THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS:
A CONTINUING DIALOGUE

edited by Susana T. Fried

Report of the 1994 Women's Global Leadership Institute
Center for Women's Global Leadership

The State University of New Jersey
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THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS:
A CONTINUING DIALOGUE

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The Women's Global Leadership Institute is a collaborative activity which draws intensively on the talents and skills of many. It involves the staff and volunteers of the Center, many friends and advisors, resource people, and, of course, the participants of the Institute. The success of the Institute depends on the dedication and energy of each and every one of them.

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Mariama Williams.
THE 1994 WOMEN’S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE: AN INTRODUCTION

Embracing the concerns of women from diverse cultural, political and geographic communities, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership seeks to bring their perspectives and strategies into greater visibility, both nationally and internationally. The Center’s goal is to advance women’s leadership globally, through programs which provide opportunities for the exchange of information, strategies and visions by:

> promoting increased visibility of women’s perspectives in global debates and public policymaking;
> creating institutional and leadership development opportunities for women and feminist organizations;
> and working collaboratively with other groups addressing similar questions through mobilization, advocacy and global education.

Since 1990, the Center has focused on women’s human rights. This has taken two major forms: first, demanding that the international human rights community broaden and expand its definition of human rights to more effectively incorporate women’s understanding of their human rights; and second, strengthening women’s human rights advocacy efforts through training and leadership development, international mobilization campaigns and global education. The annual Women’s Global Leadership Institute is a central part of building global strategies and expanding international networks. Indeed, many of our continuing programmatic activities had their origin in working group sessions and collective decisions at the Institutes.

The Indivisibility of Women’s Human Rights presents debates on issues of women’s human rights—including violence against women, reproductive health, economic justice, and organizing—that took place at the 1994 Women’s Global Leadership Institute. It addresses questions about how the human rights framework can incorporate women’s experiences and perspectives, how it can strengthen women’s organizing, and what we can do to hold international, national, and local institutions accountable for promoting and protecting women’s human rights. Part II, following this Introduction, contains edited versions of the four thematic panels of the Institute, which together established a common basis for discussion among Institute participants. Part III addresses issues of leadership and organizational development. Part IV presents the reports from the strategy working groups at the Institute.

The theme of the 1994 Women’s Global Leadership Institute was “Women, Violence and Human Rights.” It provided the Center and the participants with an opportunity to build upon the work of previous Institutes in reconceptualizing human rights from a feminist perspective and devising cooperative strategies for action at local, national, regional and international levels. Preparation for and anticipation of the IV World Conference on Women infused sessions with an immediate common focal point. We also discussed potential joint activities at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), and the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), and ongoing collaborative efforts like the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and follow up to the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993).

The 22 participants came from all regions of the world. This Institute was privileged to have five participants from Africa, more than in the previous two Institutes. They were:
The increasing complexity of geographic boundaries in women’s organizing was reflected in the fact that six of the participants lived outside of their nation of origin, and three were women from the South living in the North. The unique perspective of these women greatly enhanced the substance of the Institute. They continually reminded us that while divisions such as North/South reflect real differences in power, access, resources and identity, there are other realities that cut across such divisions. Such an acknowledgement, which included grappling with both the growing poverty within the “North” and the necessity of bridging these divisions, added to the richness of our discussions.

The two-week Institute included a number of thematic panel and small group discussions, along with skills and strategy group sessions. As in the past, we spent the first few days setting out the framework of women’s human rights, including discussions about using international law as a tool for advancing women’s human rights, and a session on strategies to end violence against women. In addition, we included two thematic sessions that reflect the Center’s developing programs: one on the social and economic dimensions of women’s human rights, the other on the human rights aspects of women’s reproductive health. These sessions included presentations from leaders in national and international organizations that have been working to expand definitions of women’s human rights and strengthen the women’s human rights movement. These reports make up Part II of this book.

In response to comments from past participants and the expressed interests of this year’s group, we added several sessions to the agenda that focused explicitly on the concepts and practices of leadership. These sessions addressed a variety of concerns, but brought into focus the everyday issues we each face within our organizations: building effective and responsible leadership, dealing with differences, and grappling with diversity between and among groups, each of which affect our ability to work in coalitions or on common concerns. These sessions are summarized in Part III of this publication. Participants also struggled with the challenges to collaboration posed by the international composition of the Institute, at the same time that we pushed the human rights framework to articulate more fully the concerns and organizing strategies of the people with whom we work. We ended the two weeks with strategy group reports and commitments to work together in future campaigns and conferences. Reports from these strategy groups comprise Part IV of this book.

Over the past five years, increased women’s leadership and recognition of women’s human rights have gone hand in hand. Women have been able to use the ethical and strategic elements of the human rights framework as tools for mobilizing and lobbying for change. The growing movement for women’s human rights increases the number and legitimacy of women’s voices at all levels of policymaking, and expands and strengthens women’s efforts to play a central role in local, regional and global civil society.
DEBATES AND DIALOGUE: KEY ISSUES IN WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

In the past few years, women have made tremendous advances in broadening the conceptualization and practice of human rights so that it better incorporates the perspectives and experiences of women. However, despite the growing awareness of women's human rights, the process of transforming the human rights framework so that it can be used to address more fully the range of human rights issues that women encounter must continue. As part of this process, the Women's Global Leadership Institute organized four panel sessions that provided Institute participants with an opportunity to discuss issues of women's human rights using a common analytic framework. The first session was an overview of the ways in which the human rights framework and international law can be utilized strategically in our work on women's rights. The remaining panels were discussions from within a human rights perspective, addressing such themes as organizing and developing policies to end violence against women, human rights aspects of women's reproductive health, and the economic and social dimensions of women's human rights.

One of the goals of the Institute is to develop a common framework of understanding that can serve as a basis for the collaborative development of strategies towards promoting women's leadership in the areas of violence against women, reproductive rights and health, and socio-economic rights. Participants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the human rights framework, and are introduced to examples of ways in which they might integrate such a perspective into their own work. For practical purposes the three more particular themes were discussed in separate panels, while the subsequent discussions in workshops and working group sessions were based on the premise that these issues are interconnected.

The following section contains edited transcriptions of the panel sessions. Each panel was followed by more participatory discussion in the plenary and then by small afternoon workshops. As far as possible, substantive comments by panelists that arose during the discussions have been edited into the text of the main presentations.
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SETTING A WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

MODERATOR: Charlotte Bunch
Center for Women’s Global Leadership

This panel will focus on the human rights framework as a way of addressing violations that women experience. We will look at different avenues, through both human rights organizations and the United Nations, for addressing women’s human rights, and examine the challenges and experiences of using these traditional human rights channels. This panel will draw on some of our previous discussions about the framework of human rights and what it means to situate women’s issues in this framework.

In several of the Institute participants’ introductions, I noted that people said that human rights for women, or women using human rights, was unknown in your country or was relatively new. I should say that for most of us, this is new work. Even those of us who are on this panel—who in some ways have become the old guard of this work—have only been doing it for five or six years, and in some cases even less. So I do not think any of you should feel that women using a human rights framework is especially new in your country or that your country is somehow far behind. This is a new movement. With the exception of a few individuals who were trying to do this very early, there was not very much work done on a specifically women’s approach to human rights before the late 1980’s. So, please do not feel that the work we will talk about today is far more developed somewhere else in the world. We are in the process of building this approach together. Even in places that will be described by some of our panelists who have been pushing on the doors for some years, a specifically women’s approach to human rights still feels new and often almost unimaginable.

A second thing I want to mention is the difficulty of getting funding for women’s human rights work as compared to something like women and development. What is challenging in women’s assertion of women’s human rights is that the claim is not that women are needy, but that we are demanding our rights. It may be more difficult to get funding for this empowerment approach than it is for a charity or needs framework that is more familiar to funders.

Another theme which will run throughout all of the panels is the question of how we work in relation to the United Nations and how we utilize the UN World conferences. In many ways, those of us who worked on the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June, 1993 saw that conference as a way to make visible what women are demanding and what women need at the grassroots level. So when we talk about the United Nations conferences, I hope we will keep referring to them in relation to what women do locally around them. Further, conferences are not the only international or United Nations mechanisms we should think about using. Many of the panelists today will talk about other UN conventions, the Human Rights Commission, and other ways we can utilize international legal instruments, organizations, or mechanisms, so that we do not start thinking that the only thing out there are these world conferences which have been dominating the horizon in this period. We have asked the panelists to talk about many aspects of the United Nations, about human rights organizations, human rights education, and their experiences with trying to bring a women’s perspective into these operations.
Elsa Stamatapoulou-Robbins is from Greece. She has been the Director of the United Nations Center for Human Rights here in New York for four years, and has been one of the main forces within the UN bringing women's perspectives into human rights activities. Suzanne Roach and Sheila Dauer are from Amnesty International. Suzanne is one of those pioneers who started pushing for a women's caucus in Amnesty at least ten years ago and Sheila is the Acting Campaign Director. Dorothy Q. Thomas is the founding Director of the Women's Rights Project of Human Rights Watch and she has pioneered bringing a gender perspective to human rights documentation. The next panelist is Krishanti Dhamaraj from Sri Lanka, who has been living in the United States for about 12 years, and is currently the acting director of the San Francisco office of Amnesty International where she works on women and human rights education.

Elsa Stamatapoulou
United Nations Center for Human Rights

Normally when I talk at these panels, I start with a critique of the United Nations and of how little we have done on women’s human rights. Now, I think after Vienna I have a certain calm, and I feel, together with you, more of a responsibility to follow up on our achievement, because it is really up to us. Women have made the call, the UN has responded, and it is up to us now to continue the work. Otherwise, to put it bluntly, we are going to be embarrassed.

Now, why did we use human rights as a strategy? I think, frankly, that it was not simply a strategy. But why did we use it as a strategy? For three main reasons. First, because human rights, internationally, have been defined. We have them in treaties and in declarations of the United Nations. We have more than 70 treaties and declarations in the area of human rights. So we have human rights in the body of international law that most countries have accepted. Second, because the UN system in the human rights area has expanded tremendously in the last 15 to 20 years it has developed monitoring mechanisms for receiving complaints of human rights violations, and has developed a number of good procedures. The UN has also developed a program of secondary systems which provides such things as advisory services and human rights education. So women wanted to profit from that. And third, because the political visibility of human rights has increased tremendously, especially since the end of the Cold War. Now you see human rights included in every major conference, in every major program; the human rights framework is central to the United Nations. It is normal for us to have wanted to ride on that wave of high visibility. Human rights is becoming the ideology of the 21st century and the yardstick for any human behavior.

Having answered quickly why we used human rights as a strategy, I must go two steps back. We have to know what the United Nations does in order to critique it and to act accordingly. So, what does the UN do? In a nutshell, the UN does three basic things. First, we draft international legislation in the area of human rights. Second, we monitor the respect of human rights. And third, we provide technical assistance and advisory services.

Since the creation of the United Nations, we have been creating a body of law, which starts with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And were the human rights of
women included in that? Yes. We had the non-discrimination clause of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was followed later with the non-discrimination clauses in the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. But there are also many other extremely important provisions in these treaties that are of concern to women: equality in the area of marriage, protection of motherhood, protection of women and children in armed conflicts, the political rights of women, the nationality of married women, and equal pay for equal work. So there is a body of law in the already-existing treaties, in general human rights treaties, with concern for the human rights of women. And of course, we have the culmination of all that in 1979 when the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

CEDAW gives a very good definition of discrimination against women, but it has a very sad record of government reservations to it, most of them on religious grounds. In fact, out of almost 130 signatories, 55 have made reservations of an especially religious nature. This has weakened the legal framework of the convention. What have we been doing in response to this? The women's movement has been talking about it. Several human rights bodies of mainstream human rights areas of the UN have tried to critique this practice, and have even taken it to the National Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on whether it is possible to have reservations that go contrary to the very purpose of the convention. But these efforts have been nipped in the bud. Nothing has happened.

However, the World Conference on Human Rights made a very big step forward at this conceptual stage in the creation of law. Not only did it ask for us to integrate women's human rights issues into the mainstream of the United Nations human rights bodies' work, but it also called for the elimination of reservations that go contrary to the spirit of the convention. Then it said that whenever we have gender bias that might arise because of the conflict between religious extremism and women's rights, we should eliminate the practice which is based on religious extremism. This was the first time that this was said at such a high level forum—and there was a consensus acceptance of the concept at the Conference.

Now, apart from the problem of reservations, we had another conceptual problem regarding women's human rights at the international level, which is that not all of the rights that we see as women's rights in the women's movement were declared as human rights at the international level, especially violence against women in the private sphere. There was the private versus public split. And again, a very big breakthrough was made at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, because we said that violence against women is an issue of human rights. Last December (1993), with all this momentum of worldwide movement, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on The Elimination of Violence Against Women.

I want to quote how it defines violence against women so you see how courageous it is. It says:

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 plans of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life....
And then it says

It encompasses but is not limited to physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring in the family including battering, sexual abuse of female children in
SETTING A WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

a household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation, and other traditional practices harmful to women. Non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation. Second, physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the general community including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and intimidation at work and in educational institutions, trafficking in women, enforced prostitution. And third, physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state wherever it occurs.

So you see, it is extremely far reaching. And of course, it was also adopted in record time. Normally it takes us ten years; this was adopted in two years.

Now let me come to the second area of our work—monitoring abuses and what we can do about them from a women's perspective. The UN monitors human rights implementation around the world. It has a system: a Commission on Human Rights and a number of treaty bodies that monitor treaties in the same way that CEDAW, the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, monitors the women's convention. We have monitoring bodies that monitor the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Against Torture, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc.

There is also a whole new set of practices that have developed around the work of monitoring. What do we do? We can receive complaints from individuals, from non-governmental organizations, and process them through various procedures. Suppose you have a case of arbitrary detention, summary or arbitrary executions, religious intolerance, or the sale and use of children in prostitution and pornography—we have a number of procedures that deal with such complaints. We can act like Amnesty International does. We can send urgent action appeals to a government if there is a life-threatening situation, and once a year, we publish a public report in which you see everything exposed. This is how we work.

The most recent mechanism related to women, thanks again to the movement and the World Conference on Human Rights, is the Special Rapporteur—"expert" for the vernacular—on Violence Against Women at the Commission for Human Rights. The person who was appointed is Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka. In March, I looked at the Commission On Human Rights resolutions of 1994, to check whether they have done anything to integrate women's human rights concerns into the rest of their work, or whether, as some people fear, they are going to just leave it to Ms. Coomaraswamy to appease their conscience and forget about it. And I saw with great pleasure that, à propos about 80 subjects, they have included women's human rights concerns: Religious intolerance, human rights administration of justice, torture, human rights information activities, gender desegregative data for all rapporteurs, rape and abuse of women in the former Yugoslavia, legal and social status of women in equatorial Guinea, and rights to own property. In all these resolutions, you see women. This is a first step.

When I looked at the Special Rapporteurs' reports, for example, the Rapporteur on Summary and Arbitrary Executions, is now obliged to have a subchapter on women, and he addressed women. He said that women do not suffer particularly, are not specifically targeted victims of summary and arbitrary executions. I think he says this because we have not yet had a breakthrough in our movement in terms of what we submit to the Rapporteur. If we submit...
to him cases of state-condoned executions of women—state-condoned means tolerated by the law in the midst of judicial practices—then he will include it. We have this responsibility.

Now, when we talk about the treaty bodies, a problem I see is that although they have accepted the idea of gender disaggregated data—they now have to ask about women, but governments still do not submit information to them. Also, NGOs have still not come to these human rights treaty bodies adequately enough to bring the situations to their attention.

The third area of activity of the United Nations is advisory services and technical assistance, and this has been a major part of our work since 1987. This is what we call institution building—building local capacity for human rights education. This starts with the idea that everybody needs to know their rights. First of all, we all have to know our human rights, which of course includes women knowing their human rights. Then, we try to build democratic institutions. These days, the building of democratic institutions is the thing. Everybody does it; the UN Development Program does it, we do it at the Centre for Human Rights, everybody.

The Centre for Human Rights has several ways in which we try to be sure that women are included. We study the situation of women wherever we go in order to establish programs. For example, when we do training courses for judges, we include elements of gender bias in the courtroom, and issues such as how women can be particularly abused when they are detained. We try to raise a particular awareness. Finally, the Center for Human Rights in Geneva now has a focal point on women who, on a daily basis, tries to integrate women's human rights concerns into all of our work. I will list seven of the challenges the Centre for Human Rights has given:

> First, to achieve the true integration of women's human rights in all international human rights activities, governmental and non-governmental—whether it is the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the European Union, etc.

> Second, to establish the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women as a most important political and moral authority. It is very important to bring out Mrs. Coomaraswamy, to see her as a leader, and to help her. All of us—non-governmental organizations, governments, the Secretariat of the United Nations, the academic world—everybody really has to help Mrs. Coomaraswamy.

> Third, to integrate the human rights perspective in the women's movement at the grassroots level. This is something we are trying to do—to educate about human rights and the international complaints procedures to which I alluded—so that we can submit all this information to the United Nations at the international level.

> Fourth, to press for the withdrawal of the reservations to CEDAW. We have to press from all levels. We are pressing from the international side; we must also press at the local level. CEDAW passed a significant initiative at its recent session in January, that the first question that we ask of any state party when they present reports will be whether they’ve made a reservation to CEDAW, to ask them why, and to grill them on that.

> Fifth, to establish a complaints procedure or optional protocol under CEDAW. Again, this was an idea that CEDAW launched quite successfully at this last session, and it is in the works.
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Sixth, to insure that governments report to CEDAW on issues of violence against women. In 1992, CEDAW interpreted the Convention as covering violence against women. So, all those countries who have ratified the treaty have to report to us on what they do on the issue of violence. With the help of the new Declaration, we must press countries to report to CEDAW on that as well.

Seven, to develop further international standards on the elimination of all forms of sexual exploitation. There is a legal weakness here that we need to fix.

In conclusion, I think the biggest challenge of this is a moral one. In our work, we have to create a kind of moral revolution within the United Nations so that the discrimination, the abuse, and the violence against women will be seen by governments, by individuals, and by all for what it is—in other words, as an affront to human dignity and as a human rights violation.

Suzanne Roach
Amnesty International

I thought it might be interesting to look back over the past five years and see what has happened within Amnesty International (AI) around women’s human rights. Amnesty is an organization that has representatives in more than a hundred countries around the world, has been in existence for over thirty years, and is seen in many places as one of the foremost human rights organizations. In the past five years, work for the protection of women’s human rights has evolved in this institution internationally. As Elsa was describing the different agencies within the United Nations that protect women’s rights and that have had to be pushed and forced at every level to begin to integrate women adequately, so is it equally true that Amnesty International, as a large human rights organization, has had to be shaken a bit to begin to look at how better to include the protection of women’s human rights in its work.

I would like to take two minutes to describe the structure of Amnesty International in very broad terms, because as we have gone through this process, we have had to learn how to affect the different structures of the organization to make the change happen. So if you will bear with me for a moment, I will run through this in a schematic manner, ending with some of the challenges that we are now faced with. Then I would like to ask Sheila if she would comment on one of the most important campaigns that Amnesty has undertaken this year, which is called Breaking the Silence: Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation.

Amnesty is made up of member sections in more than 46 countries around the world. We also have groups of Amnesty members that haven’t quite evolved to sections in a further dozen or so countries. This is the base of Amnesty. Generally, they are organized with a grassroots membership, they elect a board of directors, and in some, but not all Amnesty sections, there are staffs of paid employees to help carry out the work. Here in the United States, we have a very large staff; we have over 80 people. But in many Amnesty sections, there are no paid staff and it is purely volunteers who carry out the work.

Every two years, members from Amnesty around the world elect delegates from within their own sections to go to what are called the International Council Meetings (ICM). This
group of elected delegates meets every two years to determine the policy of the organization for the next several years. This meeting goes on for two to three weeks, and when the meeting is over, there is a body called the International Executive Committee (IEC).

The IEC is responsible for overseeing the organization and is a kind of board of directors for the international organization. These people are primarily responsible for overseeing our international headquarters in London—the International Secretariat. This next point is really critically important: All the work that Elsa was referring to—of gathering data on human rights violations—happens here. The different membership sections of Amnesty do not document human rights violations and collect that information. It all happens in London at headquarters. All the information comes in there. That information is checked, double-checked, and then is either sent out in the form of urgent actions asking for help in writing to governments on behalf of this people, is repackaged as reports, or is developed for campaigns on which all the members of Amnesty can work together. In addition, this information is sent to the United Nations to begin to be put through all of its human rights mechanisms.

So, you can see that it is a pretty complicated, unwieldy operation. And—I have to tell you, this is one of things I feel very strongly about—it is truly based on a great, unwieldy democracy. Members in each section vote on the policy that they want the organization to follow. Then, when they send their delegates to this meeting every two years, they fight it out and decide on the policy by a democratic vote. That is how things happen in Amnesty. You have to understand this in order to picture how work for women in Amnesty is evolving, because it is only evolving through this long and cumbersome process.

With that as a background, I would like to run through some of the things that have happened in the past five years. I am a member of Amnesty here in the United States, so I will begin with that section. If you had an Amnesty member from a different section, they would begin with what was happening in their section. In 1988, Amnesty members from around the United States came together in a membership meeting and they said, “You know, we’ve got some reports, we’ve looked at the materials, and women are really just missing. These are great reports and they’re really important. But turning the pages, what you have is case of man after man after man after man—on whose behalf we do want to work. But where are the women?” Once the membership had voted on that, our board of directors sent a letter, both to the researchers at the International Secretariat, and to the IEC, the governing body, saying that our section was very disturbed, that we really wanted to see stronger work done for women. At the same time, the members of Amnesty in Germany, Switzerland, Britain, Ireland, and many other countries were doing the same. So the message began to arrive at the center saying that there was concern and that it was shared not just by one section of Amnesty but by many. Therefore, at the ICM meeting in 1989, for the first time in Amnesty’s 27 year history, there was a meeting of Amnesty delegates from around the world to begin to talk about how we should do work for women. So it was only five years ago that delegates at this international level began to work on this issue, and it was even an unofficial meeting; it was not even on the formal agenda. The group at this meeting brought back a resolution to the full body that called for strengthening Amnesty’s work for women at every level of the organization, and the resolution passed. We were so happy when we heard this. We thought, “This is it! This is
the breakthrough. This is what we've been waiting for.” And it took us a while to realize that passing a resolution, even with a strong majority, was not very much with no resources.

So that was the first lesson. However, in the next year, the US section worked out an arrangement with the International Secretariat in which we said that we would like to help them go back through all the information they had collected on women to see if we could identify some patterns of abuse against women. They agreed. So we sent Sheila Dauer over to London to work with all the researchers, to pull out the material they had been keeping on women, and she began to analyze it to see if we could identify patterns of abuse that were gender-based. And we did. It resulted in the publication of a report, and that report wound up being the basis of a major international campaign, Amnesty’s first international campaign on abuses against women. This was the first time the organization and all of its member bodies had begun to focus on women in particular. That was only 1991. So what Charlotte was saying about this being new is really true.

At the 1991 ICM, a resolution passed—after 12 years of work—that expanded Amnesty’s mandate with regard to work on behalf of imprisoned homosexuals. Amnesty had always worked on behalf of people who advocated human rights for homosexuals, but not on behalf of people who were actually arrested for their identity as homosexual. It took many, many international meetings, with delegates from around the world coming together, before we could finally agree that we really should be doing this. As a result of that 1991 resolution, Amnesty would adopt anyone who had been imprisoned solely because of their homosexuality, that is the practice of homosexual acts in private between consenting adults. This meant that Amnesty would now begin to document, report, and campaign to stop human rights violations against lesbians and gay men throughout the world.

At the same time, sections around the world were asked to identify women who were interested in seeing work for women promoted within their section. We developed a group of women’s task forces in a number of countries, and together have formed an intersectional network. In the first year of its functioning, we were very weak. We had difficulty communicating with each other. We were sending each other things in different languages, we did not know how to translate. Again, this was an unwieldy group of about 20 sections, and we just could not quite figure out how to communicate together.

In 1993, we had another ICM meeting. The women’s network really was not organized; we did not raise a lot of issues about women at that ICM. However, groups of women from sections around the world had been complaining to London repeatedly: members had been complaining. We got our directors to complain and say that we absolutely had to do better work than we had been doing. The IEC came away from that meeting and said, “Okay, we’ll do a section consultation. We will consult with all of these sections around the world and ask them what they want to be the focus of the major campaign in 1995.” We just found out they did the consultation, and guess what the decision was? Amnesty is going to focus on women, which means it is not going to be a side campaign. It is going to be a major campaign on which the resources of every one of those sections will be focused.

In the meantime, our struggling little network has become a lot smarter. This year, in about seven sections around the world, we have brought forward very specific resolutions. For example, at the international headquarters, there are about 300 paid staff who collect
information on abuses in countries around the world. They work on all of the abuses within
Amnesty's mandate, within the particular countries for which they are responsible. That
means they work on men, women, and children. But in the last five years, we have
recognized the evolution in the area of women's human rights. As an area of specialization,
of particular expertise and knowledge. We have no full-time staff person with these
qualifications at our international headquarters. So one of the resolutions being brought
forward by some of these sections calls for the creation of a women's human rights
research position. About nine sections will be coming forward with the same resolution. A
second resolution calls for a clarification of Amnesty's mandate that would allow Amnesty
to work for a number of things, including for women who are detained because of laws
that are discriminatory. In line with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against
Women, we are asking to look at how governments can be held responsible—not for acts
that they commit, since that is what Amnesty does right now—but for wide patterns of
abuse against women that the government does nothing to stop, like bride burning or
domestic violence. We are asking that this clarification be made so that we can do better
work on these issues.

I would like to end by saying that we have become a lot smarter in the past five
years. We have realized that we have to be able to talk together in sections, and that we
have to be able to work with our delegates, get our position papers out, get our
resolutions working for us. We believe that next year, if all goes well, we will see a very
strong increase in the resources of Amnesty working internationally for women.

Sheila Dauer
Amnesty International

I would just like to add a few things to Suzanne's sketch of how things work in
Amnesty. One of the things you should know is that information on human rights violations
can come from anywhere in the world, and that you can send information directly to the
London office of Amnesty International. If you are in a larger country, and right now it tends
to be North America, some of Latin America, and Western Europe, there are country experts
volunteering with Amnesty who pick up reports of human rights violations in their country
and relay them to the Research Department in London.

One of the things that I want to say about Breaking the Silence is that, like the report,
Women in the Frontline, it was a result of membership work. In fact, it was written by the
Amnesty International force that works for gay and lesbian concerns in consultation with
the International Secretariat. So the volunteers of Amnesty in the United States' and other
sections provided the missing piece and the human resources that were not available at the
international level.

The first resolution on bringing protection for gay men and lesbians into the Amnesty
mandate was presented in 1979. It took successive resolutions over the years until finally,
in 1991, we had international consensus and were able to pass a resolution. But because
of this lengthy process, the Research Department is just at the beginning stages of picking
out material within the AI mandate on gay men and lesbians. So, we designed a campaign
to go along with this report that would accomplish several different objectives. First, we
wanted to take up particular cases in countries around the world where we can make a
difference. And second, we wanted to do some outreach to let people here in the United States know how Amnesty's mandate has been widened, what kinds of human rights violations fall within its purview, and how to document and send violations to the International Research Department. Similarly, we wanted to do outreach around the world to organizations that are documenting violations, to explain how to send information to the International Secretariat.

Here in the United States, we have been using two techniques in our campaign. One is publicity, with local chapters around the country giving newspaper interviews, and in some cases placing advertisements in newspapers that address issues of imprisonment, torture, and political killings of gay men and lesbians. We invite those who see this ad to approach us and talk to us about what is going on, so that we can tell them they have to document and send information to the International Secretariat. In terms of direct action that is work on a country and on specific cases within that country, we have done an action on Mexico where eight activists who were identified as homosexuals were picked up, charged with rape, beaten up, and then imprisoned. We have issued a number of urgent actions on this situation. Because of our work, I think at least two of those activists have been released and have a case against the Mexican government for false arrest and torture.

