

Women2000

Women and decision-making

**Published to Promote the Goals of the Beijing Declaration and the
Platform for Action
October 1997**



UNITED NATIONS
Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
THE PERILS OF STEREOTYPES	6
WHERE ARE THE WOMEN DECISION-MAKERS TODAY?.....	13
INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING.....	24
ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO POWER AND INFLUENCE	27
CLOSING COMMENTS	29
QUESTIONNAIRE	31
NOTABLE EVENTS	33

"You agree, then . . . that men and women are to have a common way of life . . . -- common education, common children; and they are to watch over the citizens in common whether abiding in the city or going out to war? . . . And in so doing they will . . . preserve the natural relation of the sexes."

The Republic, Plato (428-348 BC)

INTRODUCTION

At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995, the global community stressed the importance of women assuming positions of power and influence, not only because their points of view and talents are needed, but also as a matter of their human rights. Moreover, increased involvement of women in decision-making processes with respect to social values, development directions and allocation of resources enables women as well as men to influence societal agendas and to help set priorities. Efforts to achieve gender equality are thus more likely to be brought into the mainstream of decision-making and to be pursued from the centre rather than the margins.^{1/}

Yet questions about both style and substance persist where women and decision-making are concerned. As many historians listen, they hear the echo of questions raised at different times in different parts of the world when the right to vote and to hold office was granted to working men who had neither the property nor the level of income that, earlier, had qualified men as "responsible" citizens.

Like the questions at that time about working men's participation in the exercise of public power, interest in gender-based differences and similarities in approaches to decision-making has increased in recent years and has been the topic of a growing number of leadership training seminars and workshops in different parts of the world. This issue of Women 2000 offers some recent evidence on women's entry into the "corridors of power", whether in governance, business or other public domains, along with conclusions of a number of the studies on women's decision-making styles and focus. The purpose of this edition is to present issues, stimulate research and, above all, provoke discussion.

In exploring the question of women's role in decision-making,

Some of these groups have also claimed that because of inborn altruism or their roles as mothers, women leaders would foster societies of peace and nurturing. In much the same way, they have assumed that women captains of trade and industry would advance economic justice. In addition, since the environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s, some women's advocates have argued that women are natural caretakers of the environment -- largely because in many rural societies, women have managed water, food and fuel resources and employed their knowledge handed down from generation to generation about herbal medicines and other natural products.^{3/}

But for every peacemaking woman monarch, a comparable warrior queen comes out of history's pages. For every female environmental healer, there is an exemplar of unsustainable consumption. Although much of the data on women and decision-making have been anecdotal, an increasing number of full-scale studies are emerging based on the growing number of examples of women decision-makers in public life. But until women's participation rate reaches the level of "critical mass", generalization is difficult. This critical mass can be defined as the proportion of 30 to 35 per cent that, in any group, may result in marked differences in content and priorities, often leading to changes in management style, group dynamics and organizational culture.

The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women in support of the Commission on the Status of Women, the international intergovernmental body charged with securing the advancement of women, has been exploring the question of women and decision-making for some time. In 1989, an expert group met in Vienna to consider "Equality in Political Participation and Decision-Making". Another expert group met in 1991, in Vienna, to discuss "Women in Public Life". "Gender and the Agenda for Peace" was the focus of a 1994 expert group meeting in New York, while another expert meeting in that same year examined "Women and Economic Decision-Making". In 1996, two United Nations expert group meetings addressed these issues. The first considered "Political Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution: the Impact of Gender Differences", and was held at the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The second was "Women and Economic Decision-Making in International Financial Institutions and Transnational Corporations", held at Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts.

At its forty-first session in 1997, the Commission on the Status of Women considered a critical area of concern, women and power and decision-making, and called for acceleration of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in this area. Governments were called upon, inter alia, to take into account diverse decision-making styles and to project positive images of women in politics and public life.^{4/}

NOTES

1/ Johanna Schalkwyk, Helen Thomas and Beth Woroniuk, "Mainstreaming:
A
Strategy for Achieving Equality between Women and Men, A Think
Piece", unpublished paper, July 1996.

2/ Among the most widely read are Peter Drucker and Tom Peters. The
latter, as paraphrased by economist Robert Chambers in Whose Reality
Counts? Putting the First Last (London, Intermediate Technology
Publications, 1997) p.196 , calls for "achieving flexibility by
empowering people, learning to love change and becoming obsessed with
listening . . . a culture of knowledge-sharing versus hoarding, user
democracy versus authoritarianism"

3/ Cecile Jackson of the University of East Anglia questions this
belief from the standpoint of gender analysis worldwide in "Doing
What Comes Naturally? Women and Environment in Development", World
Development, vol. 21, No. 12, 1993, pp. 1947-1963.

