



## GENDER IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

At the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, held in April 2000, Governments were made aware of the findings revealed by the 2000 Education For All (EFA) Assessment. The indications were that access to primary education had been improving and showed progress in many cases. However, hardly any success was indicated in narrowing the gender gap in the system. This resulted in the decision made by the Forum to focus attention on closing the gender gap while committing themselves to achieving gender equality by 2015.

Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General speaking at the opening of this conference expressed his support through the UN towards girls' education. Among the goals enumerated in Dakar were the following;

- ❖ Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls ..... have access to, and complete free and compulsory education of good quality.
- ❖ Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women.
- ❖ Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to, and achievement, in basic education.

Narrowing down gender inequality with a view to eliminating it completely from the school system would be a challenging task. The education system will need reforms that will give equal opportunities to both boys and girls so that they will leave school equipped with knowledge and skills able to fit into their chosen field without gender bias against themselves or society. This would call for a gender sensitive and gender responsive national education development EFA plan. The Dakar goal expects gender disparities to be eliminated by 2005 and gender responsive EFA plans to be formulated by 2015.

In Sri Lanka the EFA policy has been adopted by the Ministry of Education while actively integrating a gender perspective into the system. A workshop was conducted in September 2002 to explore several aspects of gender in basic education. It brought together representatives from the Ministries of Education and Women's Affairs, NGOs, UNICEF and others concerned. They had the opportunity to express their views, suggestions and experiences on integrating gender into the Education For All(EFA) plan. The workshop produced an Action Plan which envisages preparatory work in gender networking, leading to the creation of a National Resource Group in Gender and Education.

Given the Sri Lankan background strategies appropriate to the country should be adopted which in the first place would mean mainstreaming gender concerns into the national education system.

Gender experts need to be involved to conduct gender awareness and skills training for staff, from policy makers and management onwards till the school level is reached. Along with gender mains treaming gender analysis is required in order to recognise the real needs of women, men, girls and boys. Where sharp gender disparities are visible gender specific interventions will be essential, and suitable strategies adopted.

Basically everybody needs to be convinced that gender sensitive education is beneficial to every individual learner and to society as a whole.

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## MODERNITY VERSUS TRADITION

There are endless debates about modernity and tradition trying to make one better than the other. The identity crisis that has overtaken us all in the 20th / 21 st century has an inbuilt schema for upholding and cherishing traditions as one's own and therefore superior, which had to be upheld against alien intrusions such as from the West. The gender implications in these arguments are also many. Women seen as the custodians of tradition are posited as the symbol of national, ethnic, and religious traditions, embodying questions of identity in areas such as behaviour and dress code. Implicit in this argument for maintaining traditions is the view that whatever we call values are to be found only in traditions. Saree clad Hindu women and burqua draped Muslim women, Kandyan Saree clad Buddhist women are supposed to speak out a value system. The same symbolic assertions are not made from men. There are also major contradictions both in modernity and being traditional. One can be modern in some ways, in dress, in behaviour, in speaking the English language, but can be very traditional in outlook. One can be very modern in outlook but can be traditionally dressed and behave also traditionally in some ways.

### THE PRACTICE OF FEMINISM

In the course of an inhouse seminar, the Executive Director of WERC made several interesting remarks.

While there have been many attempts to define feminism(s) and to delve into the various theories of feminism ranging from Socialist Marxist, Liberal, Radical and Eco feminism, her vision of a feminist was found to be interesting and useful. In the contemporary era of national identities, and struggles and battles fought on languages and religion, her views of a practising feminist are of immense value. She asked rhetorically - who is a feminist? A feminist believes in internationalism and human values.

A feminist reaches out to women of all colour, all ethnic belongings~ of all religions and of all classes. She is in solidarity with women all over the world across borders and boundaries. She empathises and sympathises with all women who are oppressed and exploited. She cannot be a racist or a chauvinist. She works ceaselessly for social transformation in which there is democracy and pluralism. The democracy she envisages is on a principle of non- hierarchy where structures of power are equalised and shared.

A feminist shuns arrogance and violence and seeks out to practice non-violence in action and language. She also believes in politicising the Personal.

Modernity has its levels, facets and degrees. A woman dressed in Kandyan saree and wearing a sleeveless blouse. Is she being traditional or being modern? If one wearing a pair of slippers or being bare foot is traditional is one who wears a pair of shoes modern?

Caste based hierarchical order, gender based patriarchal order, superstitions, religious dogmatism are also, unfortunately part of the traditions -Modernity on the other hand has given us democracy, political and civil rights technologies, western medical expertise.

It has dispelled superstitions, it questions hierarchy of caste and gender along with its patriarchal relations. Modernity has challenged parochialism, autocracies and undemocratic family norms. Modernity cannot be arrested, though there will be pockets of people who will be unsuccessfully resisting it always imagining Utopian "good old days".

