

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN  
ON THE ROAD TO  
DEVELOPMENT, EQUALITY  
AND PEACE

BEIJING CONFERENCE  
PLAN OF ACTION



A NATION  
WILL NEVER  
BE FREE  
UNTIL  
WOMEN  
ARE  
FREE

**"Women's liberation and gender equality have become an irreversible trend in our world. Governments will join hands all over the world to achieve this liberation."**

*(Peng Payun, Chair Chinese Organising Committee for The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing)*

# CONTENTS

## SUMMARY REPORT ON FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, BEIJING

### INTRODUCTION TO REPORT

1. THE PERSISTENT AND INCREASING BURDEN OF POVERTY ON WOMEN .....
2. UNEQUAL ACCESS TO AND INADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES .....
3. INEQUALITIES IN ACCESS TO HEALTH AND RELATED SERVICES .....
4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN .....
5. ADVANCE PEACE, PROMOTE CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND REDUCE THE IMPACT OF ARMED AND OTHER CONFLICT ON WOMEN .....
6. INEQUALITY IN WOMEN'S ACCESS TO, AND PARTICIPATION IN, ECONOMIC STRUCTURES AND POLICIES, AND THE PRODUCTIVE PROCESS ITSELF .....
7. INEQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN THE SHARING OF POWER AND DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS .....
8. INSUFFICIENT MECHANISMS AT ALL LEVELS TO PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN .....
9. LACK OF AWARENESS AND COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN .....
10. INEQUALITY IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ALL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS, ESPECIALLY THE MEDIA, AND THE MEDIA'S FAILURE TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....
11. WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES AND SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT .....
12. PERSISTENT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST, AND THE VIOLATION OF, THE RIGHTS OF THE GIRL-CHILD .....

# INTRODUCTION TO REPORT ON FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

BEIJING, CHINA



Part of the South African delegation at the Beijing Conference

## What was the Beijing Womens' Conference?

The Beijing Conference on Women was held by the United Nations in September 1995 as part of a series of social development conferences to look at the issues of Development, Equality and Peace. This was the largest conference ever held by the UN, 180 countries took part, and the first official attendance by South Africa at an international women's conference.

An event called the NGO Forum of Women took place at the same time as the official UN Conference. The UN wished to ensure that there was a process of consensus building between governments, NGOs and individuals. The main aim of the Conference was to address the key issues which are fundamental obstacles to the advancement of women.

## Beijing built on previous UN Conferences

In recent years the UN has held conferences on the environment, children, population, and social development.

The aim behind these international conferences is to shift the way governments approach development. These conferences look at the centrality of empowerment and human development in all social issues. Issues like combating poverty, job creation and sustainable economic development, integration of the marginalised, and children and adult human rights, are dealt with at all these conferences.

All of these conferences dealt with the status of the girl-child/women in some way. Mechanisms for governments and NGOs to take these issues forward at national and international levels are also built into conference procedures.



Deputy Minister of Welfare, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, who headed the South African Preparatory Committee to Beijing.

The UN has also held previous conferences on the status of women in the world in order to recommend strategies to speed up women's equal participation in the development process. The Beijing Conference was the fourth in a series of conferences on women. The first three were held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), and Nairobi (1985). Each Conference built on the previous one, adding and developing ways of bringing women into the mainstream.

## Beijing as a platform for action

The focus at the Beijing Conference was on practical ways to implement women's full and equal participation in development, politics, decision-making, and in international co-operation to achieve world peace. Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Beijing Conference, said:

*"The challenges ahead include dealing with the problem of 500 000 women dying each year - one every minute - of pregnancy-related causes that could have been prevented through comprehensive reproduction health care. Girls are sold into prostitution. The majority of women, particularly rural women, continue to live as 'beavers of wood and drawers of water' in a world characterised by science and technology.*

*Discrimination against women persists. Part of the reason for this is a lack of resources, political will, accountability and mechanisms for*

*bringing women into the decision-making process. The past decade has witnessed an escalation of war with women suffering most from this scourge. Even women living far from war have no peace from the injury or threat of sexual harassment, rape, abuse and trafficking. The main accomplishment of the past decade is that non-governmental organisations have broken the silence around this evil and have called governments to account. But this is just not enough. We must have action.*

*What women need is an enabling environment to overcome obstacles they experience in the political, economic, social and cultural structures of society. Governments must take the leading role in implementing the Platform for Action. Perhaps the most effective change in the long term is for governments to achieve a critical mass of female representation in decision-making bodies.*

*NGOs are essential actors. The private sector also must contribute to positive change. Resources and political will are essential to the Platform's implementation. This is the mission of Beijing: not analysis, but a deeper level of action."*

These practical ways of removing obstacles to women's advancement are carried in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Governments from all over the world put forward their ideas and settled their differences to produce a Platform of Action.

The Platform for Action is a minimum document which governments adopted at the Conference.

## Government commits itself to Platform for Action

The South African government committed itself to the adoption of all parts of this Platform. This means the government must oversee and ensure that items in the Platform will be carried forward in all its policies and actions. This report is part of the process of carrying the message into government departments, NGOs, the private sector and civil society in general.

The report is a summary of a fuller document that came out of the Beijing Conference. The full document is available from the Department of Welfare. This report puts the issues in a South African context, and then describes the main issues for implementation from the Platform for Action.

## What does the Beijing Conference mean for South Africa?

It is clear that all women in South Africa suffer from some kind of discrimination but black working class and rural women are the main sufferers. The head of South Africa's Beijing delegation, Dr Zuma, told the Beijing Conference:

*"Women in South Africa are definitely not free. The majority live in poverty and many cannot read or write. Millions do not have proper housing and no access to water, sanitation, education, or health services. They are marginalised economically with no right to own land. Under customary law they marry and live their lives as effective minors subject to the authority of a male relative."*

The huge changes in South Africa have major implications for women's lives, and open new opportunities and challenges for the goal of women's equality and empowerment. Women's empowerment is now the responsibility of the government and all its people. The 1993 Constitution and the RDP commit South Africa to building women's equality and ensuring their emancipation.