4/ Commission on the Status of Women, Report on the forty-first
session
(10-21 March 1997), Official Records of the Economic and Social
Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7 (E/1997/27, E/CN.6/1997/9), pp. 10-12.

THE PERILS OF STEREOTYPES

Almost every class in every culture around the globe has projected an ideal of the woman who endures and sacrifices for her children, her family or her people. But worldwide there are also other visible images of women. In Viet Nam 1,000 years ago, legend has it, two princesses overthrew Chinese oppression for the first time in that country's history. In seventeenth-century Jamaica, Nanny of the Maroons is reputed to have outwitted the British for three decades. And from contemporary India comes the modern folk heroine Phoolan Devi, the "Bandit Queen". Despite adverse circumstances, she fought for the oppressed and later became a Member of Parliament. When we look at stereotypes of male behaviour, exceptions can also be cited.

What does modern science say? According to a number of experts, the vast outpouring of research since the 1980s has shown fewer differences between men and women based on gender than differences that grow out of disparities in income, household responsibility or access to power.^{5/}

Despite such examples, the belief that any one group of people is inherently predisposed -- usually by heredity --- to perform one or another function in society, such as to rule or to enjoy whatever a culture considers privileged, has persisted in some quarters and has been described by scholars as "essentialism". The idea of essentialism probably reaches back into prehistory. The oldest and most universal essentialism concerns the "nature" of women as distinct from the "nature" of men -- with whom "human nature" is generally associated in western culture. Some scholars have subscribed to an essentialist philosophy to defend women as having a particular style or approach.

Problems arise from essentialism. One is to equate identity with beliefs and behaviour. If a person is defined by any trait that is considered dominant by those who do the defining, he or she is also expected to hold certain convictions, exhibit certain behaviour patterns and take certain actions. Whether these convictions, behaviours or actions are judged good or bad, beneficial or destructive, essentialist perspectives tend to deny or gloss over differences within a given group -- even a group defined by a set of ideas, such as a religion or a political philosophy. All Christians, for example, might be presumed to adhere to a particular creed -- or all socialists or feminists; the creeds or behaviour themselves are at best represented simplistically, one or another element eclipsing the complex whole.

One analyst points out that if we reduce human beings to one or another facet of their identity, we reduce enormously the possibility of human change -- whether of groups or individuals -- through education and experience.^{6/} Essentialism thereby endangers reform as well -- certainly to the extent that it aims at reforming values, attitudes and behaviours. It is just as dangerous to champion women in terms of immutable biological traits as it is to ignore the needs that arise from these traits or to subjugate women because of them.

Since women inhabit the globe in much the same proportions as men, it is not surprising that they are as diverse as men. Over and against any concept of an inborn and universal female identity, the Fourth World Conference on Women set gender issues in the context of the evolution of societies and characterized women's diversity as an asset to all aspects of human development. A major message of Beijing was that stereotypes should be avoided -- particularly those that make assumptions about female and male traits.

Issues and Styles: Gender Dimensions

Despite their diversity, however, there appear to be specific kinds of issues women tend to champion, and they appear to bring distinctive styles to leadership. Arguably, such similarities can be traced to the different positions women hold in society, the ways in which different societies constrain women or enable them to fulfil their human potential and the distinct roles that society expects them to play in relation to men, rather than any supposedly "innate" female or male qualities. Whether as mothers or caregivers concerned with basic needs or, in times of war and conflict, as protectors and mediators, women are often directly responsible for the immediate survival of their families. Although their particular concerns and styles may vary from one society to another (and within societies), they tend to bring to governance and other public-sector affairs a perspective that in some measure reflects their social and cultural position and the prevailing gendered division of power.

The differences displayed by women and men must therefore be examined in relation to enduring social structures. Gender socialization begins in infancy for both girls and boys. The power relations between women and men are enforced and reinforced throughout their lives. As two social scientists have remarked, "The gender dimensions of multiple social structures interact and, in effect, 'discipline' individual behaviour to conform to stereotypes."⁷

So it is that women in authority have often assumed male attributes, even male dress. In Egypt 3,500 years ago, the only woman Pharaoh, Hatshepsut, had to put on a beard of lapis lazuli and a male kilt for ceremonial occasions. It was the only way she could perform the central ritual of Egyptian kingship, by which the god-monarch every morning celebrated the sun's rebirth and re-transmitted life to the people of the Nile valley. In literature, Shakespeare's Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice*, amazes everyone with her legal skill -- by which she "tempers justice with mercy" and outwits the villain in his lawsuit for a pound of flesh. But she does so disguised as a man. Similarly, both Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher were termed "statesmen" and contemporary women executives wear "power suits". The reverse, a man imitating a woman, is less frequent, particularly if the aim is to portray public power and influence.

