



**7<sup>th</sup> South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference**  
*Commemorating Beijing*  
*- Delivering for Women in South Asia -*  
Dhaka, Bangladesh  
3 - 5 October 2010



Organized by:

Ministry of Women & Children Affairs  
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## Executive Summary

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prepared for:

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7<sup>th</sup> South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference Commemorating Beijing

3-5 October, 2010

### Table of Contents

Background.....	3
Day 1 .....	5
Inaugural Ceremony .....	5
Modalities of the Meeting .....	6
Everyday Equality: Be The Change – by Ms. Naina Kapur .....	6
Bell Bajao – by Ms. Sonali Khan .....	9
Measuring Poverty With a Gender Perspective – by Prof. Madhura Swaminathan .....	10
Afghanistan Country Presentation .....	12
Bangladesh Country Presentation.....	17
Day 2 .....	21
Bhutan Country Presentation.....	21
Update from the 54th CSW on Beijing +15 .....	24
India Country Presentation .....	26
Maldives Country Presentation.....	30
Impediments to Reducing Violence Against Women – by Ms. Kamla Bhasin .....	33
Panel on Lived Realities of Women.....	34
Field Trip to BRAC Safe Migration Facilitation Centre .....	36
Field Trip to One Stop Crisis Centre.....	37
Day 3 .....	39
Nepal Country Presentation .....	39
Sri Lanka Country Presentation .....	44
Pakistan Country Presentation .....	48
Impact of The Financial Crisis on Women – by Mr. Farooq Sobhan.....	51
Comments from the SAARC Secretariat – by Mr. Riaz Hamidullah .....	53
Adoption of The Resolution.....	55
Press Conference .....	58
Appendices .....	59

Executive Summary 2



## Background

At Beijing, world leaders from 189 countries met in 1995 to promise equality and gender justice to the world's women and made a commitment to undertake concrete actions towards it. The **Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)**, which was adopted and which has the potential to transform women's lives, has been central to UNIFEM's work.

In South Asia, the governments and civil society have very successfully deployed regional review mechanisms, as a strategy to address the BPfA and CEDAW. These participatory and transparent review meetings between governments and women's groups take place biennially and have entailed a process of introspection, gap identification, addressing challenges and developing a common South Asia agenda of priorities for action. In addition this process has successfully facilitated cross regional peer learning and sharing of best practices.

There have been six meetings thus far: New Delhi (1996), Kathmandu (1998), Bandos Island (2000), Paro (2003), Islamabad (2005) and New Delhi (2008). During the last meeting, countries of the region and the SAARC Secretariat endorsed the South Asia agenda of priorities for action by adopting the **India Forward Moving Strategies (IFMS) for Gender Equality 2008**. This called for introducing mechanisms to follow-up on CEDAW Concluding Comments; preventing VAW; strengthening women's participation and leadership capacity in decision making; promoting women's economic security & rights; protecting women's human rights in conflict & disaster situations and ensuring women's participation in peace and conflict resolution processes.

Every half a decade, this biennial process is extended and connected to larger international events, such as Beijing + 5 and Beijing + 10 and now Beijing + 15. The year 2010 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BPfA. The implementation of the BPfA was appraised at the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2010. In line with its tradition, UNIFEM facilitated national and regional processes in 2009 to feed into the global review in 2010 at the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW. This included support to a South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15, which took forward the IFMS for Gender Equality 2008. It provided a platform for women's groups to prioritize their concerns and develop a consensus lobby document on key gender concerns in preparation for the CSW in New York.

In 2010, the outcomes of the CSW were unpacked in the regional/national context at the **Seventh South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference Commemorating Beijing**, which was organized in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka on 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2010. At this meeting an effort was made to transform the review process and go beyond it. In order to make it as cutting edge and strategic as possible, two critical challenges to gender equality in the region have been identified for focus, namely, economic security and rights of women and violence against women (VAW). A workshop mode and a conference mode were harmonized to coalesce stock-taking and active learning on gender equality, as well as lay an emphasis on partnership building. The consensus document of the meeting will delineate the current key priorities for South Asia.

Participants in the conference included ministers and secretaries responsible for women's development, representatives from SAARC and a section of civil society and women's organizations from the region. A list of the participants is available in the Appendix of this report. At the end of the conference, delegates were required to collectively draft and adopt a series of recommendations and/or forward moving strategies on crucial gender issues affecting women across countries in the region.

The review meetings were held in the Grand Ballroom of the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. The Inaugural Ceremony took place at the Winter Garden in the same hotel. This was also the venue where the participants of the conference were entertained to dinners hosted by the Bangladesh Ministry of Women & Children Affairs and UNIFEM. Each day of this three-day conference began at around 9:00am and ended at around 6:00pm, punctuated by two breaks on either side of a one hour luncheon. The agenda of the conference is available in the Appendix of this report.

This report summarizes, in chronological order as per the agenda, the key points of the various presentations and discussions.

## Day 1

### Inaugural Ceremony

The conference was inaugurated by **Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh** in a ceremony organized by the Bangladesh Ministry of Women & Children Affairs and UNIFEM.

The ceremony began with recitations from The Holy Quran, The Bhagavad Gita, The Bible and The Tripitaka, followed by an impressive cultural performance organized by the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (a national academy for fine and performing arts), depicting dance styles from each of the eight SAARC countries participating in the conference. This was followed by a series of speeches from the presiding executives of the ceremony.

First, **Mr. Tariq-ul-Islam, Secretary-in-Charge, Bangladesh Ministry of Women & Children Affairs**, who served as the ceremony's chairperson, greeted the delegates and highlighted the need for such a meeting in order to evaluate the progress made by the SAARC nations on the mutual commitments made at the last biennial meeting commemorating Beijing. He also remarked on how the policy making and legal framework can contribute to the achievement of those commitments.

Next, **Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM South Asia Regional Office (part of UN Women)** emphasized on the importance of developing a conceptual understanding of gender-related issues before any meaningful action can take place. Critical questions on the actual progress made thus far and analysis of the barriers preventing further progress are paramount. She also pointed out that many new problems have developed since Beijing such as the economic crisis, the food crisis and climate change, therefore the BpFA needs to be constantly reviewed with a fresh perspective.

