



## **Global NGOs Forum for Women: Beijing + 15, February 27, 2010**

### **The State of the World's Women: Patriarchy, Violence against Women and Girls and Women's Health**

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#### **Synthesis**

27 February 2010

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In the framework of the UN CSW 54, with Marie-Anne Delahaut, director of research at the Destree Institute and head of the Information Society Unit, I participated to the NGOs Forum for women that took place in New York on February 27, 2010.

This participation was possible thanks to the Destree Institute, a European Research centre based in Wallonia in which I am doing an internship at the Information Society Unit.

Our presence during the UN CSW 54 was notably justified by the presentation of Millennium 2015 which is a Foresight Research Process on "Women actors of development for the global challenges" by Marie-Anne Delahaut, head of Millennium 2015 with the support of the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

This document is a synthesis of the conference with a resume of speaker's interventions and a resume of the audience interventions.

### **Introduction**

#### **Moderator: Afaf Mahfouz (Egypt)**

*Psychoanalytic psychotherapist serving patients of diverse social, cultural and linguistic background.*

The conference aims at making a balance 15 years after the Beijing conference about women's rights and about women's new concerns.

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In 15 years, women's movements have involved a lot to create a space for voice and power. The UN Security Council agenda includes the women's agenda.

It is important to respect our diversities and to achieve our women's goals

## Patriarchy

### **Speaker: Nyaradzayi Gumbodzvanda (Zimbabwe)**

*General Secretary of the World YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association)*

When a woman applies for a post in public institutions she is considered differently with respect to men.

Patriarchy is about power. Power determines who the leaders are; it determines who has access to public services. Patriarchy is giving different standards to men and women around same issues. There is patriarchy within the Constitutions, within the institution

Patriarchy is about resources and determines opportunities, identity or exclusion. It is necessary to find a proper formula for recognizing women care giving. Patriarchy defines norms and values. Women's rights within the family are influenced by patriarchy: they suffer from violence, early marriage, they have no protection and they do not go to school, it justifies the violation of women rights.

There is a huge need to move patriarchy forward and to build a society which will not be under patriarchy influence.

There is a set of recommendations to involve the society within patriarchy:

- \* Diversity must be respected and taken into account to address specific spaces of experiences, to provide opportunities, capabilities and start the transformation of the society. It is about connecting experiences within community to exchange good practices and sharing of experience and knowledge
- \* Agencies of women must be sustained in order to transform the patriarchal society. For example violence intergenerational differences must be taken into account. Thus, patriarchy does not approve that a girl marries with a man younger than her but it totally approves that a young girl marries with a man much older than her?
- \* Informative agendas must be institutionalized and transformed to include women in decision-making processes and in government because the society can not change without women's involvement.
- \* Finally there is a need to go beyond gender mainstreaming and to move towards transformation, to take concrete action, to understand that patriarchy is everywhere: in private life, in institutions, etc and to find strategies and perspectives to go forward

## Violence against women

### **Speaker: Mahnaz Afkhami (Iran)**

*Executive Director of Women's Learning Partnership for Rights Development and Peace*

Conferences between 1975 (Mexico conference) and 2000 had changed a lot. In 1975, women who were at the conference were wives of president, of ambassadors, etc. Since there, things have changed. Women's rights are recognized as human rights. Conferences on women's rights are about mobilisation, networking and understanding.

Processes until Beijing conference had evolved step by step thanks to science, to technology. During Mexico and Nairobi conferences, communication was harder than now. Today, the communication is instantaneous.

89 countries have a legislation to condemn violence against women. 104 countries consider violence against women as a crime. However there is still a big gap because 100,000 young girls under 18 suffer from trafficking. Two millions women are victims of mutilation, crimes of honour, submission or familial violence.

After 15 years of fight, the Beijing project reaches its adolescent period. Now it is time to go towards the adult period and to transform the negative in positive, to transform speeches into actions.

Dreams for the future are: a peaceful world, justice, security, hope and realisation of potential. Violence against women must be eradicated.

Human relations must be redefined to reach goals. Culture is defined by many things. There are some positive aspects like cooking, celebrations, etc and some negative aspects that limit and encourage exclusion. Patriarchy is one of them. It is necessary to change them to go from a patriarchal culture to a culture without violence. News forms of human relations between men and women must be created.