Attributes women bring to public life: One expert group view

- A particular concern for justice and the ethical dimension of

- politics, derived in part from their experience of injustice
- A talent for setting priorities and accomplishing complex tasks learned in the course of balancing competing demands for their time and attention in the family, at work and in the community
- An awareness of the value of consensus and agreement, because of their central role in social relationships
- A concern for future generations^{8/}

In the early 1940s, a British diplomat summed up his view of women and political life that is still widely believed. There were three feminine qualities -- "zeal, sympathy and intuition" -- that he considered dangerous in international affairs unless kept under the firmest control. The ideal diplomat, in his view, needed "male" qualities such as "impartiality and imperturbability", and, he surmised, needed to be "a trifle inhuman".^{9/} Recently, an exit poll conducted by the University of Namibia in that country's regional and local elections found that about one fourth of the respondents said they would find it difficult to vote for a woman candidate because "women are not suitable".^{10/}

By contrast, in many countries today, some transnational corporations trying to survive in a highly competitive world appear to be "finding common ground with the values that women have been raised and socialized to hold".^{11/} These so-called "female principles" according to Anita Roddick, who founded a transnational firm, include:

"principles of caring, making intuitive decisions, not getting hung up on hierarchy or all those dreadfully boring business-school management ideas; having a sense of work as being part of your life, not separate from it; putting your labour where your love is; being responsible to the world in how you use your profits; recognizing the bottom line should stay there -- at the bottom."^{12/}

Notably, trends towards democratization and greater participation in both business and government point towards valuing traits that women acquire through socialization.

"Organizations of different kinds are now going through a 'feminization' of their structures, some more rapidly than others, creating more space for the discussion and valuing of personal issues and problems, as well as reconsidering a more intuitive style of decision-making. Some of them are relying on more inclusive and horizontal schemes of power and responsibility. Team-work and organization-wide communication processes are becoming common in business organizations and governments"13/

As early as 1932, psychologist Jean Piaget observed that girls showed a greater tendency than boys to make exceptions to the rules and were better able to adapt to innovation.^{14/} Exploring this view further during the 1970s, sociologist Nancy Chodorow observed:

Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is experiencing another's needs and feelings) From very

early, then, because they were parented by a person of the same gender . . . girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world as well.^{15/}

In 1982, psychologist Carol Gilligan added her observation, echoed by many others, that men are most comfortable in hierarchical structures of organization, while women prefer weblike structures -- and that this largely unconscious difference in perception explains many of the tensions between the sexes. She noted that:

"as the top of the hierarchy becomes the edge of the web and as the centre of a network of connection becomes the middle of a hierarchical progression, each image marks as dangerous the place which the other defines as safe. Men's wish to be alone at the top and the consequent fear that others will get too close contrasts . . . with women's wish to be at the centre of connection and their consequent fear of being too far out on the edge."^{16/}

As one woman remarked of a London Borough Council, "It continually shocks me how male working culture is not about delivery. They're about status, position, about being, not doing. Women want to see results, are prepared to be flexible and make changes in themselves."^{17/}

A prominent Indonesian woman business executive recently stated, "I'm more supportive than my male colleagues . . . Clients relax and talk more. And fifty per cent of my effectiveness is based on volunteered information."^{18/}

Some differences in women's and men's leadership styles

Men's Leadership Styles

- Maintained a complex network of relationships with people outside their organizations
- Identified themselves with their jobs
- Had difficulty sharing information

Women's Leadership Styles

- Maintained a complex network of relationships with people inside and outside their organizations
- Saw their own identities as complex and multifaceted
- Scheduled time for sharing information^{19/}

Ireland's former President Mary Robinson, now United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, puts things somewhat differently:

"Women speak from their experience and work outwards, and do so with increasing confidence as they find that what they are saying is at least as valid as what they're hearing from other sources. I do feel that women tend on the whole to draw more from their experience and to want to play a role in a power structure to influence change -- it's part of a whole

different reference point. Women in most contexts are coming from a kind of minority, if not marginalized, position into one where they're trying to move nearer the centre, and that brings with it all the empathy, the listening, and the sense of questioning20/

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a recent candidate for the presidency of Liberia, has stated her belief that:

