

# Poverty Eradication as a Challenge for Sustainable Development

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Many of you could stand here and tell the stories of the poverty situation in your own countries; so I feel rather reluctant to make this presentation. I will focus on where poverty comes into the Johannesburg agenda; a birds' eye view on what issues are at stake in our regions, and make some suggestions on how to tackle these in the WSSD context. I am not as advanced as many of you, so I will not use powerpoint, nor overheads; just my own voice and me-technology.

## Introduction

**In 2000, world leaders agreed to half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 in every region and every country i.e. lifting 1 billion people out of extreme poverty. (Millennium Goal, 2000)**

- Many women mentioned that this is unacceptable, as it would accept to leave half of the population poor, whereas we have all the means and capacity to ensure that nobody lives in poverty anymore! What is failing is the political and probably corporate and public will to really make that happen.

Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said recently at a lecture in London: "I do not need to describe for you the multiple hardships to which so many of our fellow human beings are subjected, each of which makes it harder to escape from the others: poverty, hunger, disease, oppression, conflict, pollution, depletion of natural resources. Development means enabling people to escape from that vicious circle... Its first prerequisites are basic security, the rule of law, and honest, transparent administration which only

national governments can provide. But it is a struggle that concerns the whole world...."<sup>1</sup>

Poverty is not just about numbers or the fact that people are just living on basis of a minimum financial budget: it is far more a situation of social exclusion, of physical and social insecurity, of bad health, limited participation and no choices. In our world of 2002 with its population of 6 billion people, about 1.2 billion people are living under the absolute poverty line of \$1 per day, while 2.8 billion people – just more than half of the world population – have to survive on a daily budget of less than \$2.<sup>2</sup> Together, these people form more than half of the world population. They have almost no prospects, no future, let alone the perspective of a common future. Many of these are women: 70% on average; often women (single) heads of households, without proper education, without formal jobs. Worldwide only absolute poverty decreases proportionately; relative poverty rates still increase.

Not all people are born in this situation: processes of impoverishment push more and more persons and communities backwards into marginalized situations. Therefore poverty is not a just a fixed situation or status quo; it is a dynamic process that – apart from internal factors (such as limited education and social status) - depends to a large extent on a range of external factors (including stagnating and badly operating economies, globalization, privatization, the disappearance of social protection guarantees, and a seriously increasing inequality between and within nations).<sup>3</sup> The OESO-DAC (Development Assistance Committee) distinguishes five dimensions of poverty: (a) the economic dimension, (b) the political-judicial dimension,

(c) the public welfare dimension, (d) the social-cultural dimension, and (e) the security dimension.<sup>4</sup> In order to eradicate poverty successfully, all these dimensions have to be taken into account.

The relationship between poverty eradication and sustainable development has been recognized already by a range of individuals and organizations.

Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the later chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development was in 1985 among one of the first to mention: *"Sustainable development has many dimensions. First and foremost it requires the elimination of poverty and deprivation..."*<sup>5</sup> Many studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between the status of the physical environment people (are forced to) live in, and their poverty levels. Poor people not only depend more directly on the quality and availability of the natural resources and the environment, they also often live in the most poor and polluted situations. On the other hand processes that enhance poverty and social exclusion often also contribute to impoverishment of the environment and biodiversity. When people are poor they do not have a real future: there is no sustainable development for them. It is according to these lines of thinking and insights that it became clear that sustainable development and poverty eradication are intrinsically linked.

#### **Poverty on the Johannesburg agenda**

In the outcome of the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the World Summit of Sustainable Development (WSSD): the Chairman's paper (11 February 2002) – which elaborates on the specific action areas for the WSSD - it is stated clearly: "Eradicating poverty, hunger and promoting sustainable livelihoods are central to achievement of sustainable development. Realization of poverty related goals contained in Agenda 21 and the Millennium Declaration requires a wide range of actions." In the Chairman's paper 13 such action areas are mentioned, ranging from guaranteeing safe drinking water and food security, to a 'health for all' strategy, secure tenure and education. Apart from this cluster of actions also the ones called for under other topics, such as changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, promoting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social

development, as well as sustainable development in a globalizing world, all have their impact on the poverty/wealth situation of people.

In its reaction to the Chairman's Paper the European Union stated that also the region considers the eradication of poverty as central to the achievement of sustainable development. The EU recognizes that over 1 billion people live in absolute poverty, the majority of them in rural areas, with the burden falling most on women and marginalized groups. The EU also stresses that serious attention needs to be paid to sustainable urban development. The EU is a believer in economic growth and in trade liberalization (Doha agenda) - and we have already expressed deep concerns about that vision. "The EU is committed to the fight against poverty in all its dimensions. Creating sustainable livelihoods requires growing economies, which generate opportunities for the poor, including jobs. The recognition of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development will also require actions to empower the poor – in particular women – so as to enable them to influence the policies, processes and institutions shaping their lives..."<sup>6</sup>

All these (and several more) policy statements indicate that poverty reduction and eradication are high on the agenda for the WSSD in Johannesburg. NGOs play an important role in focusing attention on the relationship between poverty eradication and sustainable development, i.e. by sharing information and experiences from the ground, and monitoring progress in this area. Let's focus on the situations where we come from.

#### **Information from the region.**

From the report of the UN Secretary General on the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) it became clear that the conditions of the poor and the extent of poverty in the different regions of the world and especially in the former Soviet-union are changing rapidly. Poverty is presently a major concern in the region. The socio-economic conditions are under pressure. Especially those countries that have suffered from armed conflicts face harsh times in recovering and establishing new structures. The changing socio-economic situation in the NICs lead to a tremendous decline in social welfare and

shrinking opportunities for people to achieve a satisfactory quality of life. However the region is often forgotten when the international arena talks about poverty eradication.

Several NGOs, coming from Tajikistan, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine and Uzbekistan have supplied the organizers of this conference with relevant information on poverty in their countries. I am happy that Yelena Panina will introduce the relationship between women, poverty and globalization just after I have finished talking to you. The results of the questionnaire is available for who is interested in that, and the working group on poverty is already working on it.

Also in Western Europe we can see a growing gap between rich and poor these days: the rich are getting richer, the poor poorer. Many of you might question if the W.European poverty is the same as in your countries. To some extent yes, in that people's prospects for a decent and healthy lives are at stake. Single-mother households, immigrants, street children, people with a psychiatric background, drugs and alcohol addicts: even in a country like the Netherlands they have major problems in meeting basic needs and are often subject to malnutrition and abuse. Safety nets are failing more and more, and medical care becomes less accessible. And, you might be amazed to learn that according to Dutch standards more and more students have budgets that are not enough to pay their rents, their studies and their meals. In Western Europe poverty is not only an issue in the big cities; also in rural areas there is growing indebtedness and income and job insecurity. Often there is an environmental justice aspect to poverty issues: the most rich live in the most well-off neighborhoods, whereas poor people often live in polluted and even dangerous environments. Feminization of poverty is not very visible in W.Europe, but when you take a close look – especially at hidden poverty – than you will find there are more women than men who bear the burdens of this situation.

Often these women do not sit back passively; they start organizing amongst themselves: single-parent women, farmer women, and migrant women. Several organizations try to lobby for changes in their government or even EU policies, their municipalities replies on to develop their own safety nets. Yelena will come back

to the situation in the NIC-region. What will be clear is that there poverty has grown tremendously there during the past decade: for example in Armenia it has tripled since the early 1990s, and trends are not showing any signs of improvement. In most countries especially the effects on women and their health has been very serious. Trafficking and abuse of women are amongst the most serious manifestations of the present socio-economic situation. Main causes – apart from globalization – have been long-lasting conflict and war, bad governance and corruption, the economic crisis and recession. Related environmental problems put a major burden on people living in poverty, especially women and children. Lack of recognition of the poverty situation in the region is a major concern, as is lack of basic data – gender differentiated – and an absence of coherence in policies. Over and over again major investments go to the military and profit-making sector not to the poor – and poverty eradication stays in the so-called soft policies and ministries.

### Conclusions

If we want a more sustainable development to be reached, it is of paramount importance that poverty eradication gets to the center of all policies and programs, both from governments, the private sector and civil society; and that promises and commitments (such as the 0.7% ODA and the millennium targets) are met and monitored. It also requires good governance, respect of human rights (particularly women's rights), as well as fighting corruption and criminality. A more holistic vision and approach to social, economic and environmental dimensions of society is necessary. Globalization and its institutions – such as the WTO – have to be reformed in order to really work for the poor and for future generations.

In the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development it has been recognized that poverty eradication and sustainable development are closely linked. However, a major effort is needed to decide upon necessary strategies, and GOs, private sector and every person really has to be brave enough to implement necessary measures at all levels: including redistribution of wealth.

Nine major groups have been identified in Agenda 21. It would be good to constantly include one extra major

group in our discussions and minds: the people, women, men and children, that are forced to live in poverty – the poor. Their voices should be heard – their concerns shared, their dreams put into reality by our city councils, by our government and in Johannesburg. Only then, when we come back to discuss our strategies in 2012, can we conclude that Johannesburg has made a difference, that it has been success.

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<sup>1</sup> The Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science: 'From Doha to Johannesburg by way of Monterrey: How to achieve, and sustain, development in the 21st century.' London, 25 February 2002.

<sup>2</sup> James D. Wolfensohn, Worldbank president, in the Foreword to the 'World Development Report 2000/2001: attacking poverty.' Washington, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mansoob Murshed: 'Notes on Poverty Reduction and Economic Development'. World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> OESO/DAC: 'The DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction.' Paris, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Sir Peter Scott lecture, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> From revised version (REV 4) WSSD PREPCOM-II Preliminary Views of the EU on the Chairman's List of Issues and Proposals for Discussion. New York, 8 March 2002. The paragraph reads further: " .... This includes securing their rights to services, particularly education and health, and their access to resources such as land, water and sustainable energy and addressing other issues such as desertification and droughts. Environmental policies by themselves, when applied in a sustainable development perspective, can have a positive impact on poverty reduction. The EU commits itself to actions to support these efforts."