We also have a case in Brazil, which unfortunately has to do with an assassination. A town counselor in Honduras State went on the radio and revealed his bisexuality, and very soon after that was harassed and started getting death threats. The council tried to expel him. Amnesty issued some protective urgent actions, but unfortunately he was abducted, tortured, and assassinated. We are currently working on an action to push investigators to make sure that people who were involved in this assassination are arrested, and tried and punished. The general pattern we have been able to draw is that there will be an investigation, and occasionally somebody may be picked up. But somehow they get released, and in fact, that is what happened in this case. So we are working on that situation, and although the campaign ends in June, we will be continuing our work on this case.

Also in Romania, there is an Article 200 which basically makes it illegal to be gay. We have done a lot of work with the Helsinki Human Rights Committee in Romania, which has somebody here at the Columbia University Human Rights Advocacy Program with whom we have been able to work. We have had an action to abolish Article 200, and last month had a march and big demonstration outside Romania. So we are keeping up the pressure on the Romanian government to abolish that article.

Finally, here in the United States we have concerns, one of which is discriminatory sodomy laws, i.e., laws which are applied to homosexuals for acts in private between consenting adults. We have targeted five states, but in order to work on the United States to help homosexuals, we had to bring this issue to the International Executive Committee. Again, we had to begin this process way before we had even started our campaign. Finally, in March we got a positive decision, so we will be working to abolish the sodomy laws in five targeted states in the United States.
Maybe it is a good idea to say briefly what Human Rights Watch is. For those of you who do not know, Human Rights Watch is the largest US-based international human rights organization. It is made up of regional and thematic divisions. Most of you know the regional divisions by their independent names: as the “Watch Committees.” So, Asia Watch, Africa Watch, Middle East Watch, America’s Watch, and Helsinki Watch are actually all one entity, Human Rights Watch. We are working very hard now to consolidate that identity more. In addition to those regional divisions, there are thematic projects: one that works on prisons and prisoners rights; one that works on arms sales to gross abusers of human rights; and one that works on freedom of expression. The one that I run, which works on women’s human rights, has been around for about four years.

I have come here every year since the Institutes started. I came up on the train from Washington, which takes about five hours, so I had plenty of time to think about what I was going to say. And I realized that I was obsessed with the idea of boxes, of looking at the way in which this work on women’s human rights gets us into issues about what defines what we do, about how what we do is limited by certain kinds of boxes, about how we try to open them up, break them down, and about what the relationships are in between them.

Human rights, in its most theoretical sense, in its most principled sense, is a house that has many, many rooms in it. But there has been a tendency within the human rights community to live in only one room—and maybe in the basement room. What I mean is that human rights has this incredible, expansive breadth to it. It is universal in theory, it is indivisible. It encompasses economic rights, civil and political rights, social rights, cultural rights across race, class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or other status—whatever that means. Amnesty has made a very significant contribution to expanding the meaning of “other status” in its work on gay and lesbian rights. What happened over time in the human rights community is that, instead of living in that house and in all those rooms, we ended up living in one of them, a small one of them, looking only at a certain set of rights, and then only a certain set of rights affecting only a certain group of people. Maybe, in the most rhetorical sense, it was the white male civil and political rights room, and the rest of the house was really not being lived in.

What I feel about the women’s human rights community or movement, is that, in a lot of ways, we have been a factor in challenging this kind of one-roomism, in trying to get out of human rights being confined to a particular set of rights or a particular set of people’s rights, and in trying to open up the rooms, break down the walls, and do work across different types of rights and with different types of people. In many respects, we have had an extremely revolutionary influence on the way human rights practice is conceived and implemented by saying that it is not just about this particular type of right or this particular type of person. Certainly, one group of people who have been excluded and who should certainly be in the house is women. The effect of our presence has been to begin to break down some of these walls. By the same token, though, and this is going to be the major portion of what I want to talk about today, we always have to watch for the fact that we are at risk of replicating the very same problems we are trying to challenge.

It is a normal reaction to divide to fight a divided scene, and I think it is something to watch out for. By virtue of having been excluded from the room in some respects, we fight...
to be included as groups. So there is a lot of fighting on women's rights, on gay rights, on Native American rights, on rights for people of color. And we get into segregated groupings of ourselves. Sometimes, within those groupings, we only work on some rights and not on other rights. I think there is a risk for us in going too far down that road. It is important to be aware that with such a segregation of focus, there comes a real risk of division and of some consequences that bear very strong resemblance to the things that we were seeking to overcome in the first instance.

I think I felt that way a bit about this panel because it is represented as human rights organizations talking about human rights. It is almost as if I am back in the box that I am trying extremely hard to get out of. There is an interrelationship between this panel, and the panel on violence, and on reproductive rights, and on economic and social rights, that will grow over the days of your time here. Now, I understand that the organizers cannot create a situation in which everybody talks about everything at the same time. But I also think there is a feeling of trying not to be locked into a standard view of what is human rights practice, or what is a standard human rights organization. In fact, there is a lot of dynamism, flexibility, and interaction both within human rights organizations, and within and across various rights and types of people’s rights. I raise this issue as a caution, as something to be aware of as we think about how our work on women’s human rights really does change the way human rights is done, so that we do not replicate the problems that we have sought to challenge in the past.

That said, I want to focus on the issue of the interrelationship between this panel and the other panels, not so much because I know what the other panels are going to say, but because I am interested in seeing the dynamic between the various types of rights, like reproductive rights, civil and political rights, economic and social rights, and the variety of issues that arise in that whole amalgamation. I want to talk about this with one caveat. I am a practitioner who tries to get accountability for violations of women's human rights. That is really what the reporting is about, that is really what I do. So when I speak about the interrelationship between rights, it is from the perspective of somebody who is looking for accountability. I am trying to find how to define a particular violation, how to determine what the obligation is, and how to go after the abuser with as much power of the law and of international solidarity as I can get. That is the filter implicit in what I am about to talk about.

Once you get out of this one-roomism thinking, once you try to do this interrelationship between civil and political rights and economic and social rights one of the most interesting things that happens, at least to some people, is that there is an immediate desire to get back into that one room. There really is a benefit to trying to limit what you look at when you do human rights work. That is partly why an organization like Amnesty or Human Rights Watch, or maybe your organizations, tries to define very carefully what it will and will not take up, what violations it will and will not denounce. In a way, it is because the more clearly you can define what it is you are going after, what the violation is that you are trying to document and denounce, the more likely it is that you are going to be effective in raising the visibility of that violation and in bringing to bear an enormous amount of pressure to change it.

Once you begin to erode the boxes, once you begin to break out of the very limited definitions that you started with, the situation begins to get more complex. And the more complex it gets, the more difficult it becomes to really target the violation you are trying to
denounce, and to focus as much international scrutiny and pressure as you can to make abusive governments change their practices.

In my opinion, one of the biggest weaknesses in the women's human rights field now is that, no matter how simple or complex the issues we are working on, the quality of our documentary evidence is very poor. This is really undermining our capacity to make strong arguments about accountability for violations of women's human rights: We do not have good facts at our disposal, largely because we do not have resources at our disposal. The reliability of information is extremely important when we do fact finding, when we want to establish accountability, point the finger, and call a practice a violation of human rights. At Human Rights Watch, we have developed not exactly a sixth sense, but we often try to double check our information with sources we know are reliable. So I appeal to all of us here to put together very reliable information.

One of the most defined areas of human rights work—and by defined I mean the most tried and true areas of human rights work—is torture, which is an area in which there has been an enormous amount of documentation, an enormous amount of activism, and an enormous amount of consensus. When you focus on torture, you can count on the fact that people will be clear about what the violation is, and clear about the degree to which that behavior has been deemed unacceptable. Therefore, you can bring to bear an enormous amount of international scrutiny, attention, and denunciation, and you are going to have a greater likelihood of changing the abusive practices.

But as you gradually move away into broader and broader conceptualizations of human rights, or as you move into all the other rooms in the house, it becomes more complicated to identify what the violation is. Is there broad agreement that it constitutes a violation? What is the obligation under international law vis à vis the violation, and how can you mobilize vast international pressure to change the practice? And most importantly, as you get into developing consensus about rights that have previously been perceived as outside the scope of human rights work, you must pass the test of universality. This is not about every individual person inventing rights themselves. It is about putting a rights claim to the test. It is about moving into areas in which there is no agreement that a certain violation constitutes a violation and trying to build broad consensus that a particular practice is a violation, that it is prohibited under international law, and that the international community can consolidate an enormous amount of opposition to it. If you can manage to meet the universality test over time, the likelihood of having a more authoritative message and a more effective result is very high.

So, what has been the difficulty in making these interrelationships? What are the problems we are encountering in doing it? Once you start doing economic, civil, political, social, public, private, reproductive rights, violence—an enormous variety of rights that we are, as a women's human rights movement, injecting full force into the human rights field—we have a corresponding responsibility to deal with the complexities of working on these issues. Let me give some examples of what I am talking about, to give you an idea of some of the problems that are arising in my work. First, as you move away from areas of what could be termed traditional human rights work into these broader issues, you will find that the violation itself becomes harder to identify. This is a very important issue, because if you cannot identify the violation, how are you going to condemn it? How are you going to show that the state is responsible for committing it if you cannot identify, in
fact, what it is? This is crucial. Second, you will find that consensus about the fact of the violation is more limited. Fewer people agree with you. The further you go along, the less consensus there is about whether the particular thing you are working on constitutes a violation—which means that you have to work to build that consensus. You cannot just assume the violation or assert it, because ultimately you will not have an impact in changing the behavior.

Another problem which arises here is that if the violation is difficult to identify, or if the consensus about it being a violation is limited, then you have to play much more of an interpretive role as a human rights actor. You are not just saying that a soldier shot a person extrajudicially: It is an abuse; everybody knows about it; it is currently defined under international law; you can denounce it; it is not a problem. In our case we have to interpret the law to encompass this particular violation. It is not so straightforward, and that interpretive function can be more complex.

Finally, in the work of women's human rights, the actors we deal with, the individuals or entities to whom we try to assign accountability, are also more complex. We are not just looking at the state anymore. We are looking at private individuals. We may even end up looking at private companies, and this is a much more complicated set of problems in terms of identifying accountability and fixing remedies. It is at about this point in my work that I start thinking that I like that basement room, and that I would not mind going back into it. When you are in the process of documenting women's human rights abuse in these kind of complex situations, when you are going to release big fat reports that are going to be publicized all over the world, believe me, you start thinking it was clearer when it was just torture and detention.

It used to be that the most narrow focus of traditional human rights work was on political detainees. It was very straightforward: These people did not belong in detention, and they were often tortured in detention as a result of their political beliefs. This was clearly a no-go situation under international human rights law. But as the notion of women's human rights in particular has evolved, the kinds of issues we are getting into have changed. The problem for women's human rights is that, by and large, violations of women's human rights are acceptable practice. There is not a tenor of denunciation about them. I think it is a real problem that the abuse we are documenting is still perceived as standard procedure. For that reason, I think that consensus is crucial to our work, and even though we may not get it, we still need to denounce certain practices.

So, in the work on abuse of women in prison in the United States, for example, you are not looking at political detainees. The person being abused is a different person, and there is a completely different idea about what rights are at stake. These women usually have not been detained for their political beliefs, except in a few instances. And in large measure, you are dealing with people whom the public thinks deserve to be just where they are—and nobody cares what happens to them in custody. The level of consensus that these people should not be there, or certainly that they should not be abused, does not exist. So when you do this work as a human rights organization, you operate in a different situation and you have to try to say, "No, look at what is happening." In our case, we are looking at widespread sexual abuse of women in police custody in the United States, in prison in the United States, in a situation in which, by and large, there is not a large consensus about the problem.
Now, let's talk about a situation in which you are dealing with abuse by private individuals, like in the report we did on trafficking of Burmese women and girls into Thailand. Here you do not even have the state as the actor as you have traditionally had in situations where the state tortures the political prisoner or where the guards rape the women in their custody. Now you have a private individual, whom usually you cannot even find, who is going into Burma, bringing the person across the border, and selling her into prostitution. The perpetrator is a private individual. The government says, “Look, this is not under my human rights obligations. I am not doing it. It has nothing to do with me.” How do you deal with that? Nobody cares about trafficking. Nobody cares about prostitutes. So everybody questions why you are working on this issue. You have no consensus on how to deal with private actors, or on how to deal with the abuse itself. That means you have a responsibility to be very clear about questions such as, what is the violation? who is the violator? and, what are the responsibilities of the state vis à vis this problem?

In this case, we were lucky, because the state happened to be directly involved in the cross-border traffic of the women and girls. That helped us. But it did not help us in looking at some of the other rights indicated. The state was directly involved in the trafficking, it was profiting from the practice. That happened to be the case in this situation.

But there was also something else going on, which is that the women were being forced to work as prostitutes. Prostitution is not perceived as work, and as a result, prostitutes have a large number of problems with health and working conditions. But these problems are not perceived as violations of economic and social rights, of the rights to health care and safe working conditions that are implicit in this report. Who is accountable for denying these prostitutes this right to health, and who is making their working conditions bad? It is not the state; it is the brothel owners. But the state is tolerating it. When you start to get into the economic and social rights aspects of human rights abuse, it begins to get very complicated. This is especially so since it is very difficult to determine, for example, what the state's obligations are in guaranteeing a safe workplace in a place that the state does not even recognize as a workplace, and for a form of behavior that it does not recognize as work.

The last example I want to give you is in the report we have just released which contains the roots of a possible economic and social rights approach. But it also illustrates many of the complications. This is a report on reproductive rights. It is called A Matter of Power and it is about the state's control of women's virginity in Turkey. Basically, it looks at the state's use of virginity control examinations; that is, forcible virginity control examinations on women in police custody. But I do not want to talk about that, because that is the easy part. The part that is more complicated is the fact that these virginity control exams are often done by private individuals, usually families, on their daughters, and those daughters are usually minor girls.

Here, you have a situation in which there is a view that the girl's right to bodily integrity, her right to reproductive freedom, is completely subservient to the family's notion of honor and to the community's notion of honor. It is totally accepted—it is standard operating procedure for girls to have virginity control exams. How do you deal with that as a human rights activist? Who is accountable for the abuse? First of all, nobody thinks it is an abuse. Then comes the question, who is doing it, and how do you get at accountability.
for what they are doing? As we get further into the area of reproductive rights, we are going to find these problems of getting clarity about what the violation is, of getting agreement about the fact that a violation has occurred, and then of getting agreement about how you go after it. In this report, we were very careful not to comment on the action by the family members. We really could not do that. And we had another very big problem, which is that international law protects the right of the family with respect to the minor girl. This is a big impediment, especially for somebody who is coming at this with the perspective that doing virginity control in custody is degrading, humiliating, invasive, and discriminatory. But when they do it at home, and you are a private individual, we are sorry, there is nothing we can say about it.

This is all to say that there is an absolute necessity for us to do this work in women's human rights. We have got to get out of the basement. We have got to get out of that confined set of rights. But the more we move out, the more we have to be aware of the complex kinds of issues we are raising. We need to be sure that we do not create frameworks for doing this and then neglect to bring with us the consensus that is necessary to really make these rights universal rights. They cannot simply be rights which we construct out of our immediate outrage, rights for which we have no broader consensus nor tested practice for making them enforceable, rights for which governments and others cannot ultimately be held accountable. This is an extremely important cautionary note, because I feel that we could end up living in all those rooms in that big human rights house and be the only ones in there.

Krishanti Dhamaraj
Amnesty International

I feel like half of my work has already been done by the other panelists. What I would like to do is a little exercise to help you understand what I am talking about. I would like all of you to take a look at the chair and tell me what you see.

"A chair with its back to the group..."
"An empty chair..."
"I don't see a whole chair. I just see the back..."

The reason I put the chair in the corner far away from most of you, and facing one or two people, is that the way we interpret life, and the way we interpret human rights, depends on where we are and where we are sitting—on which room we are in, in which house, and in which box, as Dorothy said. All the answers about the chair are correct, but each response depends upon where one was sitting. Now we have to come together for universality, we have to look at one thing, and come to consensus about what we believe.

All women suffer discrimination, are discriminated against because of our gender. But we are not all equal in the oppression that we face. So what we need to do is be aware of what rights are and of what we consider to be rights. We need to understand them; to accept where we are on a local, national, and international level; to react and defend when it is necessary; and to interpret the law and work on it to protect ourselves. That is human rights education in a nutshell.
We need to protect these rights. We need to react and re-create policies to protect and defend ourselves. We need to inform people so everyone will join together to see what we are talking about, to mobilize and empower ourselves. Human rights education is going beyond what we are supposed to see. It is looking at every room in a house and not being boxed in. In order to do that, we have some principles and guidelines we would like to work with. As women, we are coming together from different levels, from different angles, from different cultures, different religions. We need to keep these differences in mind, but come together to face what we call rights and protect them. We have to be open-minded, because we have to recognize that not everyone is going to agree with what we have to say, that not everyone will see what we see.

Then we have the international and the global dimension of human rights education. Whatever happens at a local level has an impact on a national, an international, and a global level. We have to keep this in mind when we talk about human rights abuses. When something happens at home, in a house, when you talk about battered women, what effect does it have nationally and internationally? We must always make that link between the local and the international, and believe that individuals can make a difference. It is very hard to feel empowered if you believe you cannot make a difference. It is very easy for us to look at something, to criticize it, and not figure out what we can do about it. Yes, there are Nobel Peace Prize winners, but you must ask, who is making a change within our organization, within our community, within our house? We have to talk on a local level. We must always give examples when we talk about the people who make a difference. And we must also have an action dimension to human rights education, which means that we pose a problem and say, "We need to do this. How are we going to do it?"

We need to use guidelines to help people understand that human beings, anyone we call human beings, have human rights, and that although we are all supposed to be equal, women have been somewhat left behind in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR can still be used as a guideline because we are talking about all human beings being equal, and we are talking about basic and fundamental human rights: Food, shelter, clothing, love for children, education. These are the things that we talk about. We must also use the guidelines in the UDHR to reflect a variety of perspectives, because we all come from different paths. All of us must keep these different perspectives in mind but also look at the universality of the abuses of women that occur.

Further, the educational process itself is very important. You cannot talk about human rights abuses in far off places before you take a good look at what is going on within our room. Are we making people comfortable within our environment? Because if you do not make that place safe for the people around you, it is very hard to go beyond it. Human rights education has been taught in classrooms, so we emphasize to the teachers that they cannot talk about human rights in the classroom if they do not treat the children well. They cannot abuse the kids at the same time that they talk about the UDHR. We are trying to get teachers to make the classroom sensitive to that need.

As I talk, I am going to refer to the UDHR because that is the document we use as a tool in human rights education. UDHR is not the way the world is, unfortunately; it is a vision of what the world ought to be. When we talk about the UDHR, we have to remember who wrote it, where it was written, when it was written, and that somehow, in the language, women were displaced. We have to remember that, and when we interpret it, go beyond
what we simply see written. When it says that all human beings are equal, we must include ourselves and go beyond the sheet of paper we have as a declaration.

In this world, we always give credit to writing, so the UDHR provided guidelines and articulated rights in written form, they are on paper and documented. But what about the people who did not write the UDHR, but who have these rights? I am talking about indigenous populations in the world who have their own systems of ethics and truths and values and rights. Since they were never written down, we completely ignore them. And what about the illiterate of the world, two-thirds of whom are women? What about their contribution to human rights education? What about their struggle? We tend to forget about the difficulties that they face in learning about human rights simply because they do not write and do not document. We need to remember that when we talk about human rights and human rights education, we are trying to pull everything that was said in the panel together and go beyond it. How can we draw pictures of human rights? How can we help illiterate people look at the universality of human rights? If we can not document human rights abuses, how are we going to empower people?

I am going to give you a bit of information about where human rights education has been during the last couple of years. And I am going to talk about Amnesty's point of view, since that is a group with whom I have been working on human rights education. When I first started working on human rights education a couple of years ago, I remember asking, "How come we don't talk about women here?" They never said anything about women when we went to a classroom and talked about human rights. Now we include women in our work. The good thing about human rights education is that it does not have the boundaries of a mandate, because you are talking about the UDHR, and people can interpret it and take it however and wherever they want. Teachers use their creativity to think about human rights education and take it beyond the UDHR because human rights education is a basic mental toolbox.

We were teaching human rights, training teachers to use human rights in their classrooms by actually incorporating human rights issues into the existing curricula of courses on other subjects. It is hard to create a human rights course and find people to teach it, since with the current funding crises in education, such a course would be the first thing cut off. And this is to say nothing of what might happen to a teacher who taught a course that dealt mainly with women's human rights and abuses. That is why we believe one of the most effective methods of doing human rights education is to incorporate it into course materials being used already.

So let's say you are talking about a math problem. A standard math problem in the United States is about two trains, one going from L.A, one from New York. They meet halfway. What's the speed? Where are they meeting? That is the basic problem. One of the problems we introduced said, a boat leaves Haiti at 60 miles per hour, it can take 100 passengers, and it is supposed to touch Miami. For whatever reason, the boat doubled its capacity, which means it slows down the speed. How long will it take to get to Miami? In such a question, you also specify that there are strict guidelines that say you cannot double the passenger capacity, which raises questions such as, Why are people doing that? Why are they leaving? With this kind of math problem, you make people think. Another example might be an English class: Here again there is a standard literature. We tell the teacher to incorporate a local writer, a woman perhaps. What a novel idea! You go beyond Shakespeare, and you are talking about history, you are incorporating women.
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The latest report we have done on human rights education is on how to talk about homophobia in the classroom. How do teachers incorporate these issues? We are teaching teachers, and it is very difficult. With human rights education, it is very important to try to touch all levels. Human rights is not just a subject; it is also a way of life that children need to cultivate. We were talking about starting this kind of discussion at a preschool level, and the teachers were very frightened because, you have to remember, whenever you introduce something new to a public school system, people go crazy. I mean, people dislike it because it is either too much work or you are considered to be “polluting” young minds. So what we have told teachers to do—and what we help them to do—is to pull from the environment, to pull what is available in the classroom, and to go beyond the textbook. Be creative. Look at your classroom, and look at the students. Learn from them, and let them contribute. People cannot complain about your classroom, can they, if you say you are going to ask a student to speak up about her life.

We talk about gender equality in the classroom by using the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Here is a declaration that says, “No matter who I am and who my parents are, you have to treat me as equal.” We teach children exercises. What we do is incorporate gender issues by saying, “Okay, I’m a girl. Look beyond me. Don’t say I have a pretty face. I can climb trees better than you, and I can run faster than you.” You go beyond what you normally see. Some countries have actually developed this method. South Africa was very interested in human rights education, and they started at a very local level. Guyana just did a training, and the Minister from the Department of Education said openly that he was going to put money into human rights education and do the training there. And Kenya, Poland, Romania, and so on. In California, it is in the constitution of the school system to teach about human rights, but unfortunately nobody knows that. So there are only isolated incidents where teachers come and grab this information, take it back to their classrooms, and teach.

The reason I have spoken so much so far on human rights education in the classroom is that that is where we began, that is where we injected ourselves into the system. But clearly, we realize that we have to go beyond the classroom. What are you to do in a society where some children do not make it to the classroom? How do you take human rights education beyond the classroom? How do you take human rights education to grassroots organizations? How do you take it into women’s groups and create a common understanding that rights are not dreams that cannot be achieved, they are not simply hopes, but that they are rights, they are fundamental human rights? How do you explain human rights to a person whose basic need is to walk three miles a day to get to a work place, to work eight hours, to come back home, and then to start life all over again? If this person has not had a formal education, how do you teach them about human rights informally? By showing pictures, by working together, by doing group assignments.

I will give you an example from Sri Lanka. Last December, I was home on vacation. When I was there, I learned about a 10-year-old girl apparently who got raped by a retired police officer. She was a domestic worker. The family, the mother, went and complained to the police. The case went to the court system, and the Attorney General dismissed the case, saying that this 10-year-old girl was lying, and that she had previous sexual experience because she had been raped before. Of course, the newspapers went crazy saying, “Oh yeah, the feminists are at it again.” But this goes beyond being just a women’s issue—there are more issues involved. For example, where does the human right to education come in?
What do human rights groups have to say about the power structure? Shouldn't this child be in school? Why is she working at the age of 10, sweeping, dusting, cleaning, putting in 12 hours of work? What are the laws, and who are the people responsible for upholding them? Where human rights education comes in is in questioning these issues, in going beyond what is given in the newspaper, in talking about freedom, justice, and equality. Human rights education means going beyond saying, "She was a domestic helper in order to get food. What are you complaining about?" We must go beyond these attitudes and actually hold people accountable. We are talking about an upper-middle-class group who are the lawmakers, who do not want to talk about these issues because they themselves are using 10-year-old girls to sweep and dust. Human rights education can get people to understand that this child has rights. It can help people to know what rights are, and to say to the mother, "Yes, fine, she is getting three meals a day. But should she be abused?" Human rights education helps us to question so we can go beyond this basic level. It is part of the women's movement to talk about equality, to talk about freedom, and to protect women's human dignity.
Yasmin Tambiah and Sharon K. Horn.
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

MODERATOR: Roxanna Carrillo
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

The panelists in this session will speak about the strategies that women's groups have devised in order to put the issue of violence against women onto local and international policy agendas. When we talk about violence against women, we are not referring exclusively to domestic violence, even though domestic violence was the first type of violence against women used by activists to gain recognition as part of the human rights agenda. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 and offers a very useful definition of violence. It states, “For the purpose of this declaration, the term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life.” This declaration is a major breakthrough in the work that feminists have done to ensure that violence—in both the public and the private sectors—is considered an international human rights violation. The Declaration was approved unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, and is, in part, the culmination of a process that started five years ago with an extensive series of expert group meetings and consultations at the regional level to build an international consensus.

This panel will explore how women have worked to shape the international human rights agenda in order to make space for the inclusion of our issues and perspectives. At the Center for Women’s Global Leadership’s second Leadership Institute in 1992, participants strategized about how to build momentum to create an awareness of violence against women. At that time, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights (to be held in Vienna) was on people’s minds and looming on the horizon. This conference presented the opportunity for women to raise awareness and put the issue of violence against women on the international agenda. The only previous World Conference on Human Rights took place 25 years earlier in 1968 in Tehran. Therefore, the 1993 conference was particularly important because it was the first time since the Cold War ended that the international community came together to revisit the concepts, understandings, and standards of human rights. This conference provided an opportunity for us to re-examine male-defined standards that have dominated prevailing notions of human rights.

The process of organizing for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the conference’s passage of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action represented a huge success for women. Among our many achievements, three deserve to be highlighted: First, women’s rights were presented in the principles of the Vienna Declaration as an integral, inalienable, and indivisible part of human rights discourse. That was a very concrete declaration. Second, the international community acknowledged violence against women in both the public and private spheres. Third, women influenced the decision by the World Conference on Human Rights to declare the need to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.
These successes were not simply handed to us by the United Nations. They were our achievements. Women organized extensively in many parts of the world: pressuring, lobbying, documenting, and bringing forth issues, remedies, and strategies. Before the World Conference decided to introduce and accept the Special Rapporteur, nobody in the United Nations, or in any of the country delegations, would have thought of creating such a position. Women’s strategic organizing was responsible for pressuring the UN to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and we should all feel proud of our success. It is clear that women’s work in Vienna affected the international political arena. Now, we have to go back to the groups we work with to connect with them, to share with them, to teach, and to advocate. We need to help women at the local level use international legal instruments to strengthen their own work.

Some people have wondered about the politics and efficacy of using the United Nations in our work. While I have my share of questions about this, I know that I can use this institution to the extent that the institution allows me to use it—which may vary according to the issue at hand. In thinking about whether to concentrate energy at the level of the United Nations, women activists need to decide when the UN provides a legitimate arena for promoting a particular set of political objectives and when it does not.