"Women's vision for their societies often differs from men's because they understand clearly the impact of distorted priorities on their families and communities. The vision of women is one of inclusion not exclusion, peace not conflict, integrity not corruptio

NOTES

- 5/ Cynthia Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender and the Social Order*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988.
- 6/ Dan Smith, "The Problem of Essentialism", a working paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Political Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution: The Impact of Gender Difference, 7 -- 11 October 1996. (EGM/PDCR/1996/WP.2).
- 7/ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1993.
- 8/ Report of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women in Public Life, Vienna, 21-24 May 1991 (EGM/RWPL/1991/Rep.1).
- 9/ *Spectator* (London), 23 January 1942.
- 10/ Consideration of Reports submitted by States Parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women: Initial Report of States Parties: Namibia (CEDAW/C/NAM/1), 10 February 1997, p. 70.
- 11/ Sally Helgesen, *The Female Advantage, Women's Ways of Leadership*, New York, Doubleday, 1990, p. 39.
- 12/ Anita Roddick, as quoted in Helgesen, *ibid.*
- 13/ "Can Women Change the World?", in Ana Maria Brasiliero, ed., *Women's Leadership in a Changing World: Reflecting on Experience in Latin America and the Caribbean*, New York, UNIFEM, 1996.
- 14/ Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgement of the Child*, New York, The Free Press, 1965.
- 15/ As qu

20/ Ibid., p. 111

21/ Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, statement in *Empowering Women for the 21st Century. The Challenges of Politics, Business, Development and Leadership*, A. Aderinwale, ed., London, ALF Publications, 1997, p.25.

22/ Centre for the American Woman in Politics, "Survey of Women State Legislators", Washington, D.C., 1997.

23/ Margaret Gallagher, *An Unfinished Story*, Paris, UNESCO, 1995, p.59.

boards and agencies, both elective and appointive. Nonetheless, in Norway, as in the rest of Scandinavia, old gender patterns persist in the workplace, even in public-sector jobs.

Women

still perform almost 90 per cent of the country's caretaking, whether of children or the elderly, and spend nearly twice as much time as men in unpaid work.^{25/}

Only a handful of countries have chosen women to hold the portfolios of foreign policy, finance, trade or defence -- sectors that were not only traditionally dominated by men, but are also pivotal in international relations and can be viewed as the "public" face of a nation, in contrast to its domestic or "private" face. At present, only in the Caribbean do women represent more than 20 per cent of ministers in fields outside the social fields and in departments of justice.

In Africa, only a handful of high executive offices, including ministries outside the areas of social affairs, have been held by women. These included, in 1994, Uganda's Vice President, Botswana's and Liberia's Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Burundi's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ghana's Minister of Trade and Industry.

At the international level, of the 185 United Nations Member States, only seven women head permanent diplomatic missions as of mid-1997: the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Jamaica, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein and Turkmenistan. At the United Nations Secretariat level, only five United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, of which there are 36 altogether, are headed by women: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme. Women also head important entities dealing with human rights, the war crimes tribunals and the disarmament institute.

In senior national civil service positions, the number of women has continued to increase -- still largely in social welfare ministries, which have traditionally been associated with some of women's "caring" activities, but to a lesser extent in others, such as energy, agriculture and the environment. These latter ministries have been dominated by men -- perhaps because of the current prominence of these areas in the economic and foreign policy agendas of Governments. While the fields of health, education, housing and community development doubtless mirror major concerns of many women throughout the world, female concentration in these ministries perpetuates traditions of women managing women and certainly does not reflect the growing numbers of women economists, management experts, lawyers and engineers.

Women at ministerial and sub-ministerial levels

- The number of women ministers worldwide doubled from 3.4 per cent in 1987 to 6.8 per cent in 1996
- Globally, 15 countries have achieved 20 per cent to 30 per cent

- women at the ministerial level
- In 48 countries, there were no women ministers
 - Globally, only 9.9 per cent of all sub-ministerial positions (Deputy Minister, Permanent Secretary and Deputy Permanent Secretary) were held by women
 - In 136 countries, women held no ministerial positions concerned

Organizing workers today involves confronting two increasing problems. First, more and more jobs, notably those for women, are informal, even when they constitute an integral part of the formal sector -- including the production of toys, apparel, shoes and components for high-tech industries. The experience of the Indian Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), founded in 1973, still stands as a model for the organization of women labourers doing "informal" jobs. A second labour question of growing proportions worldwide is the organization of women workers who cross borders, continents and oceans.