## From Habitat to WSSD: Gender issues and globalization

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**Melania Cavelli**

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With just under half of its population living in cities, the world is already urbanized.

Of the 6 billion people in the world, almost half now live in cities and towns. This rapid increase in the urban population is expected to continue, especially in developing countries. It is estimated that between 1990 and 1995 alone, the cities in the developing world grew by 263 million people, this is the equivalent of another Los Angeles every three months. Everyday there are an additional 180,000 people in cities and towns all over the world.

This historic transition is being further propelled by powerful forces of globalization and the central chal-

lenge for the international community is clear: to make both urbanisation and globalization work for all people, instead of leaving billions behind or on the margins<sup>1</sup>.

This should be one of the main goals of the WSSD of Johannesburg, as it was the case at the U.N. Istanbul + 5 Summit of New

York last June. While globalization had only been at the

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margin of attention five years ago at the U.N. City Summit of Istanbul, it has now been at the center of the U.N. discussion. Many U.N. studies<sup>2</sup> prepared for "Istanbul + 5" Conference, focused on the impact of globalization on human settlements. According to UNCHS<sup>3</sup>, the central challenge of the 21st century will be how to make both globalization and urbanization work for all

the world's people, instead of benefiting only a few.

The UNCHS's "Global Report on Human Settlements 2001" (Cities in a Globalizing World), prepared for the New York conference, amounts to an indictment of the present globalization process based on marked mechanisms<sup>4</sup>. Studies and extensive statistical information presented in the Report indicate the uneven distribution of benefit and cost of globalization and its unbalanced nature<sup>5</sup>. A consistent theme throughout the Report is how to overcome the limits of market mechanisms that have character-

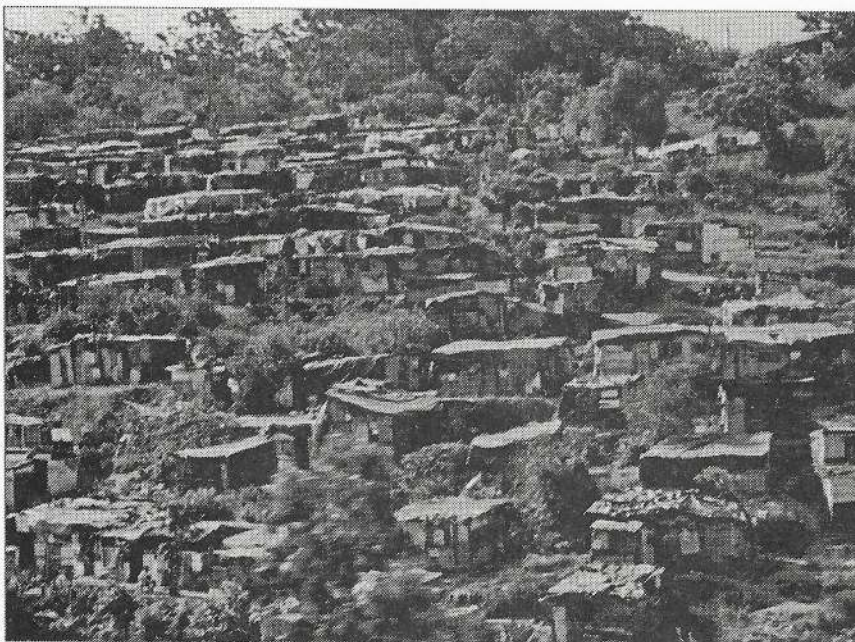


Photo: a slum along the highway between Johannesburg and Durban, South-Africa

ized globalization processes, which are dominated by transnational corporations seeking to maximize profit. The main thesis of the Report are that:

- globalization must serve other goals besides economic growth;
- cities can modulate the impacts of globalization.

*Poor people often pay up to twenty times more than the rich for basic services like water, as they will buy from street vendors*

In this paper I would like to set out some of the problems caused

by rapid urbanization and how this is marginalizing more than half of humanity. I would then like to present some examples of how women all over the world are taking back the city.

In many cities of developing countries more than half of the urban population lives in slums and squatter settlements. In some African cities, the figure is as high as 70 percent. Apart from the fact that many squatter settlements have a high proportion of single mothers, it is the women who are responsible for taking care of their families under the most appalling circumstances.

These settlements often lack basic services such as water and sanitation. It is estimated that over 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and about 2.4 billion lack access to adequate sanitation. What is worse is that poor people often pay up to twenty times more than the rich for basic services like water.

It is also depressing to note that many young girls are pulled out of school to help with household chores, especially child care and water collection, because

*68 million primary school girls are not able to attend school*

mothers cannot cope. This perpetuates the cycle of women's poverty.

For example it is estimated that at least 68 million primary school girls are not able to attend school. Although the situation is better in developed countries, the women in the cities of the north also have their share of problems: city design continues to be insensitive to women's needs, regardless of class. Examples include zoning laws that separate residential and commercial areas making it difficult to

combine economic and domestic activities.

Another area of concern is the design of public spaces and public transport systems to ensure women's safety. Many women find public transportation inconvenient or insecure. A survey carried out in Montreal revealed that though 60% of public transport users are women, up to 90% of women interviewed admitted to being afraid to go out at night. They were particularly afraid of parking lots, buses and subways. North or South, Developed or Developing, in cities and towns all over the world, the concerns of women are not being adequately addressed. Despite the increasing number of female-headed households, unequal patterns of property ownership between men and women persist.

In fact, it is estimated that 41 percent of all women headed households live below the locally-defined poverty level. World wide there is a high correlation between women's poverty and their inability

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to exercise their rights as full citizens. This is particularly true in post conflict zones where women survivors are left to fend for their children without access to family property.

In cities and towns all over the world, the problems confronted by women are exacerbated because only few women are in positions of power to change the prevailing attitudes to urban development. The average for women's participation in local government ranges from about 9 per cent in Africa to 50 per cent in Transition Countries.

This situation cannot continue. The exclusion of women from decision-making, from access to urban resources is unsustainable at every level. The crisis of women in our cities is a crisis that affects everyone. Social exclusion undermines the very fabric of society; violence against women has social repercussions beyond the immediate act. The world neglects women's concerns and issues at a very high cost. As a result we are all at risk. This is why the UN Human Settlements Program should take women's role in promoting sustainable urbanization seriously. The U.N. advocacy initiatives and operational projects should be designed to integrate women's concerns. Women's empowerment

should be used as an indicator of the success of UN interventions.

During Habitat II in Istanbul (1996), women were active in formulating the Habitat Agenda <sup>6</sup> which is explicit

*Women's empowerment should be used as an indicator of the success*

on the principle of gender equality in human settlements

7. It calls upon governments to formulate and strengthen policies and practices to promote the full and equal participation of women in human settlements planning and decision-making.

With the objective to ensure UNCHS Habitat's effective implementation of its Gender Policy and to address the Habitat Agenda commitment to gender equality, the UN Gender Policy Unit has been created. UNCHS (Habitat) Gender Policy has three overall objectives:

- to promote women's equal rights and women's empowerment internationally within the area of human settlements development;
- to support capacity building and development in order to mainstream gender equality in human settlements development;
- to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the Center's activities.

The main method of outreach for the empowerment of women in human settlements is through the global women's networks that form part of the Huairou Commission. The women's networks partners of UNCHS are currently engaged in a wide range of activities to bring concerns of grassroots women into public decision-making and policy at a variety of levels <sup>8</sup>. They are being successful in implementing Gender Planning and Policies at the international level, according to the Habitat II Agenda.

As a strategic entry point into the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, UN-Habitat has launched two campaigns: The UN Global Campaign for Secure Tenure and the UN Global Campaign on Urban Governance. These normative campaigns encourage political commitment to women's right to land and property and women's equal participation in governance. Briefly, the UN Global Campaign for Secure Tenure rejects forced evictions and takes the position that all people especially women have a right to adequate

shelter. In particular the campaign strives to ensure that women have equal rights to own and inherit land and property.

The UN Global Campaign on Urban Governance envisions an inclusive city as a place where everyone, especially women, can contribute productively and enjoy the benefits of urban life. The only way to have democratic and productive human settlements is to include women at every level of decision-making about urban development.

Parallel to the campaigns, the UNCHS have several ongoing programs and projects. The experience confirms that women are important stakeholders in any urban setting, that women and men are often affected in different ways by the same urban problems, and that they often have different views on priorities and solutions. Women are active in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The UN-Habitat women's Best Practices <sup>9</sup> from all over the world show that women are claiming successfully their right to the city <sup>10</sup>.

#### **Best practices from all over the world**

Since 1998, more than 200 programs and projects in 80 different countries were realized with the support of the United Nation Centre of Human Settlement – Habitat - of Nairobi. Many of this programs tried to overcome the classical North-South divide.<sup>11</sup>, and tried to implement feminist planning.

#### **Women's right to land in Dar es Salaam**

The Women Advancement Trust (WAT) was founded in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 1989, to promote the interests of women through education, training and information sharing. The first major campaign was to influence the new land laws, which discriminated against women. This was successful in 1999 when new, gender-sensitive Land Acts were passed. The next stage of this program was to educate women about the Act, and the impact it could have on their lives.

#### **Property rights**

In Rwanda, women suffering under the problems caused by the genocide successfully lobbied for changes in succession laws to accord property rights to women and girls. Similarly in the last four years, in Tanzania and Uganda, women have organized and successfully lobbied for changes in land laws.