S.T.

### FEMINIST CONCERNS: BUT WHY WITHIN THE RHETORIC OF HEGEMONIC POWER

A delegation of the left wing European Women's Parliamentarians spent several days in Afghanistan. "Afghan women's faces should be no longer hidden," Lissy Groner told a news briefing in Kabul at the end of the visit 'If you have real freedom in Afghan society there is no place for the forced veil.' !

They also called for aid cuts unless the government took women's rights more seriously. Genevieve Fraisse said European Union should reduce aid to an impoverished country struggling to recover from decades of conflict. Anna Karamanou head of the five member delegation said, "Cut down funds, that is what we are going to do because we have noticed that women's rights are not a priority for the Government of this country" (Daily News 16/11/02).

We certainly appreciate their concern for women and their choice of dress. But the language spoken by the European women parliamentarians smacks of power and authority. The aid they give is bargained for the removal of the burqua as a condition, as a demand.

This is not feminist language, or feminist practice!

S.T.

## Female Journalism principles for media Democracy

The recent abolition of criminal defamation law raising momentum of the government effort for further media reforms, a more liberal local media is seen to be on the emerge.

Perceptions of freedom of expression of women mobilising for the betterment of women scan beyond the commonly-comprehend mass perceptions of the concept. It would be worth noting how the women's Institute for freedom of the Press (WIFP), USA Articulates the Journalistic Principles which guide its mass information decisions.

An article from the Institute penned by Dr. Donna Allen and Dana Densmore describes a new philosophy of communication which is gentle, peaceful, respectful of all people and politically equal. "Media is the source of power and key to women's progress.. which is having means to communication options." It says. The more options one has in political, social, economic and personal areas of life – without social and economic penalties – the more will women use, for more dextrous use of their abilities for greater progress.

The article defines today's global mass media as a means of governing, rather than a means of communication for information of the nations. Financed by conglomerates, multinational corporations and governments, the "free press" are distributors of a commodity, namely – information – which is harvested, collected and manufactured for distribution."

Mass media is criticised as a national communication system for:

- a. not conveying adequate information of women or conveying male-perceived "news" on women, with male characteristics of emphasis on violence, conflict and sex.
- b. Reporting in third person, leading to inaccuracies, distortions and violation of privacy.
- c. Not presenting information of the majority individuals thereby depriving public of information it needs for self government and national policy-making.
- d. Being a causal factor in history by constraining or over-leashing information on which people take decisions for action.

WIFP's more peaceful communication philosophy is better spelt out in Dr. Allen's "Women's News" article in the quill magazine of May 1991, where she defines eight characteristics of women's media as against the conventional. Male-owned, mass media. The first three relate to journalistic practice and the rest, to structure.

1. Women's journalism reports news in the first person, allowing the newsmakers to speak for themselves.

2. Women-owned media define "News" differently to men who tend to identify "news" as conflict and violence, as these editorial policies indicate: we seek to generate harmony and interconnection by taking care that our words and images nurture and affirm our wholeness.. It is, therefore, our policy .. to refuse to print words which are racist, classist, anti-semitic, ageist, culturally elitist, or which in any other way further divisions among people.." (women of power). "Our aim is to make every interview informational rather than adversarial." (Women's Radio at WMFO). "The challenge to all of us, but most particularly those in film and television, is to transform the violent macho role models – creating media heroes and heroines who are intelligent instead of belligerent, cooperative rather than combative, nurturant rather than destructive." (Mary Batten in women in Film newsmagazine).
3. Male-owned media claim a journalistic goal of "objectivity". The goal of women's media is the "effective use of media as an instrument of change." (Echo on Sauti Ya Siti.) "More than a simple conveyor belt of information. It has also served as an agent for change." (Women of Europe.)
4. A non-hierarchical structure, "We all share in reading what goes into the paper and we all share in the menial labour." (Second Coming).
5. Women's media replaces the competitiveness of media's "scoops" and financial rivalry, with co-operation.
6. A common carrier concept. "... an open forum for women – a space where women could speak freely about their concerns as women.. on any subject so as to encourage the widest possible diversity in submissions." (Sojourner).
7. Analysis of mass media as hostile to women. "Men are the gate-keepers of power... of the dominant ideology.... The making and shaping of cultures.... The systems of thought, belief, values, attitudes and symbols and images by which these are expressed.. are the works of men... and serve to legitimate male domination." (Mediterranean Women, KEGME Review).
8. The content, "Women's newspapers report all the news the male-press finds unfit to print. It frames women's issues in a different way than the straight press, it reports what is going on in the women's movement..." Susan Cavin in Womanews, NY) "Women's Movement is not dead. It's just not setting enough coverage.

Principles which are well-worth a candid analysis for inculcating more value to our own ethical structures.