Each aspect of culture strengthens structure based on power and hierarchy without any link with ethic and morality. A holistic vision must change all this.

To illustrate this, Family code in Islamic societies had been taken as an example. How do changes occur in Islamic societies?

Family code refers to marriage, work, trips, children, men and women relations within the family, etc.

In 2004, changes happened in the Tunisian and Moroccan family code. Women's movement mobilized and went to population to get information about their situation, their interests, and their needs. They made researches on sciences, on national laws, on international laws to be informed and to be able to be proposal force. They provided information back to the grassroots. They started the dialogue with politicians basing on their researches, their knowledge of local population desires. They were enhanced by the mobilization, the support created around their action?

In 2006, an Iranian movement tried to do the same and gathered one million signatures. Although it was a failure because the notion of equality is unknown in Iran, it was also a

success because one million signatures meant one million militants. Women make aware of their rights.

Communication with the local population, with the concerned parties, dialogue, awareness, international mobilization, men's integration, power to local community are the means to reach the goals to stop violence against women. Unity and sense of humour must not be forgotten.

*"There is still a long way to go. We have to struggle on and to keep our humour"*

## Women and health

### **Speaker: Violet Shivutse (Kenya)**

*Volunteer community health worker*

In 2002, in Kenya, in more than 67% of hospitals, the majority of the patients were affected by AIDS/ HIV.

In 1996, the big issue was the maternal mortality because of the lack of medical structures and staff and because of the bad hygiene conditions. A group of 15 women decided to form a group and to be trained for maternal care.

In 1999, a huge epidemic of AIDS affected Kenyan population. A group of women created an association to train women for home medical care. The home medical care emerged and developed. A governmental platform was created to advocate and to find means to support women who work at the base and to create positive synergies.

It is necessary to mobilize those who give care; to make an alliance to strengthen home caregiving and to identify means to enhance women.

Women's initiatives on the field must be recognized and doors must be opened in order to allow them to participate to decision-making tables to encourage development.

Women must have access to investment and to decision-making processes in order to getting them out from the marginalization?

## Suggestions, recommendations and observations

After speaker's interventions, the audience was allowed to make brief comments on various topics concerning women. You will find here some of this comments.

- \* On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, a law passed in France to condemn psychological violence but there is still important effort to do regarding that topic.
- \* There will not be improvement in the world without spirituality and morality.
- \* Cultural diversity is important and sharing of experiences from one country to another.
- \* Regarding secularism, what are the advancements for women's emancipation in the World? Secularism must be demystified. It is necessary to manage the society respecting

religions. Secular country is a country that respects the freedom of beliefs. (Mahnaz Afkhami)

\* Women must take initiatives to address issues, to empower themselves and to take lead.

\* In many countries, women are well educated; they have incomes and access to health care services. These women have no interest in other's needs. Without being informed and being sensitized, they can not help the others because they do not understand their preoccupations.

\* No veil, no burqua (Ni Putes Ni Soumises)

\* The first violation is the one of States that expressed reserves to the CEDAW. Algeria ratified the CEDAW expressing a reserve on the article 16 about divorcee because of religious reasons. There are more reserves on the CEDAW than on other conventions and this devaluates the importance of the CEDAW.

\* In the world, there are places where women can not wear veil in the Parliament and there are places where they have to do it. Concerning veil, women have the choice to decide what they want to do.

\* It is important to integrate women's rights in international treaties and to have regional treaties to apply the CEDAW at a local level.

\* The youth, young men and men must be integrated to the fight for women's rights respect.

\* Climate change has negative impact on us. Women can and must participate to the efforts around the world to deal with climate change.

\* Patriarchy starts at home. When empowering women, it is highly necessary to empower the girl-child. Discrimination begins when a girl-child must obey to her brother

\* In addition to live in bad economic and social conditions, migrant women suffer from a double discrimination: the violence of the government and the violence of the culture where they are victims of discrimination, racism, sexism, etc.

\* Marie-Anne Delahaut, director of research at the Destree Institute and head of Millennia 2015, made an intervention to introduce the Millennia 2015 process and to invite all NGOs to join the Millennia community to encourage "Women actors of development for the global challenges"

The NGOs Forum for Women allowed women with different backgrounds, cultures, works and expectations to express their concerns and to meet their peers to share their experience, their knowledge on a common goal: women's development and empowerment. The NGOs Forum for Women has encouraged the solidarity for action.

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