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi headed the South Africa Preparatory Committee to Beijing and believes *"that the actual value to South African women of the Beijing Conference lies in implementing the agreements reached there. The question is how Beijing meets South African women's practical needs, while getting rid of gender inequalities."*

## Mainstreaming women's development

It is important that women's concerns are brought into the mainstream. Separate government committees to deal with women will not bring women's issues to the forefront. The Platform for Action specifically deals with the strategic objective of creating national machineries, and other governmental structures, to promote the advancement of women. It says governments need to "ensure that responsibility for the advancement of women is vested in the highest possible level of government; in many cases, this could be at the level of a Cabinet minister."

Government departments at national, provincial and local level in areas such as finance, land, housing, health, justice, police and security, trade and industry, water and forestry, public service, education and health and welfare need to take up this Platform of Action in a very concrete way.

## Departments need to:

- develop policy on women's equality and empowerment if this has not happened yet, and make sure that items in the Beijing Platform for Action have been integrated into policy making;
- put forward legislation that must be amended, or new legislation that must be enacted: In order to do this government departments must become familiar with both the Beijing Platform for Action and with CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). CEDAW is a 1979 United Nations convention that the South African government will ratify by the end of the year which is in essence a 'bill of rights' for women. Departments need to look at possible legislation in the light of CEDAW to satisfy the terms of the convention;
- set in motion programmes in all areas of departmental activity to ensure the practical implementation of women's empowerment.

The Beijing Platform for Action is a minimum document. The important detailed strategies and mechanisms must be put in place in South Africa. The United Nations will hold future conferences with the theme of Development, Equality and Peace. We need to go to these conferences with reports of real progress and show the world that we take women's development and empowerment seriously. Dr Zuma told the Beijing Conference:

*"My government pledges itself to the full implementation of this programme as a major step to achieve the non-sexist South Africa which is our ultimate goal."*

Let us fulfil this promise.



Dr Nkosazana Zuma, the head of South Africa's Beijing delegation

# 1.

## *The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women*

### Introduction

#### WOMEN AND POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

All over the world, including South Africa, there has been an increase in women's poverty in the last decade.

Poverty shows in various different ways: lack of income and productive resources to ensure a decent living, hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or no access to education and other basic services, homelessness or inadequate housing, unsafe environments, and social discrimination and exclusion. Women's poverty is also characterised by lack of participation in decision-making in all walks of life.

Women's poverty is increased by the rigidity of gender roles in our society. This leads to women's limited access to power, education and training and productive resources. The failure to mainstream a gender perspective in economic planning, coupled with the discrimination of the apartheid regime, has further impoverished women. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities.

Poverty affects men and women but because of gender divisions of labour, and women's responsibilities for the household welfare, women bear a greater burden. Women have to manage household needs under conditions of increasing scarcity.

Many households in South Africa are headed by women only — at least 35% of households are headed by women alone. Women-headed households are also much poorer than the average household — the per capita income for women-headed households in 1993 was R243, compared with R468 for other households. Over half of the unemployed are women.

Many women live in the impoverished rural areas, and the fact that women are both farmers as well as mothers and homemakers puts extra burdens on them. South Africa produces 60% of Africa's electricity but two-thirds of the population do not have household electricity. Only 13% of rural households have water in the home, 55% rely on communal water, and 32% have no formal access to water. Women in rural areas spend hours of their time and labour collecting wood and carrying water.

# *What the Beijing platform for action says*

## Macro-economic and Development Strategies to deal with women's poverty

### *Government to*

- Target the allocation of public expenditure to promote women's economic opportunities.
- Formulate and implement policies and programmes to enhance the access of women agricultural producers to financial, technical, extension and marketing services, and other appropriate infrastructure, and provide access to and control of land, in order to increase women's incomes. Encourage the development of producer-owned, market-based co-operatives.
- Develop policies to promote the equitable distribution of food within the household.
- Strengthen state and community-based support systems in order to help women living in poverty.
- Adopt specific measures to address women's unemployment.
- Formulate and implement policies in support of female-headed households.
- Develop and implement anti-poverty programmes through the use of appropriate pricing and distribution mechanisms.
- Enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land by removing obstacles to access.
- Ensure access to free or low-cost legal services, including legal literacy, especially designed to reach women living in poverty.
- Promote policies and programmes for women to eradicate poverty with their full participation, and respect for cultural diversity, so they have the possibility of choice in the development process.

## Financial and development institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund:

- Increase and allocate resources to eliminate the poverty of women and their families.
- Strengthen analytical capacity in order to strengthen gender perspectives and integrate them into the design and implementation of lending programmes.
- Help to create an enabling environment that allows women to build sustainable livelihoods.



*NGOs and women's organisations to*

- Mobilise to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes directed at disadvantaged women. Government should not abrogate responsibility by shifting social responsibility to NGOs and women.
- Develop in co-operation with Government and the private sectors a comprehensive national strategy for improving health, education, social services so that girls and women living in poverty have full access to such services. Funding must be sought to secure access to these services with a gender perspective in order to reach remote rural areas not covered by government institutions.
- Develop in co-operation with Government, employers and other social partners education, training and re-training policies to ensure women gain a wide range of skills to meet new demands and increase access to education in science and technology, mathematics, engineering, information technology, high technology and management training.
- Mobilise to protect women's human rights to equal access and control of land and credit regardless of customary laws, traditions and practices related to inheritance and marriage.

## Laws and administrative practices to ensure women's access to economic resources

*Government to*

- Ensure access to free or low-cost legal services which reach women in poverty
- Enact legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources including right to inheritance, ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies.

