

ECA-CEA
African Centre for Women (ACW)



THEME 2

ACHIEVING GOOD GOVERNANCE : THE ESSENTIAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

- 2.1. Operationalisation of a new vision for governance : the implications of Beijing and Dakar at the national level for a gender responsible State
- 2.2. Create and support mechanisms to ensure the participation and influence of women in all peace process at the national, sub-regional and regional level.
- 2.3. Post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation: An opportunity for full participation of women
- 2.4. Strategies and actions to protect women's rights and to eliminate the gap between provisions in the law and the practice
- 2.5. Women's empowerment in a decentralised system of government

*On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa, an international conference was organized under the theme “**African Women and Economic Development : Investing in Our Future**” from 28 April to 1 May 1998. It was attended by policy makers in different government sectors including heads of state and government, representatives from religious organizations, NGOs women’s groups, grassroot associations, youth, the private sector, regional subregional and intergovernmental bodies, the international community, bilateral and multilateral agencies. The aim of the conference was to engage in intensive dialogue in order to :*

- *Share experience on how public policies should equalize opportunities between women and men and redirect resources to those investments in which women’s participation would bring about the highest social returns;*
- *Draw strategic lessons from on-going efforts to implement the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action;*
- *Identify and share “good practices” in strategies and programme modalities for country level implementation of actions recommended by the conference;*
- *Forge partnerships for post-conference development and implementation of the recommended action and programmes.*

The aims of the conference were tackled through four main themes:

1. *Developing African economies : the role of women;*
2. *Achieving good governance : the essential participation of women;*
3. *African women and the information age: a new window of opportunity;*
4. *Creating opportunities for Africa’s new generation.*

While the four themes were addressed in plenaries and panel discussions, they were also broken down into a total of 22 sub-themes which were discussed in greater detail in self-selected groups. The information in this booklet summarizes the content of the issues in theme 2, the questions that guided the group discussions and the strategic actions that evolved out of the group discussions.

I hope this booklet will be useful for all those participants and organisations wishing to follow up on the proposed strategic actions.

*Joséphine Ouédraogo
Director, African Centre for Women
Economic Commission for Africa*

**SUB-THEME 2.1
OPERATIONISATION OF A NEW VISION FOR
GOVERNANCE: THE IMPLICATION OF THE
BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR
ACTION AND THE AFRICAN PLATFORM FOR
ACTION FOR A GENDER RESPONSIVE STATE**



ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. Good governance is essential if African countries are to effectively implement economic reforms and foster sustainable development. Principles of good governance require adherence to the rule of law, respect and protection of every individual's human rights, governmental accountability and transparency, consistency, political openness and tolerance, effective participation and communication, and decentralised power structures.
2. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their social, economic and political status are essential factors in the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration, as well as the attainment of sustainable development. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making provides a balance which more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Women in politics and decision-making positions contribute to redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda which reflect and address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences, and provide new perspectives on mainstream political issues. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.
3. Despite efforts towards democratisation in a number of countries in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, women continue to be largely under-represented at all levels of government. Africa's regional average for representation of women in national legislative bodies stands at 11 per cent, reflecting the little progress made in achieving the 30% target of women in decision-making positions by 1995 set by the UN Economic and Social Council. Inequality in the public arena starts with discriminatory practices and attitudes arising from the unequal power relations between women and men. The unequal division of labour and responsibilities within house-holds limits women's potential to find time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public for a.

Initiatives undertaken

4. Efforts are being made by governments and NGOs in a number of countries to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Countries like Namibia, South Africa and Uganda used their legislative reform processes to provide affirmative action in favour of women in the national constitutions. The government party in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC), has reserved 30 per cent of parliamentary seats and 50 per cent of local government seats for women. Angola, Tanzania and Zimbabwe have legislation which provides for quotas in favour of women. Although these strategies have significantly contributed to increased representation and visibility of women in the public arena in those respective countries, their effectiveness has depended very much on the commitment of governments and political parties, and on the vigilance of women politicians and activists to enforce them and guard against political manipulation to serve purely partisan interests.
5. NGOs have developed a wide range of initiatives and strategies through lobbying and advocacy, as well as training and political education programmes. In the period leading up to the general elections in Kenya, for example, a motion to support affirmative action for women was tabled in Parliament through the activism of the Kenya Women's Political Caucus. Although the motion was defeated, this initiative galvanised public debate on the low representation of women in the Kenya Parliament and other public positions of power and decision-making efforts of the NGOs to promote and strengthen women's participation in politics have also increased. A number of countries have organisations specifically focusing on women in politics. For instance, Emang Basadi in Botswana; Forum for Women and Development (FOWODE), in Uganda; and the Women's Lobby Group in Zambia. These organisations have arranged training for women in advocacy skills and campaign management. These initiatives have, however, been largely election-oriented to public office rather than other spheres in which power sharing is exercised. The training provided is also more directed at how to fit into the existing power structures rather than how to transform these structures and systems of power.