### Inclusive planning

After the earthquake in Turkey women have been actively involved to ensure that all marginalized groups are included in the reconstruction process. Detailed community profiles and persistent negotiation with

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relevant authorities has created a new awareness about the need for inclu-

sive planning. A similar approach is being taken in the reconstruction of Gujarat, India, after the earthquakes of 2001.

### Mothers' Platform in Hamburg

In Germany women from poor neighbourhoods have established Mothers' Centers (and Mothers' Platforms) where women can access child care, as well as space for meetings and economic activities. They are helping women in the Czech Republic and in Kenya to start similar centres.

### Make public transport safe

Differentiating needs of women and men is a first step in creating gender awareness and meeting the needs of all people. Programs to support the particular needs of women and men (like A Gender Perspective on Public Transport in Montreal) can help to increase gender equality in cities, as well as ensuring that better use is made of services. In Montreal, women have negotiated with city authorities to make public transport safe. This includes measures such as allowing women and girls to get off buses between stops at night, and better lighting at bus stops and subway exits.

### Introduction of Gender Considerations in transport Planning

The introduction of gender considerations in the planning of the regional transport system is vital to ensure that transport services meet the needs of all users. The Women's participation in transport planning in Pamplona (Spain) is a good example how to address the lack of women's involvement in town planning processes.

Many more such examples can be found in UN-Habitat's database of best practices. Furthermore, in order

to highlight the importance of women's role in promoting sustainable urbanization, in 2000, the theme for World Habitat Day was Women in Urban Governance.

In that year, the Habitat Scroll of Honour was awarded to many women's organizations such as the Women for Peace Network, one of the constituent networks of the Huairou Commission. They were recognized for reaching out to women's organizations in war torn societies and for promoting women's participation in reconstruction programs.

Last year, in 2001, the Bremer Beginenhof Model from Germany received a scroll of Honour. This initiative helps single women and mothers to live and work together in a community in order to overcome their isolation. The initiative also provides safe spaces to protect threatened women and children from male violence.

### Conclusion

The Habitat II experiences, implemented by UNCHS of Nairobi, show that, starting at the city level we can formulate more easily appropriate policies and gender sensitive solutions and actions: it is more easily possible to design appropriate policies and actions for reducing the negative impacts of the globalization process (which affect more women than men). The reason is that cities can negotiate in a more flexible way than national government. Cities are therefore becoming strategic places. Creating city networks becomes every day more important<sup>12</sup>.

City-based initiatives and associations have been successful in finding common ecological goals and strategies to implement a "globalization from below" (with goals of social justice and environmental sustainability)<sup>13</sup>. The experience shows that to promote social sustainability and to change our cities and towns, Governments and local authorities must support the participation of women so that gender sensitive solutions can be brought into the mainstream of urban policy. The experience show that, by including women at all levels of decision making, we can transform our cities, towns and villages, into places where young and old, rich and poor, men and women, boys and girls, can all enjoy the benefits of urban life.

In perspective, it is important to underline that there



are a number of important links between the Habitat and Rio processes. The outcome of the meeting in New York should feed into the Rio + 10 Conference. I personally believe that city networks as well as Local Agenda 21 initiatives and feminist planning have become so successful over the years, that it will be difficult to push them into oblivion. Today, especially thanks to gender planning, cities have become "engines" of social innovation.

1 The Habitat II experience, implemented by UNCHS of Nairobi, shows that looking at globalization processes from the city-point of view, makes it possible to see more easily and precisely how the costs and benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed both within and between cities.

2 The most important U.N. Studies prepared for Istanbul + 5 Conference were: UNCHS, *Cities in a Globalizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 2001*, and UNCHS "State of the World's Cities Report 2001".

3 United Nations Centre of Human Settlements – Habitat- (UNCHS) of Nairobi.

4 The Global Report on Human Settlements 2001, argues that technology-driven options for growth and development – which spur globalization – have led to divided cities where the lines of stratification between people, places and groups are becoming more magnified..

5 Relying on some 80 background papers prepared by urban experts worldwide and extensive statistical information, the Report analyses the effects of growing poverty and deepening inequality on access to basic services.

6 The "Habitat II" Agenda priorities were as follows:

1. adequate shelter for all;
2. sustainable human settlements;
3. enablement and participation;
4. gender equality;
5. financing shelter and human settlements and assessing progress.

The Special Session of the U.N. Conference Istanbul + 5, held in New York from 6 to 8 June 2001, had the aim of reviewing the implementation of the 1996 "Habitat II" Agenda adopted in Istanbul.

7 From the positive side, the final Istanbul +5 Declaration of New York has concluded that full implementation of its Agenda will require an enhanced role for women (see art. 44 of the Final Declaration).

8 Activity of Gender policy currently include: the Grassroots Women's International Academy (GWIA) for peer-group learning among communities in the North and South, the "local-local dialogues" to activate grassroots women's participation in local authority decision-making. The Gender Policy unit works closely with the global campaign on Secure Tenure and Good Urban Governance. Extensive work on women's property rights is underway. A draft policy paper on Women and Urban Governance was prepared in 2000 and is currently being reviewed by partners.

9 The UN-Habitat women's Best Practices are collected by UNCHS together with the Huairou Commission, a group of six international networks working on women and urbanization issues.

10 The U.N.C.H.S. Best Practices have the goal to Implementing the Habitat Agenda

11 Now in western countries we have to think in terms of 4th World, which is populated of urban poors.

12 For example small cities in Africa can often benefit not to insert themselves in a global economy, but they can profit to be in a regional network. For this reason many Cities Alliances have already been born. Among them: Cities without Slums, IULA – International Union of Local Authorities, Metropolis, United Towns Organization, World Association of Cities and

Local Authorities Coordination.

13 City alternatives show that is possible to find a common ground between North and South in the globalization process. Cities from the North and from the South, thanks to the Habitat II initiatives implemented by UNCHS of Nairobi, were cooperating, trying to find common solutions that don't export problems to others (for example implementing strategies for avoiding eco-dumping, or the creation of new environmental and social refugees, etc.).



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# Financing for development - a Gender View

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*This presentation was distributed at the European Women's Conference as Oksana Kisselyova herself could not attend; she attended the Financing for Development Summit in Monterey, Mexico.*

### **Globalization and its Impact on Social Justice and Gender Equality in Countries with Economies in Transition**

For the last half century the world has experienced vigorous progress in economic activities and technologies, a development absolutely unprecedented in human history. This rapid progress is largely due to globalization of both capital and economies.

However, the globalization process has not brought significant changes to the overall balance of powers in the world. There is still an abyss between rich and poor people. About half of the world population hardly earns scanty livelihoods. Every fifth human being (around 1.2 billion people in total) has to struggle for survival earning less than 1 dollar a day. Economies with low per-capita incomes show high child mortality and sickness rates and high levels of illiteracy.

Global incomes are distributed in an increasingly inequitable manner. As things now stand, aggregate earnings of 80% of the world population account for less than 20% of the global income. This effectively means that benefits of globalization process are perceptible for only 20% of the world population, mostly residents

of a few leading countries. Therefore, there can be little doubt that it is the most developed economies that actually benefit from the globalization process.

The last decade following the breakdown of the former socialist system has become a period of political, social and economic reforms for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Newly Independent States (NIS). The very first years of the transitional period were marked by deep changes in the social financing system and by dynamic economic reforms. Many CEE/NIS countries have made efforts towards economic liberalisation and opted for transformation models designed to restrict the governmental regulation of economic activities, eliminate the existing barriers for free flows of labour, goods, services and investments, and join the free trade system and the relevant international organisations. But these positive changes have been accompanied by economic decline and a reduction in national trade and production activities. The process of transition led to a drastic drop in GDP and a radical change in the ownership of public property as well as a large-scale redistribution of incomes. The available data on income flows gives reasons to say that the reforms have triggered rapid transformations leading to inequality of incomes that may be considered the fastest known in history. The transformation process has also led to growing inequality in wages and a rapidly increasing unemployment.

It is worth to remember that traditional market reforms, including financial stabilization; corporatization and privatization; liberalization of prices; liberalization of foreign economic activity; securing convertibility of national currency; etc. have been undertaken under the

pressure and control of multilateral financial organizations (particularly the IMF).

Supporting actions of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and a number of other multilateral financial organizations and donor countries has resulted in a temporary stabilization of the national budgets and currencies and has helped mitigate the inflation processes. However, the practical implementation of the market reforms has been inadequate in terms of addressing the local realities such as the national political systems, existing economic environments, legal frameworks, attitudes and mentalities of the communities, etc. Developers of the reforms have also failed to support them by clear assessments of the time frames needed for the anticipated changes and effective implementation mechanisms, as well as have completely ignored social aspects of the reforms. Moreover, the loans have quite often been used for non-eligible purposes. As a result, the foreign financial support has little effect in controlling inflation but on the contrary has contributed to the instability of the national budgets and local currencies.

The process of the CEE/NIS countries joining the global economy has been accompanied by serious deviations from the fundamentals of sustainable social development. Therefore, the globalisation process in these economies is usually associated with such negative category as the "loss of social capital" that implies growing poverty, unemployment and social inequality, as well as scaling down public participation in the political process and growing social justice. Hard-line market reforms recommended by the multilateral organisations have given rise to a serious opposition in some of the regional economies. It may be pertinent to remind in this context the mass meetings of protest against the globalisation and activities of multilateral financial institutions that took place in the Czech Republic in September 2001.

The instability has a particularly pronounced impact on the most vulnerable groups of society, in particular women. The available data gives good grounds to conclude that the process of market transition has brutalized the gender discrimination in economy and reduced the economic opportunities for female work-

ers. The female economic involvement throughout the CEE economies is now lower than it was in 1985 and the economic activity of women has declined stronger than for male labour. The female labour proportion in Hungary had

*Between 1985 and 1997, female employment dropped by 33% in Hungary*

contracted by one third in the period of 1985 to 1997. The female labour proportions have been on the decline even in those countries where the male employment statistics were stable (i.e., in Poland), or where increasing trends were registered (as was the case for the Czech Republic). Female employment rates have reduced dramatically. The magnitude of a smallest drop in the female employment rates (in the Czech Republic) was still nearly 10 times larger than the average deviation for the male employment rate.