## Access to savings mechanisms, financial institutions and credit

*Government to*

- Enhance women's access particularly in remote areas to financial services, through strengthening links between banks and intermediary lending organisations. Give legislative support, and training for women, to mobilise capital for intermediary institutions and in order to increase the availability of credit for women.
- Encourage links between financial institutions and NGOs and support innovative lending practices.
- Support institutions that meet performance standards in reaching large numbers of low-income women through capitalisation, refinancing and institutional development support in forms that encourage self-sufficiency.

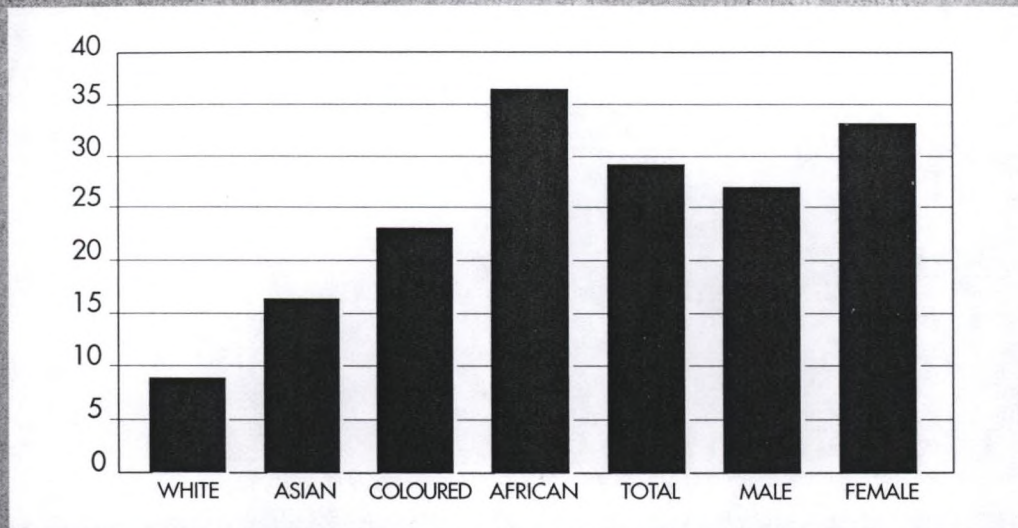
*Banks, financial institutions, private sector to*

- Use credit and saving methods that are effective in reaching women in poverty and innovative in reducing transaction costs and risk.

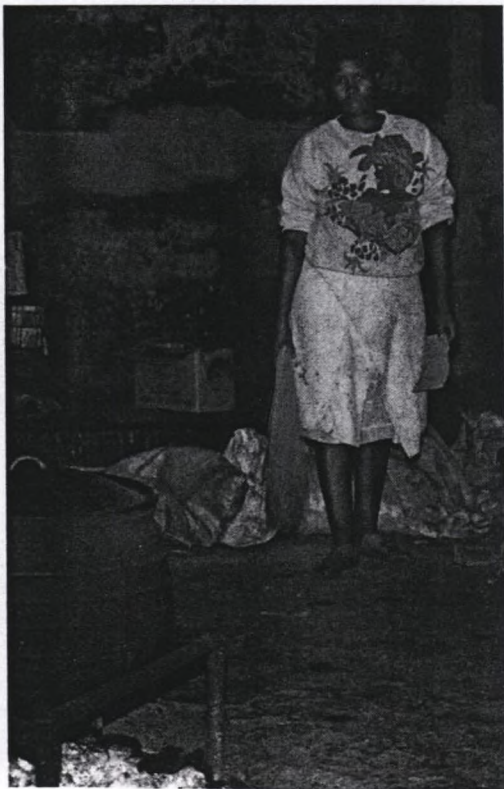


Women in impoverished rural areas have the burden of surviving on minimal resources and are both farmers and homemakers

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



- Open special windows for lending to women.
- Simplify banking practices, for example by reducing minimum deposits and other requirements for opening banking accounts.
- Ensure joint participation and ownership by women clients where possible in the decision-making of institutions providing credit.



Many households are headed by women alone. Many women-headed homes survive on half the income of other households.

*Development organisations to*

- Provide adequate funding for programmes designed to promote sustainable and productive activities for income-generation among women living in poverty.

### Research to enable women to overcome poverty

*Governments, NGOs, academic and research institutions, private sector to*

- Develop conceptual and practical methodologies to incorporate gender perspectives in all aspects of economic policy making.
- Apply the above methodologies to gender-impact analyses of all policies and programmes, and disseminate the research findings.

*Statistical organisations to*

- Collect gender and age related data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity to facilitate the assessment of economic performance from a gender perspective.
- Devise suitable statistical means to recognise and make fully visible the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy, including their contribution to unpaid areas like domestic work, and how this unpaid work contributes to their vulnerability to poverty.

## 2.

# *Unequal access to and inadequate educational facilities*

## Introduction

### WOMEN AND UNEQUAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

More than two-thirds of the world's 960 million non-literate adults are women. In South Africa non-literacy rates are estimated at 50% in rural areas where the majority of women are located, and 38% in urban areas.

Discrimination in girls' and women's access to education is a result of early marriages, pregnancies, inadequate materials and gender-based teaching, and sexual harassment.

Fewer girls get to school, and if they do, their scholastic performance is lower and their drop-out rate from school is higher than with boys. Girls undertake heavy domestic duties at an early age and are expected to manage domestic and educational responsibilities.

Lack of gender awareness by educators strengthens gender inequalities and undermines girls' self-esteem. Lack of sexual and reproductive education has a profound impact on girls' and young women's lives.

Curricula teaching materials in South Africa are gender and race biased. Science curricula are particularly gender-biased. Science text-books do not relate to women and girls' daily lives and girls often do not get a basic education in mathematics. In 1990 of 27 192 apprenticeships in the building, electricity-generation, electrical-contracting, furniture, local authorities, motor, railways, sugar, mining and metal industries, only 61 were women!

Educational materials reinforce traditional female and male roles that deny women opportunities for equal partnership in society.