Next, **Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, State Minister, Bangladesh Ministry of Women & Children Affairs** suggested that the conference was also an opportunity to celebrate the progress made in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. She highlighted some of Bangladesh's success stories such as achieving gender parity in primary school enrollment, the reduction of child mortality and increased women's participation at all levels of government.

The final speaker was the chief guest of the ceremony, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Before she spoke, she was highly commended by all previous speakers for giving importance to this conference as indicated by her attendance at the inaugural ceremony. She was also presented with a bouquet by Dr. Chaudhury to commemorate the 2010 MDG Award the Prime Minister received last September on behalf of Bangladesh.

During her speech, the Prime Minister stated that the problems related to gender equality were similar throughout the region and achieving women's empowerment was critical to making overall progress. Her government has been working to eradicate poverty, reducing

gender disparity in education, health, human resource development and incorporating women into mainstream economic activities. She discussed some of the initiatives taken by the government to address these issues such as the setup of women-friendly day-care centres, social safety-net programs, shelter homes and one-stop crisis centres for victims of domestic violence. Other government actions catering to women's needs include the passage of the Domestic Violence Act and the Local Government Bill that ensures 30% of all seats at grassroots level.

The Prime Minister concluded her speech by reminding the delegates that many laws and policies have indeed been made to prevent violence and injustice against women in their respective countries, but these require appropriate and steadfast initiatives to implement them. With that, the Prime Minister declared the conference open.

### Modalities of the Meeting

The conference was composed of a series of presentations from the SAARC countries, punctuated by other presentations and speeches about gender-related topics given by various experts. The second day of the conference also included field trips to two successful local gender initiatives.

Each country presentation included a presentation from the country's senior government delegate, additional comments from other government delegates if any, reflections from representatives of the country's civil society organizations and concluded by an open discussion session. Each presentation was chaired by an internally appointed delegate from a different SAARC country and coordinated by one of the facilitators. Each presentation has been summarized in this report with particular emphasis on any discussion about VAW and economic rights and security.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the delegations were each required to nominate one member from amongst themselves, either from government or civil society, to serve with representatives from UNIFEM on a Drafting Committee that would be responsible for developing the Dhaka Resolution to be adopted by the SAARC countries at the end of the conference.

### Everyday Equality: Be The Change – by Ms. Naina Kapur

Ms. Naina Kapur is a consultant on law and gender equality who has authored a report (of the same title) on behalf of UNIFEM for this conference. The report presents the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in the region, elaborates the problems and challenges pertaining to VAW and economic security and advocates the need for attitudinal shifts and pursuit of innovations for making progress on gender equality. A synopsis of the report is presented in this Executive Summary:

- Gender equality is the most important linkage to all other MDGs yet women and girls in South Asia continue to face discrimination by:

- ◀ having unequal access to information, goods, services, resources and productive assets.
  - ◀ having less access to food.
  - ◀ having the burden of social and cultural practices and traditions.
  - ◀ suffering HIV infections from transactional and forced sex.
  - ◀ being denied access to real economic security.
- Deeply entrenched attitudes and practices perpetuate inequality and discrimination in all facets of life everywhere in the world. But attitudinal shifts in individuals alone will not bring in the desired change. Structural issues that foster inequality need to be addressed and attitudinal change within those contexts need to be positioned.
- Much progress has been made in the SAARC countries to address gender inequality, such as legislation to combat VAW, improved migration procedures and safety nets, gender-responsive budgeting in government and increased economic incentives for women.
- Yet gender equality is still a goal and not a way of life in the region. There is slow progress due to VAW and economic insecurity for women:
- ◀ More women are “disappearing”.
  - ◀ There is a lack of effective implementation of the laws that prohibit VAW, uphold property entitlements and allow people to divorce in an informed manner. This has led to an unchecked increase of physical and sexual abuse towards women.
  - ◀ Lack of education and paid work for women is depressing economic growth.
  - ◀ Discriminatory attitudes and restricted mobility cause women to be economically worse off than men.
  - ◀ Women in politics are prone to physical, psychological or social intimidation, thereby undermining their authority as leaders.
  - ◀ Young women are more prone to being infected with HIV due to increased prostitution, trafficking, poverty and lack of education.
  - ◀ Women are being highly under-utilized in global peace processes as highlighted by these facts: only 4 out of the 27 UN Peacekeeping Missions are headed by women, only 6% of all negotiators are women and none of the permanent members of the UN Security Council are headed by women.
- Primary prevention strategies focus on changing the belief systems that contribute to gender inequality e.g. community awareness programs and curriculum changes in school to promote healthy notions of sexuality, prevent VAW, and understand the changing roles of women at home and in society.
- The success of a primary prevention strategy is directly linked to the degree to which people, particularly men, acknowledge that they are the perpetrators of inequality and then internalize the change itself.
- Although they are intangible, attitudes need to be measured continually because the findings would reveal:
- ◀ how our attitudes reflect our perceptions about gender.
  - ◀ those myths and stereotypes that distort the truth.
  - ◀ that individual attitudes are what shape structures.
  - ◀ that attitudes can indeed change for the better.



- In order to change attitudes, the individual must be introspective and ask basic questions about oneself and those around them. Observing daily thoughts, language and actions through an equality lens will help the individual to filter out and focus on those assumptions that constrain him from seeing any other point of view.
- As the world advances as a whole, so do the way people live and think. Aside from ensuring that women receive the basic rights to education, healthcare, nutrition, income and security, innovations can:
  - ◀ lead to women’s empowerment by securing freedom and resources for women to act in their own interests and expand their capabilities.
  - ◀ reshape social norms that constrain women by mobilizing serious, national-level commitments at opportune times and in a conducive, social, economic and political environment.
  - ◀ advance women’s economic resilience by supporting women in overcoming livelihood barriers and produce a more equitable flow of financial and non-financial opportunities benefits.
- There is a framework, developed based on the findings of the ICRW report, that offers a well-defined pathway and key elements to assess innovations that can positively impact the lives of disadvantaged women:
  - I. Five dynamic, interactive areas that define the pathway, which connect innovation to empowerment, are:
    - 1) The nature of the innovation
    - 2) The timing of the innovation in context of the local social, economic and political conditions
    - 3) The actors involved in the innovation system
    - 4) The features of successful diffusion and adoption processes for such innovations
    - 5) The effectiveness of such innovations in advancing women’s well-being
  - II. Seven levers that are instrumental to innovation so as to catalyze women’s empowerment are:
    - 1) Having broad-based partnerships with different types of players – government, civil society, private sector, etc.
    - 2) Engaging women during the design and diffusion process
    - 3) Cultivating dynamic, influential, well-connected champions to spearhead the agenda
    - 4) Creating a stir that propagates through people on a mass scale
    - 5) Capitalizing on opportune timing and context
    - 6) Targeting efforts that can reach poor women
    - 7) Combining high-level ownership of the innovation with a grassroots level mobilization to double its effectiveness and chance of success
- Examples of innovations include:
  - ◀ Family Welfare Centres to combat family-based violence (Afghanistan)