The extensive lay-offs and high unemployment rates are accompanied by the re-emergence of the patriarch stereotypes that women should turn back to their "predestined" place. A labour force survey performed in Poland in 1990 showed that chances for married men to find a job are twice as good as for married women. Patriarch trends in the policies being pursued by the transitional economies simply imply that women are bound to accept poorly secured and low-paid jobs in the shadow economy.

The existing gender gap in wages is one more form of discrimination of female employees on the labour markets of the CEE countries. Female workers in the CEE economies are paid on average 20% to 35% less than the male staff. Female-to-male wages ratios expressed on a percentage basis averaged only about 69% for Bulgaria in 1997, 78% for Hungary in 1997 and 79% for Poland in 1996. The wage gap is attributed to concentration of

*Female workers in CEE countries are paid 20-30% less than male colleagues*

female jobs at the bottom level of the labour market and to what may be called discrimination in payment for work of the same quality. In view of the steep drop in real wages across the region (i.e. real wage in Bulgaria now accounts for only 40% to 50% of that for 1989), the lower wages of female staff make women a most vulnerable category as far as the risk of poverty is concerned. Female entre-

preneurs have started more than 40% of the new businesses since 1990 in Hungary, and female managers currently run 38% of businesses in Poland. However, despite some success, businesswomen still have to face more barriers in their individual business activities than men. Studies show that the process of privatisation gives more assets in control of men than women. It means that women dispose of less start-up capital and have limited access to collateral needed to raise finance for business operation and expansion. Information on credit opportunities and training courses is less accessible for female managers as well.

Home-work is still regarded as an area of gender discrimination. Traditionally the "double burden" borne by women in the CEE countries was notably heavier than that for women of Western Europe (by 15 hours per week on average) and totalled 70 hours per week.

*Despite the fact that 38% of Polish companies are run by women, women face more barriers*

Under the new conditions of sagging household incomes, women have to work

even harder hunting cheap products, cooking and grasping every opportunity to survive.

National expenditures on the public health sector have contracted in most of the CEE countries that made medical and health services less accessible for communities. The increasing proportion of payable medical services is a factor that disproportionately affects women as one of the most economically disadvantaged categories in the process of transition. Single parent families where women dominate as breadwinners are particularly vulnerable in this situation.

Governmental support of families has diminished for the period as well. Benefits paid to families with children have devaluated with time. For example, family benefits paid in the Czech Republic totalled 0.8 % of GDP in 1997 that is twice as little as the total benefits paid before the transition. Bulgaria spent 0.6 % of its GDP on financing social benefits in 1997 compared with 2.2 % in 1991. Female representation in the national parliaments of the CEE countries now varies from 5 % for Albania to 20.5 % for Croatia. It means that women have very low opportunities to participate in economic decisionmaking processes.

Market economy formation and globalisation process in the CEE/NIS economies tend to diminish the state role in securing social justice and gender equality.

#### **UN Financing for Development Process: Background**

The negative consequences of globalisation are visible not only in countries with economies in transition, but in developing countries as well. That is why the least developed countries initiated the UN Financing for Development process to address the problems associated with the financial globalization process and to agree on internationally acceptable mechanisms that could help take advantage of the globalization process on a more equitable basis, for the benefit of every nation and every social group.

The Financing for Development process was launched in June 1997 when the UN General Assembly endorsed the "Agenda for Development", an important document that declared the need in an international conference to discuss financing for development problems. It was in December 1997 that the UN General Assembly issued its first FfD Resolution.

The FfD Conference is intended to join and help coordinate efforts to ensure that benefits of the globalization process are equitably distributed among all countries of the world.

#### **Financial resources are always the problem in UN processes:**

In the 1990s many conferences and summits have taken place, and many declarations and plans of actions and beautiful words have been said about the environment, development and reproductive rights and health (population & development/Cairo), social rights and development (Social Summit in Cph.), food security (World Food Summit), women's rights (Women's international conference in Beijing) and children's rights (Children's Conference). Last year UNCTAD X and this year the 3rd LDC Conference took place. I could continue. Many commitments were made on paper and very little implementation has taken place! In fact, financing and new additional resources is always a contentious topic of discussion at United Nations fora. The Financing for Development process provides a unique opportunity to press for the implementation

of agreements made at these other UN conferences, including the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and the World Social Summit, both in 1995.

### **Global Women's Consultation cooperation within FfD process**

WEDO – Women's Environmental and Development Organization – is known for its facilitation and coordination of Women's Caucuses and consultations together with other NGOs in various UN processes ever since the preparations for the 1992 UN Environment and Development conference in Rio.

During the Beijing Plus 5 and Social Summit Plus 5 reviews by the UN General Assembly in 2000, WEDO partnered with UNIFEM and UNDP and another women economic justice network (WICEJ) to focus on global economic issues faced by women and women's economic rights issues.

WEDO at that time decided to give high priority to the upcoming UN meeting on Financing for Development.

As it was written, in December 1999 the UN General Assembly agreed to initiate a new collaboration between the United Nations, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) to find ways to improve development financing. These institutions had gotten together in 1998 to discuss enhancing trade opportunities for developing countries in response to a WTO and UNCTAD initiative, but it is new that the UN and G77 took this initiative to establish a general process.

The global women's movement has achieved significant breakthroughs since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. For example, violence against women is now on the international and national agendas of countries around the world and the feminization of poverty has been recognized as a disturbing global trend. But women have not been successful, at the national, regional, and particularly the global level, in shaping global economic policies or influencing macroeconomic decision-making. There is a critical need to increase awareness of the importance of these issues and strengthen the capacity of women's organizations at the national, regional,

and global levels to address global economic issues.

Financing for Development is an opportunity to place women's concerns on the global economic agenda. When it comes to financing, the discussion is too often all male and gender blind. And it is also an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of women's economic justice organizations at the national and regional levels.

That is the background for WEDO cooperating with UNIFEM, UNDP, and women's civil society organizations in order to bring women's voices and experiences, women's needs and solutions to the table. A WEDO/UNIFEM project "*Financing for Development: Investing in Women*" has been developed, which aims to get more women, especially Southern and CEE/NIS, represented at PrepComs. A number of lobby documents have been produced.

### **WEDO input into the FfD Process:**

A key component within the FfD has been the willingness and openness of the UN to include input from civil society and other key stakeholders.

WEDO convened a Women's Caucus during the November 2000 NGO hearings where only 16 women (six from outside the United States) attended the hearings. WEDO was — and continues to be — an active participant in an Ad Hoc NGO Working Group (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Global Policy Forum, International Cooperation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), International Council of Social Welfare, Mercy Global Concern, Quaker UN Office, and the World Council of Churches) which organizes NGO introductions and orientation sessions and daily NGO Strategy and debriefing sessions /caucuses at the PrepComs in order to maximize the participation of international NGOs attending the meeting. The Ad hoc NGO WG also convenes dialogues with the FfD Secretariat and the Inter-Agency representatives from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), UN Council on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNIFEM, and UNDP.

At the November PrepCom, WEDO and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung co-sponsored a successful breakfast panel entitled, *Financing for Development: Investing in Women*, that focused on the impact of FfD issues on

women as a means to make the gender and WID issue visible in the FfD process.

In the Women's Consultation and Caucus process there are several Regional Focal Points. It is important to share information, experiences, ideas, advocacy and lobby globally and among regions. But is also just as, or more important, to encourage the development of regional and national networks that can carry out advocacy tasks of information, literacy, and lobby in the seven FfD issue areas (including inter-linkages) on the regional and national levels.

#### **CEE/CIS regional activities within FfD process**

The Liberal Society Institute (Ukraine) is the FfD Focal Point in CEE/CIS within the UNIFEM/WEDO project "*Financing for Development: Investing in Women*". In November we organised the seminar "*Women's Economic Empowerment in CEE/CIS region in the context of UN Financing for Development process*".

The identification of FfD issues and priorities for CEE/CIS countries, gender dimensions of the FfD Agenda, developing of ways and mechanisms for women's economic empowerment, and recommendations for national governments, multilateral institutions and UN structures have been the key issues of the seminar.

Due to UNIFEM support six women from Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Kazakhstan and Ukraine participated in Resumed Preparatory Committee in January 2002, New York. They had the opportunity to raise CEE/CIS women's concerns within FfD agenda, present recommendations developed at the regional seminar, lobby national governmental officials, produced statements and present them at the Session.

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## II. Learning from Best Practices and Success Stories

# Building up a sustainable community on the edge of the dying Aral Sea

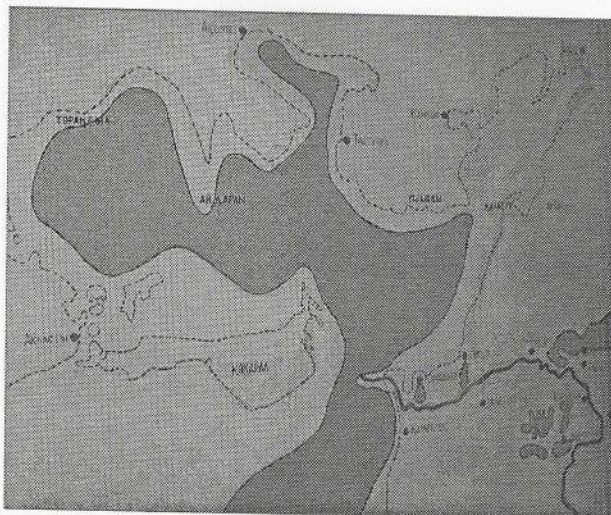
## Zhannat Makhambetova

Aral Tinesee, Kazakhstan

Thank you for the invitation to this international women's conference. It is important for me to know that there are a lot of women in the world participating in this process of world change.