# *What the Beijing platform for action says*

## Ensure women's equal access to education

### *Government to*

- Take action by the year 2000 to ensure basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80% of primary school-age children; closing the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005.
- Eliminate gender disparities in access to all areas of tertiary education by ensuring that women have equal access to career development, training, and scholarship.
- Create a gender sensitive educational system and full participation by women in educational administration, policy and decision-making.
- Provide, together with other sectors of society, young women with academic and technical training, career planning, leadership, social skills and work experience to take part fully in society.



Government needs to take measures to develop training programmes and materials for educators that raise awareness of the status, roles and contribution of women and men in society

Government must reduce the female illiteracy rate as a priority with emphasis on rural women who are at least 50% non-literate

- Increase enrolment and retention rates of girls by allocating funding and by enlisting the support of parents and the community, as well as through campaigns, flexible school schedules, incentives, scholarships, and other means to minimise the cost of girl's education to their families.
- Promote an educational setting that eliminates all barriers that impede the schooling of pregnant adolescents and young mothers including affordable and accessible childcare facilities, and parental education to encourage those who are responsible for the care of their children and siblings during their school years, to complete their schooling.
- Make available gender-sensitive professional school counselling and career education programmes to encourage girls to pursue academic and technical curricula in order to widen their future career opportunities.



## Eradicate illiteracy among women

*Government, NGOs, donors to*

- Reduce the female illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on rural women, migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and women with disabilities.
- Eliminate the gender gap in basic and functional literacy.
- Encourage adult and family engagement in promoting total literacy for all people.

## Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education

*Government, employers, workers and trade unions, NGOs, women and youth organisations, educational institutions to*

- Develop and implement training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and women re-entering the labour market, to provide skills to improve their employment opportunities.
- Provide information to women and girls on benefits of vocational training, science and technology training and continuing education.
- Diversify vocational and technical training to improve access and retention of women in such fields as science, maths, engineering, environmental sciences and technology, information technology, high technology and management training.

- Promote women's central role in food and agricultural research extension and education programmes.
- Encourage a supportive training environment and take positive measures to promote training for the full range of occupational choices of non-traditional careers for men and women, including the development of multidisciplinary courses for science and maths teachers to sensitize them to the relevance of science and technology to women's lives.
- Develop curricula and teaching materials to ensure women participate in technical and scientific areas.
- Develop policies and programmes to encourage women to participate in all apprenticeship programmes.
- Increase training in technical, managerial, agricultural extension and marketing areas for women in agriculture, fisheries, industry and business, arts and crafts to increase income generating opportunities and women's participation in economic decision-making.
- Ensure access to quality education and training at all levels for adult women with little or no education.

## Develop non-discriminatory education and training

*Government, educational authorities, educational and academic institutions to*

- Develop curricula, text-books and teaching aids free of gender stereotypes for all levels of education, including teacher training, in association with publishers, teachers, public authorities and parents associations.
- Develop training programmes and materials for educators that raise awareness about the status, role and contribution of women and men in society, and develop educational modules to ensure that boys have the skills to take care of their own domestic needs, responsibility for the household and care of dependents.
- Develop training programmes and materials for educators that raise awareness of their role in the educational process and provide effective strategies for gender-sensitive teaching.
- Ensure women educators have the same opportunities and equal status with male educators.
- Introduce and promote training in peaceful conflict resolution.
- Take measures to increase the proportion of women in educational policy and decision-making, especially women educators, at all levels of education as well as in the male-dominated scientific and technical fields.
- Support and develop gender studies and research at all levels of education especially at the post-graduate levels.
- Develop leadership training opportunities for women.
- Develop appropriate education and information programmes that make the public, particularly parents, aware of the importance of non-discriminatory education for children and the equal sharing of responsibilities for boys and girls.

- Support the advancement of women in all areas of sport and physical activity including coaching, training, and administration.
- Acknowledge and respect the artistic, spiritual and cultural activities of women.
- Promote education and training and information programmes for rural and farming women through the mass media for example: radio programmes, cassettes and mobile units.

## Allocate sufficient resources for educational reforms and monitor implementation

### *Government*

- Mobilise additional funds to assist in meeting the costs of education for girls and women.
- Provide funding for social programmes in maths, science, and computer technology for girls and women.

### *Development institutions, banks, donors*

- Increase funding for education and training needs for girls and women.

We need to ensure that women get vocational and technical training to improve access to such fields as science, maths, communications and information technology, environmental science technology, high technology and management training



### 3.

## *Inequalities in access to health and related services*

### Introduction

#### WOMEN AND HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

South African women's experience of poverty, violence, negative attitudes to them, the lack of power over their sexual and reproductive lives, and the lack of influence in decision-making, all affect their mental and physical health. In poor homes girls and women often get a smaller share of the food, and women's double load of work in the domestic and employment areas also impacts negatively on their health.

There is a severe lack of counselling and reproductive health information for young girls, and combined with the trend for early sexual experience, this increases the risk of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The rapid increase in the rate of HIV is highest amongst young women. Early child-bearing also impedes the educational, economic and social opportunities of young women.

Women often do not have control over their sexual and reproductive lives and are subject to coercion, and violence and so do not have the power to insist on safe sex. Men are not educated to respect women's choices and to share responsibility with women on matters of sexuality and reproduction. The ability of women to control their own fertility forms an important basis for their enjoyment of other rights.

In South Africa the quality of women's healthcare is often poor. Women are treated with little respect, are not guaranteed privacy or confidentiality in their health treatment, and seldom receive full information about the options and services available to them. Studies in the Transkei show that 66% of women give birth at home because of lack of access to services.

In some cases women are forced to use contraception against their will. In rural areas women are not given any choice in contraception besides Depo Provera and often nurses administer this contraceptive injection routinely when women give birth.

An estimated 200 000 to 300 000 illegal abortions occur each year which increases the national mortality rates and the incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and psychological trauma.



Statistical data around women's health are not systematically collected. Little is known about how social and economic factors affect the health of women of all ages, or about the provision and use of health services by girls and women. Medical research is often based on men, and statistics are not gender specific. This means there is no appropriate adjustment in treatment and medication on the basis of gender differences.

