

**Beijing + 10 Review: A Feminist Strategy for 2004-05  
A Working Paper for NGOS on How to Move Forward  
March 2004**

*(The following ideas emerged out of several activities held as part of a consultation process on the future of women's human rights sponsored by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 2003. They have been further discussed and elaborated on since then in several places by different people, and are meant to contribute toward discussions of what to do to advance women's rights in the context of the United Nations review of Beijing +10 in 2004-05. Please give us your feedback at [cwgl@igc.org](mailto:cwgl@igc.org).)*

### **WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

**In March of 2005, United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will conduct the 10 year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action (B +10) at its regular session, but no UN world women's conference will be held then. In late 2003, the Division for the Advancement of Women sent a questionnaire about implementation of the Platform to member states and a number of regional commissions are holding reviews in 2004. In addition, the UN review of the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals (MDGs) will take place in 2005. These events provide an opportunity to work pro-actively to bring women's perspectives back into the forefront of dialogue in national and global arenas.**

**Much is at stake for women in the wake of the political shifts and decisions being made globally in the post September 11<sup>th</sup> world. This includes at the United Nations which we see as an important contested space where key issues are debated and decisions made. Feminists cannot afford to have our views left out of these critical discussions on globalization, governance, poverty, peace, security and human rights. We need to ensure that the relationship between these issues and feminist concerns, such as those in the Beijing Platform is made clear.**

**Women's movements have won important spaces within the UN system and its processes, which we should utilize for this purpose. For women to not be seen as still a strong force in the B10 review would be to lose some of this ground. The future of work on women at the global level will be affected by both the Beijing and the MDG reviews as well as by other forces. Yet, in these processes, it is also vital to advance feminist perspectives and not just be defending past gains or become tied down by UN documents. Therefore we seek new forms of engagement with these and other UN processes and to utilize the B10 process as a means of engaging in critical conversations at many levels with governments, multilateral institutions and with each other.**

- At this moment, future directions of our world are at stake in terms of war, economic inequality, racial and sexual justice, the role women will play in our societies, etc. and how the globe will be “governed,” including what the role of the UN will be in this. The various forces that affect people’s lives at multiple levels need to be understood better, and in many cases held accountable. Similarly, the role of the nation state in relation to global forces needs to be considered if the Platform is to be implemented.
- Women need to find ways to be more pro-actively engaged with the UN in these debates and in other multilateral spaces like the World Trade Organization, where critical discussions are happening. The task is to continue to be involved in these contested spaces, but to do so in more strategic as well – to redefine the rules of our engagement in order to re-assert a political agenda driven by women’s movements. Women’s rights will be achieved only when we tackle the intersection of the multiple forces inhibiting gender equality. Therefore we propose to use B + 10 to examine these global forces, their relations to each other, their impact on women’s rights and what alternatives women’s movement s want to achieve.

## **HOW TO BE ENGAGED?**

**In 2004-05, rather than focusing primarily on lowest common denominator negotiations over UN documents or just defending what women gained in the 1990’s, we need to use this time/space to have diversified discussions on where women are on the UN and other global agendas and what we really want at all levels – local to global. Thus, the B10 process can be seen as a political moment that women can use to focus attention on our concerns and to build momentum for repoliticization of gender equality work and change.**

**We are opposed to any negotiated text at the global level in the review process because of the current geo-political climate. Rather, the emphasis should be on serious examination of progress on and obstacles to women’s rights in the context of the larger global forces, and on looking at the resources and interventions needed for progress.**

**We are proposing that NGOS use the matrix of interlocking forces outlined below (Fundamentalisms, Neo-liberal Globalization, Militarism, and Patriarchy) as a critical framework for analysis of progress and obstacles to implementing the Beijing Platform. In addition, our discussions cannot be confined to only those issues addressed in the Platform as the world has changed since 1995. This framework can be also be expanded upon and used for discussion of issues that are not adequately covered in the Platform such as HIV/AIDS, migration, racism, genocide, sexual rights, disability, aging, etc.**

**Local, national and regional groups will of course take up their own priorities and different activities for utilizing the public space provided by the B10 Review, according to what is happening in their areas including with the regional meetings in 2004. While women will be engaged in diverse actions, the effort to be pro-active and have publicly visible discussion of these issues within a feminist framework is aimed at infusing new creative energy into the process and will hopefully result in a sense of being part of a common endeavor. As this discussion advances in various venues, it is anticipated that more overarching messages, questions, and/or slogans like those suggested below will emerge to maximize the impact of our separate efforts and guide global activities in 2005.**

- The overall messages of 2004-05 activities need to be assertive - taking back the discourse, celebrating that women are still moving forward while identifying the problems and obstacles we face, and demanding accountability from governments and other actors, with some clear questions/points.
- While not being limited to the Questionnaire that the Division for the Advancement of Women sent to all governments on their progress in implementing the Platform, it can be utilized nationally by NGOS through producing shadow reports, holding discussions on what has been done, meeting with national governments, etc. Government and NGO shadow reports presented to the CEDAW Committee on implementing the women's convention and/or to other human rights bodies can also be helpful in this effort.
- Some activities (March 8, 2005 for example) might focus on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City in 1975 and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nairobi conference, thus giving a wider scope to discussions of where women have been and where we are going.
- Discussion of B10 should be linked with the other major global agendas like the MDGS, development, Security, Peace, Human Rights, Environment etc. Women can hold meetings discussing this and/or work with other social movement actors in outlining these connections and how they should be addressed nationally and globally in the 2004-05 review process.
- In all of these efforts, the critical framework below could be utilized leading to debates locally and at the regional meetings, in workshops that further elaborate on it, and perhaps through primers that show how the forces intersect in different contexts.
- Thus we can use the B10 review process in 2004-05 to re-politicize our agenda, have a global focus that brings women back into the picture and energizes our movement, but also links this process to ongoing work so it is not seen as diverting energy from the urgent issues at hand.

## A CRITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGEMENT

In order to move forward, feminists need to take back the discourse, re-insert patriarchy into the equation, and address the over-arching challenges posed by neo-liberal globalization, militarism, and fundamentalisms that threaten the gains made for women's rights. The framework below is intended to be a tool for analysis and strategies that assess progress and identify obstacles to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action as well as for looking beyond Beijing + 10.

- Progress on the Platform can be reviewed on the basis of these four cross-cutting forces or roadblocks and how they impact women. Analysis of these obstacles to implementation of the platform needs to take account of how they overlap and intersect as well as occasionally contradict each other as well. The Alternatives or countervailing forces are to remind us that we seek to promote a positive vision of change and not simply to make a critique. They can also be analyzed in terms of what it will take to realize them in each area of the Platform and beyond.

| <b>Obstacles</b>                           | <b>Alternatives</b>               |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Globalization and Neoliberalism            | Economic and Social Justice       |
| Fundamentalisms/Extremism                  | Open Secular and Spiritual Spaces |
| Militarism and Imperialism                 | Peace and Democracy               |
| Patriarchy and All Forms of Discrimination | Human Rights and Equality for All |

Having some common questions can be useful to looking at our agenda as well as for guiding critiques of the obstacles. Below are some of the questions one might build around that can be asked at various levels. For example, asking "where is the money?" can be addressed to governments in terms of delivery on promises made in the platform. It can also link Beijing +10 to the MDGs – which are about where development money will go. It is also a way to raise issues about where money is now going – such as to wars and corporate profits, and where it is not going, like to address human needs, to end violence against women, etc

### **Our Critique:**

Where is the money?  
Where is the justice?  
Where are the women?

### **Our Agenda:**

What have we achieved?  
What's our vision?  
How is another world possible?