- ◀ Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association vs. Govt. of Bangladesh & Others in the matter of an application under Article 102(2)(a)(ii) of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.
  - ◀ The *Bell Bajao* Campaign to engage men as partners against VAW (India)
  - ◀ HIV Stigma Reduction Programme (Nepal)
  - ◀ Connecting women’s empowerment with poverty reduction (Pakistan)
  - ◀ Altering social norms for women’s work (Sri Lanka)
  - ◀ “Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product” (Bhutan)
- Given that VAW persists in South Asia, it needs to be viewed as an indicator of women’s continued poverty and hence, poverty alleviation initiatives should focus directly on, amongst other things, the reduction of VAW.
  - Economic security programmes need to be developed in the countries of South Asia to raise the region’s capability poverty index which is comparatively very low especially when viewed from a gender perspective.

### Bell Bajao – by Ms. Sonali Khan

Sonali Khan is the India Country Director for Breakthrough, an international human rights organization that focuses on using the power of popular culture, media, and community mobilization to transform public attitudes and advance equality, justice, and dignity in India and the United States. She presented a short lecture about *Bell Bajao*, a national campaign to combat VAW in India.

- Launched in 2008, this campaign was devised with the objective of achieving three main goals:
  - 1) to bring domestic violence into the public light
  - 2) to engage boys and men as part of the solution to VAW
  - 3) to get the community to take responsibility of addressing the acts of VAW occurring amidst them instead of staying quiet.
- The campaign was spearheaded by a series of 60-second video messages, each one depicting a short skit about a woman suffering from domestic abuse and violence. Neighbors and passers-by overhear the conflict and then go up to the house and ring the door-bell with the intent of giving a faux excuse for ringing the bell in order to stop the man from further abusing the woman.
- The video messages were rapidly transmitted through mass media (TV, radio and the Internet) and have thus far reached 130 million people. The campaign even motivated other countries to produce similar campaigns, such as in Pakistan and Vietnam.
- The campaign was created to capitalize on the context formed by the passage of India’s Domestic Violence Act (2005).
- It further mobilized local action by providing capacity building, arranging public education events to increase awareness about VAW and reaching out to influential members of the community in order to make the campaign sustainable.
- The campaign is considered to be highly successful in that it was able to:

- ◀ have the backing of a top-level player: the government of India.
  - ◀ capture mind space thanks to its memorable video skits and catch phrase “Ring the bell!”.
  - ◀ educate people that there are forms of VAW other than those related to dowry, such as sexual abuse, threats, economic disempowerment, etc.
  - ◀ increase recognition and awareness of the Domestic Violence Act.
  - ◀ increase awareness of and consequently motivate women to take legal actions in retaliation to acts of domestic violence and abuse.
  - ◀ motivate individuals to take action in their own communities by improvising the “ringing-the-door-bell” idea.
  - ◀ develop partnerships with other stakeholders and influential champions such as UNIFEM, the fashion industry, theatre performers, etc.
- The long-term target of the campaign is to remove the stigma of taking legal action against abusive husbands so that women no longer suppress their suffering for fear of shame or violating family honor. This can be accomplished with persistent discussion of the subject in all public arenas.

### Measuring Poverty With a Gender Perspective – by Prof. Madhura Swaminathan

Professor Madhura Swaminathan is head of the sociological research unit and professor-in-charge of the social sciences division in the Indian Statistical Institute. She presented an economic perspective on the definition and measurement of poverty and deprivation, which in turn are two of the major underlying factors leading to VAW and economic insecurity for women.

- Poverty can be seen as having a lack of capabilities as postulated by the economist Amartya Sen. This perspective allows one to evaluate what a person is capable of doing with the resources he possesses rather than the quantity of resources in possession.
- The capabilities approach to measuring poverty reveals that even though some households have adequate income, the individuals (notably the women) may still lack certain capabilities, such as the opportunity to go out for work for reasons unrelated to income. This implies that capabilities measurement and analysis must focus on each individual and not the household in order to properly gauge the deficiencies.
- Furthermore, the measurement and analysis of capabilities must cover a broad spectrum of factors and conditions because poverty is always multidimensional and circumstantial.
- In some countries (e.g. in India, until very recently), poverty is measured based on the energy intake per capita per diem. The FAO norm for daily energy requirement is 1800 kcal per day, but this is based on an individual who does sedentary work. This type of measurement of poverty is highly inaccurate because most poor people do not do sedentary work but instead do energy-sapping, back-breaking, hard labor.
- Another example of how poverty measurement based on total household income can be misrepresentative is seen with regards to educating children. There are usually high inequalities between the costs of rural and urban education.