GUIDING QUESTION

The following questions were used to guide a group discussion on the issues above:

- What strategies can be adopted to initiate action to institutionalise and build capacity for good governance, transparency and accountability among women and men? How can youth (girls and boys) be assisted to utilise existing opportunities to prepare them for informed leadership?
- what strategies, mechanisms, and models can be used to build and link national women leaders with a critical mass of politically sensitised women at grassroots level and broad-based constituencies at the community level?

- The African Charter for Popular Participation provides a regional framework for good governance, propose steps and strategies to popularise the contents and implementation of this Charter.
- What active and visible policies and strategies can governments and other “actors” adopt to address structural constraints (social, legal, political) to women’s effective participation in the public arena?
- What indicators and processes can be suggested for monitoring progress in the implementation of the agreements and conclusions reached under this sub-theme?
 - What concrete mechanisms are proposed to ensure the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of this Conference?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

At the end of the discussion, the following strategic actions were recommended:

Actions for creating an enabling environment

1. Promoting affirmative action as an important strategy in bringing about transformation, and creating a critical mass of women in decision-making positions. For example, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda have used constitutional and legislative reform to provide affirmative action in favour of women.
2. Reviewing and challenging electoral processes and discriminatory practices against women. In addition, setting up a central fund for women’s political activities would encourage women to aspire for leadership positions. For example, in Zambia, a campaign fund was set up to help women candidates.
3. Supporting women public leaders by active and vibrant women’s movements, which could offer technical assistance, informations and solidarity.
4. Ensuring that the legal policy framework allows for a constitution that promotes equality between the sexes as a base for all laws and regulations.
5. Reviewing and reforming laws that relate to women’s rights and access to economic resources e.g. credit, land and inheritance.
6. Establishing family counselling centres for support services and family courts with gender-aware and competent personnel for spearheading the enactment and reform of laws.

7. Changing oppressive traditional and cultural practices.
8. Strengthening women's community-based organisations through capacity-building by governments, NOGs and communities.
9. Ratifying (without reservations) CEDAW and other international and regional instruments. NOGs, such as Women in Law and Development in Africa, to work with other NGOs and institutions to advocate ratification and implementation.
10. Enactment of a comprehensive non-discrimination act (as in the case of South Africa)

To promote alternative leadership, the strategies recommended were :

11. Acknowledging and encouraging leadership initiatives by women at all levels of society. For example, the successful role played by Ms. Ruth Perry, the former President of Liberia, who influenced the opposing factions to lay down their arms in November 1996. A new vision for leadership by African women should move from addressing social welfare issues to strategic public policy analysis.
12. Conceptualizing and alternative framework for women's leadership such as the responsible use of power, challenging corruption, opposing violence, and promoting a culture of peace. The African Women Leadership Institute (AWLI), African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) and Women in Law and Development (WILDAF), in collaboration with other regional organisations, are promoting a new vision of leadership for African women.
13. Understanding the need to transform the structures which control women's lives such as the economy, legal and religious institutions, organisations such as GADA (Nigeria), Zambia Women's Lobby, Association pour le Progrès et la Défense des Droits des Femmes Maliennes (APDF), Mali, are examples of organisations which have taken initiatives in this regard.
14. Encouraging leadership and public service based on participation, accountability, and representation. The "100 Women Group" in Nigeria enable women to organise around their strategic needs at community level and to engage power structures in a dialogue to effect change. This model also links women's basic, practical needs with opportunities for them to influence policies through decentralisation.
15. Designing and implementing programmes that will build on the organizational skills of women at community level and linking their initiatives with mainstream political action.
16. Taking action against systems, structures and individuals that brutalise women in private and public sphere.