Men, like women, are also not given sufficient information on areas like reproductive choice and parenthood. Parenthood training programmes need to be developed to inform men and women about childbirth and child care. Many existing programmes do not involve fathers and young men.



We need to promote women-sensitive health research and make information available to women so they can make informed decisions

## *What the Beijing platform for action says*

Increase women's access to appropriate free or affordable and good quality health care and related information services throughout their life

### *Government, NGOs, employers*

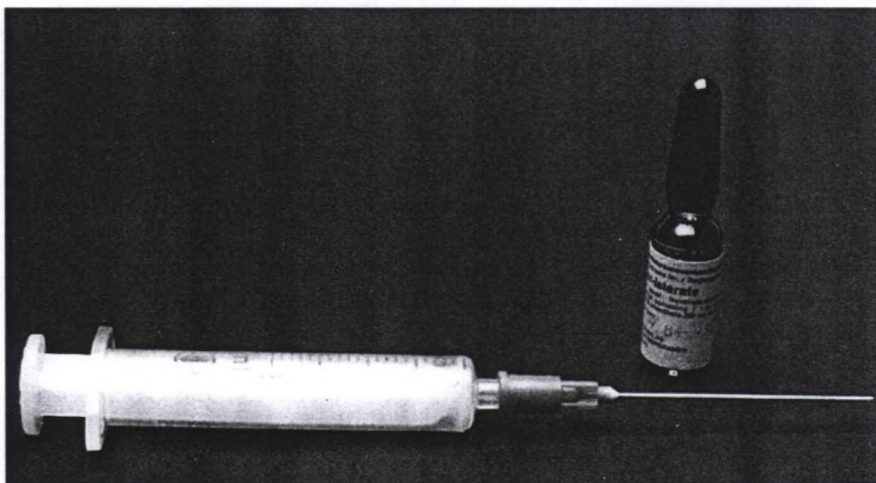
- Reaffirm the right to high standards of physical and mental health for women and girls, for example, review existing legislation, and policies to reflect a commitment to women's health.
- Design and implement with women and community-based organisations, gender-sensitive health programmes, including de-centralised health services that address the needs of women and take into account their multiple roles and responsibilities, demands on their time, the special needs of rural women and women with disabilities, and provide the widest possible access to a broad range of health-care services.
- Provide accessible primary health care services of high quality including sexual and reproductive health care, as well as family planning information and services, giving particular attention to maternal and obstetric care.
- Redesign health information services and training for health-workers so they are gender sensitive and reflect the users' perspectives with regard to interpersonal communication skills and the users' right to privacy and confidentiality.
- Take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful, medically unnecessary or coercive medical practices, as well as inappropriate or over-medication of women. All women should be fully informed of their options including benefits and side-effects.
- Reorient health services, particularly primary health care, in order to ensure access to quality health services for women and girls to reduce sickness and maternal morbidity, and to achieve the agreed upon goal of reducing maternal mortality by at least 50% of the 1990 levels by the year 2000 and a further one half by the year 2015. Make reproductive health care accessible as soon as possible.
- Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development states:  
*"In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. All Governments and NGOs are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health to deal with the impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family planning services. Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have access to reliable information and compassionate counselling."*

- Develop information, programmes, and services to assist women to understand and adapt to changes associated with ageing and to deal with the health needs of older women.
- Formulate policies and programmes and enact legislation to eliminate environmental and occupational health hazards associated with work in the home, and in the workplace with special attention to pregnant and lactating women.
- Integrate mental health services into primary health care systems and develop supportive programmes, and train health workers to recognise and care for girls and women of all ages who have experienced any form of violence especially domestic violence, sexual abuse or other abuse resulting from armed and non-armed conflict.
- Promote the benefits of breastfeeding and enable mothers to breastfeed by providing legal, economic, practical and emotional support.
- Establish mechanisms to involve NGOs and women's organisations working towards women's health in government policy-making and programme design.

## Strengthen preventive programmes that address threats to women's health

*Government with NGOs, mass media, private sector to*

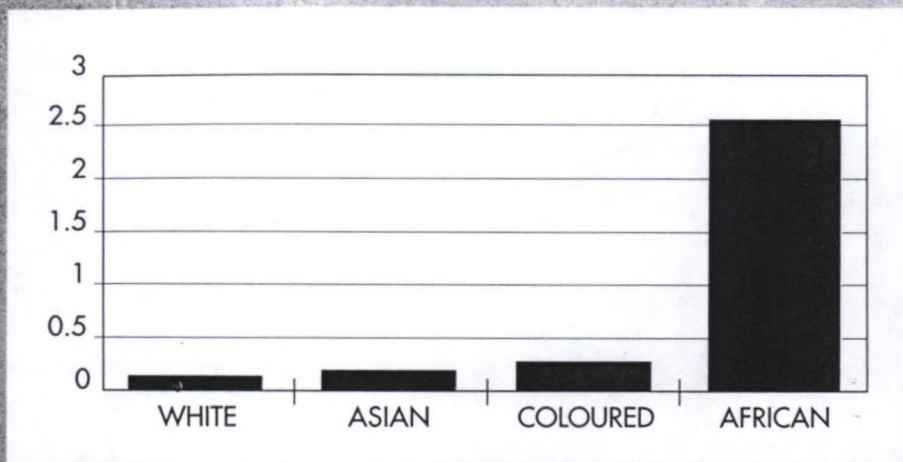
- Promote educational programmes that enable women to acquire knowledge, develop self-esteem, and take responsibility for their own health. Educate men regarding the importance of women's health and have a special focus on programmes that eliminate harmful attitudes and practices including female genital mutilation and son preference.
- Adopt regulations to ensure that the working conditions, including remuneration and promotion of women at all levels of the health system, are non-discriminatory.
- Develop media and implement media campaigns, and information and educational programmes, to inform women and girls of the health and related risks of substance abuse, and promote rehabilitation and recovery.
- Devise programmes for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis, a condition that affects mainly women.
- Establish programmes and services including media campaigns that address the prevention, early detection, and treatment of breast, cervical and other cancers of the reproductive system.