- Multidimensional assessment of poverty addresses many other indicators related to poverty, such as child mortality, school enrollment, access to utilities (electricity, water, sewerage, cooking fuel, etc.) and possession of certain assets (e.g. cars, mobile phones, etc.). Although this gives a *better* indication of the level of poverty, it raises further question marks about the validity and significance of the findings:
  - < *Specification problems*: The selection of indicators is sometimes arbitrary and can vary from country to country, or even region to region within the same country.
  - < *Gradation problems*: The debate arises on whether the indicators should each be worth the same score or if there should be weighted scoring. Some indicators, such as child mortality and HIV infection, are more critical than, say nutrition and school enrollment. Other problems include the logic behind aggregating the scores of conceptually unrelated parameters and the setting of cut-off scores for poverty eligibility.
  - < *Measurement problems*: Data manipulation and “cooking” is a common problem with any type of national census, usually affected by political motives. The census-takers may also differ in their understanding of the parameters and thus may grade differently, leading to further unrepresentative data.
  - < *Timing problems*: An individual’s economic status may change in the time between two censuses. For instance, a person who was previously healthy may contract HIV or a person who had a home at the time of a survey may lose that home afterwards due to a natural disaster. Therefore, poverty assessments need to be done frequently so that people whose livelihoods suffer dramatic downturns in between censuses do not go too long without recognition and support.
- Several studies have shown that even with broad-spectrum multidimensional assessment, there is a further need for disaggregated data based on gender, religion, caste, etc.

## Afghanistan Country Presentation

### Violence Against Women

#### Government

##### *Commitments*

- ☐ Enact laws and reform to address the root causes of VAW
- ☐ Conduct research for capacity and action
- ☐ Capacitate and increase resources for law enforcement mechanisms
- ☐ Organize awareness and sensitization programmes for boys, girls and communities
- ☐ Implement the SAARC Regional Convention on Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution

##### *Achievements*

- ☐ Recognition of VAW and women's oppression as a major concern for public policy and action considering the country's most recent history regarding this issue
- ☐ Adoption of the Elimination of VAW (EVAW) law which defined 22 forms of VAW and their respective penalties, the rights of victims and the duties of concerned institutions.
- ☐ Setup of the Commission on EVAW to research the subject and provide statistics, recommendations and , coordinate EVAW activities and conduct awareness-raising programmes
- ☐ Establishment of the EVAW Special Fund (supported by SIDA, UNHCR and the government s of Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland) to sponsor EVAW activities and initiatives:
  - < 41 NGO projects thus far
  - < 2,700 EVAW articles
  - < 24 radio spots
  - < 60 notice boards and 750 posters about EVAW in schools
  - < a video biography of a victim of domestic violence
  - < awareness programmes and a training manual for police officers
  - < awareness programmes for religious leaders
  - < 5 shelters for VAW survivors
  - < Legal aid services in three new provinces
  - < Emergency support to women's leaders and activists to escape from serious threats
- ☐ Setup of VAW primary database to uncover the extent and seriousness of VAW by collecting data from hospitals, police stations, schools, courts, NGOs, DoWAs and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

##### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Effective implementation of the EVAW law
- ☐ National Program for Law and Justice for All (2010) will review and revise laws, operational procedures, development and security of justice institutions and their personnel and strengthening of people's access to justice

##### *Challenges*

- ☐ Pre-existing culture of silence to conceal VAW offenders within the family due to shame
- ☐ Lack of facilities and services accessible to VAW survivors
- ☐ Lack of female staff at hospitals

- ☐ Lack of sensitive male staff at justice courts
- ☐ Due to inefficient state courts, some people resort to informal local courts which are usually presided by village elders whose traditional viewpoints vastly differ from the country's current laws

### Civil Society

- ☐ The rate of VAW is not experiencing any major downturn due to the lack of effective implementation of the new laws
- ☐ Medical practitioners need to be trained so that they can properly identify and treat VAW cases
- ☐ Law enforcement units in the provinces need to have forensic analysis equipments and training so that they can investigate and aid in the apprehension of VAW offenders

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- ☐ Promote women's economic independence
- ☐ Strengthen economic security systems for women
- ☐ Protect female workers' rights as well as their right to own/control property and access economic assets
- ☐ Ensure women's participation in economic policy making
- ☐ Recognize women migrant workers' economic contributions and ensure the protection of their rights
- ☐ Review trade, commercial and other regulatory laws to make them gender sensitive

#### *Achievements*

- ☐ MoWA and Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled (MoLSAMD) cooperated in drafting a law to extend state support to women without caretakers, orphans, elderly, the poor and the handicapped
- ☐ Equal access to industrial parks for businesswomen
- ☐ Increased support for the Afghan Women's Business Federation in promoting business and conducting capacity building
- ☐ Relaxed government requirements for business application in favor of women as well as provision of information services that exhibit and export the products of women entrepreneurs
- ☐ Setup of a women's union in the Ministry of Commerce vested with the authority to ensure women's equity in recruitment and appointment processes
- ☐ Formation of a federation of women merchants
- ☐ Provision of employment assistance to 28,751 women and their families thus far
- ☐ In collaboration with the Self Employed Women's Association, 1,000 women were trained on income generating skills and 150 women entrepreneurs were trained on accessing micro and small loan facilities

#### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Improve loan packages and banking services for women entrepreneurs
- ☐ Equalization of the retirement age for men and women

*Challenges*

- ☐ Still one of the poorest nations in the world (36% living below the poverty line)
- ☐ Second worst rating on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index
- ☐ Downturn in the export of dried fruits has affected women's development as they dominate this industry
- ☐ Slow execution of development budget
- ☐ Whatever economic progress has been made is hardly felt at the household level in terms of improvement of living standards thus fueling the perception that the government is failing
- ☐ High national fertility rate (1 million babies per year)
- ☐ 70,000 households headed by women and these are the most vulnerable
- ☐ Only 47% of women participate in the labor market, due to:
  - < Denial of women's rights to land ownership and inheritance (only 1.87%)
  - < Culturally imposed restriction on female mobility leading to limited migration
  - < Harassment of women in public spaces
  - < Women lack decisiveness to assert their rights
  - < Overbearing domestic responsibilities
  - < Lack of control over their own businesses or earnings (only 5.6%)
  - < Low education and poor skills
  - < Gender bias in the labor market
  - < Continued security threats such as from the Taliban
  - < Female literacy rate is only 12%
- ☐ Women earn \$402 per year per capita, which is one-third of the national GDP per capita
- ☐ High unemployment (18%) amongst educated women, indicating a lack of resource utilization
- ☐ Scanty, irregular and disoriented data on women in the economy
- ☐ Current economic interventions for women have been small-scaled and directed at only alleviating extreme poverty; no known strategies exist to permanently address the gender dimensions of the national economic frameworks