My NGO is called Aral Tinesee, which means Aral Sea in Kazakh. Our aim is to restore the Aral Sea, or at least the Kazakh part on which we have influence, by restoring sustainable fishery in the Aral Sea. This will sound a bit contradictory to you, but I will explain how.

The Aral Sea before the 1960 was the 4th largest inland sea in the world. It is situated 600 km east from the Caspian sea. The Aral sea is divided in the middle by the



Map 1: the northern part of the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan. The dotted line shows the former shore of the Aral Sea. The red dots are former fisher-towns and villages. The port of Aralsk is the the highest dot on the right.

border between Uzbekistan (in the South) and Kazakhstan (in the North). The border divides the Aral Sea in a large part in the south and a small part in the north. The total Aral Sea used to be 64.000 square kilometers large – larger then the Netherlands. The southern part is the biggest. The small Aral Sea used to be 13.000 square kilometers large, but now it is much smaller. The Aral Sea has an average depth of 30 meters.

The Aral Sea used to receive its water from two large rivers coming from the Eastern Himalaya region, the Syr Darya in the North, which passes through Kazakhstan, and the Army Darya in the South, which passes through Uzbekistan.

What you see on the map (graph 1) is the small Aral Sea in the North. The read line is the former shore before 1960. In that time the depths reached 60 meters. The Aral Sea region has a strong continental climate, with a variation of temperature from +40 in summer to -30 in winter. The summer heat used to cause a vast evaporation, which was the reason for the good climate in the Aral Sea region. This was before the Aral Sea started drying up. The sea was like a big oasis in the desert.

In the small Aral Sea there used to be the port of Aralsk, my native town (Graph 1: the most northern red point). I used to live in Aralsk. There was a beach where the people from the city would swim in the sea. Aralsk had about 35000 inhabitants. As a port Aralsk was a well functioning town, with a shipbuilding yard, fish-processing plant and services. The shipbuilding yard would build big cargo ships of 500 tons as well as fisher boats. The Fishers had an annual catch of more than 50.000 tons of high quality fish. A total of 13 different



species were caught, including carps and sturgeon. Around the small Aral Sea there were 19 small and larger fishery communities (graph 1, the villages are the red dots on the map). Before the 60ties thousands of people were involved in catching and processing fish.

In the interwar period, agriculture production was introduced in Kazakhstan with tragic consequences for the Kazakh nomadic culture. After the war (1953-64) President Nikita Khrushchev further expanded agriculture in the Aral Sea region. He was fascinated by agriculture on sandy soil only needing water. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan both had lots of sandy soil and two large rivers. A program was started which aimed to make the USSR self sufficient in cotton and wheat. In Kazakhstan we started growing mainly wheat, rice, millet and barley and in Uzbekistan mainly cotton. The agriculture along the Syr-darya and the Amu-darya were expanded tremendously, immense amounts of water started to be used for irrigation.

This is typical of unsustainable development. A few high-ranking people in Moscow took away our water without asking us if we needed or wanted this agricultural "progress".

From the mid 50' till the late 80', huge amounts of water were taken from the two rivers that used to supply the Aral Sea. The total water supply to the Aral Sea dropped from 25.000 cubic kilometer to less than 5.000 cubic kilometer from both rivers. This means that we were using 20.000 cubic km of water for our agriculture. Just to compare, Denmark with its 5 million inhabitants, agriculture and industry uses only 0.9 cubic km per year. Kazakhstan has 16.500 million inhabitants and Uzbekistan 25.000 million inhabitants, so should we apply Danish standards, we should not be using more than 7.000 cubic kilometers of water, and not just for agriculture!

Fishing communities started digging fareways deeper. This did not help much because a lot of water was wasted as it seeped into the sandy bottom of these canals. In 1975 fishing stopped in the small Aral Sea. Aralsk became a port without a port, a harbour without a harbour. The fishing stopped, groundwater salinity increased and the climate started to change,

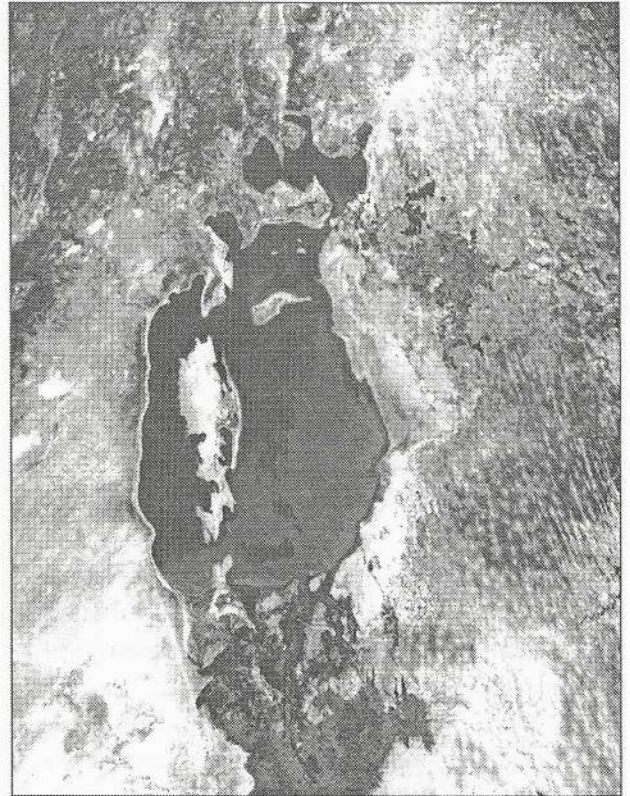


Photo 1: satellite photo of the Aral Sea in 1996. The "small Aral Sea" is the most northern part.

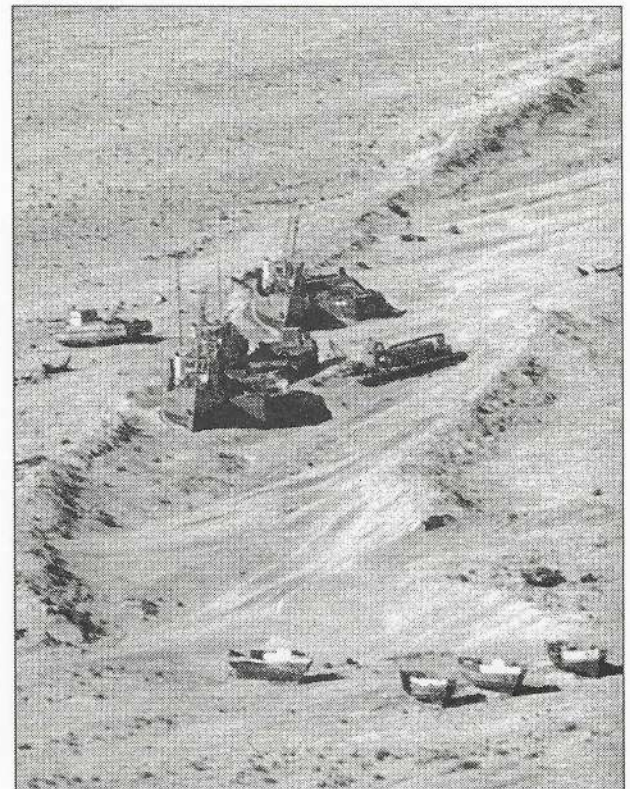


Photo 2: fishing boats stranded in the canals which were dug further and further away to get to the receding Aral Sea

more dust-storms, colder winters, hotter summers. In order to maintain employment in the fishing industries, frozen fish was imported from other parts of the USSR to the fishprocessing plants. The fish would be imported all the way from the Baltic Sea, the White Sea and the Pacific Ocean to the Aral Sea region. It was an artificial way to try and give work to local people. But of course it was not sustainable. 17 fishing villages were abandoned, the inhabitants started to leave the Aral Sea region.

The Kazakh Aral Sea region had always been quite affluent. But since the fishing stopped, the Aral region became dependent on aid. Now it is the poorest region in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Aral Sea region was declared an ecological disaster zone and the inhabitants received some additional money to their salary from the government in Almaty. But salary payments were often late or would not arrive at all.

Today, the few fishers who are left bring less than 1 ton of fish per year. As the fish-processing plants have all closed down, these few fishers can only fish in winter and early spring. The weather has to be cold. If not the fish will not arrive fresh at the markets of the nearest towns.

This is the history, before we started our project.

Since 1990 many international organisations have become involved in trying to solve the Aral Sea problem. Most of these organisations never came to Aralsk. Many international meetings were held in the capital on the problems of the Aral Sea, but none of us, people from Aralsk, took part.

Then in 1991, a Danish representative came to Aralsk and asked our fishermen; how do you fishermen live without the sea? The fishermen said they wanted to fish. They explained that there are fish available in the sea. In 1978 a salt-water fish, the flounder, had been introduced into the Aral Sea. While the sweet water fish had been disappearing, this fish had been expanding. The fishermen explained to the Danish representative that the problem with the flounder was that it is a flat-fish, a fish which lives on the bottom of the sea. The Kazakh fishermen did not have the nets and knowledge to fish such bottom-fish. The Danish repre-

sentative was a fisherman himself. He said, "what if we bring you our nets? In Denmark there is an old tradition of fishing bottom-fish like flounder. We can show you how to use them, and your fishermen can go back to the sea again".

The Danish organisation is called "For a Living Sea". This organisation came directly to the villages, without a go-between, and talked directly with the fishermen and women. I am very happy that the Danes came to us. This is the only project working well in Aralsk at the moment. There is also a UNDP office, but their approach is a little different as they work with the government.