Often, especially in rural areas, women are not given any choice of contraception besides the injection of Depo Provera often administered when women give birth

Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR) per 1000 births

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES



- Ensure that medical school curricula and other health-care training include mandatory courses on women's health.
- Adopt specific measures to protect women, youth and children from any abuse - sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence - including the formulation and enforcement of laws, and provide legal protection, medical and other assistance.

Undertake gender-sensitive multi-sectoral initiatives that deal with sexually transmitted diseases, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other sexual and reproductive health issues.

**Government, donors, NGOs to**

- Ensure the involvement of women in all decision-making related to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Recognise the extent of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, taking into account particularly its impact on women, with a view to ensuring that infected women do not suffer discrimination.
- Facilitate the development of community strategies that will protect women from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Strengthen national capacity to create gender-sensitive policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, including the provision of resources to women who are the principal caregivers or economic support for those infected with HIV/AIDS, and the sufferers' dependents particularly children and older people.
- Give women information about HIV/AIDS and pregnancy implications for the baby, including breast-feeding.

- Design programmes for men of all ages aimed at giving information on safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour, including voluntary methods for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Support programmes that acknowledge the high risk amongst women of contracting HIV from substance abuse and unprotected sexual behaviour.
- Support and carry out research on strategies empowering women to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, and on care and treatment, ensuring women's involvement in this research.

## Promote research and information dissemination on women's health

*Government, health professions, research institutions, NGOs, donors, pharmaceutical industries, mass media to*

- Promote gender-sensitive and women-centred health research, treatment and technology and link traditional knowledge with modern medicine, making information available to women to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions.
- Increase the number of women in leadership positions in the health professions, including researchers and scientists.
- Increase financial support for research into women's health especially with respect to chronic and non-communicable diseases, particularly cardio-vascular diseases, cancers, reproductive tract infections and injuries, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, domestic violence, occupational health, disabilities, environmentally related health problems, tropical diseases, and health aspects of ageing.
- Inform women of how hormonal contraception, abortion and promiscuity, increase the risk of cancers and infections of the reproductive tract.
- Support research on how gender-based inequalities affect women's health.
- Examine patterns of provision of health services to women and use of these services by women.
- Provide support for research on safe, affordable, effective, and acceptable methods for the regulation of fertility, methods to protect against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and simple inexpensive methods of diagnosing such diseases. This research must be guided from the perspective of gender and women.



Government must reorient health services to reduce maternal mortality by at least 50% of the 1990 levels by the year 2 000

- Research to understand and address the consequences of induced abortion, including its effects on fertility, reproductive and mental health, and treatment of complications and post-abortion care.
- Acknowledge, research and encourage traditional healthcare as practised by women and incorporate the value of traditional healthcare in the health services.
- Develop mechanisms to evaluate and disseminate research findings to researchers, policy-makers, health professionals and women's groups.

## Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health

*Government, NGOs, women's and youth organisations to*

- Increase funding for basic healthcare and give special attention to the reproductive and sexual health of girls and women with priority to health programmes for rural women and women in poor urban areas.
- Increase funding to community health centres and community-based programmes and services that address women's specific health needs.
- Develop local health services promoting gender-sensitive community participation and self-care and preventative health programmes.



The quality of women's healthcare is often poor with inappropriate services and a lack of easy access to health services

## 4.

# *Violence against women*

## Introduction

### **Women and violence in South Africa**

Women and girls in South Africa are subject to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture.

Violence against women takes place in the family in the form of battering, sexual abuse of girl children, and marital and non-spousal rape.

Violence against women also takes place in the community in the form of rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment at work and in educational and other institutions, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.

The incidence of rape and battery in South Africa is alarmingly high. The police estimate that only 2.8% of rapes are reported in South Africa. Based on this, a total of about 966 000 rapes were committed in 1993. It is estimated that a female person is raped almost every minute. Rape and sexual abuse are not included in SAPS' definition of serious crime.

Violence against the women is cited in half of all divorce actions brought by women. The figure is definitely higher as many women do not want the violence in their relationship made public. There are no state-funded shelters for abused women and the state provides no funding for shelters run by private organisations. Women in abusive relationships are often unable to leave because they have no shelter and/or means to support themselves or their children.