*Special Writer*

## AMERICAN FEMINISTS ARE AGAINST WAR IN IRAQ

Gloria Steinem, Robin Morgan, bell hooks, Alice Walker, Eve Ensler, Angela Davis and other prominent feminist leaders and authors in America have all pledged their support for the campaign opposing the Bush Administration's plan to wage war against Iraq.

The pledge, "Not In Our Name," is now being circulated in the United States. It not only opposes the war against Iraq but the broader war against terrorism launched by the US after the September 11 attacks.

Some American senators also criticised the Bush administration's policy saying diplomatic means have not been exhausted.

Concerns have been raised that attacking Iraq would shift focus away from violence in the Middle East, the elimination of the Al Qaeda network and the rebuilding of war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Feminists argue that not enough is being done to rebuild Afghanistan, citing promises that have remained unfulfilled: more peacekeeping troops beyond the capital of Kabul and more humanitarian aid.

They cite that the women in Afghanistan are the hardest hit by continuing violence, especially in areas where warlords continue to dominate the civilian population through intimidation and fear. US President George Bush should help Afghanistan before looking for "another problem to solve," they stress.

Source: "Criticism Mounts Against Bush on War in Iraq"

## WOMEN'S WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR RIGHTS, LITERATURE, AND DEVELOPMENT (WOMEN'S WORLD)

Women's WORLD undertakes work in the following areas: Researches and educates the public about the scope and prevalence of gender-based censorship, and work to have the redefined as a human rights abuse that robs the right to free expression of more than half the world's population; Defends writers who are attacked because of their views on gender or because they are women who dare to write; Mounts international press campaigns about particular cases and extreme abuses; Encourages the development of women's presses and journals, the first line of defense against gender-based censorship, and strive to link them internationally, so they can share views and resources and create a social space for women's independent political thought. Address: Women's WORLD, 08 W.30th St. #9012 New York, NY 10001, USA

Acknowledging "WE! The Newsletter of ISIS International Manila, an NGO servicing women's information and communication needs.

## INCLUDE WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING, UN URGED

The UN Security Council is pushing for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the UN's international peacekeeping operations.

The proposal, adopted as resolution number 1325 by the UN Security Council, seeks to establish a gender unit within its Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), which is involved in peace negotiations, post conflict reconstruction and peace building throughout the world. The gender unit will ensure that gender issues will be factored into all of the DPKO's field manuals, training programmes and field operations.

The Gender Unit will also report regularly to the Secretary General on the status of gender mainstreaming in the DPKO's operations. A consultant has already been hired by the DPKO to develop guidelines for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping activities. The consultant will be based at the DPKO headquarters and forms the core of the Gender Unit, focusing on resource development, capacity building and evaluation. Partners in the field will be sought for each mission, based on the successes gained from reconstruction efforts in Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and East Timor, where women's groups and gender advisors helped facilitate peacekeeping efforts. Source: "Background and Position Paper on Gender Unit at DPKO NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security", Women's International League for Peace and Reform, July 2002.

## ABORTION IS NOW LEGAL IN NEPAL

The King of Nepal recently signed the 11th Amendment Bill legalising abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and up to 18 weeks in cases involving rape, incest and foetal impairment. It also allows abortion when a woman's health needs to be protected.

Before the law was enacted, women who had abortions were sent to prison. The law is also significant considering that Nepal has the fourth highest maternal death rate in the world: 539 out of 100,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related complications. A United Nations report says that 50 per cent of these women die from illegal or back street abortions.

The bill also makes sexual abuse against children a crime and allows women to inherit property from their parents.

This achievement in Nepalese women's rights is the product of the advocacy of activists in the country. According to the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, women's organisations in Nepal have worked hard to raise public awareness about women's roles in their society.



## Women's Woes

### Pakistan June 2002

30 year old Mukhtar Mai from the village of Thiruwali was gang raped by the order of a tribal council as punishment for the family. The crime was that her younger brother Abdul Shakoor had been accused of an illicit love affair with a woman from a higher class tribe. The family complained to the local police. Human Rights groups and government officials watched the case closely, while national and international outrage developed over the incident. The Sri Lanka NGO Forum, shocked and concerned over the incident wrote to the President of Pakistan calling on the government to investigate and bring the perpetrators to book.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> the six rapists were sentenced to death by a special court in Pakistan.

### Nigeria – August 2002

In Northern Nigeria 30 year old Amina Lawal was sentenced to death by stoning by an Islamic Court for bearing a child out of wedlock. This shocking news brought a protest from the beauty queens who were due to travel to Nigeria for the Miss World contest due to be held in November. Several contestants threatened to boycott the event.

Human rights groups have condemned the ruling as inhuman.

### India December 2002

There was national outrage when a street gang raped a Medical student in New Delhi less than a kilo metre from Police Headquarters. The gang rape of this 24 year old student in broad daylight highlighted sexual crimes rampant across India. According to women's groups a woman is raped every hour in India, those of the lower castes or of tribal origin being the main victims.