Women and Religious Bodies

In a number of religions today, there is serious debate over women's role as leaders. Despite the prominence of priestesses in many ancient religions, as well as the participation of women as deacons and leaders of congregations in early Christianity, religious authorities worldwide remain predominantly male. Where religion is identified with the State -- as it generally has been historically and still is in several countries -- it tends to compound the many problems of women's access to power.

Close-up: Namibia

The under-representation of women among church leaders in Namibia may be one reason why Christian beliefs so often continue to take the form of conservative doctrine which works against the interests of women. For example, biblical teachings are often cited in both personal and political settings to justify the subordination of women, particularly in the family context. Church groupings continue to speak out against political reforms affecting women such as abortion, prostitution, the liberalization of Namibia's laws on abortion and education on AIDS and family planning. The church in Namibia does not speak with one voice, however, and some church leaders have also come out in strong support of women's issues.^{40/}

Frequently, religions portray women either as the source of evil and/or chaos or as the prototype of submission and self-sacrifice -- often as both in separate figures. None of these images encourages the idea of leadership by women among citizens by 6/23/16 10:58 AM

churches ordain women as clergy. Even in those, however, gender discrimination persists in one or another form. In the Episcopal Church, which now numbers seven women among its bishops, male priests earn, on average, US\$ 5000 a year more than their female counterparts.^{41/}

Women in Ministries of Justice and Law Enforcement Bodies

In ancient Egypt and in the west, justice has been symbolized by women -- and the facts have begun to mirror the image in many places. Since 1987, the percentage of women at the ministerial level in law and justice ministries in Europe, Canada and the United States increased from 10 per cent to 21 per cent.^{42/} The Chief Prosecutor of the United Nations tribunals established by the international community to try war crimes, including mass rape in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, is Canadian jurist Louise Arbour.

The recruitment of women to police positions at all levels is also vital because it is catalytic in changing attitudes towards women's exercise of power in all areas. Police on patrol are generally the closest representatives of authority outside the home. Brazil was the first of a number of Latin American countries -- those of the Andean region in particular -- to institute "women's police stations" that deal with gender violence, punishing a variety of crimes previously regarded as "family", "private" or "health" matters.

"The extent to which the institutions of government and civil society are able to confront the problem of gender violence is itself a measure of democracy", writes Alexandra Ayala-Marin in her recent essay on the administration of justice and changing ideas of "security" from national defense to safety in streets and homes.^{43/} To Kiran Bedi, former Inspector-General of Prisons in Delhi, India, police work for and of women should be a door to legal literacy and other skills and resources necessary to exercising full citizenship.^{44/} At the World Congress on Commercial Sexual

respective countries.

Close-up: Nicaragua

In terms of the advancement of women, Nicaragua presents a variety of paradoxes. Although women constituted approximately 30 per cent of the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion (FSLN) guerrillas and had played major roles in political protest for two decades before the Front came to power in 1979, they were regarded by many of their male comrades as "earning" basic rights through revolutionary involvement rather than based on a concept of women's intrinsic equality with men.

The Sandinista Movement of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE) worked to promote the advancement of women in all spheres, including their integration into grass-roots and labour organizations. In the campaign that cut Nicaraguan illiteracy from 50 to 13 per cent within a year, women constituted 60 per cent of the volunteer instructors -- many, like their Cuban counterparts during the 1960s, leaving comfortable urban homes to live among indigenous peasants in the war-devastated countryside. They also helped domestic servants unionize in towns and cities, established cooperatives and public health projects, and helped pass a law for the sharing of household chores between women and men.

The 1990 election of Violeta Chamorro and her coalition derived in part from weariness of counter-insurgency and continued warfare; men and women together voted in large numbers for an end to carnage and the military draft.^{46/}

Whether one advocates or opposes combat-related roles for women, many of today's political leaders have stressed their military records during their campaigns for high office, even in countries such as France and the United States of America, free of overt armed rule. In the early days of western women's suffrage, service in the armed forces was a condition for the franchise itself; in several countries after the First World War, if a woman had not actively engaged in war efforts herself, her right to vote derived from close kinship with a serviceman. Today, the ancient identification of men with armed conflict perpetuates the exclusion of women worldwide from peace and security affairs.

Consequently, with few exceptions, women are glaringly under-represented in virtually all bodies directly concerned with conflict resolution and the peace-building process in ravaged countries. Commenting on this phenomenon, Angela King, United Nations Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and former head of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa, put forward what she called two principles of concern:

"When a critical mass of women is involved in a peace-related mission, women in the host country, often a key element in the settlement of disputes at the community level, are mobilized through a positive demonstration effect of the role models of the women on the mission.