**Civil Society**

- ☐ There needs to be more scholarships and vocational programmes to improve the capacities and skills of women
- ☐ More microloans should be made available for women
- ☐ Women's participation in the agriculture sector needs to be increased along with training on the latest agricultural technologies and methods, particularly in horticulture, poultry farming, dairy farming, bee-keeping and food processing

**Miscellaneous***Commitments*

- ☐ Strengthening of national women's machineries through sufficient resources
- ☐ Improvement of accountability and performance on gender equality by mainstream institutions
- ☐ Elimination of gender discrimination in laws and policies
- ☐ Greater participation of men, boys and other stakeholders in attaining gender equality
- ☐ Increase female participation in elected and appointed bodies at all levels of governance to 30% by 2020
- ☐ Undertake budget analysis to support women in the political arena

*Achievements*

- ☐ Institutionalizing gender equality provisions in the Constitution which includes reserving 25% of the elective seats of the Parliament for women representatives
- ☐ Ratification of CEDAW
- ☐ Adoption of six gender equality targets in the Afghanistan MDGs
- ☐ Positioning of gender as a cross-cutting concern within the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)
- ☐ Mainstreaming of gender in the Sub-National Governance Policy
- ☐ Adoption of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) with six areas of concern:
  - < Security
  - < Legal protection and human rights
  - < Leadership and political participation
  - < Economy, work and poverty
  - < Health
  - < Education
- ☐ Persistent existence of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) amidst calls for it to be replaced with an alternative mechanism
- ☐ Increased budgeting and recruitment of more qualified staff members at MoWA
- ☐ Establishment of a Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA) in each of the 34 provinces
- ☐ Establishment of baseline statistics on men and women
- ☐ Establishment of women's parks in 16 provinces to serve as safe spaces for women to organize and pursue empowerment activities
- ☐ Establishment of the Resource Center for Women to provide capacity development support to female leaders involved in peace processes, politics and public life
- ☐ 18 out of 25 government ministries have a gender unit or focal point
- ☐ Contributor to the SAARC Gender InfoBase
- ☐ MoWA Priority Program (2010) was specifically designed to address the major obstacles to implementing NAPWA:
  - < Capacity building in MoWA
  - < Capacity building for other key government staff
  - < Piloting of gender mainstreaming in major government policies and programmes
  - < Policy research and development
  - < Public education and awareness-raising
  - < Establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- ☐ Establishment of the National Consultative Peace Jirga in which 1,600 national and provincial leaders of all kinds (of which about 10-12% are women) participated in a face-to-face dialogue on public policies and issues
- ☐ Increased participation of women in politics:
  - < 2 female presidential candidates in 2009
  - < 10% of all candidates for provincial council elections were women (up 20%)
  - < 39% of all registered voters were women
  - < 407 female parliament candidates (up 4%)
  - < Women encouraged to serve as poll observers and election staff
- ☐ Government mandated National Solidarity Program to ensure women's participation as actors and beneficiaries in community level councils



- Independent Administrative Reform & Civil Service Commission conducts briefings for senior officials on government gender policies and maintains a gender section on its website
- National policy in place to ensure equitable access to transportation for women by giving training to transportation personnel and awareness and sensitivity programmes for the general public

#### *Action Plans*

- Lobbying for a US\$ 29.7 million programme to develop government capacities to accelerate the implementation of NAPWA
- The Afghanistan Program for Efficient and Effective Government and the National Program for Local Governance are the two most important government programmes that need to be pursued with a gender perspective
- Improved efforts by the gender unit of the Independent Elections Commission to ensure that there will be sufficient female candidates, observers and staff at all elections and to shield them from male influence
- The efforts of the Afghan Women's Network to bring together diverse groups of women to come up with the consensus and common positions on contentious issues need to be supported and sustained

#### *Challenges*

- Gender focal points in ministries have varying levels of effectiveness and success due to their actions being sporadic, poorly funded, unsustainable or extraneous to the mainstream work of the ministries
- Lack of gender mainstreaming capacities in nearly all institutions of the country
- MoWA is struggling to constantly steer inter-ministerial processes and provide direction to the other ministries on how to implement gender equality and mainstreaming at the macro level
- Inability to efficiently access and disburse the development funds for gender equality
- Lack of concrete results from the implementation of NAPWA
- Inadequate cooperation from local government units to make their programmes gender responsive
- Development actors and gender champions are in constant danger from anti-government elements
- Representation of women in Shuras and Community Development Councils (CDCs) are far less than men which indicates that female participation in the community level is still the exception rather than the norm
- The women in political positions throughout the nation are still heavily influenced by men's agenda and thus lack the strength of political voice
- Attitude-changing initiatives are yielding slow results because Afghanistan is still very much a traditional society with deeply ingrained norms and values that are patriarchal in nature

## Bangladesh Country Presentation

### Violence Against Women

#### Government

##### *Commitments*

- ☐ Eliminate all forms of VAW and exploitation

##### *Achievements*

- ☐ Implementation of National Overseas Employment Policy (2006) to facilitate safe women labor migration
- ☐ Enactment of Prevention of Cruelty to Women and Children Act, Acid Crime Control Act, Dowry Prohibition Act and Child Marriage Restraint Act
- ☐ Setup of six Central Cells throughout Bangladesh to receive information on VAW cases from various sources and take necessary measures for their remedy, as well as serve as shelters for the VAW survivors
- ☐ Setup of six One-Stop Crisis Centres throughout Bangladesh to provide medical, psychiatric and legal aid to VAW survivors, as well as provide forensic analysis in any investigation into such cases
- ☐ Other support centres have been set up by various entities such as Bangladesh Police and the National Women's Organization as well as several international organizations to give support to VAW survivors
- ☐ Media campaign to bring VAW in the public light and combat it by using TV spots and radio broadcasts
- ☐ Gender Responsive Community Policing project aims to provide women and girls access to justice and provide increased security for them

##### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Enactment and implementation of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act

##### *Challenges*

- ☐ Fear of familial retribution prevents many VAW survivors from seeking justice against their offenders
- ☐ The issue of women trafficking has reached an alarming state whereby women are being constantly mistreated, violated and harmed in recruiting countries