India rarely exercises its legal option of the death penalty while existing laws mandate a life sentence for sex crimes.

## Women!

Hundreds of women holding flaming torches staged a protest against the proposal to lift the 11 year old ban on liquor in the state of Manipur in India, notorious for drug addicts and drug trafficking. The official decision was justified by the revenue it would bring to the states coffers.

Prohibition has been imposed at various times in various states in India  
**Liquor remains banned in Gujarat.**

The Meera Phaibi, an influential women's group was formed in 1975 to check spread of alcoholism. Now several youth groups and Christian groups across the state have joined into protest against the government's proposal. Mass anti liquor protests have been organised and the president of the group Hijam Chanu Ima Kombi (80) says "we shall shed blood but we shall not allow the Manipur government to implement it's decision."

### General Mohammadzai

Afghan General Khabool Mohammadzai is a woman, wears an impressive number of medals and has 600 parachute jumps to her credit. Among the women in Afghanistan, mostly veiled and enveloped in their

burqas, as ordered by the Taleban regime, Mohammadzai in her uniform must be a striking sight.

She says, "according to our tradition and culture women normally do not go out of the house. So once a woman does go out,, she should do something extraordinary to keep all the men quiet, that's what I am doing."

Having joined the Air Force when she was 16 when they had lots of freedom, according to her, she went on to Kabul's military University, and became one of the 17 parachutists in the Afghan Air Force. Then in the days of the Taleban they were made prisoners in their own homes and she was told she could work no longer. She look to making handicrafts for a living. But Mohammadzai was a popular person in Afghanistan that with the fall of the Taleban the country's new leaders called her to return to duty. She jumped at the opportunity. She was promoted to General by the President earlier this year and is now the Deputy Director in the Ministry of Defence in Afghanistan.

She is also the Sports Director for the Afghan Air force, a parachuting instructor, runs her own boxing club and role model to thousands of Afghan women. She believes she can make a difference as Afghanistan struggles to reverse the oppression ingrained by the Taleban.

### Gender Equality

Sweden it is reported has the highest proportion of women members of Parliament in the world. The Swedish Parliament, Riksdag, boasts of 45% of female MPs. Although the reasons adduced go back to the early development of the welfare state and greater opportunities for women's employment, the more evident is the system of proportional representation and women's organizations which are powerful and assertive.

Swedish women politicians state that there are no problems for women in politics. The 'Equal opportunities Act' ensures equality in working life. thus aiming at improving women's working life conditions. The Act also stipulates the appointment of an Equal Opportunities Ombudsman and an Equal Opportunities Commission. The various sections of the Act see to such issues as facilitating the combination of parenthood and employment differences in terms of employment of men and women. Prevention of sexual harassment and equal opportunities to apply for vacancies. It is only in the private business sector that women representation is less-only 5%.

From

## Secretary General's Statement to Security Council on Women, Peace and Security

Two years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325, a landmark step in raising awareness of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and of the vital role of women in conflict resolution and peace-building.

Resolution 1325 has also galvanized the United Nations system into looking more critically at our own work, and how we deal with general perspective not only in peacemaking, peace-building and peacekeeping, but also in humanitarian, disarmament and reconstruction activities. And more importantly, women at the grassroots level around the world have found the resolution an effective tool in bringing greater attention to their needs and priorities, and in supporting their efforts to contribute to peace processes.

My report on women, peace and security called for in resolution 1325, is now before you. It is based on the larger study distributed to you earlier this week. I hope you will read it closely and sustain the momentum that has been generated. Toward that end, I would like to draw your attention to a few issues.

The report stresses that while many of the experiences of women and girls in armed conflict are similar to those of men and boys, there are important differences. Existing inequalities between women and men, and patterns of discrimination against women and girls, tend to be exacerbated in armed conflict. Women and girls become particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Women and children make up the majority of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons. Even in refugee camps, which are meant to be safe havens, the vulnerability of women and girls may continue, especially if there is a proliferation of small arms. And some women may be forced to follow camps of armed forces, providing domestic services and/or being used as sexual slaves.

But if women suffer the impact of conflict disproportionately, they are also the key to the solution of conflict.

Women's groups and networks at grassroots level have provided many examples of the imaginative strategies and flexible approaches required for effective conflict prevention. They have worked tirelessly and courageously in preserving social order in the midst of chaos, and promoting reconciliation through informal processes that receive very little support. However, with few exceptions, women are not present at the formal negotiating tables and at formal peace negotiations. The report calls for greater representation of women in formal peace negotiations, and for the incorporation of gender perspectives in conflict-prevention activities, and in mandates for peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations, including those set in motion by this Council. It also stresses the need to increase the appointment of women at the highest levels of decision-making, including as Special Representative, Deputy Special Representative and Special Envoy.