This is how our project "from Kattegat to the Aral Sea" started. Some of our fishermen went to Denmark to be introduced to the methods of catching bottom-fish, as we don't have this tradition. When they came back, in 1996, we had the first trial of using the Danish nets on the Aral sea. 65 fishermen took part in these first trials. I went with them. The last time I had seen the sea I was 7. Then I lived 20 years without seeing the Aral Sea. I had come to think it was really dead. It was a shock to see that we could still catch fish.

Due to this project I now know that we can use the sea, that we can save the sea. We can say to our governments "the local people demand that the small part of the sea will be saved". There is a chance that we will be heard. In February of this year, the World Bank and the government of Kazakhstan signed an agreement to build a dam between the big and the small Aral Sea. The water from the Syr-Darya will re-plenish the small Aral Sea. In this way at least part of the Aral Sea will be saved. Maybe the people in Uzbekistan and in the other countries along the Armu-Darya can also change their agriculture methods so that the big part of the Aral Sea can be saved as well.

Our NGO was officially founded in 1998. How did we carry out this project? In the beginning, when the Danish people came to us with this idea of restoring the fishery, most of the people were very sceptical. Everything had been destroyed. The fish-factory and fish-kolchoses were given to the people who used to live there because the government could not pay the salaries. So

they were allowed to take doors and window to compensate for unpaid salary, and now nothing was left. We had to work with people who had lost all hope for the future. We started from the first step. We distributed nets free of charge to people who agreed to go back to the sea.

It was not easy to find the first courageous people. Most inhabited villages are now situated along the river. It is difficult to get from these villages to the sea. They need to travel 100 km to get to the sea and there is practically no road. Of course they prefer to catch the little fish that live in the river or the nearby small lakes. We started to convince the local people to go back to the sea. We explained why we should exploit the flounder in the sea. That too many fishermen are out of work. That we should try and bring back employment in the fishing and fishery industry. We have people who are educated in processing fish. We have all possibilities to rebuilt the fishery industry. We set one condition, we gave the nets for free, but only if they went back to the sea. In the beginning there were only 20 fishing brigades. Now in the year 2002, we have about 100 brigades, in total 600 fishermen catching fish on the sea. Our NGO staff runs this project. The fishermen in our project are becoming very strong. Our NGO includes many women. The managers of the project are women. The vice-president, president and bookkeeper are women, the men are drivers and small-level-workers. Why we women are involved in the project? When the Danish people came to the Aral Sea, it was very difficult to

work with them for us, because of our cultural differences. It was very difficult to integrate our cultures. Women are more flexible. Women can built the bridge between fishermen and fishermen. Now they say that they understand each other. They now think they understand each other without any 'interpreter'. But this bridge is our work, the women's work.

We had many visitors from Denmark to Kazakhstan, and from Kazakhstan to Denmark. This project has lead to a friendship between cultures, now we understand each other well. The fishermen very quickly caught the idea of a self-sufficient society.

Before the fishermen went to the sea we would first have meetings with them. We would come to their village and talk to them. We would say, 'we can save our sea, but only if you go back to the sea to catch fish'. Now about women. When we went to the fisher-villages, we would first have the meeting with the fishermen. But then usually we would have another meeting with the women. We would tell them, "you are the closest person to your man, so please, when you have a nice time with him, tell him "go to the sea", "work on this project", "you will get nice nets, you'll earn money, go to the sea and work on this project". Men listen to their wives. I'm sure that the success of the project is due to support of the women of the fishermen. After our talk with them, the fishermen started going back to the Aral Sea. Many of them will use a camel to get to the sea and to transport the fish back (photo 4).

Photo 4 shows the village Tustobek. Tustobek used to

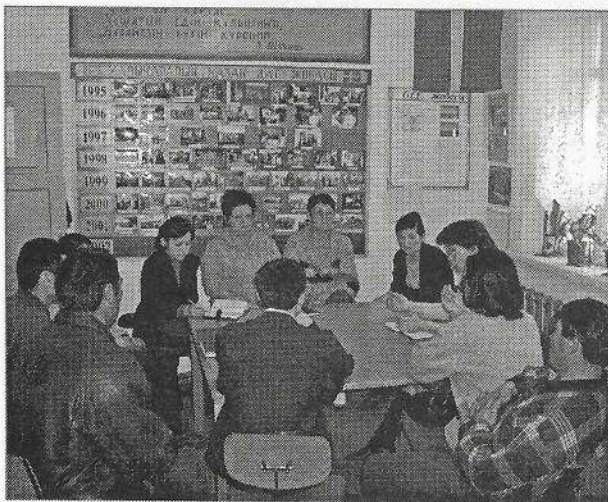


Photo 3: Zhanat Makhambetova (speaking on the right) and the staff of her NGO Aral Tinesee.



Photo 4: fisherman in Tustobek village going to sea with his camel and a slede to transport the fish.

have 1000 inhabitants and a big fishery kolchos. In 1996, only 9 families still lived here, in low houses with flat roofs (as the first house on the photo). Tustobek is 5 km from the sea and 100 km from Aralsk. There is no electricity and no road. Now 16 families are again living here, due to our project. In total 7 families moved from the city to this village without electricity and roads. All of them are building houses with pointed roofs (as the 2nd house on the photo) which are more expensive, but much better against cold, heat and rain. Why are they doing this? Because they are earning profit from the fishery. They can buy livestock. They now consider themselves rich. That is when they started believing in us. When they saw that our project was giving them a better income, a better life. Now they believe all our ideas, we can come with any crazy idea and they will believe us 100%.

In the framework of our NGO activities, we now also have a lot of small projects in villages. We help the villagers to build up their own capacity. Photo 5 shows the villagers of Karaktery and their fish-factory. The fishermen of the village came to us and said "we want to rebuild the factory". It was in very bad shape. They repainted and repaired it. There was almost nothing left. They got the materials from us, but they did the work. Now it is working well. In your countries this might not be so spectacular, but in our country it is. We had gotten used to wait for the government to take care of things.

This year, in the village Tustobek, they built a school. They built it themselves. They have 6 children going to the school. Photo 6 shows two fishermen from the village of Tustobek. You see that they have small boats and that they are fishing with Danish nets. Each photo tells a nice success story. All our work is based on success stories. We believe we should stay in our native land, we should not emigrate. We need to build a future for ourselves and our children. We need to be inspired by these small results, by these small projects. We have to work from the local level to the global level, and not visa versa. We can restore the small Aral Sea by small success steps.

We recently created a women's organisation, which shares the office with our NGO Aral Tinese. This women's NGO is called "Women of Aral". We think that now we have worked enough for men,



Photo 5: Zhannat Makhambetova (front, 2nd left) and the fishermen of Karaktery, standing in front of the re-build "fish-factory".



Photo 6: fishermen of Tustobek using the Danish nets to catch flounder.

now we need to organise the women. It has been very easy to organise women. In one, two, months we set up volunteer centers in the villages, where people discuss their problems. In the beginning they would talk about lack of products, now they are talking about environmental issues, "maybe we should build bird nests to preserve the biodiversity near our villages". Our NGO gives them some money to do this type of educational work. They now know that when they work with NGOs they can have some profit and that there will be a positive outcome for their families, for their communities.

Our NGO has every year a general assembly. This year we had 600 people participating, our members. We

had a room full of Fishermen. They elected the board and they elected the president. They elected me as their president. For two years now the fishermen have been electing a woman as their president.

In the beginning it was very difficult for us to involve people in our projects, to be creative, to take initiatives themselves. Now it has become much easier. They come to us with their own ideas. There is for example the head of one family, in the 1980' he stopped fishing and became an animal breeder. When the project started, he dropped animal breeding and forced his 8 sons to drop their jobs, and build one fishermen brigade and they are fishing again. His nature was to be a fisherman.

Fishing, the Aral Sea, is very important for our livelihoods. In the 70' the government forced many of us to leave our homes. The government had a program for replacement of people from the ecological disaster zone to the cities in the west, we were too expensive, they had to pay too much for our diseases. Now we hope that some of them will come back. If the World Bank dam-project will be a success, many things will improve. We will have many more jobs for the people, the biodiversity will return and in this way our lives will be improved.

To conclude. We saw many men in the pictures, they have been doing the actual fishing work. But the initiators, the organisers, are we, women. In post-soviet countries, it is the women who are more adaptable to new things. Women are less easily corrupted and they are more flexible to work with. I would like to recommend that you put in your recommendations to the governments meeting in Johannesburg, that sustainable development projects should always work with women in key positions.

**Questions: Do the Danish nets damage the bottom of the sea?**

Answer: the flat-fish was introduced because of the increasing salinity (more than 13 mg/l salinity). The endemic fish in the Aral Sea cannot live in water with more than (9 mg/l). The nets are not trawling nets, they are throw nets, they do not damage the bottom of the sea.

**Question: Where can you sell the fish which you catch?**

Answer: we have no fish processing factory. So we can only sell fresh fish. For the time being the fish is mostly sold directly to private people. They come with a little truck and buy the fish. That is why we sell most fish in winter and spring. The fish then keeps longer because of the cold weather.

