



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

Impressions 27th February 2010

As an intern assistant for Millennium 2015 at the Destree Institute Information Unit, I had a chance to attend, with Marie-Anne Delahaut director of research at the Destree Institute and head of the Information Society Unit, to the NGOs Forum for Women Beijing + 15. With my impressions, I am trying to reflect the atmosphere of the NGOs Forum for Women where I could not have attended without the support of Marie-Anne Delahaut and the Destree Institute.

The NGOs forum took place in the Salvation Army in New-York and was organized for two days. I attended to the afternoon conference on Saturday 27 February 2010. The Salvation Army is a big building with auditorium and conferences rooms. Before the beginning of the panel on The State of the World's women, a lunch was offered. More than 200 women from everywhere (Asiatic countries, African countries, Arabic countries, European countries) were gathered all together in an auditorium. It was more an informal lunch than an official one. It was convivial and welcoming. There were no tables and chairs were displayed in small circles in order to allow women to speak together, to exchange. Everyone one could choose its lunch box (vegetarian or turkey sandwiches). There was a background noise in the room but it was not unpleasant because that noise was the one of dozens of languages spoken by women.

The cultural and linguistic diversity was there and visible: clothes, languages, etc. It was amazing to see that women from everywhere were gathered in one place for a common goal: promote women's rights respect and empowerment of women. It was also impressive because when you sit in the room, you just realize that there are still many efforts and things to do for women's rights and empowerment in developing countries but also in developed countries. When you see all these women, you realize that they all have the same fight, that they are not alone in their fight and that each of them at their level defend women's rights from the president of NGOs or association to the woman of

1



the civil society. They get involved in the respect of women's rights, the fight against women violence, the equal treatment of women at work. Preoccupations are various according to the situation of the country where they come from. Some women fight for rights that women in other regions have already acquired. Women of every age were there for a common goal. The fight will be won when that kind of meeting will no longer be organized.

After lunch, the panel on the State of the World's Women started in the auditorium. The experts of the panel made an intervention on different topics. One of them made an intervention on patriarchy stating that patriarchy was a brake to women's development. She was totally right. Women's rights and empowerment can not be achieved without a change in mind of people. Change of mentalities of men of course because patriarchy gives them all the advantages but also change of mentalities of women. This can be shocking but I think that in rural areas where women do not receive any education and are far away from international conventions such as the CEDAW, traditions and customs are strong. Of course, I know that this tends to change but one can not envy what she does not know. Thus awareness campaign must be done to make women aware of how patriarchy and traditions look them up in a world where they do not evolve. Women awareness will change mentalities in all the family and the community are they educate children, they pass on knowledge.

After expert' speeches, the audience was allowed to ask for questions, to make suggestions or observations but they had a limited time in order to allow everyone to participate. Micros were placed in the gangway of the auditorium and women who wanted to intervene had to queue up. Some women did not respect the speech time. Of course, it is not really fair but it also showed how women are involved. They were not there to passively listen but to actively participate, to make their claims heard and to make things change. Each woman on this way passed on a message with determination or by questioning. Each detail was important. For example, one of the women intervened because she did not agree with the image of the NGO Forum for Women poster. On this poster there was a series of women's portrayal placed next to each other. She claimed that the poster did not reflect the sense of the meeting and that women on the picture should be gathered because the women's rights respect and empowerment was a common goal based on solidarity thanks to sharing of experiences. Marie-Anne Delahaut, director of research at the Destree Institute and head of the Information Society Unit and of Millennium 2015 made an intervention to invite all women NGOs to join Millennium 2015 community and works to further all together the Millennium 2015 foresight Research Process on "Women actors of development for the global challenges".

During international events under UN organization, it is important to organize NGOs forum where everyone can express herself because association and NGO work with the civil society. They are aware of population and women's needs and interest. NGOs and association allow international institutions to get and to stay connected with the reality.

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