The report also points out serious gaps in the legal protections available to women.

The report recommends the strongest possible response to the sexual exploitation of women and girls, including prostitution and trafficking, which can occur in the context of peacekeeping, humanitarian activities and other international interventions.

Finally, the report emphasizes the need for extensive capacity building. If women are to play their full part in negotiating peace accords, mediating disputes, creating new governments, rebuilding judicial and civil infrastructures, and the many other activities that support peace, the world needs to make an investment in building up their skills for doing so. This will require both political will and a much larger pool of funding.

The world can no longer afford to neglect the abuses to which women and girls are subjected in armed conflict and its aftermath, or to ignore the contributions that women make to the search for peace. It is time they are given the voice in formal peacebuilding and peace-making processes that they deserve. Sustainable peace and security will not be achieved without their full and equal participation. Just as your work can promote gender equality, so can gender equality make your work more likely to succeed.

*(Press Release 28.10.02)*

### Governance, Women, Peace and Security

Progress on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

October 31st 2001 marks the Anniversary of the Security Council's first debate and landmark resolution on women, peace and security. Though resolutions do not usually have anniversaries, Resolution 1325 is different - it is the first to have a powerful, global constituency, and the first to be supported by a vibrant women's movement. It is also the first Resolution to give political legitimacy to women's struggle for a seat at the negotiating table - the first to provide a political framework within which women's protection and their role in peace-building can be addressed. Although it was the first time that the Council had ever issued a statement on the subject, Resolution 1325 acknowledges what has been glaringly obvious for so long: that war affects women differently than men, their protection is neglected, and their contributions to peace building marginalized.

For more than ten years, UNIFEM, in cooperation with Governments, the UN system and regional, intergovernmental and non government organizations, has provided assistance and protection to women in conflict and supported their role in peace-building.

## Violence Against Women

Since the Cairo Conference in 1994 and the Beijing Conference in 1995, countries have begun to attempt to address concerns on violence against women (VAW) in their legislation. One example of this is that more countries now have separate laws for specific acts of violence such as domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment. Previously, they were usually addressed through other legislation such as the Penal Code, which may have laws on murder, voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt, assault, criminal force, cruelty and rape.

The passing of separate laws for specific criminal acts against women is commendable, as although the Penal Code may be used to address some offences such as assault and murder, very often it does not take into account the crimes that occur in the domestic sphere. Separate laws are also more effective as they facilitate the provision of better services that directly cater to the needs of abused women as it is legislation that provides the conceptual framework and the overall policy framework which guide the provision of services. A separate law would make seeking protection or redress less difficult.

However, despite such positive developments, there is still a huge imbalance in the readiness to address VAW as a state responsibility.

Such a situation could be attributed to lack of awareness of major issues related to VAW, including its various causes, forms and consequences that hinder them from formulating appropriate, clear-cut and definitive laws.

While policy-makers need to draft more responsive and appropriate laws, one must bear in mind that the existence of separate laws is no guarantee that women would be able to press charges and seek justice against their abusers if laws are not duly enforced. Laws passed after much debate and delay may lie by the wayside if those charged with implementing them do not do so due to reasons of their own or others'. This is where the government has to take all the necessary steps to ensure that the laws are implemented every step of the way. This would require the cooperation and commitment of the entire health, legal, police and social personal as well as other authorities whom VAW survivors encounters in seeking the protection and care that they need. NGOS have an important role to play in this, as it is crucial that they continually advocate for better enforcement of the law.

## DEFINITIONS

### Domestic Violence

Includes physical, sexual or psychological aggression or coercion and is a pattern of behaviour employed by one person in a relationship to control the other. The abuse is typically directed at women and girls and can create health, social and economic costs for the individual, the family and society. The violence may include battering, burning, emotional blackmail, mockery or ridicule, threats of abandonment, confinement to the home and the withholding of money or other family support. A woman living in an abusive relationship may be forced to become pregnant or have an abortion against her will, or her partner may knowingly expose her to a sexually-transmitted infection.

### Marital Rape

Marital rape can be defined as any unwanted intercourse or penetration (vaginal, anal, or oral) obtained by force, threat of force, or when the wife is unable to consent.

### Violence Against Women

Any act of Gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- a. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation, and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- b. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- c. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

## OUR ACTIVITIES

**We have been busy!! Highlights among the many programmes and projects.....!!!**

### Workshop for Media Personnel

#### *Funded by Cordaid*

A two- day workshop for personnel from the print and electronic media was conducted in August 2002, at the WERC Auditorium

The themes were

- § Racism and Ethnocentrism in Media Representation: Messages and Images
- § Gender Stereotyping: Messages and Images

The problems of racism and racial/ethnic violence which Sri Lanka has witnessed for the past two decades can be also traced to biases perpetrated by the media both by the editorials and articles. There is an increasing trend for passively accepting media representation in Sri Lankan society, without in-depth analysis of the reality. There is also a much felt need to focus on negative media portrayals of gender, more particularly the media's role in reproducing and reinforcing patterns of discrimination against women in society.