When we launched the Global Campaign for Women’s Human Rights, we never intended to focus our activism exclusively at the international level. One of the primary purposes of the campaign was to connect local organizers to global feminist networks and the international policy arena. The campaign was addressed to organizers, to activists, and to the women who were themselves suffering human rights violations. If we divorce ourselves from these people, there is no point in working at the policy-making level. We have to take an approach that links the micro and the macro, one that connects the grassroots activists to policy makers. That is the way we can use the United Nations—to advance the concerns and perspectives of our constituencies. The United Nations is really a club of governments. The international civil servants working at the United Nations are there for the purpose of advancing our agendas, but they do not have any real power to make decisions. In fact, the governments have the power to block any initiative that comes to the United Nations.

But, if we take the approach of working from within a social movement, and I myself feel I am part of this movement, I believe we can use our positions to voice our concerns. For example, I can use my position at UNIFEM to transfer information from where I am to where you are; you are the ones who have to put pressure on your own governments and regional organizations to keep initiatives within the UN alive. Making connections between the macro and micro levels is both a dynamic and time consuming process. However, because of the possibilities for making change that the UN provides, we need not view the UN as a stultifying body. The UN is a resonance box: the louder we speak, the more possibilities there are that our voices will be heard. This does not mean that all our demands will meet with adequate responses. In fact, there are initiatives that have been dormant in the UN for 25 years—initiatives on trafficking in women, prostitution, integration of migrant workers, for example—and nobody has taken care of them.

In spite of the bureaucratic nature of the UN, our success at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna highlights the fact that the United Nations responds when there is a mobilized constituency pressuring it. We can organize to pressure the UN to
enforce human rights instruments. In Vienna we managed to work, in whatever form we could, to seize that opportunity. Women’s organizing at the conference demonstrates the potential of politically engaging international institutions. Yet, we also need the more radical, grassroots arm, the one that keeps us on our toes, the one that reminds us to not buy into the system. As I said, it is a dynamic process, and I think it is very important that we continue to strengthen and enrich those links in all the work we do.

Now, I would like to introduce the four women who continue this discussion about violence against women and human rights. In different ways, each of them will be discussing the relationship between local and international feminist organizing. Niamh Reilly is a Senior Program Associate at the Center for Women’s Global Leadership. She coordinated the Global Campaign for Women’s Human Rights, including the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women, and the International petition campaign. Following Niamh, Naina Kapur, a feminist legal activist and the coordinator of a violence intervention center in Delhi, India will speak. Our third panelist is Asma Abdel Halim. Asma works with the Institute for Women, Law and Development in Washington, DC. Finally, Lori Heise will talk about her work at the Pacific Institute for Women’s Health based in Washington, D.C. Lori is the director of a research and advocacy program that focuses on violence against women as a health issue.

Niamh Reilly
Center for Women’s Global Leadership

So far, the panels and discussions at this Institute have focused on the technical side of using a human rights framework in our work. We have talked about how to document violations so that the human rights framework can have some leverage. Other points of emphasis have been political mobilization, and the job of redefining the human rights framework as it currently stands. As Dorothy Thomas cautioned, we must be very conscious of the fact that women’s human rights are not defined and static. In fact, all of these instruments, establishments, and the organizing that women have been doing over the past four or five years, are part of a continual process of defining women’s human rights and determining what kinds of remedies we want. The role of political mobilization, and particularly of mobilizing more women to be involved in defining women’s human rights, is a critical part of the process.

I would like to begin with a few broad comments about the United Nations and women’s organizing. For all our campaigning and petitioning, we were never uncritical of the United Nations. Indeed, we were always very critical, and used the United Nations and its various processes as venues and spaces from which to demand accountability. At this particular moment in international geo-politics, there have been huge changes. The strength of nation-states is weakening, and nationalist struggles and fundamentalist trends are reversing gains that women have made. At the moment, democracy and democratization are being defined as free market economics, with no regard for women, or for the socio-economic rights of women. Given these changes, our work here and around the world is to redefine, not just human rights, but what democracy and political participation mean for women.
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I would like to talk in more detail, now, about the organizing campaigns in which we have been involved. These campaigns are part of what has come to be known as the Global Campaign for Women’s Human Rights. I want to preface this by saying that many of the campaigns, programs, and initiatives we take up in collaboration with others, come out of gatherings like this Institute. So, as I talk about the 16 Days Campaign or our petition campaign, remember that they came out of institutes and strategic planning meetings like this one, and therefore represent the type of collaborative efforts that we here should be thinking about and planning. Participants at the first Women’s Leadership Institute in 1991 decided to create a thematic time period linking International Day Against Violence Against Women on November 25th, an important day for Latin American feminists, to International Human Rights Day on November 10th. Institute participants wanted to link the International Day Against Violence Against Women to International Human Rights Day in order to better connect the issues of violence against women to violations of internationally accepted human rights norms. This simple idea of thematically linking those two days framed the idea that violence against women violates human rights and from it the 16 Days of Activist Against Gender Violence was born. This idea helped us put the issue of violence against women on the international agenda. Even though women who organize around violence against women know it is a violation of human rights, that framework had not been available as a tool to fight violence and as a way to specifically address what happens to women. Participants in the Women’s Leadership Institute took this idea back to their own countries and organized numerous events between November 10th and 25th, 1991. These events focused on violence against women and human rights. Since 1991, the 16 Days Campaign has grown to become an important tool for women’s organizing in many parts of the world.

During the first 16 Days Campaign, we became aware that a World Conference on Human Rights was going to be held in 1993 and that it would be the first world conference focusing on human rights in 25 years. Since there was no sign of women on the proposed conference agenda, we decided to petition the UN to comprehensively address violations of women’s human rights at the Vienna Conference. This campaign was largely successful. By the time the conference finally happened, women’s concerns had been placed squarely on the conference agenda. This success was the result of two years of women’s organizing at the regional level, at the international preparatory level, and in Vienna itself.

The consensus among the governments in the Vienna Declaration, acknowledging that violence against women—whether by public or private perpetrators—is a violation of human rights, represented a huge victory. Three years earlier, women had been struggling in the traditional human rights community, because it seemed impossible to get them to see that what happens to women in private can be a violation of internationally recognized human rights. In other words, women’s organizing pushed governments and the human rights community to recognize that violations of human rights are not limited to abuses of political dissidents and prisoners of war. Because the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights put women’s rights on the international human rights agenda, it was a very important turning point for women organizing on these issues. However, implementation of the Vienna Declaration is another issue altogether.

1 This day, November 25, was declared International Day Against Violence Against Women by the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean in 1981, Bogota, Colombia. The day commemorates the Mirabel sisters who were brutally murdered by the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic in 1960.

2 November 10th or International Human Rights Day is the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
One of the primary tools used to get the World Conference on Human Rights to deal with gender specific violations was the worldwide petition campaign mentioned earlier. Initially this petition was sent to feminist networks, groups, and organizations around the world. It struck such a chord that it was eventually translated into 23 languages and circulated in 128 countries. We received signed petitions by the box load—20,000 from Turkey, 17,000 from Nepal—some of them signed simply with a thumbprint. The process was extremely moving and inspirational. It showed that this notion of violence against women as a violation of human rights resonated with women in many different situations, and that women are ready to use the human rights framework to advance the position of women.

The petition is an example of a simple tool that can be used in a number of different ways to facilitate popular education and to help women develop their awareness about violence and human rights violations. The beauty of the petition is that it can be effective in addressing a wide range of violations of women's human rights: rape, battery, and other forms of torture, execution, the abuse of widows, female genital mutilation, female infanticide, or other forms of systemic and culturally ingrained practices that deprive women of life or their full potential in life. Women used the petition to argue that all types of violence against women are human rights violations and to point out that these abuses will not be tolerated. Others have used it to approach local officials and representatives. Women have also used the petition in the more formal preparatory process for Vienna: at strategic regional meetings, we would bring box loads of the petition to force women's issues onto the agenda. In Latin America in particular, women organized a whole set of events during the 16 Days Campaign—which happened to coincide with that region's preparatory process for Vienna—to express what women in the region wanted. Using these tools helped to demonstrate that this local/regional effort was part of a larger international movement.

We also delivered boxes of petitions to the UN, and by the time of the World Conference on Human Rights, we had received over half a million signatures. The petition campaign was an important part of our success in Vienna. We could point to the demands of the petition with respect to trafficking in women, with respect to migrant women, or with respect to domestic violence as a method of legitimizing the changes that women wanted to see. Although the petition campaign was first conceived of as an organizing tool to pressure the World Conference on Human Rights to address violence against women as a human rights issue, the petition campaign has lived on even after the conference. The tremendous response to the petition encouraged us to reconfigure the target of the petition so it could continue to be used for organizing and popular education.

The petition and the 16 Days Campaign demonstrated that no country has a good record on women's human rights. It showed that women in the North, and in the West, need to shine a spotlight on their governments and their countries. Women in the North and the West need to point to the failures of their political and judicial systems to protect women from violence or from sexual harassment. Abuses like these occur on a daily basis in places like the United States and Western Europe. For instance, just this week an off-duty Swedish soldier shot seven people, killing five women, because he was told to leave a bar where he was hassling and harassing women. He shot the women on the way home. This happened in Sweden, where we supposedly have a model of respect for women.
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Clearly, the issue of violence against women is universal, and provides a way for women to collaborate and move forward with local issues, while recognizing how local concerns are part of a global trend of violence. This approach provides a universalizing framework of human rights that does not annihilate particular local issues and events. In using this framework, women working on local concerns are linked to women around the world.

The success of the petition at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna was the result of the tremendous organizing, done by women all over the world, to put violations of women's rights onto the policy agenda. In addition to coordinating the petition campaign, we collaborated with groups in different regions of the world to conduct a day long tribunal in Vienna, where women testified about violations of their rights. Thirty-three women from twenty-five countries testified at the tribunal. This tribunal was particularly useful, because even though governmental representatives and various officials indicated, “Women's rights? Sure, no problem,” when we actually began to define “women's rights” and articulate what we wanted done in response to particular violations, there were signs of resistance from religious and fundamentalist forces. This resistance indicated a need for women to speak out and begin the process of documentation so that the technical implementation of human rights on behalf of women could move forward. The resistance also pointed to the need for women to continue engaging in the process of defining for themselves, and in so doing, re-defining human rights. This process of redefining human rights to adequately address violations of women's rights is, as many of you know, ongoing.

The 16 Days Campaign and the petition continue to be strong tools, but we must explore ways of improving them, of strengthening them, of making them more visible so they will strengthen all the work that we do.

Naina Kapur
Feminist Legal Advocate, India

I would like to take what Roxanna Carrillo and Niamh Reilly have said, and localize it by talking from the perspective of a feminist legal activist who works within an organization. More specifically, I would like to describe some of the obstacles I have come up against in working on violence against women. The most important practical strategy I have learned is “unlearning.” The process of “unlearning” has been threefold for me. One aspect has been through thinking about violence against women in the context of women's lives. The second has been through redefining our notions of access to justice. And, the third has been through communicating about violence against women as both a lawyer and as a feminist activist.

For the purpose of contextualization, I live in the world's largest democracy—India—a country of 850 million people. Realizing a system of law or legal rights in a democracy of this size is very difficult. India does have one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, and it gives women all sorts of rights. We call them not just human rights, but fundamental rights in terms of the constitution. On the basis of these fundamental rights, the women's movement has been chasing legal reform for the last twenty years. It continues to do so, but one of the hazards has been that, no matter what the level of legal reform we achieve, we must also always look for ways to subvert the system.
Let's take the issue of dowries, for example. Many parents will come to my organization and say that their daughter is being harassed for a dowry, or has been abused because of the dowry. It is important to investigate what is actually happening behind the surface in this situation. We may find that the woman is actually being exposed to domestic violence or is experiencing violence. This connection between a dowry and violence demonstrates that the complaint is not just about the dowry. However, most people will choose to file a dowry related complaint since they know they can go to the police station to file it. Such a complaint is more likely to receive attention since a dowry related complaint is considered an economic concern, whereas domestic violence is considered a domestic concern. The question is, as a legal activist, how do you file a case that is not actually the real case?

A second example is the common allegation against women in domestic violence situations that they are unfit mothers and adulteresses. The biggest threat for these women is that their children will be taken away. In the Indian context, the father is the natural guardian of a child. So, as a lawyer, even though you know the law or the judge, and even though there have been arguments against this course of action, you might advise your client to abduct her children. That may be the only way she will be able to keep them. As you can see, the process of subversion is as much a part of your activism as your work for legal reform. As these examples demonstrate, you must "unlearn" the mainstream conceptions of law, of legal rights, or even of feminism.

The second aspect of "unlearning" I mentioned is rethinking our ideas about access to justice. This facet of "unlearning" has made me redefine and rethink my role as an intervener. For example, women's organizations intervene when the police and the community ostracize a woman who experiences violence, especially sexual violence. However, as an intervener or a lawyer, you do exactly the same thing, because the process of legal empowerment is a process of social disempowerment when you alienate a woman from her social context. Some women who hold leadership roles are facing more violence than they did while they were going through the initial process of becoming empowered. A classic case is that of a rural woman who is empowered and then gang raped. The claim of such a woman, and, I think, her fundamental desire, is to be re-instated into her community. If her primary concern is being part of the community, you must rethink your understanding of getting justice for her. When women who have experienced violence actually make it through the legal system, they will always come back and say, "But that is really not my notion of justice. It doesn’t really matter what happened to him. My notion of justice was something else."

This redefinition of justice becomes really important when dealing with the institutional vehicles that are supposed to provide justice. I will give you an example of how movements collide when it comes to violence. Take a village community, and a three-year-old girl whose neighbor ejaculates on her. She is taken to the village council, which headed by the president of the Dalit (lower caste) movement—a very vast, mass movement in this particular state. The council decides, after a series of debates, to force the man to give the girl's family 250 rupees in compensation. This is less than 10 dollars.

A women’s organization has been actively involved in this area and one of the organization’s leaders, who has been active for 12 years, was present at the village council meeting. She wanted to stand up and protest, but her son was a leader of the Dalit
movement, and he turned to his mother and said, "Sit down." So she did. She realized exactly what she had done wrong when she analyzed the situation afterwards. But, in a political forum, how do you get women who are part of more than one movement to unite on gender issues, such as violence against women, when they are up against male family members in a tightly knit community?

The second issue in relation to this case was that the girl's family then had to go to lawyers. The lawyers were completely supportive of the family, and marched and protested with them. But in the course of the march, a group of women said "Down, down" to the lawyer of the accused. Then the family's lawyers decided they were going to go on a hunger strike until the women apologized. The issue became something totally different. So, what do you do when the level at which justice needs to be understood for women is also the level at which justice is denied for those women?

The third and final aspect of unlearning is communication. The best illustration for this is a workshop which emerged out of concern for patterns that were developing in legal reform and legal amendments around the issue of violence against women. At a point during the campaign, we felt we were being co-opted. The campaign was taking us away from a three-dimensional approach to law and violence, and women were increasingly dissatisfied with legal notions of justice. So we decided to hold a workshop; we reassessed our focus and got women to articulate their understanding of justice. One of the things that surfaced as a key obstacle for most women was language, which is a critical tool for explaining or describing violence against women. However, language is often not accessible to women. For example, when family counselors taking cases to court talk to a woman, they cannot even address what has physically happened to her in basic language.

An example of this is the case of a 15-year-old child who was gang raped. In the legal arena, words like "penis", "ejaculation," and "vagina" become technical terms that are part and parcel of the path to justice. For the young girl, these words are completely taboo, but as far as lawyers and judges are concerned, this compendium of words is necessary to convict the defendant. When the child is on the witness stand, the defense lawyer asks her to use this vernacular to explain that she had sex. Using the words "rape," "fucked," or their equivalent, is not a vocabulary that she knows. If she does not use those particular words—indicating the forced and involuntary character of the violation—and instead she says "sex," then the defense lawyer will say, "There you go. You said 'sex.'" Her use of language that she is comfortable with ends up hurting her interests in the courtroom. The idea is to "unlearn" the notion of justice and to find appropriate forms and language for righting injustice. For example, do we look at violence against women and say "I, as a lawyer, live in a city. What rural woman has access to me?" In fact, a rural woman does not have access to me. I have to turn the question around and think in terms of whether I have access to her. I must ask myself what it is I equip her with when it comes to these fundamental rights?
Asma Abdel Halim
Institute for Women, Law and Development

The 1985 United Nations Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi represented a turning point in the history of women’s struggles. At this conference, women started to identify their rights, and as a result they have been able to identify violations of those rights. African women have been able to establish a direct link between the violations of rights, especially violence against women, and development. The failure of transnational corporations to recognize and account for either the role of women in development schemes, or the effect of violations of women’s rights on development projects, has resulted in inadequate approaches. The greatest stride made so far by women has been the development of successful strategies to combat violence. This, in turn, has forced transnational bodies and banks to recognize the problem and has compelled them try to deal with violence against women, even if they have not done this in a way that is satisfactory to women.

For women, priorities that were hazy for some time have been clarified through interaction and networking. For example, educated African women’s zeal to eradicate illiteracy as a prerequisite to solving all problems has been transformed into a strategy of tackling more than one problem at a time. Since some African countries have an illiteracy rate of 80%, full literacy does not seem to be possible within our lifetimes. As a result of our networking, we eventually saw there was no need to delay efforts to change the status of women until they are all educated. Illiterate women can be taught their rights and are highly capable of understanding them. The original obstacle was an obsession with the idea that education is possible only in a classroom.

We were able to develop new strategies because we grasped more fully the direct linkage between violations and cultural practices. Countries of Africa and Asia are known to identify certain issues as “cultural.” The identification of culture as an avenue for dealing with rights violations has been behind the success of women in Africa and Asia who are developing more practical solutions to the problems we face. Globalizing or universalizing women’s issues proved that women from different cultures do share a common ground as subordinate beings, even though different social pressures shape their lives.

The strategy of “cleaning up” culture—by looking to see if a certain practice is necessary to keep the culture alive—proved effective. Culture is malleable, and it may be modified to benefit women rather than used as a shackle to hold them back. A total rejection of all social values has not been advocated by anyone or any group. Further, “clean up” attempts have to start from within the culture. An example of this approach, is organizing in India against the practice of burning a living wife with the corpse of her husband. Activists have begun to ask whether this practice is necessary for the completion of a funeral ritual or to prove loyalty between the couple? Is there anything or anyone left behind by the husband that might make that woman useful if kept alive? The main issue may be a religious one, but religions, as different as they are, have shown great respect for human life. Measuring a tradition by the standards of religion may prove that the tradition violates the philosophy of the religion. In this way, the tradition can be shown to be valueless and can be exposed as an unnecessary part of a sacred ritual.
For women who suffer under traditional practices, the notion of equality may arise when they accept and appreciate their value as individual human beings, separate from others. Getting women to see themselves as equal human beings is important in making them see the fallacy of traditional justifications for certain practices and inequities. To help women recognize their equality requires a socially sensitive approach, one that avoids making people defensive since this tends to increase the intensity of the problem. A careful strategy is needed because asserting individuality in a society that is shaped around group behavior is extremely difficult. Change may be suggested by individuals, but success depends greatly on the group believing in the change and actually engaging in different behavior. For example, the long mourning periods that upset people’s lives have changed when people as a group, and not simply as individuals, agreed and decided that the period needed to be shortened.

Insensitivity to the deep social roots of any tradition—even if that tradition is without value—could prove damaging to women. An example of this is female circumcision, which is a practice that has been linked to different religions, particularly to Islam. The practice became known in the West both through eradication efforts in Africa and through African migration to the West. Western voices on the issue range from sensationalist to sensitive understanding. Video tapes depicting the tradition as a gruesome act of primitive people have succeeded in turning the stomachs of the West, but have also created a backlash in Africa. Girls started to be circumcised at an earlier age, and the tradition became more treasured because it served to notify “others” that they are not “us,” and that the tradition is none of the West’s business.

Some people in the West, such as French prosecutor Linda Weil-Curiel, apparently do not mind going to any extreme to satisfy themselves on this issue. Weil-Curiel told Vanity Fair magazine that as long as the law [banning female circumcision in France] is not enforced, it will not stop. You know, in China they said ‘Stop binding the feet of your children. Otherwise you will be shot’. And that was it, probably because a few parents were shot.

Is it right to shoot “a few parents” in order to eradicate the practice of female circumcision? As a prosecutor, Weil-Curiel should have been able to see that the practice lacks the malice, or the intent to hurt, necessary to justify any sort of punishment, to say nothing of execution. African women have suggested different legal strategies, like not using criminal procedure against parents and, instead, using legal means to enforce the rights of the child. Focusing on the roots and justification for female circumcision has demonstrated the fact that this practice is not rooted in religious beliefs. Mutilation of bodies has never been part of either Islam or Christianity.

We need to develop strategies that force those who have authority—by virtue of office, as in Christianity, or by virtue of having a superior knowledge, as in Sunni Islam—to use religion as a sword against the tradition of female circumcision. We should not tolerate a situation in which religion takes the front seat in all affairs except on a matter that concerns women. Religion should not simply endorse the opinion of doctors in this matter. People practice this tradition, not because doctors have told them to do so, but because they believe the religion orders them to do so. The opinion people are seeking in this situation is purely religious. The medical profession has long passed its verdict on the tradition and designated it as harmful.
If we deal with violations of rights in the West, we may come up with different examples, such as abortion. In most Western societies, the sexes enjoy sexual freedom. Society lets women deal with their bodies with no restriction, legal or otherwise. But, if that freedom results in pregnancy, then society takes a different approach to a woman's body. Socially, she is looked down upon if she chooses to have an abortion, no matter how old the fetus is at the time of the procedure. This inconsistency in the West's sexual culture puts women under the pressure of two contradictory situations: she has full control of her body if she chooses to engage in a sexual affair, yet that body is claimed by society if she gets pregnant. In this respect, cultures that impose restrictions on sexual behavior are at least consistent in their claims to total control over women's bodies.

Activism against cultural practices, whether in the West or in the East, has brought women under severe attack from conservatives. These attacks may take the form of physically stopping activists—an extreme case is the shooting of doctors who perform abortions—or endangering the lives of activists through legal proceedings, a strategy that is prevalent in Muslim societies where activists are tried for blasphemy or apostasy. Asma Jahangir of Pakistan faced a blasphemy charge. Tasleema Nasreen had to escape from Bangladesh because she was brought to trial on charges of blasphemy in spite of the fact that she admitted she was an atheist. Feminist men have also had their share of these charges. Mahmoud Mohamed Taha of the Sudan was executed for apostasy because he advocated a reinterpretation of Islamic rules, especially those rules regarding women. In the East, the major actors in the harassment of individuals are usually governments who bow to the pressure and violence of so-called fundamentalists. States around the world generally ignore women's rights. This failure to act should be rectified, which brings me to my final point: the role of the United Nations.

Apparently, Member States have made sure that United Nations' documents leave room for them to evade some of the responsibilities stipulated in those documents. Reservations that may be made by some states to free them from being bound by particular articles in the documents have made it possible for states such as Iran and Egypt to exempt themselves from the equality articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). There is also no mechanism of redress for aggrieved individuals or groups under CEDAW. These are faults in the United Nations system that may be rectified.

In the last decade, the United Nations has taken an active part in the lives of people throughout the world. It is dispatching food, dispatching medicine, promoting education, and with that, passing on information about health, law, and other issues. The United Nations is not being as effective at the center any more, but is now being more active at the peripheries and is in contact with more non-governmental organizations than ever before. This type of collaboration has affected the peripheries of the United Nations, and perhaps in the long run these changes will affect overall UN policy. The United Nations is a useful arena to debate and emphasize women's rights, and it is a good forum for pushing states to be serious about linking political relationships to their human rights record. But let us not forget that many states would rather not participate in human rights debates because their own hands are not clean. Furthermore, political decisions will, for a long time to come, rest on how to achieve even short term political gain, rather than on how to effect a long term policy for the protection of human beings.
In conclusion, our endeavors should include a range of approaches to dealing with the problems we confront. I have outlined the two types of "literacy" programs which are important: those that make information available to women to help them identify and challenge violations of their rights, and those that more directly focus on eradicating illiteracy by teaching women how to read and write.

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In my work, I help local organizations working on the issue of violence against women by teaching them how to conduct research on the subject. I do this because these are the groups that really understand violence against women, and I have found that the research that has been done on violence against women is usually done by people who may know how to conduct research, but who do not understand the issue itself. As researchers, we draw information from the field, and what often happens is that we have access to information that women in their own countries do not have access to. Researchers need to think about what we have to offer. International organizations need to make a better commitment to getting the information they gather to the people working at the grassroots level. There must be a stronger commitment to information dissemination; currently the information flow is far too unidirectional.

Most of us who work on violence have found, in each of our countries and globally, that violence against women is a very important issue at the grassroots level. Although there were a lot of interesting projects and non-governmental organizations focusing on the issue, the policy world, whether in Washington, D.C. or at the United Nations, rarely addressed the issue of violence against women. There was a real sense of disconnection, so that even when we brought people's attention to this issue, no one cared. It was devastating to realize that one could show people the number of women who were dying from violence and still have the issue not matter. The strategy we developed was to get different constituencies, such as the World Bank, to see how violence against women relates to what they are trying to do. We wanted to get institutions like the World Bank to acknowledge that the issue is actually part of their responsibility. It is in this way that the notion of violence against women as a human rights issue originally developed. The human rights community had not taken the issue up, and it should have. The development community said, "Well, that's not our issue." Violence against women was everybody else's issue and nobody's issue at all.

I have worked specifically in health, and I think there are certain advantages to that framework. First, there is a lot of money available for research on health. One of the problems we all face in our work is that the groups doing work on violence, for example, have very few sources of funding, because they do not fit easily into any of the usual funding categories. Given this, one of the benefits of getting violence against women on agendas such as human rights or health is that we can demand action and accountability of organizations and institutions working in these areas. We can say, "Violence against women is a health issue," or "Violence against women is human rights issue," and demand that they fund our work.
In the moments that I get to step back and assess the progress of our work, I often wonder why we worry about connecting our work with more widely accepted agendas like health or human rights. It is especially important to be skeptical since big institutions like the World Health Organization or the United Nations are not going to work constructively on our issues. In fact, I am not sure I even want them involved in the day-to-day work simply because they would probably do it wrong. However, the advantages we do get from making these connections are significant. As activists working at the grassroots level, we can benefit from the legitimacy of these large, internationally recognized organizations. For instance, the most important thing about getting the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women subsequent to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights is that we can use that document as a tool for our own organizations or governments to pressure for change. Pointing to the United Nations’ official position on an issue can serve to legitimize the work of grassroots organizations. However, unless we actually take the Declaration and use it for our own purposes, nothing is going to change. Generating change is the biggest challenge we face since the issue of violence against women is starting to get some recognition.

The question is how we capitalize on this recognition to force change and to get resources for our work at the grassroots level. First, you have to construct an argument. You have to ask “Who are we trying to affect and how do they think?” The human rights community asks: “What is the violation?”; “Who is the actor?”; and “What is the remedy?” The health community thinks in a different way. There is a different language and culture, and we need to learn about the culture we are trying to affect. If we use an argument that is in our language, and not in theirs, they are going to miss what we are saying. The strategy is a double-edged sword. Getting recognition by a constituency is good on the one hand, but you can also lose control of the issue very quickly. This problem is something I am very concerned about with regard to the issue of violence against women, because right now we are reaching a point at which it is becoming a sexy, fad issue. The danger is that suddenly everyone talks about the issue, they throw a little money at the issue, then they say, “Look, nothing changed.” After this, they will move on to the next issue.

Another related issue I struggle with constantly is that once you get these big institutions to hear you, you suddenly become irrelevant to the conversation. So, there is a trick here: on one hand, you do not want to become co-opted by their language, but you need to win their continued attention and support. At the same time that you argue against violence against women because it costs the health care system money, you must make sure you argue against it because women are valuable as human beings. We cannot lose the feminist argument, but we must also try to construct arguments that are compelling to many communities.

We have done the groundwork to make the case that violence relates to issues that people already think are important, like HIV. There is a lot of money out there, and there are many people working on AIDS related issues. And yet, no one talks about the fact that we are promoting condoms for women who often do not have the power within their relationships to enforce condom use, and who may be beaten if they try to do so. We have also looked at issues involving sexually transmitted diseases or adolescent pregnancy. People are very concerned about adolescent pregnancy, and research shows that one of the
strongest predictors of adolescent pregnancy is sexual abuse in childhood. In other words, we try to link sexual abuse to these other health-related issues in a language that is convincing to the people from whom we are trying to get funding, assistance, or cooperation.