"The presence of women peacekeepers seems to be a potent ingredient in fostering and maintaining confidence and trust among the local population.^{47/}

Does this trust grow out of a feeling that most women appear to have a somewhat different approach to violence, conflict and the resolution of conflict than most men involved in peace and security matters? This was one of the conclusions reached by an Expert Group Meeting on Political Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution organized jointly by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo in 1996. These experts also advocated "an overhaul of the idea of what constitutes security" in the light of "the importance of peace as a means for achieving democracy". Further, they stated that "the absence of women from decision-making processes indicates a value system that supports gender stereotypes that are not conducive to peace".^{48/}

NOTES

24/ Mim Kelber, ed., *Women and Government: New Ways to Power*, Westport, Connecticut, Praeger, 1994.

25/ Ibid.

26/ Data compiled by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, based on information from the *Worldwide Government Directory*, Bethesda, Maryland, January 1996.

27/ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliaments 1945 -1995: A World Statistical Survey*, Geneva, IPU, 1995, p. 26.

28/ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making*, Geneva, IPU, 1997, p. 34.

29/ Aderinwale, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

30/ Georgina Ashworth, "Gendered Governance: An Agenda for Change", *Gender in Development Monograph Series No. 3*, New York, UNDP, 1996.

31/ Data from papers prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women and Economic Decision-making in International Financial Institutions and Transnational Corporations, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts, 11-15 November 1996 (EGM/EDM/IFI-TNC/1996/REP.1).

32/ K. Spillar, as quoted in Adler and Izraeli, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

33/ M. Fanning, *op. cit.*

34/ Claire Bangasser, "Women Entrepreneurs: Some Issues and Proposals", paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women

and Economic Decision-Making, United Nations, New York, 7-11 November 1994, (EDM/1994/WP.1).

35/ Valerie Hammond, "Women and Senior Economic Decision-Making; the Experience of the United Kingdom", paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women and Economic Decision-Making in International Financial Institutions and Transnational Corporations, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts, 11-15 November 1996, (EDM/IFI-TNC/1996/WP.1).

36/ Padma Mallampally, "Transnational Corporations, the Employment of Women, and Women's Participation in Decision-Making", paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women and Economic Decision-Making in International Financial Institutions and Transnational Corporations, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts, 11 - 15 November 1996 (EDM/IFI-TNC/1996/BP.2).

37/ Report of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women in Economic Decision-Making in International Financial Institutions and Transnational Corporations, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts, 11-15 November 1996 (EDM/IFI-TNC/1996/REP.1).

38/ Marilee Karl, Women and Empowerment: Participation and Decision Making" New Jersey, Zed Books, 1995, p. 51.

39/ Ibid., p. 52.

40/ Op. cit., note 9.

41/ Adair T. Lummis, co-author of Women of the Cloth (New York, 1993), as cited in Gustav Niehbuhr, "For Episcopalians, Debate on Women", New York Times, 18 July 1997.

42/ Op. cit., note 26.

43/ Alexander Ayala-Marin, "Women's Human Rights and the Police: an Andean Regional Seminar", in Ana Maria Brasiliero, op. cit., p. 57.

44/ "The Large Roof Concept and Life Cap", in Eva Freidlander, ed., Look at the World Through Women's Eyes: Plenary Speeches from the NGO Forum on Women: Beijing '95, New York, 1996.

45/ "Women in International Decision-Making: Peace and Security Areas", background paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Gender and the Agenda for Peace, New York, 5-9 December 1994 (GAP/1994/BP.1).

46/ Margaret Randall, Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Writers, Vancouver, 1981; and B. Seitz, "From Home to Street: Women and Revolution in Nicaragua", in J. M. Bystydzienski, ed., Women Transforming Politics: Worldwide Strategies for Empowerment, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992.

47/ Contribution from "Women at the Peace Table", a panel discussion sponsored by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

But it has begun to increase once more. In Hungary, Poland and Turkmenistan, the proportion of women members of parliaments has risen respectively to 11.4, 13 and 18 per cent, the last two figures above the world average.^{53/}

Commonwealth action plan for increasing the representation of women in politics: Eight strategy areas

1. Setting targets
2. Affirmative action
3. Review of electoral systems
4. Public awareness campaign
5. Encouraging women to join politics
6. Support for women candidates
7. Support for women parliamentarians
8. Support for women in democratization, peace and conflict resolution^{54/}

Through the experience of the Indian Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), 1 million women have actively entered political life in India. Although the Parliament recently rejected a hard-fought-for female quota for its members, in 1993 and 1994, constitutional amendments allotted one third of the seats in local councils, both urban and rural (gram panchayats) to women. The gram panchayats were given the responsibility for designing, implementing and monitoring social services -- notably health and education -- and anti-poverty programmes. Since the creation of the quota system, local women -- the vast majority of them illiterate and poor -- have come to occupy as much as 43 per cent of the seats, spurring the election of increasing numbers of women at the district, provincial and national levels.