**Question: What will happen to the Southern part of the Aral Sea if the dam is built?**

Answer: the Armu Darya river, which used to flow into the Southern part of the Aral Sea, no longer reaches the sea. It disappears in the sand. Our river, the Syr Darya, still reaches the northern part. Today, most of the water of the Syr Darya flows more or less directly into the Big Aral, and therefore the small Aral Sea continues to shrink at great speed. The World Bank project wants to build a dam between the Small and the Big Aral Sea. The project has been coming up for several years, and in an Aral Sea conference held in Paris in June 1994, the UN and the World Bank reserved the money needed to undertake the building of the dam - on certain conditions that apparently haven't yet been fulfilled. The dam, a vast 21 km cement construction with sluices, is to be supported with 50-70 km of dikes. The dam should ensure that the water from the Syr Darya doesn't run directly through the Small Aral and into Big Aral, but stays in the north to make the Small Aral return to a state of fresh or brackish water, like before 1975. The Small Aral as a fresh water lake would mean an area of around 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which means that the port in Aralsk would be reactivated, and that other natural harbours could again be used. The fresh water would also further a rise of the nature that existed, before the salt destroyed the fresh water fauna and flora in and around the sea. This again would improve the climate in the Aralsk Region. The dam provides employment in itself, and in order to bring transport construction material to the sea, new roads must be built and existing improved, especially in the south-eastern parts. An improved infrastructure in the delta would improve the possibilities of establishing a fishery on flounder in the Big Aral, since it would facilitate the transport of boats, trucks and fish to and from

Aralsk. And the fishery on flounder is the very heart of this NGO-project. We hope that Uzbekistan will take our example. If their government decides to change it's irrigation policy it might be possible to also save the big Aral Sea.



**Zhannat Makhambetova**

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# From breastcancer to cosmetics: Women taking action for a healthier planet

## Helen Lynn

Women's Environment Network (WEN) UK

Thanks and congratulations to WECF for organising this wonderful conference, it is truly inspiring to hear and learn about the work of so many organisations.

WEN came into being in 1989. We are a national campaigning and membership organisation which aims to empower women and men who care about the environment. We campaign on environmental issues linking women, health and the environment, from a women's perspective. Our lifeline is our network of local Groups and Contacts.

WEN has 50 active groups all over the UK. WEN's Local Groups are vital to WEN's Campaigns. The local groups are influential in generating change to improve women's health and the environment. The local groups are the best at this because they are part of the community. They can easily introduce ideas to people around them. The local WEN groups are a place to meet like-minded people and enjoy making a difference.

WEN's 'mother'-office is a team of women taking action for a healthier planet. We have Gloria Miqueles, the Local Groups Co-ordinator, Val Nobbs, the Health Administrator, Liz Sutton the Press and Information Co-ordinator, Donna Murphy our Database Worker, Janet Williams our Welsh Co-ordinator, and I am the Health Co-ordinator of the Women's Environmental Network.

WEN took part in Rio conference and feed into consultation papers and documents. WEN works on how we can make the WSSD and other treaties seem relevant

to women. We try to find innovative approaches to encourage participation in something that is happening so far away and seems so far removed from women's day to day lives. We also participated in formulating the Local Agenda 21 document for London which was used as a model for Agenda 21's all over the UK.

WEN has been actively involved in the setting of Agenda 21 for London. We encouraged our members and local groups to get involved at a local level. All WEN campaigns reflect the ethos of Agenda 21. WEN works towards sustainable development in a way that is understandable to women.

But working on LA21 has not all been sunshine and roses. We have met with a number of problems. The interpretation of document by Local Authorities is often very different from ours. There is no infrastructure or examples of how to "do" agenda 21. There is a lack of ability to engage women. The Local agenda 21 is often dictated by those who got involved without making sufficient effort to involve a large part of the population. Many women who we had encouraged to take part got bored with the endless meetings and went back to doing something active.

When we look at what has happened since Rio, we can not be over-enthusiastic. In Great Britain we have a lack of implementation of Agenda 21. It is still the women at grass roots level who are doing the campaigning. Unfortunately their involvement is not reflected on national or international level. No infrastructure has been set out for implementing LA21. Most of the city councils have no idea what to do! And I wonder about progress in the rest of the world, it are still only 9 countries in

which the proportion of women in parliament is 30% or above.

WEN has tried to translate the positive energy from women into ideas for local action with its new project Action for a Healthier Planet (AHP). AHP is a three year project funded by Community fund UK. It aims to set up a self-sustaining network of groups across the UK. The project will support, provide information and develop networks and work with existing WEN Local Groups as well as support new ones. AHP will also set up a resource and information database to provide information or referrals to other groups and campaigns if appropriate.

This is why I love my job. It is fun being a campaigner. You get to dream up ideas of how to launch a campaign. For example, we made rice paper doves and asked women to write their wishes for a healthier planet on them.

We then took them to the millennium bridge and throw them into the Thames. It was the first action on the bridge and very symbolic as bridges span across channels and take us to a different place.

We based the idea for campaigners on the questions, enquiries and concerns received by WEN.

In this way we now have developed 6 AHP Campaigns:

- Cosmetics Cover up
- Live life don't waste it
- Cultivating the Future
- Detecting Hidden Hazards
- Stopping Breast Cancer Before it starts
- Waste Minimisation

Our experience is that, to have many women participate, they need confidence in their abilities to bring about change, they need support and resources to help them on the journey, they need companionship to make the journey seem shorter (networks), they need information to fuel their passion and they need to be taught some tools of "the trade".

So what can we do and use to encourage participation, what examples can we follow, what works, what's fun,

what makes people think and raises awareness, what's inspiring.

We have developed several tools of the trade. These are "Toxic tours" where we go around houses or other places and gather information about health hazards (more about that below). We use storytelling sessions, skill share workshops, information webs, action days, awareness raising events and workshops. And we try to find reliable information, and then translate this knowledge into practical action. We have also started to utilise examples from the occupational health sector who do risk assessments and map workplaces.

More about toxic tours. We organise toxic tours of homes, workplaces, or local environments. When we walk around these places we gather evidence about health problems in the area. We will visit sites known to pollute the locality. We will then draw maps, showing which parts are more affected than others, or where there are more health-complaints. And we will ask lots of questions. We then use the data gathered at these 'toxic tours' to lobby the local authority for changes.

I would also like to tell you about our "ending the cosmetics cover up" campaign. The cosmetics industry uses more than 5,000 different chemicals in cosmetics



Drawings from the WEN campaign: Detecting Hidden Harards.



and toiletries. Some are linked to cancer, disrupting hormones and effects on reproductive health. Our laws allow the cosmetics firms to keep certain product ingredients secret. The cosmetics industry are selling women a dream, but a toxic one. Even though we all may love our lip-stick, the ingredients can be damaging to our health, our environment and the environment in which they are manufactured. So WEN has set about to end the cosmetics cover up. First we made women aware of their power. Women in the UK spend over £3.3 billion a year on cosmetics and toiletries. If we all use your consumer power we can change a lot.

WEN asks its members and groups to harras producers and find out what is in the products they use. WEN has also lobbied industry and government for use of safer chemicals. We have asked the government to pass a law that calls for all ingredients to be listed on the label – no more secrets.

**Our campaign “Detecting Hidden Hazards” raises awareness about** potentially hazardous chemicals in your homes and workplaces, and how to identify them. There are only a few hundred of the 30,00 chemicals in daily use have been adequately tested. There are many hidden hazards because additives such as moth and stain repellent, and flame-retardants often hide toxic ingredients. But these hazards are not listed on the label as they are included in the trade marked substances. The tools we use for detecting hidden hazards



*Photo: newspaper photo of WEN ‘hands of our mamery glands’ demo in front of the ministry of fishery and agriculture in London. The great press interest showed once more that there is more interest in breast then in breast-cancer.*

it to map our homes and workplaces. We also use our consumer power by requesting information from producers and to urge a precautionary approach from them.

**Cultivating the Future** is a campaign that encourages and empowers food-growing groups among women from minority ethnic communities. WEN provides training, advice and practical support to a self sustaining network of growing and composting groups. WEN encourages its members to join a local food growing group or support local food initiatives.

We promote locally grown and organic food, we lobby for cheaper organic food for all, and we raise awareness in workshops about how the current system favours mass food production and what to do about it.

**The Real Nappy Campaign has had a lot of attention.**

In Britain alone, we throw away 8 million disposable nappies every day. WEN promotes the use of real nappies. We run a “real nappy week”, we set up partnerships with councils and have helped to develop a network of nappy services, which will collect, wash and bring back the cotton nappies.

The campaign “**Live Life don’t waste it**” promotes ways to avoid excess packaging, or as we call it “how to find ways to slim your bin”!! This campaign gets local councils to promote waste prevention and alternatives to wasteful product. We support schemes to turn one person’s rubbish into another’s person’s resources.

**Our breast cancer campaign** has been central. A large part of the work of the AHP project is on women’s health and environment, focussing on breast cancer. We have struggled to get press attention about pesticides and it’s link to breast cancer. Finally we stood in front of the Ministry for Fisheries, Food and Farming (MAFF) and said we were going to bare our breasts. Which we did!! But not the real thing, plastic ones. We stood with our bared plastic breast and held signs saying “**Hands off our Mammary Glands**”. There was enormous press interest. Which proves once more that there is more interest in breasts than in breast cancer. We think breast cancer is a symbolic disease, and what’s bad for women is bad for the environment. The same chemicals are often not only linked to breast-cancer but also to other illnesses and diseases.

Environmental degradation effects our reproductive health and has neurotoxic effects.

**We have been gathering many facts on Breast Cancer for our campaign.** Breast cancer is now the most common form of cancer in the UK. There are 39,500 cases of breast cancer each year. Which means every week more than 800 new cases. In the UK a woman's lifetime risk is 1 in 9. Breast cancer is a symbolic illness, there is a body of evidence linking a cocktail of chemicals in our environment to breast cancer. The approach to preventing breast cancer could be used as a model for illnesses and diseases linked with the environment. The bottom line is women don't want to get breast cancer in the first place. **That is why we called our campaign "Stopping Breast Cancer before it starts".** This campaign follows-up on recommendations from "Putting Breast Cancer on the Map" a previous WEN campaign. We campaign to make women and children's health the prime indicator of the state of the environment. We want to get prevention of Breast Cancer on the National Agenda. We want to raise awareness about the lack of prevention on breast cancer agenda.

So how did we get this underway?