The objective was to make the participants aware of these concerns, so that in the long run the negative images of women portrayed in the media would decrease.

### Mangai (Girl) Tamil

Mangai is a programme in Tamil telecast over the non-state T.V channel every week for half an hour, specially designed to discuss women's issues. However this programme has many short falls and our organisation has consistently brought to their notice that an improvement in the quality of the programme is needed. The Programme Co-ordinator invited the WERC staff to make interventions.

It was an interesting turning point because the staff member concerned discussed in detail the activities and programme of WERC such as publications, research, and gender sensitisation programmes and emphasised the multi ethnic character of both the staff at WERC and the recipients of WERC activities. She also mentioned the special need to raise the consciousness of men and women in the society and to what extent the publications research and the library of WERC has reached out the community at large. The importance of transforming the media images of women was taken up as important issue of discussion. It was emphasised that media managers should be given training on how to portray men and women in more gender sensitive ways.

### Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, which is a research organisation, devoted to research and promotion of knowledge on 'Man and Nature of Asia', celebrated its Golden Jubilee in October with a Golden Jubilee lecture. The celebration was sponsored by Mustafizur Rahman Khan and Saleha Khanam Trust Fund.

The Executive Director Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran was invited to deliver this lecture. She presented a paper titled 'Women's Literacy Lament as an Agency for Social Communication'.

### Leadership Training for Female Headed Households

A three-day leadership-training workshop was organized for female-headed households of Batticaloa and Akkaraipattu, funded by Konrad Adenaur Foundation. These are two areas where there are many female-headed households – women who lost their spouses in the North and the East due to the Civil war. The participants were from the poorest of the poor.

Female- headed households have been on the rise in Sri Lanka during day last twenty years. While the national average of the female- headed households has passed the 20 per cent mark, the formal studies made by WERC have revealed that this average in the proposed project area has reached an alarming high of 35 per cent.

The three major objectives for this preliminary workshop, held from the 30<sup>th</sup> of November to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2002, were

- \* To identify problems faced by the women of the female headed households and find solutions.
- \* To build up confidence and to develop leadership
- \* To identify ways and means to make them economically independent.

### Felicitation

Eva Ranaweera, poet, creative writer and activist in women's affairs, was felicitated in October, at an evening gathering presided over by Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran at the WERC auditorium. Eva Ranaweera is also the editor of Women's Voice, a journal supporting women's causes. She was awarded the State Literary Prize in 1994 and 1997 'With Maya' was a prize winning collection of poems and Blissfully was short listed for the Gratien Prize 2001.

A large gathering was present to extend their congratulations and good wishes to her.



## International Training Course on Women's Information Processing

The National Women's Education Centre in Japan provided a wonderful opportunity to women in Asia to enhance their knowledge on Information Technology at a ten-day residential workshop held at Saitama, Japan and funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. Twenty eight female participants from twenty countries of Asia and the Pacific Region participated. Latest advanced Technologies of Information and Communication were taught.

After the Training Course there was an International Forum on Women's Information 2002. All the participants and foreign experts participated. Discussions centred on the status of women's information in Japan and overseas, and related issues from Government and civil society perspectives. The forum aimed at analysing these issues from an international view point and promoting the formation of IT network among the participants. There were about 150 male and female participants with an interest in women's information. Dr. Ruth Ojiambo from International Women's Resource Centre, Isis, Women's International Cross- Cultural Exchange based in Kampala, Uganda delivered the Key Note address.

Oneworld in Partnership with Cenwor organised a 4 day workshop on the strategic use of Information Communication Technology for development. from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2002 in Colombo. Oneworld is conducting training programmes on Web site development for NGOs.

Our publications officer Ms. Sunandaseeli participated in both these training courses. She has learnt many aspects of modern technology pertaining to computer knowledge and is now equipped to create a website for the organization.

### Workshop on Advocacy

Oxfam organised a three-day residential workshop on 'Advocacy and Lobbying' at Uswetakeiyawa in Wattala from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2002 to the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2002. Our programme officer for lobbying and advocacy activities attended the workshop. Ms. Mona from Oxfam G.B (Oxford) and Ms. Catherine from Oxfam Regional Media and Advocacy Coordinator for the Middle East and East Europe. conducted the workshop.

The three-day workshop was about the promotion of a specific message or a course of action in order to influence or contribute to the development and implementation of public policies. Advocacy is a means to an end, or another way to address the problems that we aim to solve through other programming strategies.