SUB-THEME 2. 2

CREATE AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS TO ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ALL PROCESSES AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS.



ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. Many African countries have been embroiled in civil strife and armed conflicts which have led to death, disruption of life, and massive violations of human rights and displacement of people. Out of the global refugee population of some 20 million, nearly 35 per cent is in Africa. As armed and other conflicts have afflicted their societies, African women have struggled to protect and support their children and families and to preserve life and maintain some form of social order.
2. Peace and conflict resolutions are important issues for women because they bear the brunt of the effects of war and social dislocation. Women and children constitute approximately 80 per cent of the population of refugees and internally displaced persons. This confirms the magnitude of the impact of war and conflict on women, not only in terms of violence and massive violations of their human rights but also the disruption of basic social services and the diversion of the scarce resources to sustain the war effort. Among the many pernicious effects of armed conflict on women are the psychological trauma resulting from gender-specific human rights abuses and the fact of displacement and the breakdown of family structures and support mechanisms, physical injury and widespread violence against women and girls. Conflict also accounts for a tremendous increase in female-headed households, aggravating the burden of sustaining families on scarce resources and disrupted systems.
3. In spite of this and the knowledge and experience women have in conflict prevention, management and resolution at household and community levels, women have continued to be absent from national, subregional and regional forums where peace, security and policy decisions are made. The absence of women's visions, capacities and experiences has been a constraint to the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable peace.

Initiatives undertaken

4. In spite of the commitments made by African governments at the Fifth Africa Regional Conference on Women in Dakar and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, there has been no significant increase in the participation of women in national, subregional and regional mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution. Conflict prevention and management efforts of the OAU and subregional groupings such as the IGAD, ECOWAS, and the Great Lakes Region, have centred around member States, and themselves represented by men, largely excluding women.
5. Since the Beijing Conference, efforts have been made by women's organisations to strengthen their networks for peace promotion and conflict prevention and resolution. The Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender and Development (Rwanda, March 1997) concluded with the formation of a network linking women's peace initiatives throughout Africa. The same conference made recommendations on setting up a Regional Committee of Eminent Women Leaders to enhance the OAU efforts in conflict prevention, management and resolution. However, these initiatives and recommendations continue to have minimal impact on conflict situations in Africa. Initiatives to promote peaceful resolution, reconciliation and tolerance through education in countries such as Rwanda and Somalia, provide positive concrete experience on how to build a culture of peace, tolerance and non-violent ways of conflict resolution and management. These initiatives need to be shared more widely and lessons learnt.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following questions guided discussion on the above issues:

- What are the specific obstacles limiting women's participation in peace negotiations? What realistic strategies can be adopted to overcome these obstacles?
- How can the positive experiences of the nascent community, national, subregional and regional women's peace initiatives be enhanced and expanded to meaningfully influence and impact on the current national, subregional and regional conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts of African governments and the OAU?
- African societies have always had traditional methods and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution. What commitments, programmes and resources would be necessary to document, popularise and draw upon effective traditional conflict prevention and management mechanisms which also tap women's resourcefulness and experience?
- What concrete mechanisms are proposed to ensure the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of this Conference?

- What indicators and processes can be suggested for monitoring progress in the implementation of agreements and conclusions reached under this sub-theme?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

The outcome of the group discussion produced recommended actions and is summarized below:

1. Developing early warning systems and a mechanism for collaborative action
2. Constructing linkage or partnerships between national NGOs and community-based organizations and networks including human rights organizations
3. Reviewing institutional framework and culture to ensure that they are user friendly to both men and women within a family framework.
4. Making changes an internal policy and regulations with respect to employment conditions especially at international levels to safeguard the rights of both women and men.
5. Establishing mechanisms and indicators for monitoring the implementation of subregional, regional and international conventions and other legal instruments.
6. Strengthening the Peace Fund recently established by OAU.
7. Constituting the ECA/ACW into a Task Force to ensure the implementation of the above recommendations.
8. Lobbying funding agencies to pressurize governments to include women in all aspects of the peace process

**SUB-THEME 2.3
POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION,
REHABILITATION AND RECONCILIATION: AN
OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FULL
PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN**