Next, I want to make a case for data. As feminists, we tend not to get involved in documentation, data, and statistics. I think we do ourselves a disservice by this, because I have found that, like it or not, documentation matters. I have been incredibly impressed by the fact that you can say something many, many times, and have 15 different people saying it, and the information does not have any impact. Yet, when one person publishes the information, it suddenly becomes true. We have to capitalize on the power of publishing. Data does not have to be numbers; it can take the form of testimonies and written versions of women’s stories. In fact, it was by bringing women’s voices and testimonies into legislative chambers that we got the United States to make advances in its treatment of domestic violence. It is very easy to deny a problem if you do not have to face it. However, a problem becomes quite compelling when you have a woman standing in front of you telling you what happened to her. The kind of work that Human Rights Watch does, for example, has been very persuasive and it does not involve any numbers; their reports consist of interviews and case studies. I would encourage you to recognize the power of numbers, of testimony, and of other forms of documentation, and to use them on our behalf.

Finally, I want to bring your attention to a strategy that might be useful in the process of gathering or amassing numbers and statistics. We want to have our analyses appear in documents that will have an influence on policy makers. In the health movement we have done the following: we took our numbers to the statistics offices of the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization. We convinced them of the legitimacy of the research and got them to publish it. One of the projects we worked on with the World Bank, which is an organization I would not normally work with, was a large report on women’s health. They wanted to estimate what they called the “global burden of disease,” and tried to come up with project priorities relating to the conditions and situations that were creating the biggest problems. It is important to recognize that when organizations like the World Bank make these calculations, they have a significant influence on decisions over how resources will be invested. If the World Bank says that a particular issue is the number one issue, then that is where the resources are going to go.

As feminists in the health movement, we decided that we did not like the World Bank’s plan and that we did not agree with their methods. However, we had to decide whether we wanted to try to affect their work by giving our input, or whether we wanted to simply stand outside the whole process. We decided to try to influence their work to incorporate some of our agenda into theirs. We did, however, retain the option of dropping out entirely if we felt we were being too compromised by working in that environment. We were able to use the World Bank’s method of analysis to figure out the burden of each of the conditions they were examining for our own issues. We did it for domestic violence and for rape, and we were able to convince them that our research was both valid and important. The World Bank is now publishing a couple of documents with statements that say, for example, “In industrial countries, one out of five healthy days of life lost to women are due
to domestic violence or rape.” That is a really powerful statement, and it came from the World Bank. The World Bank is not going to do anything about it, but we can cite that statement and demand to know exactly why they are not doing anything. That is the only positive thing about these big international institutions: We borrow their legitimacy and then use it against them.
Virginia Feix and Margaret Murray.
Issues of violence against women are connected in an integral way to issues of women’s reproductive health. Violence intersects with physical, emotional and mental health, and women’s health is affected by rape, incest, domestic violence, the ability to use contraception, female genital mutilation, and forced sterilization. Other intersections between reproductive health and violence include the forcible sterilization of women as a requirement for job security, and the abuse of women in sex industry, including the trafficking of women and the persecution of sex workers in relation to AIDS. In addition, women’s health is adversely affected by structural adjustment policies which reduce health services, and by the use of family planning as part of population control policies. The connections between consumption, the environment, and population all provide a backdrop to women’s health in general and to women’s reproductive health in particular.

Women’s reproductive health is intertwined with the fundamental principles of human rights. Efforts to enable women to become autonomous and full actors in society necessarily entail fostering women’s ability to exercise control over their bodies and over the processes of reproduction. The centrality of reproductive health to women’s participation in society means that the right to health is a fundamental human right for women.

The exercise of reproductive rights requires the state to protect and promote the full range of human rights: economic, cultural, social, environmental, civil and political. Thus, the state must play a dual role. At the same time that it must desist from violating human rights by ending policies and practices like forced sterilizations or forced pregnancies, the state must ensure the human rights to adequate health services, food, and shelter; without which a woman’s right to health is meaningless.

Women also encounter barriers to the full enjoyment of their reproductive rights from actors other than the state. The family, cultural and social mores, religion, fundamentalism, family planning services, international donors, pharmaceutical companies, foreign governments and UN policies all have an impact on women’s health. Therefore, any human rights movement must take into account this range of actors in devising strategies and policies to further women’s reproductive rights.

As we approach the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), we know that every one of these actors will play a role in the formulation of the recommendations we are able to make to the Cairo Declaration. Our own varied positions on population policy will also determine the strategies and recommendations pursued by women. Primarily because of its emphasis on controlling the fertility of certain groups of women, population policy and practice has been a battleground, and we have taken many different positions in our efforts to ensure the integrity of women’s health and human rights in relation to it. Women working to transform policies that adversely affect women’s health have debated whether we should engage in a discussion on population policy with policy makers, whether we should attack the entire population paradigm from the outside, or whether we need to be positioned inside the policy-making structure to insist on the recognition of women’s health needs and human rights. Indeed, women challenge population policies from all these positions.
During the final Preparatory Committee session (PrepCom) for the ICPD, the strength of women's organizing around issues of reproductive health was apparent. The last two decades of organizing around this issue have seen the development of a sophisticated and powerful movement that cannot be ignored. The demonstration of our strength has led to public attacks by the Vatican and other organizations who are upset with our visibility. The significant media coverage this issue has received underscores our political strength.

Another important aspect of our organizing in this area is that it is a truly global movement. Although North-South, race, class, and cultural differences continue to exist on certain issues, the presence of women and our voices from every part of the globe has been clear for all to see and hear. As a result of the global nature of our movement, the Vatican is forced to resort to concepts like “cultural imperialism,” labelling the reproductive rights movement as simply a Northern one in order to undermine our power and presence all around the world. The use of the term “cultural imperialism” as an ideological weapon by the Catholic church in this context is certainly one of the supreme ironies in this battle.

In addition to our struggles against oppressive population policies and religious fundamentalism, women are engaged in several other conversations. Many women feel that the emphasis on reproductive health has made our positions on consumption, the environment, and population policy less visible. Others believe that because our reproduction is controlled and abused by so many forces, it is essential to focus and to try to ensure that women's reproductive health be protected and promoted. Because we are besieged from so many sides, our challenge is to insist that all these issues are interconnected and to ensure that we promote a holistic framework of human rights within which we locate women's health.

It is important that we connect the ICPD itself, and women's activities there, with the other world conferences. We have to look at what we gained in Vienna and think about how we can utilize the gains there to move into what is going to be a battleground in Cairo. We have to link these things to the issues that are going to be raised in Copenhagen at the World Summit on Social Development, and integrate it all into our plans for the United Nations IV World Conference on Women in Beijing September, 1995. And every step of the way, we need to work on strategies to utilize the resources and energy necessary to these world conferences to our advantage and to advance our agendas.

I would now like to introduce the panelists for this session and describe their presentations. We begin with Lynn Freedman, who is with the Development, Law and Policy Program at the Columbia University School of Public Health. She will discuss the human rights paradigm as it relates to reproductive health, emphasizing population policies and family planning practices. The next panelist is Anika Rahman, from the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, will discuss how the human rights framework intersects with issues of donor accountability. The final panelist is Nahid Toubia, who is with RAINB9 (Research Action Information Network for the Bodily Integrity of Women) and the Columbia University School of Public Health. She will describe how the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) has been addressed in relation to human rights.
The first question we need to ask is, “What does it mean to take a human rights approach to reproductive health?” The question can be answered in two distinctly different ways, and it is important that we keep in mind the distinction between the two. The first way uses human rights as a formal, legal system. In this context, human rights can be regarded as a treaty-based system in which rights are defined in the language of treaties and the treaties apply to the states who are parties to them. One can talk about human rights as it applies to reproductive health in the very formal sense of taking the law in the treaty, applying it to a state—or to a practice of the state—seeing whether the state violates it, and holding the state accountable to it.

The second way we talk about the human rights approach to reproductive health is in a much more general sense of human rights as a basis for political activism, or as a basis for making demands of states and other parties. This approach has the same foundation as the formal legal system, in basic principles of human dignity and social justice, but it does not accept the limitations of formal law. This approach to human rights and reproductive health requires us to build from the perspective of the woman whose rights and health are at stake; it requires us to see how human rights principles in general apply to what happens in her life. We need to apply general human rights principles to the range of actors and institutions that have an impact on women’s lives.

In the reproductive health field, the development of the second, more political and less formal/legal way of thinking about human rights is absolutely critical. The reason for this is that the traditional human rights model does not fit reproductive health very well. It is extremely important that we not wait for changes in the formal legal system before we develop our own view of the way human rights applies to reproductive health.

In many ways reproductive health is different from traditional human rights issues like torture of political prisoners, repression of religious worship, or even violence against women. In these cases, the critical concern is to stop the abusive practice or get the state out of the field altogether. In contrast, when we talk about reproductive health, we are concerned not only with stopping abuses, but equally with providing affirmative services to women. In order to promote reproductive health and reproductive rights, women must have access to services. So, the idea is not just to get the state out, or stop an abusive practice: the idea is to demand affirmatively that rights be respected and that needs be actively met. This requires us to think about human rights differently than we do in the case of more traditional political and civil issues.

Another reason it is important to reconceptualize human rights is that in this field, the state is an important player, but is certainly not the only player. In many cases the state is not even the primary player. If you just think about which actors and institutions affect women’s reproductive health and reproductive rights, you can take down a whole list. There is the family, communities, institutions within the communities, and service providers, which may be local service providers or part of large international actors like IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation) or the UNFPA (a United Nations agency that deals with family planning). The list includes donors such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, other international institutions and, very importantly, private corporations. There is a series of international actors (aside from
local actors like families, husbands, and religious institutions) who work across borders. It is important for all of us in the women's movement and the human rights movement to focus on these actors when we organize internationally to challenge the forces that affect reproductive health.

It is therefore critical to think about human rights in terms of activist politics and political organizing. We also need to think about the definition of reproductive rights. What I have done is taken a definition I have used in some of the work I have been doing to help explain what I am thinking as I talk. So, let me just read this:

By reproductive and sexual rights, I mean constellations of legal and ethical principles that relate to an individual woman's ability to control what happens to her body and her person by protecting and respecting her ability to make and effectuate decisions about her reproduction and sexuality.

Several aspects of this definition are critical. First, by Constellations of legal and ethical principles: Different principles that relate to an individual woman's ability to control what happens to her body and her person. I mean not just her physical body but her spiritual/emotional person too, and her ability to control what happens to her by protecting and respecting her ability to make decisions. That is to say, respecting her as a moral actor with the ability to make decisions about her own life, and protecting and respecting her ability to effectuate those decisions. I am trying to link a sense of control over reproduction and sexuality, which I think is a basic part of human dignity, to the specific ability to make and effectuate decisions about your reproduction and sexuality.

A basic principle of demography is that there are three forces that affect the size of the population, and official population policies generally have provisions that relate to all three things. First, mortality, is the rate at which people die. Second, fertility, is the rate at which people are born. And, third is migration. These are the three factors that affect population size. All three of those factors have human rights implications, but I am going to focus on fertility. The debate over population policy is obviously centered on the question of fertility. There is a dispute within the women's movement about whether any population policy can ever be legitimate. Some people argue that a population policy is by its very definition an infringement on women's rights to reproductive freedom. However, others argue that some types of policies are legitimate, while others—those that are deeply discriminatory or racist—can never be.

Let us assume, for the purpose of this discussion, that you have a situation in which the fertility rate is such that the population is doubling in size every 20 to 30 years. This is certainly true in many parts of the world. In such cases—and especially if you have a state in economic crisis, operating under structural adjustment policies—you are confronted with serious problems. If you think the state has an obligation to provide education, health services, employment, and social security, and your population is doubling, then you have to demand that the state address the question of how it will meet this obligation.

There are many different factors that affect fertility, and we know for sure that the strongest of them are things like women's education, women's legal status, and women's employment status. If we are concerned about the size of populations and the quality of people's lives, we should be thinking about improving women's status via education and employment too and not just about contraception. The big problem is that in many countries, the main policy that is used to affect fertility is family planning or contraception.
When we talk about contraception, its effect on fertility, and the human rights implications of this relationship, people generally think about coercion. I think we all agree that, as a matter of human rights, population policies should not be coercive. However, I would like to suggest that it is not so simple to figure out what is coercive and what is not. Let me give you two examples. One is the issue of incentives and disincentives. In many parts of the world, perhaps in every part of the world, the government uses incentives and dis-incentives to try to encourage people to have more or fewer children. Therefore, one of the ongoing questions is about when incentives are coercive, and when they are not. For example, if you pay a poor woman to be sterilized, is that coercive? Many people feel it is. But, let me present the other side of that discussion so you can see that the debate is slightly more subtle. Many people also feel that a certain amount of payment to a woman is the only thing that enables her to access the services. Unless a woman can get reimbursed or unless she can get money to travel a long distance to a family planning clinic, she may not be able to get the services. So, if we give the woman travel expenses, it is viewed as an incentive. Is that coercive, or does it simply help her exercise her rights?

Another good example is that all over the world there are so-called IEC programs, Information, Education, and Communications Programs. In many places, these are patronizing, ultimately coercive messages (perhaps we should say propaganda) that are pressed upon communities in an attempt to change people's fertility desires and fertility needs. We could view those messages as coercive and their broadcast as a violation of human rights. On the other hand, if you live in a patriarchal family, in a society that is pro-natalist and that coerces you to have children, then an IEC program that changes the climate in the country might be something that enables women to exercise control over their own fertility. It may help change the public perception of women who use contraception. Now, you may or may not accept this argument, but the point I want to make is that the issues are subtle ones. What constitutes coercion is not obvious, and it is not the same everywhere. The reservation I have about incentives is this: Is there ever a time that an incentive policy can help a woman exercise her right? The answers to this question will differ from place to place.

From these examples, we can begin to see that a central conceptual and practical problem is that family planning has within it both danger and promise for women. It has peril in that it can be coercive, taking away a woman's control over her body and her reproductive life, and it can also be physically dangerous. But family planning also has the potential to help women exercise their rights. We must figure out how to distinguish between those two, and how the human rights framework can help us do that.

At the level of population policy, an important distinction to make is that family planning programs or contraception programs should not be used to reduce wanted fertility. These programs should not be used to change the number of children women want to have, but rather should be offered, made available, and accessible, to help people control their own fertility. That is a principle that we can use both to distinguish among different kinds of population policies and also to evaluate reproductive health services. In general, then, we can say that a service succeeds if it helps individuals and couples achieve their reproductive intentions in a healthful manner. In fact, this is an index that is now being developed in this field.

Finally, let me just raise three issues that I think we need to be aware of when analyzing the human rights implications of population policies. First, population policies have had a
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different history in different countries. It is therefore very hard to make a blanket statement
about population policies and their impact. In Bolivia, for example, my understanding is that
population policy was a United States' initiative forced upon the country. That kind of
history greatly influences reproductive rights, family planning, and health services in
Bolivia. In other countries, population policies have become a weapon in ongoing ethnic
conflicts, with the government in power enforcing a pro-natalist policy "for" one ethnic
group and an anti-natalist policy "against" another (in all cases violating women's right to
reproductive choice).

A second issue is that the discussion about population policies often assumes that
governments are equally legitimate—and this assumption can be a huge fallacy. If a
government is totally illegitimate, the response of people to the kind of policies it develops
and imposes will be very different from the response of people who feel that their
government is legitimate and that it should be making such decisions. In addition, there are
situations where there are no governments at all.

A third point of caution I would like to raise concerns the way that donors, particularly
the United States, address this issue. Here a bit of history is helpful. In the 1960's and
1970's, the United States began pushing family planning as part of an anti-natalist
population policy, strictly for demographic purposes. Certain demographic goals were the
reason for United States' policy, and were the reason that contraceptives were pushed
everywhere. As this became an unpopular policy and started to be seen as unacceptable
not only in other countries, but in part in the United States as well, a body of literature
developed that attempted to show that contraceptives were good for health. This literature
used women's health as the rationale behind contraceptive use. This is partially how the
problem evolves: contraception programs installed primarily for demographic reasons get
defended as health measures.

It is very important, therefore, not to let the terms of the debate be set by the question
"Is a population policy that is implemented for demographic purposes good for health?" The
answer for the population as a whole (even if not for every individual woman) will almost
always be that access to contraception is good for health in general, in the sense that when
levels of contraceptive use go up, morbidity and mortality will, almost invariably, go down.
But this is asking the wrong question. Instead, we need to turn the question around and
ask "What are women's health needs? What policies fulfill those needs?" When you look at
health from women's perspective, and from the perspective of their needs—individual
needs included—then the contraceptive policies that are being implemented do not
necessarily meet the needs of the women themselves.

Let me give you a good example. You can have a population policy that pushes intra-
uterine devices (IUDs), and there are places like Vietnam where this is the case. They just
push IUDs, and they will defend this measure as good for health. Many population people
will defend it as good for health with the argument that if people have fewer pregnancies,
there will be fewer maternal deaths. That may be a fact for the population as a whole, but
we can not let this kind of health argument end the discussion. We need to turn it around
and ask what women's health needs are, and then ask whether a policy that just pushes
one kind of contraception meets those needs. I think the answer will surely be no.
I would like to begin by noting a couple of points. The term "donor" conjures up images of foreign governments, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, and this is indeed what I mean by the term "donor." But it is important to realize that the term "donor" does not necessarily refer to a foreign institution or government. It can often also mean local institutions. For many service providers, "donor" means local/national governments that are funding programs for service delivery. In the family planning and population arena, many, if not most national governments, are involved in service delivery.

I hope the question of why we should hold donors accountable is one that we can answer. I will begin by introducing you to what I regard as the major problems with the donor scenario. The first problem is that of global ideology. Many of us who work on reproductive health and rights often lose sight of the fact that these are not issues that lie at the heart of many governments, although they may lie in our hearts and in our concerns. We have to contextualize our advocacy in the greater political map. This contextualization has resulted in the identification of many problematic situations. The world is overly politicized with enormous amounts of money being spent on other priorities (such as militarization) and a lack of concern for women's issues. There have been donors, particularly the United States, which have stopped funding countries because of security issues and concerns. For example, recently funding to Pakistan has been cut off, even to the NGO sector working on family planning issues, because there have been other security and political issues that have overridden the concern for adequate reproductive health.

Another global ideological issue that has been mentioned several times today is the issue of abortion. Abortion has been an issue not just for the Vatican; many donors, and specifically the United States, have assumed a falsely puritanic outlook on this subject. The United States government has not funded abortion services since 1984. This law and policy is being liberalized, but currently there are still restrictions on US funds for abortion services.

There is another type of ideology—the "population ideology." Lynn has provided you with some background on the positions of the women's movement, which is that because there are many different approaches to the issue, there is no agreement on whether there can ever be a feminist population policy, or whether any population policy can be revised to meet the needs of women worldwide. But I believe that there are certain points upon which we can all agree. One of these basic points is that currently there is a very narrow paradigm or approach to population—one that has focused exclusively on fertility and fertility control. There has been very little attempt to contextualize population in any sort of development context or in a holistic manner.

Within population policies, there has been very little integration of reproductive care. Often, the primary focus of population has been the provision of contraceptives, irrespective of the health conditions and the needs of women. That has been a problem since, as Lynn said, contraception is a peril as well as a promise within the narrow framework of family planning. But we are still pushing to broaden that perspective. Now, whether this expansion lies within the umbrella of population policies and programs is a question on which there is no consensus. Either way, it is necessary that we broaden services and the availability of health services for women worldwide.
I am making generalizations, but this is because there are as many population policies as there are countries, and these populations policies change. However, what I have just outlined has been the general scenario in this area. Often, population policies have been donor driven. There are some donors who can be regarded as saying, "We want the population growth rate to be one percent or fertility rates to be down to two, so that every woman should have only two children." But as reproductive rights and human rights activists, we say that there are no magic numbers of children. Women should know what is good for them and what is bad and then they should be allowed to make choices.

These are the types of ideological issues I see involved in any discussion of donors. There are also practical issues with which to be concerned. Because donors contract out the work of service delivery, they are obviously engaged in setting the policies in these areas. And if we look at the services being provided, we could easily say that the policies underlying them are very narrowly focused on fertility. But, who is providing these services? If we look at the training of individuals and at their backgrounds, we realize that certain problems arise because a lot of services have focused on making sure people receive certain types of contraceptives with little or no concern for the rights and health status of the particular individuals involved. In addition, it is generally women who are the targets of fertility reduction policies.

Another question is, who is being served? Yes, women are being served. But not all women are treated equally. In many countries, unmarried women and adolescents are not being served. In other cases, specific women have been targeted for population reduction. For example, there have been claims of population policies being misused in the United States. There has been a history of racism in this country manifested in the selective coercive sterilization of African-American and Latina women. That is not to say that population policies cannot be implemented correctly. Rather, this historical background has led to a great deal of criticism and suspicion of these policies.

Given all these problems, we must ask the question: Where does human rights fit in? I would answer that we have to review human rights not just in the formal, legal sense—because that has a great deal of power—but, as Lynn suggested, in the general activist, ethical, and moral sense. I believe the human rights lens in this particular instance has great political value. It elevates the needs of women, whether to health care or to choice in a general sense, to the level of rights. This elevation has enormous political significance. Even if reproductive rights do not fall within the traditional human rights framework, the fact is that the power of the terms "rights" and "human rights" can be helpful to women as they try to access services, make choices, or make their own statements about how they want to control their bodies and their lives.

There is also practical value in human rights concepts. Donor institutions and governments are involved in service delivery, and such activities do raise traditional human rights questions. Are women exercising informed choice? Is there coercion? Is there not coercion? We are able to combine traditional and nontraditional human rights elements to deal with many problems we have with donors. The human rights framework becomes a means of setting standards. In the ideological sphere we can say, "Well, if human rights are standards, then why do we have an over-militarized world? Why do we not have a world in which the human rights that we all believe in are respected? Why are political rights being violated?" With the human rights framework, we can ask these questions, which create some sense of political will to move on these issues.
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On the population ideology front, there are enormous benefits to be derived from human rights, because that framework focuses on the individual. It is an approach in which you look at the individual, the rights and concerns of the individual, and then you work upwards. That has not been the manner in which donor organizations have historically worked. In fact, almost by definition, a donor sits on top and tells those at the lower levels how they want their aid used. So, using the human rights framework allows us to turn the standards upside down. I am not saying we have assessed the entire subject, but I do believe we have created a strong voice. I think that at least at the service delivery level there is an enormous amount of work to be done.

On a larger and broader human rights level, Lynn talked about the right to health and the right to access of health services. That is the question of a broader political movement on these issues. When you talk about the right to health, the question then becomes, How are we to measure this? How do we know that this right is being met or not met? When you are talking about a traditional human right, it is often easier to assess whether somebody is being coerced. When someone is given ten dollars or rupees or pounds to have a sterilization, perhaps that is an incentive which changes people's choices. But does the incentive amount to coercion? Of course, it is clearly coercion when one has been given an anesthetic and wakes up without an ovary. However, in the right to health area, the question is, How do we establish standards? How do we know when someone's right to health has been met? Does every single person's every health need have to be met? These are difficult questions.

We can begin to examine issues by looking at what we call socio-economic indicators. We can look at maternal mortality rates, infant mortality rates, and life expectancy in order to start setting the minimum standards for the right to health. Surely the right to health means that you should not have a maternal mortality rate of 300 per 1,000 live births. That is clearly a violation of some notion of the right to health. Development and empowerment are fundamental tenets. If poverty were eradicated, women would be more empowered. And we have to contextualize rights within the status of women. Women cannot achieve reproductive choice if they have no choices in other aspects of their lives. But, socioeconomic indicators cannot tell the full story. The human rights approach will be an important means by which to raise quality of care queries and concerns.

There are many other questions to discuss. When we get to the issue of accountability, the question becomes, accountability to whom? To a foreign institution? Is a donor accountable to the government of its host country? Should donors be accountable to that country's people? In determining the answer to this last question, the representative nature of the government is of critical concern. Are we dealing with a democracy or a dictatorship? There is also the issue of the accountability of a donor to its own citizens, to its own workers, or to its own government.

Here in the United States, the organization I work with believes we have to start working on US foreign assistance policies and US foreign aid, because the US is the largest donor in the world. We believe that perhaps our best contributions can be made by affecting policies in this country as well as by working overseas. I believe that, ultimately, the issue is not just accountability. In general, the issue is one of political will of the will of people and of governments to deal with women's reproductive health issues and to say that these are priorities. Women's reproductive rights and reproductive health should be accorded the priority they deserve.
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We need to look at genital mutilation not just as an issue in its own right but as a very good example of the practice of taking women’s issues, fleshing them out, and incorporating them in a practical way into the conceptual framework that Lynn Freedman has just talked about. As we started developing the work on women’s rights as human rights in the last two or three years, the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) surfaced. There were a number of reactions to the issue being raised. The reactions came from the history of how the issue of FGM had been dealt with and they came from the way in which differences and unresolved controversies within the women’s movement sometimes make us very short-sighted. I think it was an excellent exercise, something very concrete so that now we can say, “We believe in all these internationalized principles of human rights for all women. How are we going to deal with genital mutilation specifically?”

Historically, genital mutilation has been labeled as a traditional practice. We could spend quite awhile asking, What do you mean? How do you define tradition? What is tradition? What is the difference between tradition and culture? Is culture changeable and tradition less open to change? Historically, genital mutilation has always been labeled traditional practice, even at an international level. It has also been considered traditional practice by a lot of the groups working on the issue. That meant it was dealt with in isolation, as a quirky, strange practice that takes place in remote, barbaric places.

This kind of image still prevails whenever FGM gets mentioned. As a result, FGM has never been taken seriously enough by the international women’s movement. Few activists and scholars have invested enough time in thinking about how to incorporate FGM into our concern for women’s reproductive health and rights; that analysis and link have yet to be adequately constructed.

These conditions also meant that the actors who were working on this issue were of two types. Particular groups of women in Africa took FGM as a very narrow issue around which to focus their careers: this is going to be what we work on—traditional practice. They did not try to link it to gender equity, oppression, or women’s rights. Health professionals also took up the issue. Their understanding was that FGM is a health issue; it is something that actually hurts women’s bodies through bleeding, infection, coma, and death. Indeed, there sometimes appears to be a prurient interest in the gruesome impacts of FGM. When the human rights/women’s rights movement really took off, the issue of FGM came up. And some women felt wary about this because they feared the implications of using FGM as an example; i.e. marginalized, overemphasized and exoticized.

Fortunately, the egalitarian and participatory nature of this movement has made it possible to discuss FGM and define it as an issue that, no more and no less than any other issue, affects women’s health and rights. The political angle of human rights resolved some of these problems: Is FGM a health issue that only physicians see, is it just a traditional issue that only certain African women can work on, or is it an issue that is a genuine human rights concern? I think that once you articulate these options it becomes obvious that FGM is an important human rights concern. It wasn’t, however, obvious a few years ago and people did argue, “What has FGM got to do with human rights?” This only emphasizes that
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we need to continue thinking through and creating the kind of language that makes people realize that FGM is a human rights issue.

In bringing genital mutilation into the global women's reproductive health and human rights movements we also faced the question of whether we should consider FGM a women's issue or a children's issue. It is a little funny when you think about it, but still a real issue. This is because, in the modern women's movement we see gender oppression as the arch-enemy to overcome. We also think in terms of getting our rights. That is the way we pose our concerns, whereas traditionally children are to be protected—children don't go out to get their rights. Further, since women have conventionally been pushed behind children—we only do things for children—the women's movement reacted by saying, "We don't want our issues to be subdued under sloppy concern about protection of children." Fortunately, we quickly became aware that a woman does not become a woman before she is a girl, and that we really have to start thinking of the life cycle in gender discrimination of women. That way, we can undo this whole thing about children versus women, and take FGM into the women's agenda.