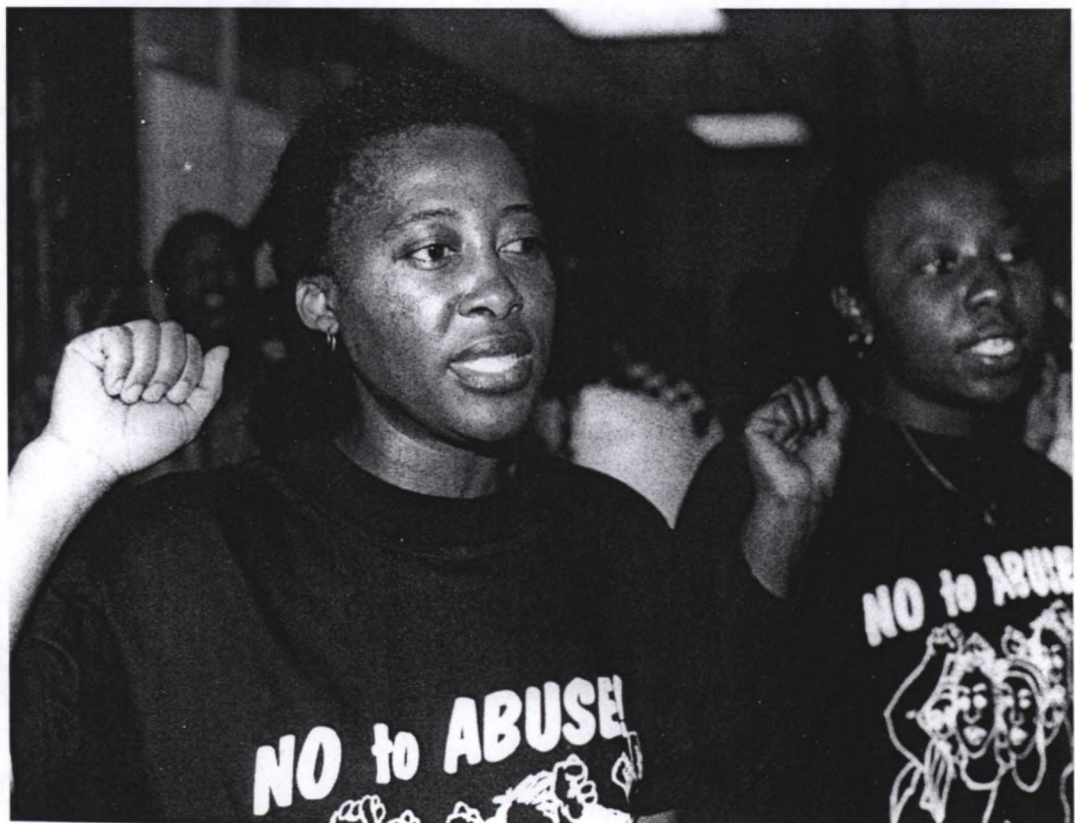
Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate position by South African men. Currently community representation in Community Police Forums is biased towards men. Increased involvement by women would mean issues of importance to women would be dealt with urgently.

Violence against women is made worse by social pressures, and lack of social services. Social factors like the shame of denouncing acts that men have committed against women and girls like rape and battery; the lack of access to legal information, aid or protection; the lack of laws that prohibit violence against women; inadequate efforts by the authorities to promote awareness of the abuse of women's human rights and to enforce existing laws adequately; and the lack of education and use of the media to address the causes and consequences of violence, all keep violence against women alive and well.

Images of women in the South African media that depict women and girls as sex objects, and pornographic images that depict rape and sexual slavery are factors contributing to violence against women.

The absence of adequate gender related research, data, and statistics on the incidence of violence against women, makes it difficult to put appropriate programmes in place and to monitor resulting changes.

Women and girls are subject to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across the lines of income, class and culture





# *What the Beijing platform for action says*

## Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

### *Government to*

- Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid government obligations with respect to the elimination of violence against women.
- Prevent, investigate, and punish acts of violence against women.
- Adopt and review legislation to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, emphasising the prevention of violence and the prosecution of offenders. Take measures to ensure the protection of women subjected to violence, including compensation and indemnification and healing of victims, and rehabilitation of perpetrators.
- Promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes related to violence against women. Support and implement programmes aimed at increasing the knowledge and understanding of the causes, consequences and mechanisms of violence against women among those responsible for implementing policies, such as law enforcement officers, police personnel, judicial, medical personnel and social workers, and those who deal with minority, migration, and refugee issues.
- Provide women who are subjected to violence with access to mechanisms of justice with just and effective remedies from the harm they have suffered, and inform women of their rights in seeking redress through these mechanisms.
- Formulate and implement plans of action to eliminate violence against women.
- Adopt appropriate measures, particularly in the field of education, to change social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices, and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women.
- Create institutional mechanisms so that girls and women can report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment.
- Ensure that women with disabilities have access to information and services in the field of violence against women.
- Create, fund, and develop the training of judicial, legal, medical, social, educational, police and immigration personnel to sensitise them to the nature of violence and threats of violence against women to ensure fair treatment of female victims.
- Allocate adequate funding within the government budget and mobilise community resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women.

### *Government, local government, community organisations, NGOs, educational institutions, private sector, mass media to*

- Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subject to violence, as well as medical, psychological, and other counselling services, and free or low-cost legal aid, and assistance with finding a means of subsistence.

- Establish appropriate language and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls who are victims of violence.
- Recognise the vulnerability to violence of migrant women whose legal status in the country depends on employers who may exploit the situation.
- Organise, support, and fund community-based organisation, education and training campaigns to raise awareness about violence against women as a violation of women's human rights, and mobilise local communities to use gender-sensitive traditional and innovative methods of conflict resolution.
- Support the fundamental role of intermediate institutions, such as primary healthcare centres, family-planning centres in dealing with the issue of violence against women and girls.
- Organise and fund information campaigns, educational and training programmes for girls, boys, women and men, about the personal and social harm of violence on the family, the community and society and how to communicate without violence.
- Disseminate information on the assistance available to women and families who are victims of violence.
- Provide counselling for the perpetrators of violence and promote research to further efforts around rehabilitation.
- Raise awareness of the responsibility of the media to promote non-stereotyped images of women and men, and raise the important role of the media in informing and educating people about violence against women and to stimulate public debate on the issue.

*Governments, employers, trade unions, community and youth organisations, NGOs to*

- Develop programmes and procedures to eliminate sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in all educational institutions, workplaces and elsewhere.
- Develop counselling, healing and support programmes for girls, and young women who have been involved in abusive relationships.

## Study the causes of violence against women and effective methods of prevention strategies

*Government, research institutions, women and youth organisations, NGOs to*

- Promote research, especially concerning domestic violence, on the prevalence of different forms of violence, and the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women.
- Disseminate findings of research widely.
- Support research on the impact of violence such as rape on women and the girl-child.
- Encourage the media to examine the impact of gender role stereotypes, including of commercial advertisements, which foster gender-based violence and inequalities with a view to eliminating these negative images.

## Adopt special measures to eliminate trafficking in women and to assist female victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking

*Government to*

- Strengthen legislation to provide better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing perpetrators.
- Step up co-operation and action by law enforcement authorities with a view to dismantling networks in trafficking.
- Allocate resources to heal victims of trafficking including through job training, legal assistance and confidential healthcare.