**WEN organised a Forum** in the House of Commons November 2000. We brought together stakeholders from all sectors. We called for the formation of a working group on the primary prevention of breast cancer. We had a meeting with the Parliamentary Group on Breast Cancer. In order to get women involved we borrowed an idea from Greenpeace to raise awareness about the meeting inside the House of Commons, outside on the green we got women to put on plaster casts of breasts and bellies to demonstrate the vulnerability of women to polluted environments. We called it the **"Breasts and Bellies demo"**. We protested outside House of Commons to raise awareness of the meeting going on inside. We also made a statement and got it signed by many women's organisations, scientists, environmental groups and trade unions. We had a number of women contacting MP's (parliamentarians) to ask them to attend meeting, and we organised a special briefing for MP's. In this private meeting with the MP's we discuss setting up a special parliamentary working group. It should be a working group on primary preven-

tion of breast cancer, linked to the government's cancer group. In October of this year there will be a national "Britain Against Cancer" Conference, and we asked to include the issue of primary prevention.

We will continue to work on this issue until we get some action on primary prevention.

I will leave you with a slide of a map draw by a project participant in our "Putting Breast Cancer on the Map" project. The women who drew it described the future as sunny but it is obscured, illustrated by the glasses. We can't see our way forward but there is hope, despite all the bad things in this world. We must hold onto the idea of acting local and thinking global, as the way forward, and remind the WSSD that even though they are acting global they should be thinking local.



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# Sustainable Development in Odessa

Barriers and progress as exemplified by the quest for safe drinking water

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The Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 has had positive influences in Odessa. NGOs and scientists have been informing the public and press about Agenda 21 and sustainable development. The mayor of Odessa signed the Aalborg Charter and Odessa has joined to the European movement of cities and towns for sustainable development. In 2001, the program "Clean water" was accepted by the town council. "MAMA – 86 Odessa" has had an active participation in its development. In 2002, two new sustainable development programs are developed: "Clean sea" and "Transportation Odessa". Also, a network of 7 cities which signed the Aalborg Charter is created, in this way cities from all over the Ukraine are now working together on implementing Agenda 21.

But there is also still a lot lacking! We have a weak involvement of NGOs and citizens in the development and realization of these programs. The term "sustainable development" is still not clear to a large part of

*The city's money intended for the protection of the environment is used for other purposes*

the public. The local authority understand the term as "steady (economic

development" mostly to the detriment of the environment. Many LA21 programs are doomed to exist only on paper!

We have several barriers to Sustainable Development in Odessa. We will have to overcome these first. First of all, we have not yet found a good way to translate the term "Sustainable development" into the Ukrainian language, so that it is simple and easy to understand. We see a constant and universal infringement of our

laws. There is an absence of economic stimulus for sustainable development. The money intended for the protection of the environment is used for other purposes. And

*Low income families should pay up to 33% of their income for water*

there is a negative influence of financial institutions (World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development...) and foreign companies on public participation in decision making in the city. This has been resulting in a loss of democratic processes.

Instead of sustainable development we have witnessed increasing poverty in Odessa. The Ukraine has, according to different ratings, an estimated 28% up to 63 % of its people living in poverty. Contrary to expectations, both the extent and the depth of poverty have increased. The polarization of the population has amplified, the poor have become even poorer and the rich even richer. Working, having a job, does not help. About 78 % of poor families have at least one adult who works. 75,5 % of poor families have children up to 18 years.

## **Basic Human Right: access to safe drinking water**

One of the reasons for the increase in poverty are the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF requires from the Ukraine an increase of 100% for payment of municipal services, leading to more poverty. This is an infringement of our constitution, which guarantees minimal social needs as well as charges linked to a guaranteed level of satisfaction. The cost of payment for water services in most countries is less than 1 % of GDP. In Ukraine we already pay 3,3% - 6 % of GDP for water services. With the new level of water pricing, Odessan citizen's with a low level of the

incomes have to pay 8 - 33 % of their income just in order to get water! A large part of the poor in Odessa are women. We have many poor women-headed households.

The Odessa water utility has been trying for some time to get credit for the necessary infrastructure improvements. Odessa's water utility "Vodokanal" has a monopoly on the water supply in Odessa. In 1998 the water-utility did a feasibility study together with the World Bank to look at the necessary improvements and their cost. The feasibility study said 64 million dollars were needed, of which 14 million to pay for foreign experts. Then the "Vodokanal", on basis of WB study, requested these 64 millions dollars credits from EBRD. The EBRD wanted a warranty from the Ukrainian government. The Ukrainian government could not give this warranty. Next, the "Vodokanal" formed a closed joint-stock company, in order to provide a warranty on the basis of its property assets. Despite the warranty, the Vodokanal again received a refusal from EBRD, they did not want to give the credit. It is strange that the EBRD, who did not want to pay 64 million, was immediately prepared to give 200 millions dollars, for the same purposes, when the French firm "Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux" asked for this.

#### **Globalization: not good for democracy**

The negotiation between local authority of Odessa with the French firm "Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux" (to privatise the "Vodokanal") were conducted in secret. MAMA-86 and other NGOs, even state structures ("Derzbud"), could not get information. This is in contradiction with the legislation of Ukraine. The mayor of Odessa was invited to Paris by Lyonnaise, and he did maybe receive other things to make him favourable to a take-over by Lyonnaise. MAMA-86 lobbied so that at least there would be an open tender procedure. This

*International financial institutions such as the EBRD have a negative influence on democracy and sustainable development*

then happened. But the tender conditions were not transparent and the time for

responding to the tender were too short, so that only Lyonnaise, who had been planning this for months, was well prepared. MAMA-86 thinks it is a bad thing that the Odessa water utilities will be privatized and the

concession given to Lyonnaise. Even though the local Vodokanal is a old-fashioned, badly-functioning, non-transparent company, it is better for Odessa's citizen's if the utilities remain in local hands. In this way the citizens can have an influence on them, and slowly lobby them through reforms. They can have no influence on a French boss with headquarters in Paris.

Conclusion: international financial institutions as EBRD and World Bank do not promote sustainable development of the local economy in Ukraine

#### **Positive local developments; Women at Work !**

Although MAMA-86 has not been able (yet?) to lobby successfully against the water multinationals, MAMA-86 has been successful in other cases. MAMA-86 developed from a group of women who had been lobbying together for stopping floodings in their neighbourhood; the Luzanovka district. Luzanovka is a residential area (12000 inhabitants) which was regularly flooded with polluted water from the nearby oil-tanker-washing station. MAMA-86-Odessa Organized 80 inhabitants of Luzanovka to submit a claim to bring the local authority to court because of this. It was the first time ever that local citizen's dared to go against the authorities of Odessa!!

*We prefer trying to improve a badly functioning local water utility than be powerless against a water-multinational*

MAMA-86-Odessa organised 2 general meetings with 6000 inhabitants of the Luzanovka district (half the population of the district). MAMA-86 encouraged the inhabitants that they should start to make use of their right to public participation in local policy making. MAMA-86 then collected 10.000 signatures which were presented to the mayor of Odessa. MAMA-86 held 4 protest actions – with colourful banners - near the Cabinet of Ministers and the Supreme Council of Ukraine. The protest actions got wide press coverage. The Luzanovka women then took part in the development of a plan for a solution for the floodings. They even got the Odessa City Council to accept this solution: the public participation had worked! The MAMA-86 women insisted on closing the oil-tanker-washing station by the year 2000. MAMA-86

not only organised actions locally, but also nationally. The result of their lobbying activities at a national level was that 7 millions dollars were given from the fund for "Extreme situations" to construct a new sewer pump station. The new sewer station began functioning in the year 2000.

### Taking responsibility as consumers

In most CIS countries, use of natural resources is not measured, one pays a flat-fee for an unknown quantity of water or energy. Of course this does not favour efficient use. In 1999 MAMA - 86-Odessa started a pilot project to measure the level of water consumption of 4 large house blocks (1000 residents). At the entrance of the large flats MAMA-86 installed a water meter. The results of the water meters were analysed by the university. It is only because of this that we saw that the water consumption of the people living in these flats was 2 – 3 times more than had been estimated by the water utility. Some families had a water consumption level of 1.100 liters per person per day !! The main reasons for this waste of water are leakages; leaking toilets and taps. The leaks are responsible for 57-76 % of water use. The reasons for the leakages is the malfunction of fixtures. The university researchers also found out that there was too much pressure on the water pipes. And finally, people in Odessa have no awareness about the need to save water. They will leave the tap open for entire time they brush their teeth, or while they are washing dishes or vegetables. MAMA-86 wanted to use these results to start a campaign on efficient water use.

However, MAMA-86 first had to deal with the disastrous reaction of the water utility. Based on the pilot calculation of MAMA-86 the water utility (Vodokanal) began to charge citizen's surcharges for the "over-consumption" of water (disregarding the leaks in its OWN pipes). These charges on water suddenly had the cost of water increase to 33 % of the household budget of some of the lower income families in the flats. MAMA - 86-Odessa then started a case against the water utilities to prove the illegality of these charges. MAMA - 86-Odessa helped the inhabitants to get a reimbursement of 1000 dollars of the illegally charged payments, and money continues to be paid back by the Vodokanal. Of course the Vodokanal did nothing to improve things

from its side: it did not remove the superfluous pressure on pipes, it did not install water meters in apartments of consumers so that the individual use and not the communal use per flat could be measured.

MAMA- 86-Odessa now started a new project to get better legislation. It published a statement with recommendations: "Rules, regulating installation and operation of room water meters". The Odessa Urban Executive Committee took over and ratified these Rules on February 4, 2002. Thanks to this work of MAMA-86 the cost of installation of water meters in apartments is reduced and the procedure of registration for installation is simplified. In this way, our small group of women protects the rights of Odessa's 1 million water consumers.

Getting direct contracts between the utilities and the consumers to warranty a good quality of drinking water is the next step which we as NGO are going to tackle.



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