#### Civil Society

- ☐ Dealing with the pre-existing attitudes against women and the root causes of VAW is the biggest challenge in Bangladesh and still needs to be addressed despite the plethora of positive laws and policies that have been made thus far
- ☐ Crimes that were committed against women during the 1971 Liberation War should also be brought to public light and the offenders should duly be prosecuted in order to set an example
- ☐ Police reform is absolutely vital if any progress is to be made in combating VAW
- ☐ Eve-teasing and other acts of sexual intimidation and predation are not only oppressing young girls but also hindering their pursuit of education and careers
- ☐ It could be prudent to promote more physical fitness and self-education programmes in schools so that girls can learn to defend and protect themselves from sexual harassment

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- Ensure full participation of women in mainstream economic activities
- Ensure social protection for women against vulnerability and risk
- Building women's capacity through education, health and nutrition services and knowledge dissemination

#### *Achievements*

- Achieved gender parity in primary school enrollment throughout the country and will also be achieved in secondary school enrollment shortly
- Stipends are given to students in primary and secondary education to cover ancillary costs (e.g. stationary, uniforms, etc.)
- Vulnerable Group Development focuses on giving food security and skills training for self-sustainment to 750,000 distressed and ultra-poor women
- 12 Day Care Centres throughout Bangladesh (10 more to be set up this year) were set up to allow young mothers to pursue their income generating activities
- Women Volunteer Social Welfare Organizations/Centres promote rural women to get involved in socio-economic activities
- Eight hostels set up in the major cities to accommodate 1,403 single working women thus far
- Distribution of sewing machines every year
- Sales & Display Centre in Dhaka set up to display products of women entrepreneurs
- Capacity building centres set up throughout Bangladesh by various ministries and organizations to provide training to over a million poor and unemployed women thus far on skills such as IT, sewing, embroidery, poultry farming, food processing, packaging, house-keeping, etc.
- 60% of primary school teachers throughout Bangladesh are women
- Disbursement of allowances for old-aged people, the disabled and orphans; 59% of the funds allocated for such programmes is being spent on women
- Various government-administered microcredit programmes currently reaching over three million women throughout the country
- Establishment of Self-Employment of Rural Women Through Cottage Industries Trust, the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation and the SME Foundation to promote and facilitate women's involvement in the development of socio-economic and entrepreneurial activities across all income levels

#### *Action Plans*

- Provide stipends to 30% of female students in higher education from poor families
- Setup of more day-care centres for working mothers
- Setup of more Sales & Display Centres throughout Bangladesh
- Setup of Employment Information Centre for educated, skilled and unskilled women
- Increase the residential capacity in the women's hostels at the Primary Training Institutes to encourage more women to become primary school teachers
- Enforce equal pay for equal work and ensure inflation adjusted wages
- Ensure safe working environment for women
- Ensure six months' maternity leave with full pay in the public sector

- Develop a national system of Contributory Provident Funds and Pension Funds for working women
- Provide life and disability insurance for women workers and women-headed households

#### *Challenges*

- Women-headed households earn less income since poor women have low earning capacity and command lower wages than men
- Women's economic participation is still quite low
- Many girls are still being forced into early marriages which results in a loss of education, employment opportunities, early child birth and higher chances of maternal and infant mortality
- Women are more afflicted than men by the many natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, etc.) that hit Bangladesh annually

#### **Civil Society**

- Some independent studies have revealed that despite the growth made by Bangladesh, the resulting improvement in the standard of living has been uneven between men and women-headed household which further emphasizes the evident feminization of poverty
- There is a concern that the push for longer maternity leave for women may backfire because it may discourage companies and organizations from hiring women
- Women need more access to land and the freedom to use that land to achieve economy security and as such, little has been done until now to realistically empower women in that regard
- More secular institutions need to be established at the grassroots level to get women more involved in public affairs and decision-making
- Private banks are far less likely to give loans to women entrepreneurs because they do not have confidence in the success of women-led enterprises and because most women do not have the kind of collateral needed to qualify for such loans from such banks

#### **Miscellaneous**

##### *Commitments*

- Establish a policy and legal framework to facilitate achieving gender equality
- Enhance women's political empowerment and participation in decision making
- Strengthen institutions for ensuring gender mainstreaming
- Integrate gender concerns in all national policies, programmes and projects
- Ensure women's participation in international forums

##### *Achievements*

- Constitution guarantees equal rights for women in all spheres of state and public life as a fundamental right
- Ratification of CEDAW
- Formulated the National Policy for the Advancement of Women (1997 that in turn led to the adoption of the National Action Plan for Women's Advancement (1998), which projects the strategy of mainstreaming gender as a cross-cutting issue in all government policies
- National Council for Women & Children Development is the highest policy-making body in the country on this matter and is headed by the Prime Minister
- Maternal and infant mortality rates have been vastly reduced by extended immunization programmes, safe motherhood programmes to promote breastfeeding and provision of antenatal

and neonatal care

- Positive portrayal of the role of women in national electronic and print media through awareness creation programmes, community meetings, talk shows, documentaries, workshops, cultural programmes, dramas, etc. as well as discussions on trafficking, reproductive health, early marriage, HIV/AIDS, dowry and eve-teasing
- Implementation of the Medium Term Budget Framework process in the planning and budgeting system of all 32 ministries where the issues of gender equality, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and access/control over resources has been outlined

#### *Action Plans*

- A 100-bed Diabetic, Endocrine and Metabolic Hospital for women and children only
- Strengthening the capacity of the national statistical system and the ministries in reporting sex disaggregated data

#### *Challenges*

- The Constitution lacks articulation about ensuring gender equality in the sphere of private life which is where most cases of violence, abuse and discrimination against women occur
- Although the first steps toward gender mainstreaming in government mechanisms have been taken, the level of gender sensitivity and the effectiveness of those mechanisms need to be constantly evaluated
- Gender sensitivity training for parliamentarians and government officials and in the government staff colleges needs to be persisted with, updated and conducted intensively
- Women are still existing in a culture of discrimination and patriarchy that is proving difficult and slow to change
- National institutions are still very weak and are thus incapable of properly implementing the National Action Plan for Women's Advancement
- Various mechanisms throughout the country lack the capacities needed to measure and record usable sex disaggregated data