## 5.

# *Advance peace, promote conflict resolution and reduce the impact of armed and other conflict on women*

## Introduction

### WOMEN AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Women in South Africa are often heads of households and the main people responsible for children and elderly people in their homes and community. This makes any conflict in their community and the society as a whole a huge stress in their lives.

Women have battled to keep stable and safe homes in the face of increasing conflict in their communities in the apartheid years, and some communities, such as rural communities in Natal, are still facing increasing conflict. Since the mid-eighties South Africa has been engaged in a civil war where it is estimated that between 1986 and 1993 about 12 000 people died and thousands fled their homes. Family and community life has been severely affected by these displacements.

Conflict in neighbouring countries has also spilled over into South Africa. There are an estimated 250 000 refugees in South Africa. The majority are women and children.

Various NGOs have given assistance to people displaced by conflict but they receive little or no government support.

The role of women is crucial in times of conflict as they often work to preserve social order in the midst of conflict. Women make important but often unrecognised contributions as peace educators both in family and in their communities.

Despite this role as peace educators women are seldom represented in peace-making and conflict resolution forums in their communities and in South Africa in general. If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace they must be empowered politically, and represented at all levels on conflict and peace resolution bodies.

# *What the Beijing platform for action says*

Increase and strengthen the participation of women in conflict resolution and decision-making and leadership in peace and security activities, and protect women in armed and other conflict

*Government to*

- Strengthen and increase the role of women at decision-making levels which influence policy around peace-keeping matters and in all stages of peace mediation and negotiations.
- Strengthen the role of women in processes of national reconciliation and reconstruction after conflict.

Reduce military expenditure and control the availability of armaments

*Government to*

- Hasten, subject to national security, the conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes.
- Undertake to explore new ways of generating public and private financial resources through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditure and the allocation of additional funds this releases for social and economic development.
- Combat illicit arms trafficking, violence, crime, trafficking in illicit drugs, and trafficking in women and children.

Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations

*Government to*

- Uphold and reinforce standards set out by international humanitarian law and international human rights instruments to prevent all acts of violence against women in situations of armed and other acts of conflict.
- Take action to investigate and punish members of the police, security, armed forces, and others who perpetrate acts of violence against women in situations of conflict.

Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace

*Government, NGOs to*

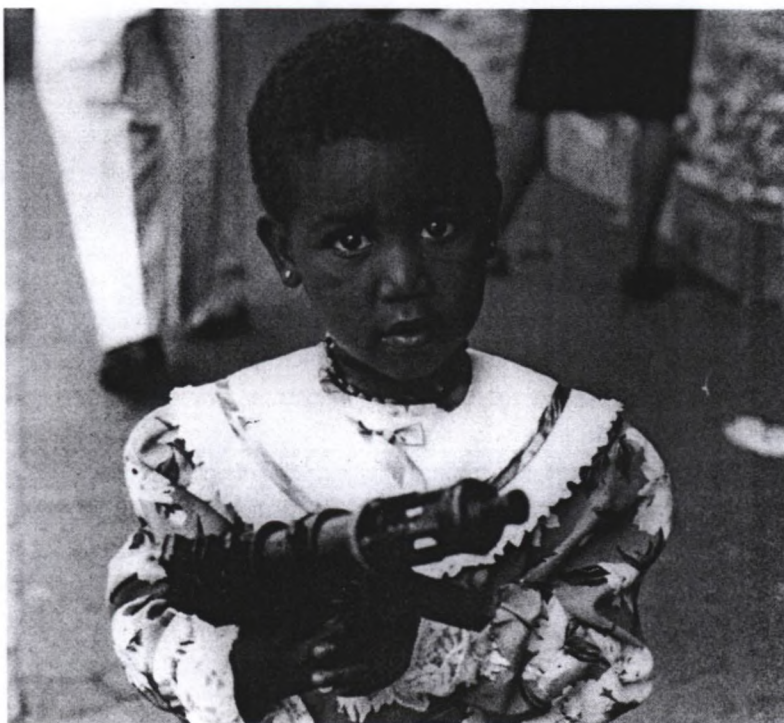
- Encourage further development of peace research, involving the participation of women, to examine the impact of armed conflict on women and children and the nature and contribution of women's participation in peace movements. Identify innovative mechanisms of containing violence and for conflict resolution for public dissemination for use by women and men.

- Develop and disseminate research on the physical, psychological, economic and social effects of armed conflict on women, particularly young women and girls, with a view to developing policies and programmes to address the consequences of conflict.
- Consider establishing educational programmes for girls and boys to foster a culture of peace, focusing on conflict resolution. Promote positive models for men and boys that encourage them to use non-violent means to settle conflicts.

## Provide protection, assistance, and training to refugee and displaced women, including internally displaced women

*Government, NGOs to*

- Ensure that women are fully involved in the planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes to provide assistance to refugees and internally displaced women. Ensure that they have direct access to services provided.
- Offer adequate protection and assistance to women and children displaced within their country and when appropriate facilitate their return or resettlement and include programmes of rehabilitation.
- Take account of specific needs of displaced women and refugees and ensure their access to water, food, shelter, and healthcare including reproductive healthcare.
- Facilitate the availability of educational material in emergency situations in appropriate languages.
- Ensure that the human rights of refugee and displaced women are protected and that refugee and displaced women are made aware of their rights and ensure the vital importance of family reunification.
- Raise public awareness of the contribution made by refugee women to their countries of resettlement, promote understanding of their human rights and their needs and abilities, and encourage mutual understanding and acceptance through educational programmes promoting cross-cultural and interracial harmony.



Government and NGOs need to establish peace educational programmes for girls and boys to foster a culture of peace and focusing on conflict resolution

**Collection Number: A3299**

**Collection Name: Hilda and Rusty BERNSTEIN Papers, 1931-2006**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* **Historical Papers Research Archive**

*Collection Funder:* **Bernstein family**

*Location:* **Johannesburg**

**©2015**

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the *Hilda and Rusty Bernstein Papers*, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.