Thus, we included the issue of FGM in the *Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights*, and we managed, for the first time, to put gender-specific concerns into major UN documents, such as the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. The *Vienna Declaration* did not talk about genital mutilation specifically, but it did address traditional practices. Now we are trying to change the culture, so we are going to have to get rid of the language of traditional practice.

We have some problems and several questions we have to think about in our future work on genital mutilation. Should FGM be something that African women's groups work on autonomously, without interference, or so-called interference, from outside? Or, do they need international support, for example, from the rest of the women's movement and/or from NGO's or UN agencies. It is not an easy question, and I don't think people can just say, "Well, we can do it through the women's movement." You have to remember this is Africa. FGM happens in the most economically depressed parts of Africa, and therefore in parts of Africa where the women's movement is weakest and will remain weakest at a certain level for a while yet. We already have a network of mixed national groups who have created an industry called female genital mutilation. Should we keep those very vertical, focused programs of interest, or do we want to bring FGM into issues of reproductive health, reproductive rights, or human rights. Should we have a mixture, or both, or either/or?

Another question is whether or not we should emphasize integrating the issue of FGM into more extensive service delivery programs like family planning, child survival, and child health programs. When you work within these large programs, you multiplying your efforts by millions because these programs are rich. If you work on just genital mutilation, somebody may give you $10,000 here, $50,000 there, but after two years, they'll forget you, and that's it. Should we and can we incorporate our issues into these programs in order to multiply our efforts? Can this be done when the possibility exists that they will just take our work and change it in such a way that it might no longer carry the message it is intended to carry?

Finally, there is the big concern which emerged in Vienna that we have to work on constantly. We must not take genital mutilation as the only issue. Rather, we should look at all the concerns over cultural practices. We must draw a very fine line between
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protecting cultural sanctity, or ensuring cultural preservation, and protecting individual
rights. How can we find the language to answer the allegations if women are starting to
fight what are seen as individual claims and individual gains: “I want to have the right to
my body and to my sexuality.” How can such claims not clash with cultures in which the
individual is more subsumed within the group identity? I think we all need to work on this
problem not just intellectually, in terms of finding more language or developing the ability to
decipher the differences. We also need to work on this problem in our practice, so that what
we do can be a model of protecting the rights of individuals without forcing all individuals
to become replicas of each other and without having to sacrifice our cultural diversity.

Female genital mutilation could be an excellent entry point, and a very legitimate one,
to open up a variety of gender issues. It is an acceptable entry point for certain players—
like the medical profession and maybe even for governments—to start a debate on gender
power and the rights of women in societies where it is still sacrosanct to talk about gender
power. If we do it right, it could be a very, very important entry point, just as in the history
of Europe and the United States, abortion was a kind of galvanizing force for a discussion
that was not just about abortion.

I would like to close with a brief clarification of some of my points, since these issues
are complex. On the one hand, there are the human rights people, with a human rights and
especially women’s rights kind of agenda. This agenda is really based on very simple things,
such as dignity for the human being, equity, and freedom from injury. These are very basic
principles that say we are all human beings, we are all equal and we should have equal
rights. Human rights is almost a replacement ideology for some of the other ideologies
that were trying to get to the same thing but that no longer exist or have failed. We need
tools to apply these principles. So these are human rights tools. Our tools are not final, but
are in a state of development.

On the other hand we have the status quo, which is that the West dominates. It has
more resources. It is white, middle-class men and women, and certain class structures and
institutions. One of these institutions is the population institution, which is part of how the
status quo generates itself. The population field actually feeds the status quo tools. And the
way these tools have been designed is that they operate with a very clear idea of progress:
We think there is more of a threat of overpopulation in countries that are poor. If we don’t
stop them, they are going to invade our cultures, invade our space; they are going to take
from us the things that we have accumulated all this time. Women are coming and
speaking across cultures to each other; they are going to break the whole hierarchy of class
and of race.

Now, the question for us is how to use these human rights principles. We have to keep
reminding ourselves that these basic principles have to stay local. That is why I personally
refuse any population policy: absolutely and categorically. Population policy is a language
and tool that was developed from within the status quo. If certain countries have more
people and less resources, there are ways to deal with that, to encourage growth or to
reduce the numbers of people, without calling it population policy.

What I am trying to do is to bring my tools and infiltrate the status quo, and the reason
I do that is because these established institutions have the resources. It is possible to work
on FGM on the basis of principle, particularly in the areas where we feel strongly about
women’s sexuality and reproduction—women have the right to their bodies, women have

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the right to sexuality, nobody should ever cut off anybody’s body parts. Yet, how do I get the tools to do something about it? Do I go straight to women and talk to them? Do we only work amongst ourselves? Do we try to get what exists here within the status quo, and infiltrate it with our ideas and tools, so that we can use the resources that exist? Because in the end, it is the resources that exist within these institutions that feed the status quo. How can we integrate without compromise? I constantly have to debate that issue, because there are a lot of us who would rather not deal with the problem at all. We say, “I don’t care for that. I’m going to have my own brave new world.” And some of us say that there is no way we can have the brave new world if we don’t integrate.

The problem is that as we are in the process of developing our tools, we are very small in power and resources. Yet we have to deal with this Goliath called the establishment. The tactical question becomes how many of their tools can we manipulate to our benefit? How many of our tools can we make into theirs? If we took a very strong feminist analysis of FGM into an environment where the whole debate has not been accepted, we would probably be marginalized very quickly. In that case, we might have to use some of their tools, including such entry points as the welfare of children, but always keeping those basic human rights principles in our minds and our hearts.

My experience has been that the problem is not the people who want to view female genital mutilation as a child’s rights issue. The problem is the people who refuse that FGM is a child’s rights issue and who believe that it is only a women’s issue. That is like saying that every single group has its own issue. As we go to negotiate around the issue of FGM, we have to think of the moment, of the tools and of our power at that particular point, and of who our allies are. It is a very political process, and while we can have a very clear ideology, we also have to be very political about the way we put it into practice.
Liu Bohong.
Discussion about women's economic and social human rights is in an early and exploratory stage. The panelists in this session will consider what it means to specify and detail women's social and economic human rights, and in what ways a women's human rights framework allows us to challenge prevalent economic models and social and economic policies. As we do this, we will look at developments in women's human rights discourse, and at both the opportunities and barriers this framework presents for discussions of economic justice. We will explore strategies for organizing around social and economic rights and think about the political implications of doing such work with in the context of current global political and economic trends. Finally, we will examine ways to demand accountability from governments, international agencies, international financial institutions, and even transnational corporations, for violations of women's economic and social rights which these institutions either explicitly promote or tacitly facilitate.

For many years, feminist educators and activists have been investigating the impact of economic crisis on women, particularly on women in low-income communities. In the past few years, feminists have been paying more and more attention to the specific effects on women of the globalization of the economy. Indeed, much recent feminist analysis and activity has focused on these issues, emphasizing in particular the importance of gendered analysis in development theories and planning. However, despite the growing network of educators and activists who recognize the need for gendered analyses of these important economic issues, there have been fewer efforts to examine the gendered impact of global economic trends within a framework of women's human rights, to look at women's economic and social rights as a viable aspect of international human rights advocacy. Further, and equally as important, feminists have not yet thoroughly explored such a framework for its potential as a strategic tool for political organizing in the area of economic justice for women.

Many of those who work on women's human rights insist that civil or political rights cannot be understood separately from social and economic rights, particularly for women. However, the human rights framework and human rights mechanisms are currently defined to obstruct such an approach to human rights through the privileging of certain categories of rights over others. At all levels of activism—local, national, regional, and international—women's groups have been highlighting the need for a holistic understanding of human rights, the need for an expansive approach that considers the economic conditions within which rights are constructed, constrained, violated, or pursued. In order to argue effectively that human rights are indivisible as well as universal, we must articulate and specify social and economic rights in a way that leads us toward greater precision and prescription rather than toward a proliferation of rhetoric. In our efforts to expand the definitions of which rights count as human rights, we encounter some potentially conflicting imperatives. For at the same time that we must allow women's experiences of human rights abuse to challenge the traditional boundaries of "rights" discourse, we must also insist that human rights is a political as well as a legal framework. To negotiate this tension, we must understand our advocacy as a multi-faceted endeavor: We need to develop clearer and deeper critiques of
the existing human rights framework and simultaneously construct new visions of human rights based on women's everyday experiences.

The application of a women's human rights framework to problems of social and economic justice brings with it a corresponding need to specify who is accountable to whom and how. The idea of accountability implicit in a women's human rights framework requires that we identify not only the violation and the violator, but those responsible for responding to and preventing the violation. Further, the framework gives us a strong position from which to hold Northern countries accountable for their programs and actions. We can use the very principles that they claim to promote while we identify contradictions and gaps in their policies and rhetoric. For instance, in the North, world poverty is frequently seen as a "third world" problem. In effect, this blames the victim, and denies both the extent of poverty in the North and the link between poverty in the South and wealth in the North. Furthermore, only recently have extensive efforts emerged to link systematically the analysis of poverty in the North and the South to the global trade and aid regime which confers benefits primarily on transnational corporations, banks, and multilateral lenders. The refusal to acknowledge the mutual dependence of poverty and wealth construes poverty and marginalization as beyond the purview of national and international economic, social, and political structures, and therefore as no one's particular responsibility.

The use of a women's human rights framework allows us to challenge this construction, particularly when it is coupled with a feminist critique of development and trade policies. This framework compels us to ask two primary questions. First, what are the gender-specific social and economic rights violations that women experience? Second, how do women's experiences underscore the need to refine, expand or re-specify the understanding of economic and social rights? As we attempt to answer these and other attendant questions, we will begin to create more cogent analyses and more effective strategies in organizing to demand that women's human rights be protected and promoted. As we challenge the hierarchy of rights and move to create strategies for concerted feminist action for change, we must be careful to think through what it means--analytically, politically, and strategically—to say that human rights are universal and indivisible.

Clarence Dias, from the International Centre for Law and Development and the Asia Pacific Coalition for Human Rights, provides a summary of the components of social and economic rights and connects this to work in the area of human rights and development. Mariama Williams is a popular educator currently at the New School for Social Research and the Fashion Institute of Technology. She will address the issue of women's social and economic rights in the context of international trade, drawing upon her extensive background in women's economic literacy training. Celina Romany is a lawyer who teaches at the City University of New York Law School and co-directs the International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic. In her presentation, she will explore the critical insights that emerge when we make explicit the connections between human rights theory, social and economic rights, and women's everyday experiences.
I would like to begin with two preliminary points. First, I will respond to the question of why we should bring a human rights focus into issues of economic justice. We are meeting during a time when economic issues have taken center stage in all spheres of human life, in a manner which is systematically producing inhuman wrongs. This is why we need to turn to "rights"—to right the whole host of these wrongs which, even at the planning stage, are integral to current economic assumptions, and therefore to development policies and plans.

We are hearing today that development is to take place less and less through aid, and more and more through trade. However, the moment this happens, the concept of sustainability flies out the window. This is the case because for development to take place through trade, you have got to sustain trade. To sustain trade, you have got to sustain consumption. And, by definition, unless you continue to sustain consumption by opening up new markets (in India, China, or Vietnam, for instance) through aggressive commercial marketing, you are not going to be able to use trade as a mechanism for sustainable development. In order to promote the opening up of markets, you've got to destroy cultural resistance to products which might be relevant to increasing the demand for consumer goods. Hence, the importance of MTV and other satellite television marketing as part of a global trade regime. At the level of international financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund and GATT degenerate into nothing more than international merchants' federations. When we strip either one of its rhetoric, we see greed, aggression, and theft through trade. Therefore, the most significant questions to ask are: first, how will this greed, aggression, and theft through trade affect women's lives and women's relations? And second, what are the best strategies to resist and reverse this? The best way to approach these issues is to address the inhuman wrongs and the gross violations and denials of human rights.

The second preliminary point I want to make relates to the question of the limitations of using international legal instruments. Since the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, especially from the perspective of the Asian experience there, we have tended to view the international human rights system in a slightly schizophrenic manner. We take what we can get from it, but we do not expect much from it. And we understand that there must always be other arenas for action. Yet, even as we respond to the plea to "think globally, act locally," we must be careful to examine what this really means. For instance, in the context of the environment, such an appeal has meant that the increase in greenhouse gasses that contribute to global warming requires us to cut rice production. This is one consequence of thinking globally and acting locally. The time has come for us to reverse the terms of this entreaty, and to think locally while acting globally. We must go back to the local communities within which we work and make clear the global implications of working to protect those communities from the forces of globalization.

A focus on economic rights is beneficial in these efforts. However, there are two limitations, or potential traps, in dealing with the human rights approach to which we must pay attention. First, existing international human rights practices, including those of the North, are excessively state-centered. They appeal to the institutions of the state to intervene against wrongs which, much of the time, result from the acts of the state, either
explicitly or implicitly. Asking the state to redress human rights violations is, therefore, like asking the cat to look after the canary.

Human rights movements in third world countries, especially in South Asia, are significantly different from those which have their roots in Europe and in the United States. These movements recognize that the state is the most chronic source of human rights violations, and that more and more, the state acts as an agent of global forces. Indeed, the state appears most often to represent the interests of supra-state actors, like transnational corporations or international financial institutions. We might say that the state is abdicating its responsibilities to protect its people, and this trend is growing. We must expand this understanding of human rights, and build a paradigm of human rights activism that restates and emphasizes empowerment rather than an elite professional approach.

From this point of view, I think it is especially important that we turn to economic, social and cultural rights. Indeed, the reason for the sorry state of affairs today is precisely that the development of social, economic, and cultural rights has fallen victim to 40 years of misapplied and misconstrued human rights practice. Such practice has led to the prominence of notions such as "generations" of rights, and to the hierarchy that this implies. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights came into existence on January 3, 1976, whereas the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights came into existence on the later date March 23, 1976. Yet Western writers tell us that the first generation of human rights is civil and political, the second generation is economic, social and cultural, and the third generation is group and solidarity rights, into which women's rights are being fitted. In one bold stroke, through this generational theory of human rights, we have extracted a major body of rights from the center of human rights practice.

Another point I want to make is about the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Indeed, I would like to challenge the way that most people think about the Covenant, and to call into question the position that people in the West take towards it. During the Cold War era, economic, social, and cultural rights were seen as an ideological ploy emanating from the Soviet bloc. In part, this view resulted from the important role that Poland played in helping to formulate the Covenant. What is important to note, however, is that at that time Poland was trying to resist the imposition of Soviet ideology and thus sought the protection of economic, social and cultural rights.

The Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights contains four rights that are clearly identifiable as economic. Only one right can clearly be categorized as a social right. And under the article of cultural rights, only one right is clearly articulated. The rest of the articles primarily deal with indivisible, interdependent, process-related rights. In fact, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was never intended to be a separate conceptual document. It is, rather, a fragment that cannot be separated from other sets of rights. But 40 years of human rights theorizing and instrument-building have been constructed around a suspicion that behind group rights and economic rights is hidden a deep conspiracy to undermine God, country, free market, and Mom's apple pie. The result is that the whole arena of economic, social, and cultural rights, along with solidarity or collective rights, has been systematically and officially cut out of the agenda of international human rights organizations. Even today, most international human rights actors remain deeply suspicious of what they consider to be "second" and "third" generation rights. In the face of this systematic exclusion, coupled with economic restructuring and structural
 adjustment, economic, social and cultural rights are of special and vital importance to women today. The construction of a participatory conceptualization of these rights, and the development of collaborative strategies, can be important tools in the struggle of women for liberation. But first we must unravel some of the contradictions that arise from the manner in which these rights have been cast. The current state of practice around these rights contains a number of devices for continuing to enslave women. For instance, there is only one social right enumerated, and it centers around the family. This immediately imprisons women within the confines of the social institution of the family. The one article that deals with cultural rights is primarily concerned with promoting the fruits of scientific research to the benefit of all. Of course, there are some advantages to the fact that there is nothing negative in the Covenant about cultural rights. However, there is a great deal that is negative in the practice around the false assertion of cultural rights to enslave women, particularly when culture is linked with religion.

With regard to economic rights, present practice operates to disempower women and continue their enslavement. Women are often excluded from the enjoyment of certain economic rights. For instance, under the customary laws of many countries, women in general, and married women in particular, have no right to property. In many cases, they also have no rights to inherit certain types of property. Moreover, as a matter of practice, if not a matter of law, women are excluded from holding certain types of jobs in certain fields of work. If women are allowed to hold a job in a tokenist kind of way, they are not given opportunities to move up the ranks of leadership. Discrimination of many sorts takes place in work situations, including the most simple form of all, unequal pay for equal work. There is an additional denial of economic rights when it comes to access of the girl child to education and food, the devastating impact of which is currently being documented. When households must get by with limited resources, girls are often denied access to education in favor of boys.

One might say that economic bondage is maintained through denying women full property rights, and through the deliberate violation of the economic rights of women. This leads to an economic devaluation of women, which in turn results in extreme forms of gender-based violence, such as female infanticide, widespread wife battering, bride burnings, and starvation and malnutrition of girl children. In this manner, the negative side of economic practices as they affect women makes visible the urgency for women’s groups to be present in debates about economic rights.

Indeed, the failure of the present system to recognize economic, social and cultural rights stems from the same exclusionary practices that underlie the failure to acknowledge women’s human rights. This leads me to the second reason I think women in particular need to take up economic, social and cultural rights issues. It is related to an intellectual failure at the conceptual level to grapple with the implications of the public/private divide. Economic, social and cultural rights are relegated to the realm of the "private" in much the way that women’s rights are: they fall outside the prevailing emphasis in human rights theory and practice on violations by state actors. This has held back women’s human rights just as it continues to constrain economic, social and cultural rights. Of course, one of the victories of women at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna was a breakthrough on the private/public front and on the non-state violator front. These conceptual advances were essential since violators of women’s civil and political rights are
often private actors. So too, the violators of economic rights are not likely to be states, but rather powerful economic actors with whom states and governments act in complicity. 

I mentioned earlier the whole notion of "generations" of rights, which relegates the rights of groups to yet a third level. This is another conceptual flaw. These flaws result from and reinforce several practices which weaken human rights organizing and advocacy. These include an overemphasis, especially in the West, on individuals rather than groups; the dominance of civil and political rights over economic, social and cultural rights; and an exclusive focus on violations of rights rather than on the progressive realization of rights. All these problems have impeded disadvantaged groups in the pursuit and enjoyment of their rights, civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural. We must be very clear, however, that this is not a question of bread versus freedom. You may have your freedom without bread. You may have the bread without freedom. The challenge lies in safeguarding both bread and freedom.

Much of this is tied to the relationships that exist between countries and the secondary position of human rights. Governments often talk in terms of trade and the denial of special treatment privileges for countries that are closely linked to human rights violations. From a human rights point of view, we have to accept the fact (and develop strategies around the fact) that governments borrow from governments, and thereby use a double standard in which they indulge as a matter of policy and hypocrisy. For instance, Indonesia has a terrible record on worker’s rights. And while the United States government might criticize Indonesia at the level of rhetoric, it is also working closely with Indonesia to form the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC), which will bring all the North American countries in a bloc, along with Korea, China, Japan and Asian other countries, into a free trade agreement. So the question is, how can people address the hypocrisy of governments on human rights issues and on trade conditionalities and agreements?

This brings us back to the importance of the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. These conceptual aspects of human rights theories and mechanisms, and the corresponding failures and limitations of human rights practice since the writing of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, have applied to human rights practices generally. They effect economic, social and cultural rights as well as women’s rights. In part, this is why women are so uniquely situated to pursue campaigns to advance women’s human rights along with economic, social and cultural rights. Advancing economic rights today requires global actions which bring together discussions about human rights and debates about globalization of trade and investment. The Global Campaign for Women’s Human Rights, and the existence of a global network, can strengthen efforts to address these issues.

Moreover, the long history of denial of women’s human rights can provide very eloquent testimony to the denial of economic, social and cultural rights of women. The importance of linking economic, social and cultural rights to women is that this shift allows us to move away from the realm of abstract rights to very concrete, stark depictions of human reality. Such a shift moves us from debate to action. For example, in the case of the killing of female fetuses, this shift moves us away from “gender discrimination” as an abstract concept to a discussion about this issue as a pressing human rights abuse which requires immediate action. The right to work suddenly takes on completely new dimensions when one begins to look at emerging testimonies about sexual harassment in work situations. The abstract is transformed into pressing, concrete concerns by using the framework of economic, social and cultural rights in the struggle for women’s rights.
Let us move briefly to a description of the United Nations’ system on economic, social and cultural rights, a system that has two aspects: rights and institutions. The rights remain vaguely defined and, unlike civil and political rights, are not generally defined as negative things that need to be displaced. The **Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** begins with a focus on two key rights that are civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights: self-determination (for nations and for people) and non-discrimination.

As I noted earlier, the **Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** really expresses only three broad economic rights. The first is the right to work, which has some clear gender implications. The second is the right to social security and social insurance which, as worded, portrays the now disappearing Western setting in which governments provide social insurance. This might have a tremendous amount of relevance today in claiming a redefined, community-based right to social security and social insurance. The third economic right is the right to an adequate standard of living, which is broken down and defined further as having three illustrative components: the right to health; the right to food; and the right to education. Article 10 of the Covenant, which deals with social rights, puts utmost priority on protecting the family, which is regarded as the fundamental unit of society. Importantly, it does state that the concept of family is based upon the notion of free consent to marriage. But this priority leads to special protection for mothers that many see as problematic when it comes to women’s human rights. It is not unusual for such protective rights to be granted to women over a long period of time. The inclusion of these rights responds to pressures women face at work and to women’s need to be able to take maternity leave. Yet these are primarily rights that ensure that women will be able to play the kind of role to which women have historically been consigned, essentially by males, and that keep women’s opportunities limited.

The cultural rights provision deals only with scientific progress, freedom of scientific research, and creative activity. This provision urgently needs to be redefined by women’s groups so that it becomes a powerful weapon in the struggle against patriarchy, which is particularly forceful as it takes form in religions and cultures.

Turning to the institutional side of the Covenant, there are two main institutions that are relevant to economic, social and cultural rights within the United Nations. The first is the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is the treaty body created by the Covenant, and which should be one of the targets of human rights activism. At the moment, all the committee is empowered to do is to review country reports about the state of progress in the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. A second, and considerably under-utilized body is the Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly (ECOSOC), which functions as the United Nations’ executive branch. ECOSOC began with a mandate to oversee and implement the United Nations Charter, especially with regard to human rights. ECOSOC has a number of powers and responsibilities that are relevant to economic, social and cultural human rights advocacy, including evaluating the country reports, and making recommendations to the General Assembly.

I would like to finish by turning to some potential strategies, tasks and campaigns around women’s rights and all economic, social and cultural rights. Women have a critical role to play, both in advocating on their own behalf and in highlighting the importance of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights in general. Further development of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** is an important piece of this advocacy. Human rights education, particularly popular
methodologies, is also crucial. Moreover, there are the tasks of monitoring and developing indicators to monitor more accurately the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. Further, there is the charge to protection, which includes sanctioning violators and providing effective remedies to victims who have been denied these rights.

Campaigns or other activities around economic, social and cultural rights issues, especially by women’s human rights organizations, might adopt a series of approaches. One approach might be to focus on a specific right. For instance, organizations might take up the right to work, and articulate very clearly the gender dimensions of developing an effective and meaningful right to work. Other issues include non-discrimination, conditions of work, sexual harassment, along with certain kinds of working conditions under which women are especially vulnerable, such as migrant women in the Gulf, and women working in free trade zones and garment factories. A second approach is to emphasize particular processes that deny or violate women’s economic, social and cultural rights, such as processes of development, processes of globalization, and trade. A third possibility might be to concentrate on specific kinds of victims. In South Asia, for instance—my region of the world—the issue of trafficking in women might be an effective way to focus upon violations of women’s economic, social and cultural rights. Finally, the levels at which these need to be introduced will range from the international level, through the national level, to the grassroots level.

Other strategies that have been utilized successfully, and that might serve as models for action include:

> the mobilization of action campaigns, such as the “dirty dozen campaign” to bring attention to the 12 development projects in Asia with the worst denial of women’s rights;

> the organization of people’s tribunals, such as the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women’s Human Rights that was held in conjunction with the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993;

> the use of existing international instruments and charters of rights relating to particular spheres of women’s activities;

> the development of a series of forums on the “forgotten peoples,” modeled after the work currently taking place in South Asia and Nepal, which might include people forgotten by the women’s human rights movement in their own countries.

There are three elements to these actions. First, we must expose the illegitimacy of what is happening, and expose and document what in fact is happening in the name of development. Second, people must continue to resist. For instance, farmers in India physically threw a multinational corporation that produces seeds, out of their state and out of India. They smashed a few windowpanes in their building, and created blockades which literally forced this multinational out. And third, we must learn to make more strategic use of the international arena to mobilize pressure, for this is an effective domain in which to make clear that our governments are hand-in-glove with many of these powerful economic forces—links or relationships that should be disclosed in parliaments and other national and international fora. We need to wrest back the rhetoric of human rights, and use it to illustrate the hypocrisy and double standards of many governments.

We have to come at these efforts with new conceptual tools, which is why we must put a face on the violators. If that means naming multinational corporations and international banks, then we need to do that. Having done this, however, we also need to
rethink what we do as human rights activists, and acknowledge or accept that more of the same is not enough. We need not give up any of the arenas for action, however limited they are. The United Nations may not have a great deal of space, but we cannot give up any of ours either.

There is a final point I would like to make. Development victims, or victims of the development process do exist, but a victim is just one step away from being empowered if he or she can only survive. The question of remedies for victims which do not depend upon the charity of the state must be addressed. And in all of these efforts, grassroots human rights education is very important, for it is one major way we can really make sure that the process of disempowerment and co-optation at the grassroots level is halted.

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What do women want from the economy? That question is much less banal than it seems. The way in which we answer it will affect the practical, conceptual and methodological issues that scholars, researchers, economic justice activists and policy-makers tackle in analyzing the relationship between women's social and economic status and macroeconomic policies. At the simplest level, one answer to this question might be adequate fulfillment of basic material needs and parity in care-giving responsibilities. Thus, from the vantage point of women, the objectives of economic policies should be to sustain life, to promote general human welfare, and to eradicate poverty.

To what extent can any economy fulfill these obligations? In other words, what are the roles and obligations of the economy and government regarding its citizens? Needless to say, most governments would pay lip service to a commitment to social welfare or at least to the well-being of citizens. Yet, empirical evidence indicates that for many people across the globe this is not the reality. Countless numbers of women experience the day to day reality of impoverishment, exclusion from access to resources, and exploitation.

We are also living in a time when "reasonable" people are querying whether the economy or the government can accept any such responsibilities. We are witnessing severe retrenchment of the state as a force for ensuring a basic level of social welfare or well-being. The new trend toward economic and political liberalization emphasizes productivity improvements and the expansion of profit-maximizing opportunities for multinational corporations, apparently at any cost. Thus there is no commitment to social welfare, equity, or economic justice.

Central to economic liberalization are programs to increase productivity and capital formation by lowering the social cost of capital. This is being accomplished through the reliance on fiscal, monetary, and labor market policies that lower real wages, squeeze the standard of living downwards, and shift the social cost of wealth accumulation by the rich on to the household sector. These policies are at the heart of both the structural adjustment programs being applied in the South and the neo-liberal economic policies in the North.

The present crisis demands the extension of the human rights framework into the discipline of economics and economic policy. Such an approach is necessary to ensure that women's human rights are protected and advanced. Women’s access to economic and social resources, and women’s possibilities for obtaining meaningful work, depend
fundamentally on the proper evaluation of our role in the economy and our position in the labor and credit markets. Central to this is full recognition, accompanied by adequate compensation, for women’s unpaid care-giving and social reproduction services. Such a recognition allows us to frame our demands not as supplicants requesting assistance, but as citizens who make distinct economic contributions and who demand that our rights be respected and promoted.

There is a compelling necessity for women to understand economic issues. Women and women’s organizations need to challenge economic theory, policy and thinking. This involves coming to grips with fiscal, monetary, and trade policies, since these are the factors that affect women’s daily lives. An initial starting point is to understand what these policies are and from where they originate. Women must also understand how these policies undergird and reinforce ongoing trends—whether structural adjustment in the South, or structural change or restructuring in the United States, Europe, and Canada.