## Day 2

## Bhutan Country Presentation

## Violence Against Women

## Government

*Commitments*

- Enact laws to protect women and girls from all forms of discrimination and abuse, both direct and indirect
- Provide access to justice and protection to VAW survivors in remote, rural and otherwise hard-to-reach areas

*Achievements*

- Setup of Community Based Support Systems in 12 districts thus far to provide proactive support, care, shelter and prevention services to VAW survivors at the community level, as well as advocate for zero tolerance of VAW
- Arrangement of sensitization programmes for service providers and officials in healthcare facilities, police stations and court houses as these are usually the first point of contact for VAW survivors
- Formation of community networks comprising different stakeholders such as healthcare workers, village headmen, etc. to provide rapid care and support for VAW survivors

*Action Plans*

- Enact and implement the Adoption bill, the Child Care and Protection bill and the Domestic Violence bill

*Challenges*

- Many regions of the country are difficult to access due to the mountainous terrain thereby making it difficult to get support services to needy people on time
- Despite being a matrilineal society in which majority of the land-owners are women, there is still a high rate of domestic violence especially in the urban areas where many women have relocated to with their husbands and hence are financially dependent on their husbands as they are mostly housewives

## Civil Society

- RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women) is one of the first NGOs in Bhutan dedicated to the relief and empowerment of disadvantaged women and adolescent girls, with special emphasis on combating VAW particularly inside homes which tends to be kept quiet
- Domestic violence is prevalent even though there is relatively less overt discrimination of women in the public spheres of life in Bhutan
- The stigma attached with domestic violence discourages many women from seeking support and protection after being abused
- Data collected from various service providers such as hospitals have shown that the average VAW victim in Bhutan has been suffering for a minimum of three years and a maximum of 14 years and hence, the issue of domestic violence is deep-rooted and has been prevalent in society

for a very long time

- RENEW aims to create awareness of VAW amongst the general public, particularly the men and boys, so that they may develop a sense of public responsibility and in turn to take steps to prevent VAW from happening or at least becoming visible sooner rather than later
- Service providers need to be upgraded, sensitized and made easily available to VAW survivors before any kind of awareness campaign is conducted in order to gain the confidence and respect of both the survivors and the general public

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- Ensure for girls, including those who are pregnant and married, equal access to all levels of education
- Eradicate domestic child labor abuse

#### *Achievements*

- Arrangement of a national consultation on countering human trafficking and HIV/AIDS by promoting a better understanding of the situation, formulate strategic approaches to deal with it and to strategize cross-border collaboration
- Achievement of gender parity at primary and basic education levels
- Setup of Extended Classrooms to reduce the walking distance for girls so that they can go to school, thereby sustaining the continuing efforts to reduce the enrollment gap in the secondary school level
- Development of Continuing Education and Non-Formal Education programmes to improve literacy and employment opportunities for women
- Setup of a Scholarship Scheme for Girls to encourage more girls to pursue schooling beyond the 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- Setup of the Complaints and Response Mechanism so that injustices against women and children can be easily made aware to the police and thus far 130 cases related to children and 80 related to women have been filed
- Setup of two Women and Child Protection Units (WCPUs) in the two largest urban centres

#### *Action Plans*

- Arrange awareness and counseling services on sexual and reproductive health for school girls
- Setup of more WCPUs in smaller districts

#### *Challenges*

- There is a big drop in enrollment of girls in higher secondary and tertiary education after the 10<sup>th</sup> grade for reasons such as marriage, pregnancy, etc.
- Some schools do not allow pregnant and married girls to continue their studies beyond the 10<sup>th</sup> grade on disciplinary grounds

### Civil Society

- The pursuit of GNH has led to progress towards achieving the MDGs thereby suggesting that there is a synergy between the two approaches to development
- The government has recognized the importance of having and dealing with civil society

organizations and have thus recently passed the Civil Society Organizations Act (2007) to encourage the formation of such organizations

## Miscellaneous

### *Commitments*

- Promote gender mainstreaming as an integral part of the government's efforts to achieve high Gross National Happiness within four key pillars (sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development, environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance) encompassing nine domains (psychological well-being, cultural diversity and resilience, education, health, time usage, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and economic living standards), each measured by 72 indicators
- Eliminate from public and private life stereotypes that are detrimental to gender equality
- Improve women's access to general, mental and reproductive healthcare in remote and rural areas

### *Achievements*

- Ratification of CEDAW
- Development of a National Plan of Action for Gender consisting of seven priority areas: education and training, healthcare, good governance, economic development and employment, VAW, prejudices and stereotypes, and ageing, mental health and disabilities
- Contribution to SAARC Gender InfoBase with focus on three areas: feminization of poverty, VAW and health including HIV/AIDS
- Setup of gender focal points throughout the government as well as in the district level, the armed forces and civil society organizations
- Distribution of the CEDAW Committee's concluding comments in Dzongkha and English to all ministries, agencies and stakeholders
- Arrangement of sensitization, awareness and training programmes on the concluding comments for all parliamentarians, senior government officials, members of the judiciary, the armed forces and the police as well planners, the media and conservative elements of society
- Recruitment of more qualified regular staff in the National Commission for Women and Children
- Implementation of five "fast-track" strategies to help interested women to participate in local politics:
  1. Identification and screening of potential women candidates and preparing them for the Functional Literacy Test
  2. Sensitization and advocacy about women taking part in politics
  3. Capacity building of viable candidates
  4. Coaching, mentoring and training for elected women
  5. Engendering the electoral commission
- Development of a preparatory programme for women interested in running in the upcoming local elections
- Formulation of guidelines for the Media Code of Conduct and Ethics while reporting on women and children issues, which has been submitted to the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority for implementation
- Expansion of emergency obstetric and neonatal services to Basic Health Unit levels so that rural people can access them easily without the need for referrals
- Percentage of births attended by trained healthcare personnel has nearly tripled between 2000 and 2009



*Action Plans*

- Reduce maternal mortality rate to 1 per 1,000 live births by 2013
- Arrange awareness programmes about the difficult realities of teenage pregnancy

*Challenges*

- Very low representation of women in parliament when compared to other SAARC nations
- Around 40% of births are still taking place at home rather than at hospitals or clinics
- Increasing risky sexual behavior amongst teenagers such as pregnancy (11% of all births in 2005) and low use of contraceptives

### Update from the 54th CSW on Beijing +15

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body on women's issues. Every year, representatives of member states gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

The CSW was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1946 with the aim to prepare recommendations and reports to the Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The CSW also makes recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.