ISSUES ADDRESSED

A significant number of African countries are emerging from periods of strife and armed conflict. These countries are concerned with rehabilitation of both people and political and economic systems. The challenges of rehabilitating a traumatised population, of reuniting families and communities separated by war, of dealing with orphaned and/or militarised children and reconciling those on the different sides of a conflict are often foremost in the minds of governments. Rebuilding the economic infrastructure follows closely. While these aspects are important, and equally crucial aspect rarely focused on is that the post-conflict context often presents opportunities for transformative planning and reforms, particularly in governance and gender equity. Demographic changes and a weakening of traditional social structures may permit governments to spearhead key reforms. In countries where both men and women have been engaged in armed struggle, there is often a new respect and understanding of the capabilities particularly in countries like Rwanda, where women form the majority of the population, there is a need, indeed a necessity, to re-examine economic, social, legal and political systems for governance and development which are based on the new political realities.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How can governments take advantage of the opportunities in the post-conflict context to change into a system of good governance in which the roles of women in all spheres of life and decision-making are substantive and visible? How can women be empowered to rise to the new challenges presented by post-conflict realities?
- Anti-personnel land mines continue to be a major obstacle to post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation and participation of communities in governance. What concrete mechanisms, capacities and resources should be mobilised for demining efforts in affected African countries? What strategies should be adopted within the OAU to sensitise and promote the ratification of the recently concluded Treaty banning the production, use, transfer, exchange and stockpiling of anti-personnel land mines?

- What are the best strategies to inculcate a gender sensitive culture of peace among African leaders and communities, particularly the new generation? How can such strategies be institutionalised in order to promote a gender sensitive culture of peace in the family, schools and communities?
- What indicators and processes can be suggested for monitoring progress in the implementation of agreements and conclusions reached under this sub-theme?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

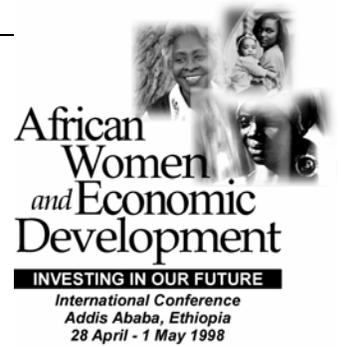
The following strategic actions were recommended by the group after discussing the above issues:

1. Developing and strengthening women's traditional peace-making role in Africa
2. Fostering partnerships and mobilizing financial mechanisms for initiatives that bring government and civil society together.
3. Empowering women to participate in policy-making, especially at grassroots level through decentralized local government and the current democratization trends in Africa
4. Training women to organize and form pressure groups to carry out advocacy, sensitization of authorities and of other women, lobbying for greater representation in parliament. For women and men, civil society has practical obligations to stimulate action.
5. Promoting an assertive civil society which avoids direct confrontation with the authorities and uses established regulations and procedures.
6. Formulation of concrete strategies to change the image of African women as being unable to govern and lead in governance processes and structures. These include:

- ◆ making education and skills training the major factor for sustainable peace;
 - ◆ stressing equal access to educational opportunities for boys and girls;
 - ◆ designing inclusive curricula and systems which do not emphasize ethnic differences;
 - ◆ supporting women to seek political office, including the highest offices, through adoption of appropriate affirmative action measures to accelerate their participation;
 - ◆ using the media for positive reporting of women's peace activities and concerns, and of women's successful bids for office at local and national levels;
 - ◆ recruiting women to visible positions where female role models would have particular impact;
 - ◆ encouraging women to change their negative attitudes towards participation in public life.
7. Convening all parties and ethnic groups regularly for dialogue, to share experiences, cultural differences, and successful strategies and practices.
 8. Promoting the economic viability of communities as a cornerstone of peace. Poverty often creates social instability; therefore so poverty reduction strategies are crucial to conflict prevention and peace-building.
 9. Promoting skills training for women and learning new technologies.
 10. Building institutional mechanisms such as the passing of laws, inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities in the process of reconstruction, designing rehabilitation programmes for victims, and ensuring open, transparent, integrated efforts for dialogue and reconciliation.

SUB-THEME 2.4

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE HUMAN AND LEGAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND TO ELIMINATE THE GAP BETWEEN PROVISIONS OF THE LAW AND PRACTICE.



ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. Human rights derive from the dignity and worth inherent in the human person. That women and men enjoy the same rights and dignity have been reaffirmed by States in many for a and publications, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Third World Conference on Women, and the Fourth World Conference on Women are two such for a. African states have, in addition, reiterated their commitment to the same ideals through the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Fifth African Conference on Women. The human rights of women (and the girl child) is an inalienable integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Such rights include the equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social, and cultural life at national, regional and international levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex. The effective promotion and protection of these rights are essential for good governance and sustainable development. Governments must not only refrain from violating the human rights of women but must work actively to promote and protect them.
2. Though inadequate, governments in Africa have taken some steps towards this end through ratification of international human rights instruments and legislative reforms at national level. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by the majority of African States, although a few have entered reservations. By such ratification, African governments have committed themselves to the removal of all forms of discrimination. Fifty-one of the 52 African States have ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights under which they commit themselves to the "elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman... as stipulated in international declarations and convention". Unfortunately in many cases there is a big gap between the provisions of the law and practice. Laws are either not systematically enforced or there are structural and procedural obstacles, including the lack of gender sensitive enforcement in agencies, making the rights protected inaccessible to the majority of women. Thus, abuses on the rights of women, especially

by private individuals remain endemic in spite of the law. This is particularly so in the case of violence against women, inheritance and land rights, and traditional practices harmful to women and girls. The international community, including African States, unequivocally stated at the Fourth World Conference on Women that “Violence against women violates, impairs, and nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. In some cases, culture and religion are misused to deny women fundamental rights and freedoms and to maintain discriminatory laws and practices. The situation is made worse by the fact that most men and women remain unaware of the legal rights of women. Failure to effectively difference in women’s and men’s access to and opportunities to exert power over political and economic structures. Women are virtually absent from or are poorly represented in economic decision-making, including the formulation of financial, monetary, commercial and other policies, as well as tax systems and rules governing pay. There is also a considerable difference in women’s and men’s access to and participation in political structures and processes at national, local and community levels. Effective participation must be seen as going beyond the mere casting of votes. Structural and other forms of discrimination against women thus continue to deny women the enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms and have a negative impact on progress towards good governance and sustainable development. African governments, development agencies, financial institutions, donor countries and individual women and men have, each and collectively, significant roles to play in remedying the situation.

Actions taken

3. In some countries, positive steps are being taken to better promote and protect the human and legal rights of women. Recent constitutional amendments in countries like South Africa and Uganda contain provisions on the fundamental rights of women and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. Some countries have legislative reforms which seek to deal with the endemic problem of violence against women and discrimination, and to provide for women’s inheritance rights and discrimination in other areas.
4. NGOs in many African countries are implementing programmes which promote increased awareness of women’s human and legal rights among women and men at community level. They are also involved in the promotion of women’s participation in politics through civic education and selective training of prospective female candidates for elective offices. Donor agencies have also supported such programmes but these efforts remain grossly inadequate.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The questions below guided the group discussion that addressed the above issues in detail:

- What steps should African governments take to transform rights protected by law (international, regional and national) into reality for African women? What role, if any, should UNECA multilateral financial and development agencies, bilateral organizations and NGOs play in this regard?

- What practical strategies would facilitate the involvement of a more positive role for culture and religion in the promotion of the human rights of women in accordance with international standards and the principles of universality and indivisibility?
- There are efforts to have a protocol on women's human rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. What strategies are necessary to ensure that African governments support this effort and finally ratify the proposed protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights?

- How can African governments appreciate, internalize and institutionalize efforts to enhance awareness of the human and legal rights of women and to increase gender sensitivity among law enforcement officials and procedures?

- What strategies and resources are necessary to popularize the content of women's human and legal rights and enforcement mechanisms with the aim of facilitating the internationalization by communities, families and individuals of the fact that women and girls have rights and the nature of those rights?

- What indicators and processes can be suggested for monitoring progress in the implementation of agreements and conclusions reached under this sub-theme?

STRATEGIC ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

Group discussions on the above issues yielded the following strategic actions:

On research:

1. Research to identify the factors/practices that need to be promoted or discouraged. The research process must be participatory, involving traditionalists, sociologists, historians and the community.
2. Resource mobilization by NGOs and governments for the necessary research
3. Dissemination of information to educate, create awareness, lobbying and advocacy by governments, NOGs and the media
4. Mobilization of support by NGOs for women at the grassroots level to network and for empowerment

5. Setting up a research centre for African women by ECA/ACW
6. Conducting studies on the evolution and eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Northern Africa, in particular to benefit other parts of the continent.