Economic theory is the base of economic policy, and it has been mystified to the extent that it has disempowered people. This has occurred at all levels: the individual, the community, and the nation. People’s understanding of what is happening to them and their lives does not correspond to economic projections by government officials or the media.

Economics has generally proceeded along lines that suggest there is no gender and no class. It masquerades as both scientific and technically neutral. Hence, the economic policies that are implemented appear to make no distinctions in terms of historical context of gender, race, or class. The assumption is that economic policies affect everyone in the same way. However, this is clearly not the case. Macroeconomic policies have a differential impact on women, as a group, relative to men. It also affects people differently based on their ethnic, racial and geographical location both within a country and among nations.

Indeed, most assumptions in economic theories are inimical to women’s interests. There are, however, two which appear to have the most insidious and pervasive effect on women’s lives. These are, first, the assumption of a “level playing field,” and second, the assumption of the mythical “male breadwinner.” The assumption of a level playing field presumes that everyone starts out on the same footing; that everyone has equal access to resources and opportunities. But this has never been the case. Nonetheless, this assumption continues to be the cornerstone of policy, much to the detriment of women’s social and economic advancement.

The assumption of the male breadwinner is generally taken to mean that women are non-workers and part of a family that is headed by a working male. When the economy grows, the male breadwinner’s income grows, so women will be well-situated economically. Of course, the reality is that this assumption has never been valid for most women, nor will it likely ever be. Not only has there been a growth worldwide of families headed by women, but women have and continue to contribute to the economy as independent economic actors with rights. What is needed now is for us to claim those rights.

A growing body of research by feminist economists demonstrates the validity and the necessity of housework and other social reproduction services that women generally perform. These services undergird the economy, particularly in periods of economic crisis and government withdrawal from the provision of social services. Ultimately, the work that women do in the household sphere is both the starting and ending point of the economy.

Indeed, to the extent that the market functions at all efficiently, it is women’s work that makes this possible. Therefore, the so-called “magic” of the market is predicated on
women's work. An accurate accounting of women's work, including the invisible tasks of social reproduction and informal activities, would require the establishment of an entirely different distribution of income, resources, and access to credit. This underscores the importance of women's work, and the need for women to recognize the tremendous role their labor plays in the economy. The very restructuring of both the domestic and the global economy is predicated on female labor, in the formal labor market, in the informal sector, and in the household/care-giving sphere.

Part and parcel of globalization and restructuring is greater dependence for most economies on international trade as the engine of growth. This means increased dependence on women's labor, because for many years we have been the major source of labor in developing countries, as we are now in the service economy of the United States and other developed countries. Hence, women need to create a strong campaign to understand economics, and to clearly and strongly state the case for women's rights as economic contributors, not simply as dependents, wives, or mothers. Given the nature of current economic and social restructuring, such a claim is particularly urgent for women to make.

For several years now, women from the South have been grappling with the combined impact of structural adjustment programs, privatization of social services, and sustained economic transition. Such processes are part of broader trends of increased economic interdependence, accompanied by a narrowing of "legitimate" models for political and economic organization. Such large-scale trends do not stay confined to poorer nations, and thus women from the North are now confronting a similar loss of jobs, services, and commitment to social welfare. Women in developed countries, where the state traditionally utilizes a Keynesian welfare approach, are experiencing the effects of drastic cutbacks in social and welfare services, much like women in the South. The state's wings have been clipped so that state provision of services is being "privatized" and thereby significantly withdrawn, while a new philosophy about who can have services is being constructed. This philosophy is founded upon an emphasis on attachment to the labor market as the qualifying basis for services from the state. Thus, women who work in the formal labor market may have a claim to unemployment compensation, pension, and social security if their jobs still include such "perks." But what of women who do no formal work? What is the basis of their claim on the state?

Evidently, women who are not part of the formal labor market have no claim on national output of goods and services. Why? Because they are not seen as productive contributors to the economy. This is quite clear in the debate over welfare reform in the United States. The assumption is that there is no need for the state to be responsible to women in their various roles as mothers and wives unless they are in the labor market. The issue of welfare reform is recast as part of this general process of re-organizing the social contract and creating a new social dispensation. Again, it is urgent that we make visible women's contributions to the economy. Clearly, the market and policy-makers will continue to depend on women's labor even while they publicly discount its economic importance. This will enable policy-makers to continue to implement policies whose outcomes implicitly depend upon increasing women's burden.

Thus, it becomes evident that the same processes undergird structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the South and the restructuring of the North. More and more evidence indicates that SAPs have severely deteriorated women's opportunities and well-being.
SAPs, like most economic policies, are founded upon the assumptions about women's lack of contribution to economic or productive activity. At the same time, the very efficiency of these programs, and therefore the potential for their success, is predicated on women's unpaid labor. They depend upon women to take up the slack in the informal and formal sectors of the economy, and to assure their families' survival—no matter how arduous this may be.

What, then, is the link between stabilization, structural adjustment, structural change, and restructuring? What are the implications for women? The first thing to note is that all these phenomena are closely intertwined. SAPs are a specific set of policies designed to transform or restructure developing countries' economies. Structural change and restructuring describe the actual processes. However, the policies which are generated by these processes, and which are used to accelerate them, are virtually identical to SAPs. The difference is that SAPs are externally directed and imposed through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to "accredit" countries as worthy of support, while the policies that are generated to deal with the effects of structural change and to facilitate restructuring, are internally directed. This is why the term "structural adjustment" is most closely tied to developing countries' economies. Structural adjustment is also intertwined with another phenomenon, which is used mostly with developing countries, known collectively as stabilization policies.

Stabilization policies originated in the 1950s via the IMF. Briefly, the aim of stabilization is to stabilize the balance of payments of a country. The balance of payments is a framework that accounts for the outflow of goods and services, and the inflow of money and foreign direct investment. In many countries, the balance of payments is chronically in deficit—the country imports more it exports. The aim of the IMF program is to stabilize the balance of payments by increasing exports and decreasing imports.

In the 1950s, stabilization efforts were driven by the belief that nations' deficits were primarily the result of excessive government spending. As a result, the IMF sought to restrain both government spending and domestic credit expansion by instituting stabilization targets designed to produce austerity within developing countries' economic programs.

Between 1970 and 1980, the debt crisis emerged in which many nations in the South found themselves unable to pay interest or principle on loans from banks and government lending agencies. To respond to this structural crisis, structural adjustment programs (SAPs) were instituted as a different way to regulate developing countries' economies. Structural adjustment was a shift within the World Bank methodology from lending to countries for specific projects to lending based upon a country's conformity with a broad-based set of macro-economic policies. Through this process, developing countries' access to international credit and aid has been tied to their ability to meet certain macro-economic targets, as specified in IMF performance criteria.

These IMF/World Bank policy recommendations have focused primarily on restructuring national economies toward a more outward or export-oriented growth strategy. Crucial to this has been the creation of opportunities for profit maximization by multinational corporations. Structural adjustment has therefore sought to fix the balance of payment, to liberalize trade, and at the same time to alter the nature and organization of production within the economy. The end result is much like that which we see occurring in many Northern countries. In both cases, we see the attempt to increase productivity and efficiency in order to increase the profits of the business sector. These strategies have led to:
> attacks on wages,
> drastic reductions in government services to the poor (the majority of whom are women and their children),
> increasing reliance on female labor,
> tax reform to benefit a small minority,
> higher interest rates for the money and capital markets,
> widespread structural unemployment, and
> growth of the informal economy.

Indeed, this is the very same process that working poor and working women in the North are confronting. This appears as a complex process, driven by technology and intense international competition among and between countries with similar income and economic structures. Like their Southern counterparts, Northern economies are being re-organized at all levels. Profound changes in the nature and organization of work are taking place in a manner that creates more and more long-term unemployment, which is called structural unemployment. At the same time, more and more people (mainly women) are only able to obtain part-time and temporary or contingent-work. This is part of a process referred to as the flexibilization of work, which also includes more people working from within their home. In each case, wages are shrinking while benefits disappear.

As with structural adjustment in the South, women in the North are being hurt the most by restructuring. Although more women are working, they continue to face discrimination in hiring and pay. In addition, “the good jobs” are not as good as they once were. Moreover, when women enter into certain jobs in large numbers, the pay system associated with the job tends to decrease. Women do not have the bargaining power it takes to obtain decent benefits. Even women who are doing temporary work are paid less than men who do similar jobs. Men tend to have a bargaining structure that secures for them adequate wages and benefits, even while these structures are being eroded. It appears, therefore, that while the idea of flexible work seems attractive, it has the potential to increase the marginalization and exploitation of women. Obviously, not all women will be hurt by these changes. In fact, women who are able to make substantial in-roads into managerial and professional jobs may benefit from the current restructuring of the economy. Poor and working class women, however, face serious obstacles to earning a decent living.

What I hope I have done is illustrate the importance of macroeconomic policy to the lives of women in both the North and the South by explaining how the theoretical basis and assumptions of these policies work to the disadvantage of women. Even though macroeconomic policy is being reformed or restructured, its analytical foundations remain intact. The assumptions that undergird the old polices will continue to be the basis for newer or revised versions of old stand-bys.

Coupled with the dramatic reorganization of the social, political, and economic institutions of the global economy, such assumptions pose serious problems for the advancement of women’s economic and social status, and hence for the securing and stabilizing of their human rights. The active and persistent leadership of women in challenging the nature and direction of these changes is crucial to sustain the gains that women have made thus far and to ensure greater gains in the future.
In order to refashion the agenda based upon a human rights framework, women must ask tough questions of policy-makers, economists, and social engineers, including:

- What are the terms of restructuring and who decides? What is the nature of government programs to re-direct and stimulate the economy and who is part of this decision-making process? Are there strategic areas identified which will provide maximum employment and maximum earnings for women? How can we ensure that this happens?

- Does the building and rebuilding of infrastructure for growth include day care, after-school centers, and technological proficiency for women? In the "shared sacrifice" requirement, are women being disproportionately affected relative to men? In the productivity debate, is the nature and the extent of the change in women's productivity (in the household sector, the informal sector, and the formal sector) being accounted for?

- Do women's contributions to the economy entitle them to universally provided benefits and services based on citizenship and full employment, as opposed to programs that stratify, stigmatize, marginalize, and penalize them?

Posing questions in this manner helps highlight the need to shift the focus of macroeconomic policies from narrowly defined parameters of "economic growth," to connecting people’s daily lives with broader economic processes. We need to restructure access to basic economic resources. Women need to rebuild and reshape economic policy and economic institutions to ensure economic justice. Economic justice is characterized by equitable distribution of income and wealth, economic security and economic freedom. By economic security, we mean the right of every woman to a safe, secure home; good health care; and safe, secure child care. By economic freedom, we mean the right of every women to earn a wage that will sustain herself and her family, whether or not she desires to engage in the labor market or remain in the household sector; shared responsibility between men and women for the care and maintenance of the elderly, children and society in general; the elimination of wage and gender based discrimination (sexual harassment and promotion barriers) that hinder women’s advancement in the workplace; the right of women to choose self employment without fear of falling into poverty; and, the right of women to own property and other economic resources.

Of course, when we talk about economic rights, we must also talk about economic education or economic literacy. Often, such education takes place in an arena of economic depression at the national and the grassroots levels, and must operate in a language that people can understand. For instance, some grassroots organizations are far removed from the cities, which makes communication and information dissemination arduous. Yet, at the same time that we face problems of communication and isolation of grassroots organizations, we also see the collusion of elites in each one of our governments that makes action and communication even more difficult. However, we must keep trying, through economic literacy and through human rights education.

Regarding the question of accountability and structural adjustment, we have to know what questions to ask. International financial institutions are now projecting the idea that they are transforming structural adjustment programs into something with a human face. The question has to be: What do you mean by "a human face"? What is it you are doing? These are some of the issues that people need to raise; people need to ask the international
financial institutions to define exactly what it is they mean and how it all translates at the level of people's existence, at the level of housing, of ending homelessness, of ending starvation. How does this "human face" really help deal with the problem of the debt crisis?

To achieve these goals, we must support the call of groups such as DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era--the South), ALT-WID (Alternative Women in Development--USA), WIDE (Women in Development Europe), National Action Committee (NAC---Canada), and feminist economists in recommending the following:

> Support of ongoing research on the gendered impact of restructuring;
> An organized campaign around economic literacy and popular economics training based on popular education methodology;
> A return to the broad-based macroeconomic goals of full employment and income security;
> Programs to institute rapid growth of meaningful jobs and wages;
> Enforceable international fair labor standards to shape "upward harmonization" of wages rather than the current downward trend;
> The transformation of political parties and other civil organizations to fight for economic justice as defined above;
> Support for new forms of multiracial and culturally diverse advocacy groups which seek to strengthen women's voices;
> Enforceable rules and regulations for international financial institutions, multilateral lenders, and transnational corporations which hold them accountable to human rights standards;
> Taxation of bond market and stock market transactions to finance job creation.

**For more information, see:**
*Challenging the Givens*, DAWN, September 1994;
*Wealth of Nations—Poverty of Women*, ALT-WID, WIDE, NAC-Canada and CRIAW, October 1994;
### COMPARISON OF AID REGIMES: 1950's AND 1980's

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STABILIZATION 1950'S INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND</th>
<th>STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT 1980'S WORLD BANK, IMF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIM:</strong> Stabilize Balance of Payments</td>
<td><strong>AIM:</strong> Balance Of Payment/Trade Liberalization/Supply Side Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOOL/TARGET:</strong> Decrease rate of growth of credit creation</td>
<td><strong>TOOL/TARGET:</strong> “Conditional Lending,” aid tied to macroeconomic policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOGIC:</strong> Budget deficit =&gt; Balance Of Payments deficit</td>
<td><strong>LOGIC:</strong> Increase exports, decrease Balance Of Payments deficit</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POLICY TYPE:</strong> Austerity Measures Decrease domestic credit Decrease domestic demand Reduce government expenditures (short term: 1-2 yrs.)</td>
<td><strong>POLICY TYPE:</strong> Structural Adjustment Packages (long term) Increase productivity Increase efficiency Shift resources into export sector Decrease government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATURE:</strong> Expenditure reducing (decrease government spending, decrease imports)</td>
<td><strong>NATURE:</strong> Expenditure switching (shift resources from non-tradeable to tradeable sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESULT:</strong> Tightened credit Decreased demand</td>
<td><strong>RESULT:</strong> Flexibility/Liberalization</td>
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COMBINED RESULT OF STABILIZATION AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

[1] Devalued Exchange Rate
[2] Decreased Deficit
   How: Decrease actual spending on wages etc., decrease jobs, tax reform, increase prices for public services (education, health care, transport, utilities, etc.) removal of subsidies on basic goods
3) Trade Liberalization
   How: Removal of foreign exchange controls decrease restriction on imports decrease in export taxes
[4] Decrease in Restriction on Foreign Investment
[6] Increase interest rate
[7] Privatization

For more detailed discussion, see Bakker, Isabella De-con-structing Macroeconomics Through a Feminist Lens; Elson, Diane Male Bias in the Developmental Process; Evers, Barbara Gender Bias and Macro and Meso Economic Policy

CYCLICAL CHANGE, STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND RESTRUCTURING

CYCLICAL CHANGE
This is a more benign process usually referred to as a movement over the business cycle. It usually refers to short term, temporary movement of the economy through periods of expansion and contraction. This periodic upswing and downswing is characteristic of capitalistic economies and is determined by business and consumer spending and confidence in the economy. Over the course of the cycle people generally lose jobs but most can expect to be rehired during the next upturn. This is dramatically different from the kind of structural long term unemployment that is created by economic restructuring.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE
Fundamental transformation in the composition of the economy, a sector of the economy, and firms. It involves all aspect of life: technological, social, political and economic. It manifests change in occupational structures, along with change in the nature and organization of work such as the redefinition of jobs. To date in many OECD countries this has meant significant job losses, increased creation of low wage, low status jobs, increased part-time, temporary and subcontracting of work.
ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING
This is both a manifestation and result of structural changes and the forces it unleashes which involve crises of profitability and intensive competition within and between countries. It is the actual day to day reorganization of economic and social processes to meet the demands and requirements of structural change. For example, it might entail the laying off of massive numbers of workers to downsize a firm. It may also include plant closures and/or the relocation of factories to locations where land and labor are cheaper, most often Southern nations. It includes the restructuring of government policies to facilitate accumulation of profits by corporations and involves restructuring the international division of labor.

MANIFESTATIONS
A decrease in Keynesian welfare state/government provision of a broad array of social services along with increasing exploitation of marginal labor, especially the overlapping categories of women, youth and people of color. There is a corresponding growth of temporary, part time work, coupled with an increased reliance on a contingent work force and the rise of non-unionized labor.

RESTRUCTURING AND WOMEN
Restructuring occurs at both the level of production and reproduction.

> In both realms, women take up the slack and this results in greater input of female labor in both spheres.

> Restructuring also reinforces and deepens women's income and employment inequality because it sustains the ambiguity of women's place in the labor market.

> The result is an intensification of class based divergence of interests among women, and increased tensions among racial and ethnic communities, who feel they must compete with each other for what few "pieces of the pie" are still available.
I come from Puerto Rico and I have been based in the United States for the past seven years. Today, I will share some of my ideas about a work-in-progress in which I am trying to reconceptualize international social and economic rights from a feminist/gender perspective and a Latina perspective. Although I do talk about a feminist perspective, I realize it may be a problematic categorization because it is subject to a host of modifications and variations in accordance with each one of our particular cultural, ethnic, and class positions.

One of the main problems in making economic and social rights a reality in the international as well as the national arena revolves around the issue of justiciability. We must ask, to what extent can we make economic and social rights justiciable or enforceable? One of the prime concerns about enforceability arises from issues of institutional competence. For example, to what extent do international organizations have the institutional capacity to monitor and enforce social and economic progress in their own countries? Further, to what extent can the monitoring process, which currently focuses almost exclusively on the civil and political context of human rights, be available in the economic and social rights context?

At the international level, the answers to these questions depend largely on the institutional makeup of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and on the limitations of existing human rights mechanisms. There is currently no optional protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, something which would allow for individual complaints and petitions in a manner that enables non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to have more fruitful participation. At this point, what we have are country reports, written by governments, that are not necessarily even monitored. The NGO input that we know to be so vital to these reports is not necessarily included. So, from our perspective, it is urgent that we devote some energy to finding ways to revise the institutional structure of ECOSOC processes so that NGOs, especially women’s NGOs, have more input with greater weight.

At the national level, constitutional and national reform demands our attention, so that women’s NGOs can play a central role in the process of constructing a minimum floor of the welfare and economic rights that are necessary for the meaningful realization of civil and political rights. For women’s participation to be most meaningful in this process, we will need to expand our effort beyond “traditional” women’s issues to include the entire economic and social organization of our countries. This will facilitate our insertion into the central discussions about the economic and social development of our countries so we can show how those economic and social restructuring processes affect our realities as women. This means that in addition to the work we have to do on violence or on reproductive rights, we also have to be more conversant with the political structures that dominate the organization of our societies and nations. We can, and must, be players in that conversation and bring to it our own perspectives.

Another obstacle to the implementation or enforceability of economic and social rights stems from the anti-majoritarian character of individual “rights,” or the idea that such rights are counter to democratic process. To what extent does the tension between individual and
collective economic and social rights articulated as rights advance an anti-majoritarian agenda, and what are the implications of this? If we bring cases to the courts or specialized institutions, whose agenda do we serve? This is a dilemma we must take up. On the one hand, we believe in demanding that the human rights framework fully include its social, economic, and cultural components. The conceptualization of these issues as part of a "rights" discourse is important because it points to questions of responsibility, accountability, and enforceability, and draws upon the symbolic and political leverage of human rights. But it can also mean that we are treading the waters of anti-majoritarian politics, which has its own dangers. For instance, what do we think is the appropriate balance of power between the majority decision-making and the so-called specialized bodies in our society, such as courts and/or international specialized bodies?

In bringing a gender perspective, there is the need to elaborate an internal and an external critique. An internal critique involves an analysis of the framework of economic and social rights: What does this framework look like? What does it pretend to be? What is it promising? I hope that in analyzing the framework in this way, we can generate questions that address unfulfilled promises, with a view towards making state and international groups accountable. In this post Cold War moment in which global marketization of society dominates, it is urgent that we begin to determine the extent to which an international economic and social covenant can fulfill its promise. For instance, of what use are claims to economic and social rights that include the right to development, to health, to sexual and reproductive freedom, when we are dealing with economic and monetary policies that lead us towards the commodification of human dignity? We must be clear about the procedural and substantive limits of these covenants. Who is applying them? Who is enforcing them? Who is implementing them? To what extent does the move towards a globalized, privatized, market-oriented economy in this new world order take us farther away from the promises embedded in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights? An internal critique must also take up the issue of political will. What is the role of political will in making economic and social rights a reality? What is the meaning of a "peace dividend" in the context of redistribution of wealth and fairness? And what is the meaning of good faith, particularly from the perspective of country reports? Among ourselves, we must come up with standards and minimum requirements of good faith in the context of implementing the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

An external critique of the current debate about social and economic rights would involve our ideals and aspirations; our utopian considerations. What is the normative direction and goal of an economic and social rights framework that responds adequately to women's everyday experiences? In order to answer this adequately, we need to redefine the "civil and political right" of equality. We must clarify what we mean by an alternative paradigm of equality that takes into account not only the very highly valued individualistic ways of fulfilling our own human dignity and reality, but other values that we, as women, experience on an everyday basis—the value of solidarity, of connectedness, of interdependence. Insisting that individual freedom and interdependence, connectedness, and solidarity are not mutually exclusive will help us to articulate a new notion of equality. It will shed light on an agenda of economic distribution and a new distribution of wealth and fairness, which are key ingredients in the redefinition of economic and social rights.
What do we mean, for example, by an economic and social rights agenda that has a human face? How do we search for new values with which to construct an alternative paradigm, when we are in the midst of a very dangerous era in which alternative economic paradigms to privatization, such as socialism and Marxism, are disappearing?

Such conditions require that we come up with alternative values that we can translate into a practical agenda. One important element of such an agenda is the notion of accountability. How will NGOs, especially women's NGOs, develop a process that holds the state accountable to its citizens? We want to ensure that the state, broadly defined, and defined from a gender perspective, becomes accountable in the distribution or redistribution of those economic and social benefits. And bear in mind that when I talk about the state, I am not talking about a universal, abstract state. Everyday, we see our states becoming less powerful by virtue of increased control by multinational corporations, structural adjustments, and neocolonial policies. States must deal with the market; the excesses of privatization require some type of intervention by the state. The challenging task for all of us concerned with the experiences of women's everyday lives is to articulate new visions of social democracy, new visions of the welfare state in which the redistribution of economic and social resources ensures that women can live their lives with dignity.

In the process of constructing alternative visions and setting out standards and processes to ensure accountability, it is important to target in a more focused way the work of specialized agencies. While these agencies are often overlooked, we could benefit from becoming more active in monitoring those issues they work on that have an impact on an economic and social rights agenda. And finally, a crucial issue in constructing alternative visions and ensuring state accountability is the empowerment of civil society. We must find ways to ensure that NGOs can effectively advance new visions of equality and of the welfare of human beings that are alternatives to the individualistic, male-biased and male-oriented dominant paradigms which promote privatization, competition, and so forth. In its stead, we must promote a framework built on the values of solidarity, interdependence, equality, and human rights—civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. A very important part of this process entails being active participants in dialogues about these issues, whether these dialogues be at a national or international level. We can use these arenas as opportunities to create interdisciplinary resources and positions. For example, in the economic and social rights agenda, lawyers cannot do all the work. We must come up with interdisciplinary groups which include economists, women's advocates, NGOs, and grassroots activists so that we can be conversant both nationally and internationally.

In this way, we will develop human rights tools which redefine economic and social rights from our many perspectives, at the national (constitutional and political) and the international levels. At the same time, we will address some of the specific scenarios in which economic and social rights are played out. For instance, population, health, reproduction, and work are all areas in which a more encompassing economic and social rights agenda must come into play. In order to deal adequately with a full agenda of economic and social rights that reflects women's experiences, we need to formulate an internal critique the dominant framework, and from a position external to the dominant framework, define our notion of what our brave new world might be.
The Center for Women's Global Leadership's approach to leadership development begins with the assumption that leadership is best developed in the concrete process of making something happen that is important to an individual or organization. This entails strengthening individual and institutional capacity through providing access to information, resources, and technical skills, along with expanding and deepening substantive debates and organizing strategies. At our Women's Global Leadership Institutes, we seek to create the space for participants to develop themselves by working with others on leadership issues at the same time that they build on efforts to challenge social structures in the area of women's human rights. Thus, leadership and institutional development take place within the context of activism, rather than as a set of abstract or formal rules or tools. Such an approach to leadership and institutional development is participatory and inclusive—which strengthens capacity, knowledge and initiative—and constitutes part of an ongoing process in which activists can evaluate their own frameworks and modes of operating, build self-confidence, and expand their capabilities as workshop leaders, facilitators and public speakers.

During the Institute, participants are encouraged to confront the global and cross-cultural dimensions of the issues and projects in which they are involved. This is an important chance for reflection and critical distance which does not arise very often for women in their daily lives. The two weeks of intensive conversation provides the opportunity for activists to struggle with the conceptual and practical challenges they face in their organizing, and to learn from the ideas and experiences of other women's movements and perspectives.

The structure and content of the agenda of the Institutes reflect this methodology and political commitment. The agenda is based upon three elements which we believe are vital to building the capacities and supporting the activities of feminist leaders in a global context:

[a] broadening participants’ conceptual frameworks by engaging in conversations with other organizers and resource persons, and exchanging ideas and strategies across geographical, cultural and political boundaries;

[b] drawing upon other Institute participants as resource people as well as mutual investigators in a process that is flexible and inclusive; and,

[c] seeking strength in the diverse experiences and skills of Institute participants in order to develop concrete strategies that will lead to expanded activism and new public policy options.

These two weeks of multi-cultural exchange include panel discussions to which we bring outside resource people, full group sessions on thematic issues and on questions of feminist practice, and small working groups as described in the Introduction. In designing the sessions, we draw upon the particular skills, knowledge and experience of the participants, as well as outside resource people, for thematic panel sessions and skill-building workshops such as those on electronic mail, fundraising or feminist therapy. The agenda is meant to guide us without constraining us, and is open to input and change by the participants. A considerable amount of time is spent in small groups, since these provide both a built-in way for participants to facilitate group sessions and give reports to the larger group.
THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS

The Center focuses on leadership in the context of advocacy, a focus which reflects the belief that leadership is best developed in a process that advances concrete goals and strategies at the same time that it challenges fixed concepts and expands the boundaries of discourse around particular areas of concern. This means we develop women’s leadership through bringing women’s experiences and a feminist perspective to the policies and practices of human rights globally. For example, one of the strategies growing out of our first Women’s Global Leadership Institute in 1991 was to focus attention on women’s rights as human rights at the U.N. World Conference on Human Rights, which took place in June, 1993 in Vienna, Austria. Over the next two years, Institute participants played a critical role in developing strategies for the Vienna Conference and beyond by broadening the definitions of human rights, organizing events individually and collectively, lobbying, and helping to coordinate various global hearings.

The Institute emphasizes that international networking and the creation of global strategies are crucial elements of leadership and institutional development. Through this emphasis, we seek to expand women’s ability to exercise leadership globally and to affect international policy-making. Organizers from different geographical and cultural communities reflect together upon the ways in which global trends affect their work and upon how to construct appropriate responses. The process engages advocates in critical conversation about their work from different perspectives, while making practical and technical information available for their future use. During the Institute, participants construct collective strategies in a space which allows them to examine questions they may not have the intellectual or political space to consider at home, and with people not usually available to them. For instance, they look at how gender definitions are affected by cultural values and women’s activism, or at ways women have defined and worked toward power, equality and autonomy. As activists engaged in complementary pursuits, they can examine their own work, the assumptions upon which their work rests, and learn from what others are doing.