According to the Indian activist Devaki Jain, this has helped many "affirm their identity as women with particular and shared experiences". Their participation, Jain adds, has moved such issues as water, alcohol abuse, sexual trafficking and tourism, education, health and domestic violence closer to centre stage.^{55/}

NOTES

49/ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 1249, p.13.

50/ Report of the Committee of Discrimination against Women, Sixteenth Session (A/52/38, Part 1) 1997.

51/ Gretchen Sidhu, "Quotas will Change the World" (14 January 1997) and "Reaching for Real Equality" (26 January 1997), Women's Feature Service.

52/ Janet C. Beilstein and Stephen F. Burgess, "African Women in Political Decision-Making: Struggles for a 'Critical Mass' and a Women's Development Perspective", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, San Francisco, 1996.

53/ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *op.cit.*, 1995, p. 36.

54/ Report of the Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, Port of Spain, 25-28 November 1996 (WAMM, (96)).

55/ Devaki Jain, *Panchayat Raj: Women Changing Governance*, Gender in Development Monograph Series No. 5, New York, United Nations Development Programme, 1996.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO POWER AND INFLUENCE

The Non-governmental Path

In many countries women have built upon long traditions of volunteering in service organizations to enter other arenas of decision-making. The influence of women's NGOs has been particularly manifest at the global conferences of the United Nations, with women's groups gaining recognition at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, shaping the agenda at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, and participating as active lobbyists at the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome.

The historical moment for civil society has been particularly opportune in the post-cold war period and, as globalization has come to characterize the end of this century, the women's movement has emerged as a force to be reckoned with internationally. As one anthropologist has pointed out:

"with the expansion of transnational activity not subject to the laws of nations, the responsibility of governments to ensure justice, economic and otherwise and to protect people from polices that threaten their livelihoods or their very lives has taken on new urgency. The strategies that women have used and might use to engage and confront the private sector, state and international organizations are critical for the future."^{56/}

Starting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Weary of trying to crack "the glass ceiling" after a difficult climb from "the sticky floor" of large corporations and, in some cases, in order to have more control over their time and workplaces, more and more women are starting small businesses. In the United States alone, women own or control more than 6.5 million enterprises with fewer than 500 employees -- approximately 30 per cent of the country's businesses.^{57/} In the Philippines, women constitute some 70 per cent of self-employed workers -- not just in trading and services associated with homemaking skills, such as restaurants and hotels, but in consumer electronics, semi-conductors, computers and their applications, car manufacturing and machinery and other durable goods. Much the same is true for Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.^{58/} In a number of OECD countries -- among them Australia and Canada -- small and medium-size enterprises owned by women are growing at a faster rate than the economy as a whole.

Perhaps because of the difficulties they encounter in obtaining financing, women entrepreneurs tend to go into the retail and service trades, where start-up costs are lower than in manufacturing and other businesses. In Mexico, women make up 23 per cent of such entrepreneurs, whereas they account for 11 per cent of ownership in manufacturing, 6.5 per cent in the oil and gas industries and 2.5 per

cent in construction.^{59/} In view of the enormous growth of the service sector worldwide, coupled with the amplified access to information provided by the computer revolution, women's current leadership in this area may augur well for their rise in other private-sector fields as well.

Alternative Banking

In some countries, women have thwarted the male banking structure by creating their own solutions. Rebuffed by India's major bank in its request for financing, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) set up its own savings association as the capital base for loans to its members. In Trinidad and Tobago, when women failed to obtain start-up funding for their businesses, they formed a susu -- a traditional, informal savings and loan group -- and "blanked" the banks.^{60/} In much the same way, the age-old "merry-go-rounds" of Kenyan women -- which once used maize and millet rather than bank notes as their currency -- have helped finance substantial real estate transactions, both urban and rural, as well as micro-enterprises.^{61/}

These kinds of achievements will hardly transform the big transnational commercial banks. But they have helped alert the major international financing institutions not only to women's growing capital needs, but to their talents for money management. According to Nancy Barry of Women's World Banking, the growing business of retailing credit may offer women high-level opportunities in global and national financial institutions -- if only to reflect better the composition of their clients.^{62/}

NOTES

56/ Freidlander, Introduction, op.cit.