The participants were trained to perform activities, such as direct lobbying, media work and decision-making, to promote

a specific message or a course of action in order to influence or contribute to the development and implementation of public policies, on three selected topics Marginalisation, Internally Displaced People and Domestic Violence.

## A Handbook on CEDAW - A WERC Project

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and entered into force in 1981 is described as the "International Bill of Rights for Women". Article 1 of CEDAW defines discrimination against women as:

"...any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

Even though Sri Lanka ratified the Convention in 1981, the material that is already available on CEDAW is very academic and has therefore failed to have an impact on women.

We feel that enlightening the public would be the first step towards incorporating it into the domestic legislation.

The aim of the project was to simplify selected Articles to produce a reader friendly handbook to be distributed to secondary schools, young adults especially university students, NGOs, and others.

## Farewell

At the end of the year we bade farewell to Ms. Sivajini Sinnathurai Accounts Assistant and Mr. T. Markandu Administrative Officer who during their short period of service, gave of their best to WERC. Our very best wishes go out to them.

Two long standing staff members also left us each having made a noteworthy contribution to WERC.

R. Baskaran Assistant Accountant looked after our finances scrupulously, for over ten years, while Tharanga de Silva Project Officer was attached to WERC for almost ten years. A versatile officer she was appreciated for her dedication and commitment to WERC.

We wish them both success in their new environments.

We also record our appreciation of the loyal service rendered by Mr. Faiz Office Aide and wish him good health.

## Welcome to WERC

Ms. Prabha Liyangage Accounts Officer, Ms. Helene Alwis Administrative Officer Ms. Sulakshana de Mel, Project Coordinator.



Workshop for Media Personnel  
(Sinhala and Tamil) August 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 2002.



Workshop on Gender for Undergraduates



Training of Trainers on Gender Responsive  
Governance Bangkok, September 2002



Participants of Leadership training workshop  
for female headed households of  
Batticaloa and Aldearapattu.



Felicitation to Eva Ranaweera - October 2002



Farewell get to gether - WERC Staff 2002





## NEW ARRIVALS TO THE LIBRARY

### QUALITATIVE RESEARCHING WITH TEXT, IMAGE AND SOUND, A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

ed. by Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2000 384pp

This book provides researchers with the skills and knowledge and accessible introduction to a broad range of research methods with the objective of clarifying procedures, good practice and public accountability. This text shows students which methods are most suitable for particular research problems.

### GENDER, RELIGION AND "HEATHEN LANDS",

American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s), by Maina Chawla Singh  
New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 2000 393pp

This volume is a deeply historical, elegantly written and accessible text that embodies the best kind of comparative feminist scholarship. Singh draws on hitherto unexamined religious studies. This book maps the archival documents, works in women's history and trajectories of power and its use and abuse among women (and men) – we have much to learn from this history.

### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DOWRY

by Ranjane Sheel.  
New Delhi, Publishers, Manohar 1999 299pp

Dowry is one of the most serious problems touching women's lives in modern India. Taking dowry as a crucial index for women's status, the author locates it within a broad historical framework and a feminist perspective viewing it not as a state custom but as a product of changing political, economic, and social processes to comprehend its present shape as well as various dimensions women and law in society.

IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE, ed. by Swapra Mukhopadhyay  
New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1999 137pp

This collection of paper, which was originally presented in a national seminar on 'women and law', opens up new dimensions in the legal discourse on gender such as in the area of women; health and institutionalization of women.

### BUILDING WOMEN'S CAPACITIES; INTERVENTION IN GENDER TRANSFORMATION

ed. by Ranjani K. Murthy. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001 383pp

A significant feature of this collection is that it views women's empowerment not as an isolated phenomenon but as part of a wider process of social change. This book will be especially valuable for teachers and students in the fields of gender studies, sociology and development studies.

### GENDERED SUBJECTS

ed. by Selvy Thiruchandran. Colombo, WERC 2002, 512pp

The six Researchers who have contributed to this book have identified topics which are in one way or the other, significant representations of cultural and political formation of both the colonial and post colonial South Asia; Sonia Amin's paper describes the recreation of the Victorian Model of a home in India in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. C.S. Lakshmi in her paper combines both the modern and the ancient culture dictums specially and specifically designed for women in the homeland as opposed to recreating a Victorian model in the colony. Reservations of seats in parliament is a common interest topic to women, and here Mary John traces the history of women in politics from 1920 to the present demand of the politics of presence. Communalism, ethnicity, chauvinism, religious fundamentals are issues taken up by Uma Chakravarthi. Selvy Thiruchandran deals with an interesting topic of social communication which has simultaneously spoken of some forms of protests and resistance through the voices of the lamenting women in Sri Lanka. Ann Kaplan who teaches film

studies, in her paper, extends the discussions about the imperial gaze in film, by now well known relations in colonialism and post colonialism and about diaspora and cinema.