The focus on women’s human rights has been quite useful in this regard. As an ethical and strategic framework, human rights offers a vision that can foster cooperative strategies and enhance solidarity built around a common political goal. At the same time, it can connect local efforts to global arenas through collective activities, or through the use of international human rights instruments, like pursuing rape in conflict situations as war crimes or domestic violence as a form of torture. To reframe one’s issue as a human rights concern adds a powerful locus for mobilization, and may open up international arenas often not otherwise available.

The Institute challenges conventional definitions of human rights and facilitates more creative thinking by asking its participants to examine different aspects of human rights and the strengths and limitations of this framework for facilitating women’s activism around local and global issues. The Institutes are also a space in which organizers and activists whose work can engage a human rights perspective recognize how “differences” among women can be a means for collaboration, solidarity and mutual support.
BUILDING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

FACILITATOR: Eugenia Acuna

This session was facilitated by Eugenia Acuna, director of the Reproductive Rights Education Project at Hunter College, City University of New York. The focus of the project is to support and expand women's leadership organizing and policy work in the area of reproductive rights.

The morning session began with a large group discussion whose goal was to get a clear picture of the leadership and process issues that Institute participants face in their ongoing work. After gathering descriptions of these issues, and questions that participants wanted to discuss further, the large group broke into smaller working groups in order to focus on and share strategies that participants had used in the past to cope with difficulties or obstacles to effective feminist leadership in their organizations. Finally, in the late afternoon, the entire group reconvened to report on and discuss the observations and individual and collective strategies developed in the working group sessions.

At the outset, the group articulated four general goals for the session to give the work direction and focus. These goals included the examination of the impact of internalized oppression on our effectiveness as leaders; the development of strategies to help us to be effective, well-rested, and powerful women leaders; the identification of ways in which we can help other women develop as leaders; and finally, the articulation of problems that arise in the development of women's organizations which are outside of ourselves but which shape the structures within which we conduct our business.

The following is a summary of the observations participants shared in both the large and the small group discussions.

OBSTACLES TO ORGANIZING:

**Competition:** Many of us often grapple with issues of competition among women who work closely together.

**Criticism:** There is a difference between constructive and destructive criticism, but unfortunately, this distinction is not always clear. Further, since criticism is often seen as taboo, constructive criticism is often constrained. Without an established practice of criticism among colleagues, there is the danger that women activists may become complacent and not challenge either ourselves or our leaders. We should have the highest expectations of ourselves and each other, and so should criticize with the goal of fixing situations or creating solutions to problems.

**Decision-making:** We often base programmatic or organizational decisions on considerations arising from power struggles rather than on factors relevant to the situations at hand.

**Differences in forms of power and status:** Forms of power and status differ from one community to another. In African communities, community status and age confer power. Therefore, younger African women are often hesitant about taking on leadership roles. In other places, critical distinctions may exist between rural and urban women. In still others, conflicts may arise between grassroots and middle class activists. In such cases, it may be helpful to have these women meet beforehand.
amongst themselves in order to discuss and explore their issues and concerns together. In groups, it can be useful to let women whose voices are often heard the least—such as working class women, poor women, or women from marginalized ethnic groups—have the opportunity to speak first. It is important to validate all women’s experiences.

**Diversity:** It is sometimes difficult to deal with a diversity of political views in an organization, since working together does not necessarily mean we share the same politics.

**New leadership:** Developing new leadership is a vital part of any organizing effort since eventually current leaders will outgrow their roles, and someone else must be prepared to take their place. Current leaders must start training others to be leaders early on in their tenure.

**Protection:** In some places in the world, engaging in organizing women is very dangerous. Indeed, for some of us, much of the work we do requires we put our lives at risk. Not only do women need support in the organizing work that we do; we may require and must seek out protection, however much we may feel we do not deserve it. Service and activism: One problem in analyzing leadership is distinguishing between being an activist in a movement and being a provider of services.

**Sexism and stereotypes:** Strong, efficient women often frighten other men and women.

**Solidarity:** Solidarity should not be simply momentary, but rather should imply a long term commitment to support.

**Specialization:** When some non-governmental organizations become specialized in a particular area, they may be seen by other groups as selfish and exclusive in their focus.

**Taking care of ourselves:** Participants recognized that often as women activists, we spend many hours fulfilling our commitments and channeling our energy into our work at the expense of taking care of ourselves. In order to continue to be effective in our work, women must take the time to tend to our own needs. Strategies to combat this include suggestions to remember to breathe when speaking to an audience; take herbal baths; socialize; exercise; practice yoga; read novels; eat chocolate.

**Talking about ourselves:** There are often differences in the ways in which women refer to or talk about ourselves. For instance, it is frequently quite difficult for African women to say “I did this,” and to take personal credit for an accomplishment. On the contrary, for those women who grow up in the West, saying “I” comes much more easily, and learning to say “we” takes a great deal of conscious effort.

**Unrealistic expectations:** We often have unrealistic expectations of ourselves and our colleagues. We think we can handle everything, and have difficulty prioritizing and selecting things we must do and leaving alone those things we cannot do.
SMALL GROUP REPORTS:

GROUP I
Observations:
We need a better understanding of power, and of how we use power in our organizing and personal relationships. In part, this requires that we recognize that we need other people at the same time that we acknowledge that no one of us is indispensable to the success of a particular project. It may be helpful to bring in a person who does not belong to our organizations to help us, as a group, work to identify and develop solutions to priority issues and problems among the group’s organizers, leaders, and members. A clearer understanding of power also requires that we understand ourselves as having a multitude of identities that may be difficult to reconcile and that may create confusion in and among the groups with whom we work. This can be especially difficult since being identified as “feminist” in some communities is taboo. Indeed, we face difficulties in our organizational work when we feel compelled to identify as feminist when we are not comfortable with that term.

Strategies:
Trust should be the governing principle for each of us in our work together.
Leadership is a question of modesty, and modesty necessitates delegation.
Spaces that foster communication and alliance within our organizations are necessary to the creation of trust and to the strengthening of leadership.

GROUP II
Observations:
Competition is a central issue in many women’s organizations. Unhealthy dynamics in the personal relationships among women are often behind such competition. Another factor may be the difficulty we have in knowing what to do when natural allies are fighting. A further factor may be the struggle for recognition with respect to the accomplishment of an activity in which several individuals or organizations have been involved.

Strategies:
Create the space or a forum within your organization that allows people to discuss issues of competition.
Bring in a consultant to work with the group in opening up discussion, re-orienting the group’s goals and priorities, and building consensus and united action in the event of external attacks on the group.

GROUP III
Observations:
In practice, it is often difficult to distinguish between artificial and genuine leadership in feminist organizations. Artificial leadership has the characteristics of traditional leadership, with an emphasis on hierarchical and highly structured patterns of authority and responsibility, and a lack of personal reflection about leadership roles on the part of leaders. In contrast, genuine leadership is inclusive and collectively developed, and is based on shared power and responsibilities. The perspective implicit in genuine leadership aims to challenge traditional leadership structures such as found in traditional families, in churches, in parliaments, and in educational systems.
Strategies:
Introduce open discussion in our organizations about the issue of leadership.
Invest time and energy in leadership training courses in order to develop leadership skills with a feminist perspective.
Develop communication skills to overcome barriers such as language, culture, and life experiences.
Work with people who neither undermine your work nor purposely provoke division within your organization.

GROUP IV
Observations:
Good leaders are those who are able to share power, to share and rotate responsibility, and to make decisions on a collective basis. Good leaders are those who have effective communication skills and who are able to facilitate group interaction. Good leaders are able to boost the morale of their fellow group members, to guide the group towards the achievement of its goals, to generate consensus, to promote trust and support among group members. Such skills are critical in efforts to help the group work through class differences, variations in ideological orientation, and issues of cultural and ethnic diversity.

Strategies:
Organizers should attend the meetings of other organizations to learn from the experiences of other women and other groups.

GROUP V
Observations:
We need to re-examine the relationship between organizational structure and the operation of power. Some women work in egalitarian organizations, but nonetheless feel they are not always listened to or heard. Other women work in more structured and hierarchical groups. These women often prefer this latter option to working in a collective since the location of power is clearly and easily identifiable, which may mean that decision-making occurs in a more honest fashion. The history of a group often influences the ways in which leadership and relations of power take shape. Past organizational and personal relationships often affect the way in which new group members are accepted or integrated into the group. Another problem is that of invisibility: Often, when one person is in the spotlight, others who are also doing the work may not get the acknowledgement or recognition they feel they need or deserve.

Strategies:
Recognize that your actions are strategies, even though they may not seem so. Leaving a group can be a strategy, and does not have to be a negative act.
Examine your reasons for continuing to work with an organization in which you are unhappy or dissatisfied. It can be painful to give up a project into which you have put time and energy, but if you are afraid to leave, or if you fear the group will break down in your absence, then the group has problems that need to be addressed.
CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS, COMMENTS, AND SUGGESTIONS

History: We need to find ways to transmit history to people who are new to our organizations and movements. This is essential to a sense of continuity and to give people an idea of the reasons for current projects and practices.

Information: We need to democratize access to information so that new leaders can help themselves develop skills and gather the kinds of resources they need to be effective in their work.

Leadership: There are many ways to be leaders, many issues which require leadership, and many people capable of being leaders. We must develop a concept of leadership as a process, so that women can move in and out of different situations and organizations, and we can expand women’s leadership around the world.

Mentoring: We need to encourage more mentoring relationships. This is often quite difficult since we may have to combat feelings of urgency. Even though it may be easier to do something ourselves rather than show someone else how to do it, the long term ramifications of such practice are problematic. A conscious and conscientious mentoring process can help our leaders feel that they are not being pushed out by younger generations of feminist activists.

Ownership: When people start organizations, they often feel a sense of ownership that is difficult to give up. Feminist analyses of organizations and leadership often preclude women from saying that they want to own a project or that they really like a group they have founded. It would be helpful if we could be clearer about what is attractive about leadership, about power, about starting an organization.

Power: Most women activists have been trained to deny that we like power. Power is most negative when we are not humble about it. However, there are positive elements to power that need to be acknowledged and appreciated.

Eugenia Acuna: “Embrace power, because it can be delicious. We know how not to abuse it. We should feel comfortable in celebrating our leadership. If we can celebrate our leadership, we can show others how to celebrate with us.”
DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE IN WOMEN'S ORGANIZING

FACILITATOR: Betty Powell

This session was facilitated by Betty Powell, who has a long history of experience working with the black liberation, feminist, lesbian and gay, and disability movements in the United States. Her work focuses on what she describes as “diversity and multi-cultural development” here in the United States, and is driven by the recognition that cultural diversity continues to emerge as one of the most critical issues both of the present day and into the future.

This workshop session took the form of a series of exercises. During and after each component, Institute participants were invited to share their reactions, and to make suggestions that might be particularly useful to women as we work on strategies for honoring the richness that women in our communities and around the world bring to our work.

Workshop Objectives

> To explore, analyze, and dismantle models of identity and behavior that construct and treat difference as negative.
> To examine ways in which issues of difference become obstacles in our being able to work effectively together.
> To develop strategies that help give each of us a better understanding of both the positive and negative expressions of the differences that exist in our own lives and communities.
> To make a commitment to bridge such differences in order to highlight and celebrate their positive aspects.

Exercise 1

“Welcome” is a basic, universal human greeting. In this exercise, each group member says “welcome” in her own language, and teaches it to the group at large. In this way, the group can celebrate ourselves, where we come from, and the people we meet in our work. It serves to help group members become involved with people who are different from ourselves, and begins to build an atmosphere in which we can create dialogue across differences and affirm those differences as positive.

Exercise 2

We all have the power to institute arenas within our organizations or communities in which to value difference and share differences in opinion. In this exercise, participants are invited to think through and respond to the two following questions: a) How do you envision your community, your organization, or your activist work benefitting from your growth in dealing with diversity? b) How might you devise an atmosphere or context in which people in your community or organization can safely and honestly voice their perspectives? To make this exercise more manageable, limit yourself to the selection of two primary issues of difference that may be particularly pertinent to your organization or community. These may include issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, geographical region, sexual preference, marital status, religion, or other facets of identity that serve to divide your community. This exercise may be used as a conversational starting point for organizational dialogue, or participants may write down their responses and create action...
DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE IN WOMEN'S ORGANIZING

plan statements that may then serve as the basis for beginning dialogues about change in your organization.

Exercise 3

Many of the problems that arise around issues of difference are the result of a lack of information about what difference is and why it matters. As we grow up in our various communities, we learn what is considered “normal,” we learn how close we ourselves come to those norms, and we develop positive or negative judgements about people based on what we have learned. These ideas about what are to be considered “normal” and “deviant” are made at cultural and community levels, and they become part of individual decisions about how we interact with others.

In this exercise, participants split into groups of two or three and engage in “cross-dialogue,” which means talking with people in the group with whom we have not yet had extensive conversations. The purpose of this exercise is to illustrate that even when we think we know a person, there is a great deal that we do not know about the experiences and aspirations that make each of us the people that we are. There are several guidelines for this exercise that may also serve as a framework for how we interact with each other in our organizations and communities:

Respect: Respect may seem to be a very simple principle of action, but in fact it is one of the things that feminists have not integrated into our movements very well. Respect does not mean that everyone agrees with everyone else: rather, it means that whether or not a particular statement or viewpoint is hard to hear, we must be committed to keeping in mind the human being behind the statement. Respect is what we each demand for ourselves; it must also be what we demand for everyone else.

Listen actively: Listening actively is essential to respect, and it is something we often do not do. Listening actively involves paying attention, asking for clarifications, and generally being an active participant in the exchange of information within a dialogue or story. A lack of careful listening makes it difficult to have a constructive and directed dialogue that has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

No sarcasm or “zaps”: Sarcasm, which consists of comments that ridicule, taunt, or cut down a speaker, closes down conversation. Sarcasm is often malicious and demeaning, and it undermines the process of having a dialogue.

Value risk-taking: If we want to create an atmosphere or forum in which it is safe to speak out, we must ensure that people are not afraid to disagree or to hold others responsible for explaining what they mean. We must support and appreciate the courage of people who disagree, and we must listen to them with open minds and respect.

Express thoughts and feelings: We will not be able to open our conversations without a commitment to saying what we truly think and feel. Many women find maintaining such a commitment to openness difficult, since we are often taught not to express either our thoughts or our feelings.

Participate fully and stay focused: People have more confidence in themselves as participants in a dialogue if they know that they have the attention of their interlocutors. A dialogue is more productive and satisfying for everyone involved if the conversation addresses each of the issues fully. Pay attention to the person who is
speaking with you. If someone you are speaking with is not paying attention, point out to her that she has withdrawn and invite her to rejoin the dialogue. If the conversation wanders from the topic at hand, point this out to the dialogue participants and steer the discussion back to its original focus.

Use "I" statements: Many women find it difficult to use "I" statements when we speak. However, saying "I" rather than making generalizations can help address problems that we face in dealing with issues of difference and diversity.

OBSERVATIONS OF INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS

Access to information: Misinformation about communities and people around the world is exacerbated by real differences in access to information and resources. Most often, it is Western women who have the resources to go to other parts of the world, to study those places, and to become experts on those of us who live there. There are similar patterns of disparity in international forums: Often, women from the North are the experts who construct the critical and theoretical frameworks around which women from the South paint the landscape in the course of giving testimony. Organizations in the South need to take more responsibility for setting their own agendas rather than focusing their energies on blaming Western women for assuming that their agendas are adequate. Similarly, in the case of Eastern Europe, it is also most often Western women who have the opportunity to visit, to research, to write books, and to become "experts" on that region of the world. But this is not simply due to a lack of resources for women in Eastern Europe to do this work themselves; it is also due to difficulties women may have in articulating an agenda. It can be difficult for Eastern European women to organize among themselves, so they continue to look to the West for direction. However, while such patterns are problematic, Southern and Eastern European women need not actively avoid using the work of Western feminists. There may be elements in existing Western models that could be usefully adapted to suit particular situations in the South or Eastern Europe.

Building trust: One of the most important aspects of engaging in fruitful dialogue is building trust across differences, even if those differences are not visible or immediately apparent. This process may not be the same in all situations. In the context of the Institute, we are able to build trust fairly easily because we know that after a week or two we will not be together any more. This process is very different when we do these exercises with the people with whom we work. Confidentiality is crucial to the success of these exercises, especially if they are done with close colleagues.

Common experiences: We are all from many different communities, but each of us is able to identify at least one group of people in our communities who are different or "other." Everyone of us had "others" about whom we received very powerful messages: these included Catholics, Serbs, the poor, black people, North Indians, South Indians, Chinese, men, white people, Mexicans, the military, and many more. While we recognize that our perceptions about these people are not true, we continue to carry those ideas with us, and they affect the way we behave, react, and interact.
Honesty about power: Some differences become institutionalized in society. To be counted as “different” in such situations can be very oppressive, since it has an impact on the way we live our lives. It means that people move in the world and work from different positions of power. As we engage in dialogues within our organizations and communities, we must be honest about power and power imbalances. For example, in working through conflicts over homophobia, it may be important to be clear that among lesbians and heterosexual women, there are differences in the privileges women have and the power to which we have access.

Local organizing: Many Southern women’s organizations are internationally known but are not the small grassroots organizations that are actually doing the bulk of the work. Similarly, the women from the North who organize and attend international meetings are often not the women who do the local organizing work in the North, but rather are part of an internationalized and professional feminist community. Smaller groups need the opportunity to enter the international arena so they can see their work as part of the global women’s agenda. Further, there needs to be more local organizing and more opportunities for South/South dialogue. There seems to be a great potential for such organizing, but there are also real constraints. For example, as long as women in African countries do not have rights and as long as there is pervasive government control, there will be limitations on the kinds of agendas that women can set for themselves.

Speaking about ourselves: Many of us find it difficult to speak personally about ourselves. While some of this difficulty may be the result of cultural differences, much of it is based upon differences in personality.

Taboo topics: A critical aspect of challenging values that do not serve us well in our work is talking about taboo subjects, or creating situations for positive recognition of issues that are generally hidden with disapproving silence. It is important to recognize that there are real implications to beginning such conversations. For example, in many communities, the issue of sexuality is suppressed. When we leave our communities—particularly to participate in international meetings—we learn new perspectives. But when we return home, it may be very difficult, and even dangerous to try to initiate discussions about sexuality. Indeed, to open up a conversation about lesbianism may cause damage to our reputations and negatively affect our ability to continue in our work. Having taken so long and given so much to get where we are, many women’s organizations are concerned that bringing up the issue of sexuality will set us back. However, the responsibility for opening up taboo topics lies with each of us. Feminists who have had exposure to and learned about different sexual orientations—no matter what their own sexuality is—must begin such dialogue in order to sensitize ourselves to the challenges that face those of us with different ways of living and expressing our sexuality.

Betty Powell: “Feminist vision has to be wedded to a human vision that understands valuing differences as the only positive way of life on the planet.”
LESBIAN RIGHTS AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZING

During the Institute, discussions about lesbianism and homophobia took place in various formal and informal ways. Explicitly and implicitly, we acknowledged the difficulty of such discussions. In particular, we grappled with the fact that open conversations about lesbians and lesbianism involve breaking deeply ingrained taboos for many women. The belief that heterosexuality, and only heterosexuality, is natural is still widely adhered to throughout the world, and often enforced through state action or inaction. At the same time, the virulence of efforts to force women to conform calls this “naturalness” into question.

The session reprinted here looked specifically at the issue of lesbians and the rights of lesbians in the women's movement and the global movement for all women’s human rights. The session was opened by three participants and a guest, who presented their experiences to begin the conversation: Charlotte Bunch (US), Lourdes Buenos (Dominican Republic), Alice Miller (US) and Anjana (Tang) Suvarnananda (Thailand).

The discussion began with some historical background by Charlotte Bunch (US) and Lourdes Buenos (Dominican Republic) and stressed how the fear of being labelled a lesbian has kept some women away from feminism. They both noted how, in different ways, they have seen this fear constrain women's efforts to take control of their own sexuality. Charlotte began by acknowledging that the discussion about lesbianism and lesbian rights in the women’s movement has been, and continues to be, quite difficult. Indeed, the threat of being called a lesbian, the fact or fear of it, continues to be used to silence women, or limit their activism on behalf of women in all parts of the world. She recollected: “it seemed to me that if it was so scary, then there must be something terribly important about what it meant for women's freedom that we needed to understand.” This speaks to how powerful it is when women are able to define their sexuality, separate from the heterosexual norm.

It is ironic that on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the lesbian and gay liberation movement in the United States (Stonewall 1994), the threat of being called a lesbian is still one of the most powerful means of discrediting women's activism.

Attempts are now being made to frame issues of women's sexuality within the context of women’s human rights. One central question about advocating for lesbian rights as human rights is how to address, and insist that others confront, the political meaning of compulsory heterosexuality in light of the broad goals of our movements. Lourdes picked up this theme and applied it to her own story. She recalled that she first fell in love with a woman in 1972, but it wasn’t until 1984—12 years later—that she met other women who were in relationships with women. Not surprisingly, the change occurred when she moved from a small town to a large city, the capital of the country. The capital was the center of leftist political organizing, in which she was engaged. It was extremely difficult to get women’s issues on the agenda, and nearly impossible to raise questions about the politics of sexuality or sexual rights. It was precisely this difficulty that generated a distinct feminist movement, and separate lesbian organizing. She noted, however, “I don’t think that we, as lesbians, really want to organize separately, but we do want our issues to be raised and taken seriously.” She emphasized the frustration many lesbian activists feel about the unwillingness of some feminist organizations to take strong and leading positions on lesbian issues, which results from “the persistent fear of many feminists of being labelled lesbian.”
Both Lourdes and Charlotte highlighted the ways that compulsory heterosexuality, and its other face, homophobia, have led to the invisibility of lesbians in political movements. For instance, Lourdes recalled how often her organization was refused access to women's spaces for meetings. For some women, the prevalence of homophobia has "forced" them to remain silent even with colleagues from progressive political organizations. For others, the invisibility of lesbians reflects the lack of outlets for distinct lesbian organizing, as Lourdes described. Of course, many lesbians move back and forth between organizing specifically on lesbian issues and incorporating questions of sexuality and sexual orientation into progressive political movements.

The question of danger and invisibility also raises the critical issue of internalized homophobia, which one participant defined as "not doing things that you have the right to do because you are afraid of being harassed or persecuted or seen as abnormal." Another participant commented that "internalized oppression does not occur in isolation. We are socialized into the very society that others are socialized in, and as they are taught to hate us, so we learn to hate ourselves." While some might define "homophobia" as an irrational fear, it becomes internalized and functions as a penalty that one endures by identifying as a lesbian. In this sense, the fear of publicly identifying as a lesbian may be, for some, a critical feature of survival. While the danger may vary from place to place, there is no totally safe place to be a lesbian. We must therefore ask ourselves, if we are committed to human rights principles of human dignity and security of person, how do we construct movements for women's human rights which include the right to sexual self-determination as an integral aspect of this work? What would it take to create a safe environment in which lesbians could be visible and demand their rights?

For some, the process of "coming out" or publicly identifying as a lesbian may be painful and fraught with anxiety. For others, it is a moment of celebration. And, of course, sexual identity is only one aspect of a person, and it cannot be completely separated from other parts of who a woman is. Lesbian identification must be considered in the context of strategies in which some women engage to resist the regulation of sexuality. Our notions of gender very much affect the attitudes that we have toward both lesbians and gay men, and therefore the particular form that discrimination may take. The meaning of gender varies from place to place, and gender takes different forms in relation to the broader social structure. It is critical to understand our identities as multiple and revolving around the construction of sexual preference, as this intersects with gender, race, class, culture, age, and other aspects of our identities. How do we fit these issues into broader questions about political strategies and coalition-building? And, how do we understand this struggle, or this movement as part of broader efforts to challenge the ways in which gender roles or norms constrain women?

Lesbian or gay visibility is particularly problematic in places where women have a difficult time identifying as lesbians. Anjana (Tang) Suvamananda addressed the conflict faced by women from cultures in which "lesbian" has no meaning. She described this dilemma by noting that it is precisely internalized homophobia which makes it difficult for lesbians to take the discrimination they experience seriously. She noted: "it is easier to talk about other people's problems, and when your problems result from your sexuality, then you don't want to talk about them at all." In the first place, she asked, "what is a lesbian, anyway?" In some languages, the word 

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differences it is not unreasonable that some women wonder about whether or not to use this word to define themselves. In fact, the questioning does not necessarily reflect homophobia. It may also indicate women's concerns about identifying themselves on the basis of their sexual orientation. When women's self-identity is not easily separable from their family, or another social group, what does "lesbian" mean? In this context, our notions of sexual identity as "personal" are challenged, along with individualistic constructions of "human rights."

Clearly, notions which require identifying oneself in separation from a whole framework of family and community will not be applicable in many cultural frameworks. Tang described the combined struggle women face in situations in which homophobia is encased within a broad set of assumptions about familial and social responsibilities, and bound up with prescriptions about sexuality. She noted, "people don't want to identify themselves by their sexual activities, especially when we don't usually talk about sex, and sex is assumed to be part of family and marriage. And it isn't just marriage between two individuals, but a whole extended family, and a whole structure of economic, social, and private or intimate relationships." In this context, the identification as a lesbian reflects a broader "coming out" of control that society imposes on women, regardless of their sexual choices. And the resistance women face may, in some cases be expressed as homophobia, but it also reflects an attempt to control female sexuality more generally, through the enforcement of various norms of heterosexuality, as well as child marriage, forced marriage and arranged marriage. Such forms of social control make it difficult to stay single and remain respected rather than pitied. In this regard, one participant noted that women's sexuality and women's fertility are interconnected, and often considered community concerns.

The existence of lesbians, and their claim to human rights, may challenge an entire social structure, by questioning the notion of heterosexuality and all of its private and public institutions as the natural or normal way to structure human relations. Ali Miller recounted her struggle to find a way to fit questions of sexual identity into the framework of human rights, in a way that highlights the particularly harsh and invisible violations of the human rights of lesbians. It is, however, difficult to find the appropriate language with which to address sexuality within the conventional framework of human rights discourse. Where do sexual rights fall within the categories of civil, political, social and cultural rights? How do we usefully extend these categories of rights, or even thinking about existing recognized rights, to sexual identities? Which construction of rights is appropriate for dealing with discrimination based on sexual identity: negative or defensive rights which primarily constrain governments from acting, and thereby protect individuals from state action, or positive rights which attempt to define the minimal levels of well-being necessary for a life of human dignity? How does this intersect with the demand that governments protect women from sexual violence?

These issues are in an early stage of articulation and the mainstream human rights community is just beginning to address them. Beyond these questions of how to fit lesbian rights into a human rights framework is the question of how we build coalitions to more effectively demand redress for human rights violations. The women's human rights movement has only recently started to gain visibility for the failure of governments to punish crimes against women, and there is a double invisibility for crimes against lesbians. A critical question we must ask ourselves, therefore, is how do we most effectively go from
identifying the issues lesbians face in different parts of the world, to building alliances with human rights groups and women's groups to ensure international attention and responses to human rights abuses?

How, then, do we specify the issues that have been left out of what is currently understood as the human rights system so that the violations of lesbian rights can be an integral aspect of the international human rights agenda? More often than not, many aspects defining or making up women's lives and the challenges they face have not been found in the traditional interpretation of rights as articulated in human rights documents. As Ali explained, those documents generally address themselves to governments, and represent what governments agree to be a minimal level of regulation of their own actions and the actions of other actors. Therefore, they should not be treated as if they will on their face—in their literal words—describe the highest or most complete standard of humanness. Nor have human rights traditionally been interpreted to address the core concepts of oneself as a human being. This includes one's relationship to one's body, one's choices of how to act sexually or emotionally, and with whom one is intimate.

In fact, laws or practices deriving from international standards have more often revolved around the regulation or control of reproduction and fertility. The control of reproduction and fertility, like the control of sexuality, may constitute the context for the abuse of state power and the denial of human rights. The state may, in fact, enforce these human rights abuses through homophobia—for instance when police raid gay bars and physically abuse the patrons—or when the state refuses to act to protect the human rights of those homophobia is directed against—as in cases where anti-gay and lesbian death squads act with impunity.