57/ Bangasser, op. cit.

58/ Zenaida Gonzales Gordon, paper presented to the OECD Conference on "Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises: A Major Force in Innovation and Job Creation", Paris, 16-18 April 1997.

59/ Gina Zabludovsky, "Women Entrepreneurs in Mexico", United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Women and Economic Decision-Making, United Nations, New York, 7-11 November 1994 (EGM/1994/WP.7).

60/ M. J. Sebro, "Empowering Women for Community Leadership: a Caribbean Case Study" in *Brasiliero*, op.cit.

61/ Helena Halperin, *Mama Ansema: Grass-roots Kenyan Women Speak Out*, t*Brasiliero*, op.cit.

59/ Gina Zabludovsky, "Women's

CLOSING COMMENTS

This edition of Women 2000 has sought to present some of the data with respect to women and decision-making in various sectors. It makes clear that 50 per cent of humanity -- cutting across all classes and cultures -- remains overwhelmingly under-represented in public decision-making. Righting gender imbalance is not only a rights issue, but one of cost-effectiveness that involves the need to address the obstacles women face in fulfilling their rights to participation, including the stereotypes thrust upon them from childhood in every culture. Dismantling these obstacles, as well as the caricatures that foster and support them, is a central concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, the implementation of which will be reviewed in the year 2000 by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

It is also clear that failure to include women in positions of power and influence is a waste of human creativity and energy that is increasingly unaffordable. The participation of all citizens is central to democracy and thereby to any concept of peace. Democratizing decision-making is served by mainstreaming women in decision-making.

What conclusions can be drawn from the available evidence about differences between male and female decision-makers? So far, none that can be advanced definitively. This issue of Women 2000 has attempted to present a variety of views on the subject from many parts of the world.

Inconclusive as the evidence is currently, one point is clear: the styles and focus of women decision-makers -- at various levels -- reflects their structural position in society and the roles they typically play. The gender differences at work in every culture are reflected in the styles of both men and women decision-makers. In addition, the evidence suggests that once women achieve a critical mass, they have a chance to influence the agenda and to promote gender equality for the benefit of the society or community as a whole.

One of the problems in considering the question of "making a difference" is that the distinction between "change" and "transformation" may tend to be blurred. Some champions of excluded or subjugated groups have gone so far as to claim that the admission of that group to equitable power-sharing would save the world -- perhaps unconscious of the burden, complexity and ultimate injustice imposed by such an expectation. But clearly, broadening women's access to positions of power and influence is likely to affect the

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Division for the Advancement of Women would appreciate your completion of this questionnaire as part of a survey to assess the relevance and quality of Women 2000. The aim is to improve future issues. Your reply will also help to determine the level of interest in this publication. All replies are confidential.

1. Please rate the quality of Women 2000 by using the following scale:
5 = excellent, 4 = very good, 3 = good, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor,

7. The completion of this section is optional
Name:
Post/Title:
Type of Institution/Organization:
Name of Institution:
Address:
Telephone:
Fax:
E-mail:

Please return your completed questionnaire to:
Coordination and Outreach Unit, Room DC2-1212
Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations, New York, NY 10017, USA
Fax: (212) 963-3463 E-mail: daw@un.org

NOTABLE EVENTS

DAW, UNFPA, UNICEF and ECA
Expert Group Meeting on Adolescent Girls and their Rights
ECA Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
13-17 October 1997

DAW and York University
Expert Group Meeting on Gender-based Persecution
York University, Toronto, Canada
9-12 November 1997

DAW and DSPD
Expert Group Meeting on Ageing Women and Care
International Institute on Ageing, Valletta, Malta
30 November

WomenWatch internet gateway (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>)
News section (<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw/dawnew.htm>)
Commission on the Status of Women (<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw/csw.htm>)
CEDAW (<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw/cedaw.htm>)
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
(<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw/platform.htm>)
Beijing Follow-Up (<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw/dawfo.htm>)
Calendar of events (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/calendar.htm>)
Archives of the Fourth World Conference on Women
(<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw/fwcw2.htm>)

For gopher users, : all DAW and FWCW information is available at:
<gopher://gopher.un.org:70/11/sec/dpcsd/daw>

For e-mail users: send an e-mail message to gopher@undp.org to receive
the
content of the DAW and FWCW web and gopher sites. Type in the body of
the
message: <http://www.undp.org/fwcw/daw1.htm>

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.
Fax: 1-212-963-3463
Home Location: <http://www.un.org/dpcsd/daw>
E-mail address: daw@un.org