COMPANION ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ANTHROPOLOGY, ed, by Tim Ingold. London, Routledge 1994, 1127pp

This encyclopedia provides a comprehensive survey of contemporary thinking in biological, social and cultural anthropology. Chapters are divided into three parts, Humanity, Culture and Social life. This provides students and teachers with essential information for study and research.

## WERC PUBLICATIONS

### *Training Modules on Gender Sensitisation*

1. Violence Against Women – English, Tamil and Sinhala
2. Women in Conflict Situations – English and Sinhala
3. Women and Education – English
4. Women and Law – English and Tamil
5. Politics Decision Making and Governance – English, Sinhala and Tamil
6. Cultural Constraint and Media – Sinhala and Tamil

### *Books*

Vivi Translation Sinhala  
Sri Lanka Women's writing Series:

Writing an Inheritance: Women's Writing in Sri Lanka 1860 – 1948  
Volume 1

Ed: Neloufer de Mel and Minoli Samarakkody – English

Celebrating Sri Lankan women's English Writing  
Volume 2

By Yasmine Gooneratne

Women's Contribution to Sinhala Literature - Volume 1

Ananda Tissa Kumara - Sinhala

Available for sale at WERC and other leading bookshops in Colombo



## LIBRARY

**For your next .....**

**Research, Article, Book,  
Speech  
Resources**

Books and Information on

- » Gender    » Child & Youth
- » Politics    » Media
- » Religion    » Sociology
- » Women's Studies

**For quick reference:**

Dictionaries/Encyclopedias  
Research Reports  
Theses / Directories

**Special collection on**

Women's  
Writing in Sri Lanka

**Documentation**

News clipping on violence,  
suicides human rights FTZ,  
Women, Trafficking in women,  
migrant workers

**Documented Journal Articles**

from EPW Feminism and  
Psychology, Rethinking History,  
Himal/Gender and Society,  
Monthly Review etc.

**Audio Visuals :** documentaries  
and Features and Feature films  
on women issues, human rights,  
ethnicity etc.

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Reading & reference work  
for non members
- ⊙ Information through  
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reading list
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- ⊙ Reference/referral services.

## WERC AUDITORIUM

- ⊙ Seminars, ⊙ Workshops, ⊙ Awareness Programmes,
- ⊙ Film shows, ⊙ Meetings etc.

**The WERC Auditorium offers you the following facilities -**

- » Fully air conditioned
- » Public Address System complete with Microphones and Ear Phones
- » Overhead Projectors
- » Translating Unit
- » TV and VCR Facilities
- » Magi and Flip Chart Boards
- » Recording facility

A seating capacity of 50 available with conference tables and an airy and spacious dining area to accommodate the same number.

*Meals, Tea could be supplied on request*

### Course in Women's Studies

WERC has designed a 4 month certificate course in Women's Studies combining both theory and activism training a comprehensive strategy for social transformation. It questions traditional areas of knowledge while incorporating new insights drawn from women's experiences. The course will be conducted in the Sinhala and Tamil medium with the objective of fulfilling the present need in our society to produce reasonably good literature on gender related subjects in the national languages.

Scheduled to commence mid 2003, the course comprises three months of course work based on 9 modules. This will be followed by one month of Research paper writing in the form of an extended essay to be submitted at the end of the fourth month. Certificates will be awarded to the successful candidates.

More details / application forms: Contact Sulakshana de Mel on 595296

## Another World is Possible!

"People's movements across the world are working to identify and demonstrate that the path to sustainable development and social and economic justice does not lie in neo-liberal globalisation but in alternative models for people-centred and self-reliant progress.

In 2001 and 2002, the World Social Forum process has explored and proposed such alternatives, and questioned the rules of governance and investment being set by the World Economic Forum. The people's argument is that Another World is Possible. It is an argument based on both vision and reality.

The World Social Forum developed as a response of the growing in-ternational movement questioning the neo-liberal economic policies being pursued in most countries, and contesting both the merit and – inevitability of capitalist-led globalisation."

"The Asia Social Forum 2003 will focus not only on the impact but also the processes of neo-liberal globalisation that is creating a small global, 'over-class' and a vast, increasingly marginalised and vulnerable under-class in every country. Every part of the process seeks to draw out people's perceptions regarding the impact of neo-liberal economic policies and their attendant divisiveness on their daily lives."

Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran on the invitation of the World social Forum India was a member of the gathering that met in Hyderabad January 2nd to 8th, 2003 to take leadership .. to all its people."

## WOMEN'S EDUCATION & RESEARCH CENTRE

# 58, Dharmarama Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka

Tel. 94 01 595296, 596826 Fax 94 01 596313

Email [womedre@sltnet.lk](mailto:womedre@sltnet.lk), [werc@itmin.com](mailto:werc@itmin.com)