Such actions are often opposed through the demand for lesbian and gay rights and the elimination of discrimination. However, the implication of these abuses extends to fundamental questions of bodily integrity, the right to security of person, and the right to sexual self-determination. Ali expressed the general consensus of the group by claiming, “I hope that women will stand up and say no government should regulate my body, not just reproduction, but my choice of how I love and who I love and how often I want to love.” Lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual, all women are constrained by homophobia, and more broadly by the regulation of reproduction and the control of sexuality. Therefore, all women have a stake in helping to make lesbian rights understood as human rights.
THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Mallika Dutt, Lynn Freedman, Nahid Toubia and Celina Romany.
STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

The Working Groups met intensively for two days at the end of the Institute to develop concrete analyses and strategies. They were distinct from earlier small groups which explored issues and expanded the framework of women's human rights in a more conversational manner. The purpose of the Working Groups, as the culmination of the Institute, was to provide the participants with the opportunity to develop concrete strategies both local and global which they could take home and begin implementing in their own communities.

Five common themes were articulated for all the Working Groups to address in conjunction with their specific topics. These were:

> developing and incorporating tools from this Institute into relevant strategies for women in our own organizations;
> building strategies toward combatting violence against women, understood in a broad sense;
> nurturing responsible feminist leadership;
> integrating feminist principles into organization and public policy issues;
> constructing joint strategies toward the NGO Forum '95 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

After setting out these common concerns, the participants divided into four strategically oriented groups as follows:

**Group I** took up the issue of increasing and sustaining feminist activism and visibility. They focused in particular on feminism as it becomes “mainstreamed” into national institutions, the government, the academy, etc. They also considered how to give feminist activism more credibility as a professional activity.

**Group II** addressed the topic of marginalized women. Specifically, they considered how to incorporate the concerns of marginalized women (such as lesbians, women in prisons, sex workers, single women, etc.) into women’s human rights organizing strategies at the national and local level and into the international human rights agenda.

**Group III** focused on how to raise public awareness about violence against women. They considered strategies for local, national and international policy action, looking specifically at: popular education techniques from a human rights perspective; using the media to deliver the message; and lobbying for women’s human rights.

**Group IV** considered the use of national and international law as a tool for women’s advancement and empowerment. As a critical feature of this, they highlighted strategies to deconstruct culture and cultural institutions which oppress women and legitimize discrimination against women.
WORKING GROUP ON INCREASING AND SUSTAINING FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND VISIBILITY

Strategies on Feminist Activism, Academic Feminism, and Feminist Organizing

This group focused on:

> the need to sustain feminist non-governmental organizations through institutionalization without losing our radicalism;

> the dilution of feminism in worldwide activities around women’s issues, through, for example, the growth of non-feminist “gender experts” in non-governmental organizations;

> the isolation and marginalization of feminists, especially in the South, and the sidelining of feminist issues such as lesbian rights and the family.

I. FEMINIST ACTIVISM

A. Definitions of Feminist Activism

1. Empowerment of women through a collective and creative process of learning and action around oppression and marginalization within social, cultural, economic, and professional structures.

2. Development of a critique of existing patriarchal structures manifested through socio-cultural and religious and political structures.

3. Commitment to the idea that “the personal is political.”

B. Features of Feminist Activism


2. Raising awareness and consciousness.

3. Developing sisterhood and solidarity.

4. Continuing the process of linking action and theory.

C. Strategies for Feminist Activists

1. Adopt a working definition of feminism/feminist activism.

2. Build alliances across movements and with grassroots NGOs.

3. Use accessible language.

4. Retain autonomy while making alliances with other movements and while working with the State.

II. ACADEMIC FEMINISM

Strategies were proposed to develop mechanisms for accountability, credibility, and sustainability for the work of academic feminists and feminist activists.

A. Areas of Priority for Feminist Activists

1. Generating more interaction between feminist activists and academic feminists through joint seminars, training, etc.

2. Developing a feminist curriculum in Women Studies, especially in the South, through collaboration between feminist activists and scholars.
3. Strengthening South-South feminist scholars' networks, and building on existing networks such as DAWN, AAWORD, and the Indian Association of Women's Studies.

4. Identifying and involving feminist scholars and activists from the South living in the North.

5. [a] Providing space for feminist activists to document, analyze, and theorize their work based on their experiences.
   [b] Educating donors about the need for collaborative and participatory research which acknowledges the work of feminist activists outside mainstream academia.
   [c] Educating academic institutions, especially Women's Studies, to provide space and fellowships to non-academic feminists.

6. Feminist activist groups need to do more action research projects.

7. Institutions must engage in more policy advocacy toward the right to information and dissemination of feminist knowledge.

8. Increasing the visibility and recognition of academic feminists and the scholarly work of feminist activists.

B. Areas of priority for Academic Feminism

1. Inclusion of the history of feminism and various feminist schools of thought in state educational policies.


3. Deconstruction and reconstruction of existing ideologies that support and sustain oppressive institutions and oppressive aspects of culture and religion, and construction of alternative paradigms that take into account women's human rights.

III. FEMINIST ORGANIZING

A. Resources

1. Invest in organizational planning and development strategies, and persuade funders about the importance of such an investment.

2. Invest in skills development and sharing, especially in the areas of marketing, fundraising, and personal and personnel development.

3. Invest in trained fundraising personnel who can, in turn, train other women's non-governmental organizations. Fund raising should be a collective process.

4. Include budget requests for increasing information capacity and networking.

B. Developing and Sustaining a Feminist Agenda

1. Maintain a feminist framework in our work.

2. Critique and restructure socialization processes and education policies.

3. Use women's human rights as a framework for feminist organizing and gaining credibility for feminist grass-roots organizations.

4. Focus on a three-pronged strategy for integrating feminist agendas into local, national and international public policy arenas:
   [a] identify, sensitize, and support women to go into decision-making positions.
THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS

[b] lobby for these women to be included in the local, national and international public policy institutions.
[c] create mechanisms to sustain and support women in decision-making positions and provide channels of accountability.

5. Recognize the need to mentor women and incorporate young women into feminist processes.

C. Leadership Issues
1. Non-governmental women’s organizations must develop strategies for management and conflict resolution.
2. Non-governmental women’s organizations must develop and utilize, on a day-to-day basis, structures for operation and accountability such as by-laws, financial management systems, periodical reports, etc.
3. The leadership of an organization should take responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of its programs and its management.
4. There should be a clear distinction between the roles and functions of voluntary management and paid staff.
5. Women’s organizations should be guided by the ethical principles of democracy and human rights practices.
6. Activists should develop mechanisms for self-care and protection.
7. There should be ground rules and organizational principles which take diversity into consideration.
8. The Center for Women’s Global Leadership should hold regional training institutes.

D. Use of the Media and Information Systems
1. Make the use of the media and other techno-information systems a priority.
2. Sensitize mainstream media structures specifically about women’s human rights.
3. Develop mechanisms for sensitizing and training women in the media.
4. Challenge anti-feminist language in the media and reclaim the use of the words “feminist” and “feminism.”
5. At the forthcoming conference in Beijing, create a focused, sustained and high-profile global media campaign around women’s human rights.
6. Encourage donors, corporations, and international media bodies to be involved in the above strategies at the local, national, and international levels.
7. The Center for Women’s Global Leadership should develop a specific media strategy to educate the media about women’s human rights.
8. Lobby donors to develop alternative media outlets to highlight women’s human rights.
9. Train women in the use of media at international events.

E. Signposts
1. Use UN conferences and other relevant dates, campaigns and independence anniversaries to demand attention, action and accountability for women’s human rights.
2. Create campaigns and political mobilizations that use the above.
3. Train women to use the United Nations and international conferences and regional meetings more effectively to benefit women's and grassroots organizations.

F. Networking and Alliance Building
1. Consider cooperative and consortium strategies for fundraising and donor education to expand the resources available to all of us.
2. Develop strategies for networking and alliance building with non-feminist organizations around major local, national, and international events, such as coordinated appeals, demonstrations, and letter-writing and petition campaigns.
3. Demand that human rights organizations and governments honor their commitments with action.

GROUP MEMBERS: Kabahenda Nyakabwa, Matlhogonolo Maboe, Ofelia Gomez, Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi and Mita Radhakrishnan
THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS

WORKING GROUP ON MARGINALIZED WOMEN

Strategies for the Inclusion of Marginalized Women in the Human Rights Agenda

What is a human rights agenda when some women’s issues are dismissed, overlooked, or trivialized? It is not a human rights agenda.

In order to talk about human rights, it is essential to create societal conditions and a safe environment where marginalized women can speak for themselves and be heard. If self-representation is not possible, due to the absence of safety and reinforcing conditions, then allies should share in the commitment to put forth the concerns of their sisters who are isolated in every locality.

The lives of marginalized women are woven with common threads: They experience more physical, emotional, and psychological abuse; they lack access to resources that can meet the basic needs necessary for survival; their options are minimal, and their mobility restricted and protected by the family—however they define it—by society, and by law. They contribute to the sustainability of the world because they belong to the world. Marginalized women are among us, even though we do not always acknowledge them; they have been silenced, and when they speak their voices go unheard. They include but are not limited to single women, lesbians, women in prison, trafficked women, sex workers, HIV positive women, migrant and refugee women, women in shelters and those who are homeless. They are women of certain castes, of certain colors, of certain ages, women forced into poverty, differently-abled women, indigenous women, and women caught in wars.

All women experience marginalization in society. However, even if women were placed at the center, many of us would continue to be marginalized. Our goal is to ensure that the issues of women relegated to the fringes are incorporated within the human rights agenda, because without their incorporation, there can be no fulfillment of human rights.

In the naming of marginalized women, we do not intend to exclude others. As allies, we understand that oppression has multiple forms, and that we must be conscious and critical of our efforts that result in single issue and single identity analyses. Women do not experience oppression in simplistic and isolated ways. We hope to create space for all those who are marginalized women. If we accept this challenge, we can then work honestly to close the space between those at the center, those at the fringes, and those in between, so that human rights can be actualized for all.

In view of this, we are committed to using tools to facilitate the inclusion of the voices and issues of marginalized women at local, national, regional, and international levels, including the United Nations IV World Conference on Women in Beijing. These suggestions incorporate a range of practical strategies to ensure all our participation to achieve social justice.

GOAL: To include the issues of marginalized women (poor women, women of color, women of certain castes, HIV+ women, refugee and migrant women, lesbians, women in prisons, sex workers, trafficked women) in the Human Rights agenda. The working group identified three areas for the implementation of strategies to include issues of marginalized women:
STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> UN and related fora
> UN IV World Conference on Women in Beijing
> Grassroots, National, and International NGOs.

I. GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR THE UN
A. Research and document the issues to be used to support our work.
B. Lobby the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. Suggested approaches:
   1. write letters;
   2. invite to visit organization;
   3. exchange information;
   4. serve as individual resources;
   5. lobby for CEDAW through Special Rapporteur;
   6. communicate, lobby, and write to UN bodies in your region, UNDP, UNIFEM, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, your governments and United Nations representatives;
   7. follow up for purposes of accountability;
   8. pressure countries for their violations on a case by case basis. Develop an action letter campaign with copies sent to specific offices;
   9. build monitoring system in coalition with other groups.

II. BEIJING SPECIFIC UN STRATEGIES
A. Lobby for changes that include language representative of marginalized women in official documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action:
   1. lobby individual country delegates;
   2. lobby at NGO level;
   3. lobby with CSW/with sympathetic delegates other than in your country.
B. Participate in Preparatory Committee meetings:
   1. ensure space for activities for marginalized women at the NGO Forum;
   2. mobilize women’s groups to work on issues of marginalized women.

III. GRASSROOTS, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL WORK IN NGO MOVEMENT
[All suggested strategies should be looked at on the local, national, and regional levels]

A. External (Outside of our organizations)
   1. networking:
      [a] identify key actors with whom we should be in touch;
      [b] exchange information and campaign materials with other groups;
      [c] encourage reciprocal endorsements of campaigns, urgent actions, petitions (solidarity and support efforts);
      [d] facilitate and engage in informational visits and trainings;
      [e] plan strategy meetings, including reunions (@ Beijing);
      [f] develop “Sister City” programs.
   2. working with marginalized women; participating in organizing by marginalized women, if possible:
[a] peer education groups;
[b] discussion groups with/among marginalized women.

3. Engaging local communities in events like a series of town hall meetings, with appropriate outreach.

B. Internal (Within our organizations)
1. In services: research persons from all levels (professional/testimonial/practical):
2. Make the issue relevant to ourselves;
3. Present the issue in the context of marginalization;
4. Present to staff and affiliates;
5. Utilize organization's newsletter;
6. Work with marginalized women; participate in organizing by marginalized women:
   [a] peer education groups;
   [b] discussion groups with/among marginalized women.

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STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WORKING GROUP ON POPULAR EDUCATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Strategies for Raising Awareness and Expanding Popular Education on Violence Against Women and Women's Socio-economic Rights

We believe that it is crucial to the development of women and the global community to expand popular education, raise public awareness, and influence policy-makers on issues of violence against women and on a gender perspective of the human rights framework.

We cannot continue to pick up the pieces of women's lives that have been shattered by male violence and by the denial of women's socio-economic rights. We must deconstruct the male view of the world that defines women's lives in such a way as to deny us both the right to develop our full potential and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to a world in which we are the majority.

Of all the strategies we have discussed and wish to implement, the one we believe is most important applies to the upbringing of children. Currently, children are socialized into specific gender roles and duties. We must redefine this socialization from a feminist perspective, deconstruct the myth of the nuclear family, and challenge enforced heterosexuality.

Further, we believe that the effects of industrialization on women in developing countries must be monitored, and that those who are responsible for the economic exploitation of women should be held accountable. We must develop strategies for changing policies that place women on the bottom rung of the economic ladder and that force women to engage in work that is harmful to health, that is poorly paid, and that frequently exploits our bodies. These include but are not limited to homework, factory work, and the sex industry, each of which occurs under working conditions that ignore health and safety issues, prevents unionization and the protection of wages, denies women the opportunity for promotion, and exposes women to continual sexual harassment.

I. HEARINGS AND TRIBUNALS

A. Hold hearings and tribunals at local, national, regional, and international levels:
   1. to document women's testimonies and experience;
   2. to make violations against women visible in the society;
   3. to channel information to the appropriate authorities, such as the judiciary, health authorities, politicians and parliamentarians, and the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

B. Potential cases and examples include:
   1. the British Government's harassment of Irish women;
   2. factory girls affected by industrial toxics and diseases;
   3. women experiencing domestic violence.

C. We in this group have agreed:
   1. to organize and co-ordinate local/national hearings during the 16 Days of Activism 1994;
   2. to use our experience of this action at local levels to inform the organization of regional hearings during the 16 Days of Activism 1995.
THE INDIVISIBILITY OF WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS

3. to utilize the timing of these hearings and the fact that they are being held worldwide to generate media interest;
4. to attempt to video record the local hearing (even if only on personal camcorders) to create:
   [a] a record of the event;
   [b] a resource material that can be used for educational purposes within the local community.

II. TRAINING

A. To develop programs and projects that aim to give all forms of training to people from every sector and strata of society.
   1. Workshops
      [a] for women, teachers, and service providers;
      [b] for groups such as homemakers, youth, parents, nurses, factory workers, trade unionists;
      [c] topics and themes of such training programs might include:
         1. violence against women,
         2. agriculture skills training within a Human Rights framework,
         3. non-sexist socialization of children,
         4. socio-economic literacy.
   2. Seminars
      [a] for professionals, i.e., lawyers, police, health personnel, media workers and journalists;
      [b] or joint seminars for professionals and grassroots activists and providers;
      [c] topics might include:
         1. gender perspectives for gender sensitizing.
   3. Conferences at all levels—local, national, regional, and international
      [a] targeted audiences would include parents, academics and teachers, government officials, and politicians;
      [b] the aim would be to address women’s rights as human rights, and to bring a gender perspective to policy and practice in all areas of life;
      [c] topics might include:
         1. examining the upbringing and socialization of children into specific gender roles and duties, and re-defining this socialisation from a feminist/gender perspective;
         2. re-examining the way the media projects sexual and ethnic stereotypes, and exploring how the media could present more positive images of women and ethnic groups, and less aggressive stereotypes of women, ethnic groups, and men;
         3. putting pressure on advertising and marketing companies to examine the way they use sexist marketing techniques;
         4. women in the workplace;

III. 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

A. To encourage women’s groups to hold hearings at the local level to make women’s issues visible and to inform the public of the existing United Nations agencies and mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on
STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Violence Against Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Other activities include:

1. organize exhibitions using audio-visual materials such as posters, tapes, videos;
2. create performance arts events on the theme of women's rights as human rights, such as theatre, dance, poetry readings, music concerts;
3. organize meetings/debates in the community;
4. co-ordinate local/regional/international petitions;
5. give press conferences, encourage media attention to all activities;
6. highlight unfair laws.

B. Activities could also be done on other occasions such as Mother's Day, especially in regions where the 16 Days Campaign is incompatible with local holidays.

IV. PRODUCE RESOURCE MATERIALS

A. To gather, research, create, and distribute resource materials such as publications, leaflets, posters, tape recordings and videos that include a gender perspective from within the Human Rights framework.

1. Propose a documentary series on women's rights as human rights for Europe. This would involve a review of women's rights in Europe, with each program concentrating on one topic from among a range that might include violence, health, education, service providers, politicians, and grassroots women activists. The project is envisaged as a quality production for public consumption through television networks, with copies distributed to women's groups, schools, universities etc;
2. The idea above could be adapted and produced at low cost on camcorders for use with women's groups.

V. PROTECTION OF FEMINIST ACTIVISTS, ORGANISERS, AND ARTISTS

A. To identify existing networks who mobilize actions to protest the persecution of feminist activists. The aim of this strategy would be to protect feminist activists who are increasingly persecuted. It would also:

1. raise public awareness;
2. pressure governments to address such violations of women's rights, to organize, to educate, and to promote a feminist world view.

VI. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

A. To encourage the setting up of local and national Human Rights Education Committees to promote gender awareness and/or challenge the existing Human Rights framework. This strategy was suggested by Shulamith Koenig:

1. keep size small (more than 12 members can be problematic);
2. choose members so that the group will be half women and half men;
3. draw members from a range of feminist activists, service providers, the judiciary, but also try to include existing Human Rights organizations.

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WORKING GROUP ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Strategies for using National and International Law as a tool of women's empowerment/legal literacy, and strategies to deconstruct culture and cultural institutions oppressing women.

Violations of women's human rights take different forms and can be based on law and culture as well as on religion. It is not always explicit that the different forms of violations of women's rights are reflected within the law, and that certain aspects of the law legitimize the discriminatory aspects of culture. We have to keep in mind that the law functions within a certain culture, and the way the law is executed reflects the values and practices of that specific culture. Therefore, we cannot separate the law from the culture in which laws and legal systems operate. Sometimes, law itself can be very progressive, but the legal system in its different bodies is conservative and crossed by oppressive understandings about the role women have in society. Thus, we emphasize the great need to investigate the ways in which culture and religion are also being used to violate women's rights. Culture is not static, and we can not tolerate the use of cultural traditions that are oppressive to women. Women have to claim their role in history and reject those parts of culture and tradition that violate women's human rights.

We agree that it is important to differentiate between the right to one's culture and the instances in which culture and/or religion contradict fundamental principles of women's human rights which are universally accepted. The concept of the universality of human rights is essential to women's human rights.

We therefore acknowledge that law and access to the legal system should be used as tools for women's empowerment, and also as ways to create social change within a feminist perspective. In order to assist social change, law and legal systems should be demystified and accessible to all women. We must mobilize feminist lawyers to work as promoters and educators of women's human rights.

I. INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LAW AS TOOLS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

A. Women should make use of the complaints procedures in the international legal instruments. It follows, therefore, that advocates for women's rights should be given legal literacy training on the available international legal instruments and how to use them.

B. Women should explore the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
   1. In reference to Clause 42 of the Programme of Action, requiring country status reports to treaty monitoring bodies of the United Nations to have a focus on women;
   2. Women's organizations in each country should expose violations of women's rights to the United Nations treaty monitoring bodies through the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

C. International instruments denouncing discriminatory and oppressive cultural practices should extend their scope to religion insofar as it discriminates against women. Religious institutions should not be exempted from observing the international principle of gender equality.
D. We must identify regional human rights mechanisms in order to develop case studies precedents that could be used in defense of women's human rights.

E. Women's organizations should continue to lobby their respective governments to ratify and/or withdraw reservations, especially on CEDAW.

F. We must use the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to expose and challenge discriminatory practices of religious institutions and the impact these practices have on women.

G. In order to fulfill the foregoing strategy, women's organizations should research and document violations of women's rights in their respective countries.

H. At the national level, advocates can rely on international instruments, whether their countries have ratified them or not, to argue that the rights being claimed are universally recognized.

II. OTHER STRATEGIES TO DECONSTRUCT CULTURE, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS OPPRESSING WOMEN

A. We must use international campaigns to bring women's issues onto the global agenda; for example, global campaigns, tribunals, hearings, petitions, and statements of concern and agitation.

B. Emergency response systems should be developed among women's organizations around the world; for example, by using e-mail.

C. Women's organizations should actively lobby their governments to make more appointments of women as representatives to international bodies.

D. Governments should be lobbied to establish and facilitate Ministries for women's affairs and to involve women in public life at all levels.

E. Legal literacy at the grassroots level should involve women as well as men since men currently dominate decision-making at all levels.

F. Women around the world should take action to question religious pronouncements that threaten their rights, and should agitate for a position that recognizes women's perspectives.

G. We must mobilize leaders of religious institutions and sensitize them to the importance of gender perspectives in order to assure women equal positions within these institutions.

H. We must challenge the Vatican, as a permanent observer to the United Nations, to observe the universal principle of gender equality.

I. We must challenge, at the national level, the special status of the church that excludes it from observing national and international laws of gender equality.

J. We must develop an analytical framework to deconstruct culture and use it to expose violations of women's rights. Questions might include the following: What is the culture, tradition or practice in question? Who benefits from it? How do the demands of culture affect men and women differently?

K. We must record and document gender-biased statements from judges, magistrates, the police, prosecutors or those in public offices and expose this at
local and international events denouncing violations against women, for example at *16 Days of Activism* campaign events. It is important to be accurate and to be able to defend the sources of the information.

L. We must denounce violations of women’s rights using media, giggles (jokes), drama, public debates and other strategies.

M. We should use community-based educators to enlighten local communities on the violations of women’s human rights by law and by discriminatory cultural and religious practices.

N. We must introduce human rights education in schools.

O. We must hold press conferences around international conferences and meetings in order to present women’s perspectives, especially when these meetings do not address women’s issues directly.

P. Women’s organizations should carry out gender sensitization programs for lawyers, prosecutors, judges, the police and law students as a strategy to change the culture of gender bias in these institutions.

Q. We should introduce into law school curricula sections on the international system for the protection of human rights.

R. Non-governmental organizations should pressure governments and make an input on country status reports and on the agendas of government delegations at international sessions and conferences.

S. Women’s groups should look for financial support in order to make their work visible on national and international levels.

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APPENDIX C

Center for Women's Global Leadership
INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sunila Abeyesekera — Sri Lanka, INFORM
Gladys Acosta — Peru/Colombia, Women's Program, Asociación Interamericana de Servicios Legales (ILSA)
Fatma Alloo — Tanzania, Tanzania Women's Media Association
Peggy Antrobus — Barbados, Coordinator of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
Elise Boulding — United States, President of the International Peace Research Association
Florence Butegwa — Uganda/Zimbabwe, Coordinator of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)
Jane Cottingham — United Kingdom/Switzerland, Founder of Women's International Communications Service (ISIS)
Clarence Dias — India/United States, President of the Center for Law and Development
Isabel Duque — Chile, Coordinator of ISIS International-Violence Project
Alda Facio — Costa Rica, Director of the Women, Gender and Justice Program of the Latin American United Nations Institute for Crime Prevention (ILANUD)
Marie Aimée Hélie-Lucas — Algeria/France, Founder and Coordinator of Women Living Under Muslim Laws International Solidarity Network
Noeleen Heyzer — Malaysia, Director of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
Patricia Imrana Jalal — Fiji, Fiji Women's Rights Movement
Stephen P. Marks — United States, Consultant on International Law and Human Rights
Yayori Matsui — Japan, Journalist with ASAHI SHIMBUN
Vibhuti Patel — India, SNDT University, Women's Studies
Jacqueline Pitanguy — Brazil, Director of Cidadania, Estudio, Pequisa, Informacao e Acao (CEPIA)
Suzanne Roach — United States, Coordinator of Amnesty International's Women's Task Force
Dorothy Q. Thomas — United States, Director of the Women's Rights Project of Human Rights Watch
Nahid Toubia — Sudan/United States, RAINBOW, International Consultant on Reproductive Health and Human Rights
APPENDIX D

Center for Women's Global Leadership

PUBLICATIONS

From Vienna to Beijing

Series of publications which focus on testimonies presented at the NGO Forum of the UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); and the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995).


Testimonies of the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women’s Human Rights, Vienna 1993, compiled by Niamh Reilly (1994) $15

From Vienna to Beijing: The Cairo Hearing on Reproductive Health and Human Rights, compiled by Mallika Dutt (1995) $6


Pamphlet Series

These three publications comprise a series of working papers on Women and Human Rights. This series is intended to promote international discussion of critical conceptual and strategic questions regarding women’s human rights and the development of a human rights agenda that incorporates women’s perspectives and experiences.


With Liberty and Justice for All: Women’s Human Rights in the United States, by Mallika Dutt (1994) $5

Gender Violence and Women’s Human Rights in Africa (1994) articles by Asma Abdel Halim (Sudan), Seble Dawit (Ethiopia/US), Mathithogonolo Maboe (South Africa), Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (Nigeria), Nahid Touibia (Sudan) and Abena Busia (Ghana/US) $7

Women's Global Leadership Institute Reports

These books present the voices and perspectives of women around the world who came together to discuss women’s leadership in areas of women’s human rights at each of the Women’s Global Leadership Institutes.


Center for Women's Global Leadership Newsletters

This bi-annual publication describes current programs and activities of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Subscription available upon request. Call for information.

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e-mail: cwgl@igc.apc.org

Video

The Vienna Tribunal: Women's Rights are Human Rights
by Gerry Rogers, Augusta Productions (1996). The video highlights the moving personal accounts from women around the world who testified before a panel of eminent judges at the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights at the NGO Forum of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna 1993.

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Mexico, D.F. 06500
Mexico
Staff and participants of the 1994 Institute.
Women have made tremendous advances over the past few years in broadening the conceptualization and the practice of human rights to more fully incorporate women's concerns and experiences. However, there continues to be an urgent need to deepen human rights analysis so that it more fully addresses different types of human rights abuse that women experience while ensuring the implementation of each of our gains.

The Indivisibility of Women's Human Rights: A Continuing Dialogue presents an overview of the 1994 Women's Global Leadership Institute of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. These Institutes have been significant locations for building global strategies and expanding international networks for women's human rights. The publication contains debates and strategies on human rights and violence against women, reproductive health and economic justice, as well as issues concerning women's organizing and leadership. The conversations illustrate efforts to broaden interpretations of human rights so that they more effectively incorporate women's rights while strengthening women's human rights advocacy through training and leadership development, international mobilization campaigns, and global education. The debates and discussion at the Institute were infused with excitement about the IV World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), and the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1994), as well as ongoing collaborative efforts like the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and follow up to the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993).

As these global fora have dramatically illustrated, women's leadership is vital to the creation of public policy that truly incorporates women's perspectives. The voices of women from many backgrounds and experiences has helped governments to create policies which strive toward equality, development and peace. Women from all regions of the world, and from a myriad of cultural, political and organizational affiliations, have engaged in this process of defining and demanding respect for their human rights. This volume reflects one such effort to extend the conceptual categories of human rights and develop strategies to disseminate information about how to utilize this framework.

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