required to collect the data. This methodology can be considered as one example of best practice, which could be modified to address the specific needs of the Asian and Pacific Region. The ECLAC framework is flexible and allows countries to focus on particular issues of concern or unique priorities, for example the needs of its migrant workers, rural or indigenous populations.

### **An Asian and Pacific Regional Methodology**

It is recommended that any methodology adopted to measure progress in addressing the concerns of women in each country in the Asian and Pacific Region synthesise the relevant actions in each of the critical areas. The example below demonstrates how such an approach might be developed using indicators and benchmarks to measure each country's progress in addressing women's economic advancement. A regional analysis could then be completed through combining the relevant data from each country. This methodology is based on "Gender Indicators for follow-up and evaluation of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001, and the Beijing Platform for Action", 1999 ([www.eclac.cl](http://www.eclac.cl)).

## A PROPOSED FORMAT FOR MEASURING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

*Regional priority: Addressing the negative effects of globalization, World Trade Organization (WTO) policy, and the burden of debt on many women in the region, which has led to the increasing feminisation of poverty, in particular with rural, indigenous and migrant women.*

Cross cuts Women and Poverty, Education and Training of women and Women and the Economy. (The following is an example not a fully developed strategy).

<b>A: Women &amp; Poverty Outcome Document Action</b>	<b>Possible Benchmarks</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Possible Sources</b>
" Implement comprehensive gender sensitive poverty eradication strategies, including: undertaking socio-economic policies that promote sustainable development; providing skills training and education for women and girls, and ensuring their access to and control over resources, financial instruments and services, land, housing and income, in particular rural and older women (paragraphs 73d, 74a, 94e, 95d, 98g & 101d, e & g)	Increase women's access to and/or ownership of land by 5% by 2010 Increase women's ownership of business by 5% by 2010 Increase women's access to social housing by 10% by 2005	Gender gap in ownership of agricultural land Business ownership by sex Equality of access to social housing programmes	Agricultural censuses. Employment surveys. Reports from ministries of housing or the like that administer, regulate or oversee social housing
<b>B: EDUCATION &amp; TRAINING Outcome Document Action</b>	<b>Possible Benchmarks</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Possible Sources</b>
"Accelerate action and strengthen political commitment to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure free compulsory and universal primary education for both girls and boys by 2015" (paragraph 67c)	Increase girls attendance at secondary school by 15% by 2005	School attendance rate by sex and age group Gender differences in school attendance	Population censuses, household surveys and Department of Education data

<b>F: WOMEN &amp; THE ECONOMY Outcome Document Action</b>	<b>Possible Benchmarks</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Possible Sources</b>
<p>“Take action to increase women’s participation and to bring about a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors and occupations in the labour market, among others by encouraging the creation or expansion of institutional networks to support the career development of women” (paragraph 82f)</p> <p>Adopt measures to ensure that the work of rural women is recognised and valued, in order to ensure their economic security, their access to and control over resources and credit schemes, services and benefits, and their empowerment (paragraph 94e)</p>	<p>Reduce the gender gap in occupations dominated by men by 15% by 2010.</p> <p>Increase rural women’s access to credit by 20% by 2010</p>	<p>State budget allocations intended to benefit women in each sector</p> <p>Legal measures</p> <p>Gender wage differences</p> <p>Access to occupations dominated by the opposite sex</p> <p>Access to credit</p>	<p>National budget and household surveys. Ministries or offices in charge of women's affairs, ministries of finance, labour and employment.</p> <p>Population censuses or household surveys.</p> <p>Lending institutions, specific surveys.</p>

This model would be linked to the regional “clearing house” and strategies developed for each commitment in the outcome document.

### **Conclusion**

In order to effect a rights based regional framework such as the one proposed, a number of steps will need to be taken. These include:

- The establishment of an agreed framework for National Plans of Action which while respecting national priorities and autonomy, includes a common element for regional measurement and evaluation of implementation.
- The establishment of a Department for Women to establish such a body in countries which do not already have one.
- The establishment of a regional central clearing house of models of best practice of strategies for implementation and measurement.
- The development and adoption of a “process model” of implementation which incorporates short, medium and long term strategies.
- The development and adoption of a common set of indicators, benchmarks and measuring tools, which are flexible in order to address the diversity of the region and the need for national autonomy, but which can also be used to measure the effectiveness of the regional framework.

- The development of mechanisms to further coordinate and strengthen the relationship between governments, the non-governmental sector, the corporate sector, donor countries and other funding bodies, in particular with regard to the funding of regional priorities.

**The women of the region deserve no less.**

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