On training:

7. Training is an essential strategy to build the necessary capacity amongst women in advocacy, lobbying, and leadership. The training which should concentrate particularly on international human rights instruments should target schools and the judiciary.

On advocacy:

Advocacy for the ratification and implementation of CEDAW and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights should be launched by the following actions :

8. Lobbying Heads of State at meetings to ensure total ratification of CEDAW in Africa and the removal of reservations by those countries that have them.
9. Providing training on how protocol and international instruments operate.
10. Wide dissemination by the media and NGOs of information on the CEDAW Draft Protocol.
11. Networking among, NGOs to form pressure groups.
12. Promoting women's representation in the judiciary.

Targets for advocacy are the media, traditional and religious leaders, governments, political parties, organisers of special days such as International Women's Day, NGOs, schools, international partners, the UN system, OAU and bilateral organisations.

Other strategies

13. Law reform to facilitate access to court by women, public education, to ensure community-oriented change, resource mobilization, to support NGOs' activities and strategies, building networks to involve grassroots communities.

Indicators and the monitoring process for the protection of women's rights

Indicators

1. Ratification of CEDAW and other international instruments by governments and removal of reservations.
2. Publication of the Convention's notice in the official gazette of all governments
3. Prompt submission of reports by governments and NGOs.
4. Availability of the Convention in local languages.
5. Harmonisation of national laws.
6. Establishment of a comprehensive non-discrimination act as has been done in South Africa.

Monitoring process

1. The following were recommended to monitor the progress in the implementation of the stated action:
2. Establishment of national and international monitoring mechanisms e.g. the National Council of Women and Family in Tunisia.
3. Dissemination by the media of research findings, government and NGO reports, and in popularizing laws and conventions relating to women's rights.
4. Regular monitoring of governments by the NGOs through research, examination of reports on CEDAW and other conventions action group for women in Morocco and Zimbabwe are two cases in point.

SUB-THEME 2.5 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN A DECENTRALISED SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT



ISSUED ADDRESSED

The lack of effective access to and control over important resources by a significant majority of women is also a major challenge to their ability to participate in the decentralised structures. Access to and control of property, credit and cash play a key role in political participation. When women run for positions in local government, it is not unusual to find that they have insufficient resources or skills to mobilise the populace and to mount a successful campaign. Even when a certain number of seats in local government are set aside for women, as they are in Uganda, for instance, women councilors might find difficulties in articulating the concerns of women and devising appropriate solutions to these problems. This is mainly because neither they, nor their male colleagues are equipped with the gender analysis skills to identify gender inequities, nor have they been trained to internalize gender concepts. Without this training, it becomes very difficult for both the women and men councilors to mainst into their development policies and programmes. The absence of a strong network between women councilors and women's organizations also rob women in local governments of a valuable source of support and encouragement.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the group discussion that addressed the above issues in detail:

- ◆ How does a decentralized system of governance differ from a centralized one?
- ◆ What opportunities for women's participation and empowerment does decentralization provide?
- ◆ What legislative, monitoring and capacity-building related activities can be uindertaken by governments to ensure that women participate and benefit from the decentralization process and in decentralized structure?
- ◆ What strategies can women themselves and women's groups adopt to take advantage of the opportunities created by decentralization?

- ◆ What strategies and resources should be undertaken and used by local governments, donors, and CBOs to sustain the involvement of women in governance at the local government level?
- ◆ What indicators and processes can be suggested for monitoring the implementation of agreements and conclusions reached under this sub-theme?

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS RECOMMENDED

The following actions were recommended to ensure that women participate and benefit from decentralisation:

1. Facilitation of strong political will through creating awareness on gender, training and the nurturing of a dynamic women's movement.
2. Provision for gender equity by the national constitution in order to ensure women's participation both in the process of decentralisation and within the decentralised structures. Affirmative action should be adopted to suit the peculiarities of each country and should be accompanied by adequate financial provisions.
3. Monitoring by governments of the number of women who have been empowered by decentralised policies, and ensuring quantitative participation and mainstreaming of women in local governance.
4. Consultation and gender analysis in project design.
5. Training and building the capacities of women for effective participation.