From 1 – 12 March 2010, the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW undertook a fifteen-year review of the implementation of the BPfA and the outcomes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly. Emphasis was placed on the sharing of experiences and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the MDGs. Member states, representatives of NGOs and UN entities participated in the session. A series of parallel events provided additional opportunities for information exchange and networking. National and regional review processes fed into the global review process. At the end of the meeting, the CSW adopted seven resolutions:

1. Combating HIV/AIDS in women and girl children
2. Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts
3. Addressing the situation of and giving assistance to Palestinian women
4. Enhancing women's economic empowerment
5. Eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women

6. Strengthening the institutional arrangements of the United Nations for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women by consolidating the four existing offices into a composite entity
7. Ending female genital mutilation

Dr. Pam Rajput, Executive Director of the Women Resource & Advocacy Centre in Chandigarh, India, presented her feedback of the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW from the perspective of the civil society of South Asia. She briefly mentioned the various meetings the civil society were engaged in leading up to the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW, most notably the Asia Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing +15 that took place in October 2010 in the Philippines. Dr. Rajput expressed the common disappointment felt by the civil society en masse at not being engaged in the drafting of the Declaration of the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW, which seemed to have been developed behind closed doors ahead of the commission and without giving the civil society the opportunity to provide their input as had been done before. The civil society also felt they had a lack of access in the consultative and participatory processes because their meetings took place outside UN premises for the first time ever. However, the civil society of Asia Pacific was able to present a statement to the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW (delivered on their behalf by Dr. Rajput) in which they summarized the key issues affecting women and girls in South Asia:

- < the distress of democracy in several countries of the region
- < the increase in horrific forms of killing of women and girls as well as new forms of violence such as cyber bullying
- < the significant impact of the various crises (economic, financial, geopolitical, food, ecological, migratory, etc) on women and girls
- < continued and unabated female trafficking
- < the eventual effect of proliferated arms manufacturing on women
- < the need for “gender economics” to be put in the forefront in this era of rampant globalization

Nevertheless, the civil society was very pleased with the most positive outcome of the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW and that was the formation of UN Women, which is now the principal entity advocating for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the international arena. Dr. Rajput reminded the delegates of the critical role that the civil society of South Asia played in lobbying for the formation of UN Women, just as they had done for the formation of UNIFEM in 1975. It is the hope of the civil society that the formation of UN Women will translate into greater dialogue with the civil society and more effective initiatives at the country level.

## India Country Presentation

### Violence Against Women

#### Government

##### *Commitments*

- Stimulate policy response for reducing VAW, both domestic and public

##### *Achievements*

- Enactment of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) which provides, amongst other things, emergency relief to VAW survivors and coordinated support from protection officers, medical service providers and access to shelters
- Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code Act (2009) to ensure, amongst other things, better protection to rape victims by giving them power to appoint their own attorneys to assist any state-initiated prosecution, protection of identity, facilitation for in-camera trials, completion of the trials within three months and, if possible, have the trials presided by female judges
- Establishment of punitive measures such as fines and imprisonment to discourage people from engaging in fetal sex determination, as well as incentives such as financial support for families that do not abort or abandon female infants
- Establishment of the National Legal Services Authority at the district, state and central levels to provide free legal aid to VAW survivors

##### *Action Plans*

- Replace the existing definition of rape with a more comprehensive law that includes a wider definition of all forms of physical sexual assault, violation of sexual autonomy of women and sexual harassment in the workplace
- Set up block-level committee in the informal sector which women can contact whenever they feel sexually harassed in the workplace
- Enact legislation to make both the state and central government responsible for compiling data on sexual harassment cases

##### *Challenges*

- Although it has slightly improved, the sex ratio in India is still highly skewed at 933 females per 1000 males according to the 2001 census
- The Vishakha guidelines on sexual harassment have been successfully applied in the government sector but not so much in the non-government sectors
- Implementation of the Domestic Violence Act has been weak at the state level primarily due to lack of sensitivity on the part of state police and magistracy to respond to domestic violence cases and cater to the needs of the victims
- The law prohibiting fetal sex determination needs to be implemented more stringently as people are still finding ways to circumvent it
- The culture of preferring sons over daughters is deeply ingrained in many people in northern and western states thereby making it very difficult to change and political parties are disinclined to address the issue for fear of losing out on their constituents

#### Civil Society

- There is a clear disparity between the sincere efforts and strategies of the government and the

realization of actual progress in eliminating VAW due to inadequacies in implementation, resource allocation, monitoring mechanisms and the general lack of women's influence in decision-making and political spheres

- Legislation to combat VAW has been quite progressive in India but the problem now is that women are not fully aware of those laws nor do they know how to benefit from them
- Accountability is vital to the success of an initiative and this must extend all the way up to the policy-making level so that the government can be held responsible when there is failure to respond to VAW crimes on time
- It needs to be understood by all stakeholders that attitude change is difficult to achieve and perhaps equally difficult to measure especially when one wants to evaluate the effectiveness of the various initiatives being implemented to shift such deep-rooted social norms and values
- The issue of UN Resolution 1325 which concerns the needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction need to be raised for discussion at the policy-making level

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- Realize permanent socioeconomic and legal empowerment of women

#### *Achievements*

- National Mission for Empowerment of Women converges all women-centric programmes by different government ministries and departments into a coordinated delivery to ensure that the benefits of these programmes reach their intended targets
- Education for All Campaign, implemented in partnership with the state governments throughout the country and reaching 192 million children in 1.1 million households, creates education opportunities to girls who have difficulty reaching schools by providing residential schools, mid-day meal programmes and other incentives to motivate families to send their girls to school
- Enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2010) with a budgetary commitment of USD 50 billion to provide education opportunities for girl child labor, migrant children and children with special needs
- Setup of 4.8 million women Self Help Groups (SHGs) thus far to empower women by enabling them to get involved in watershed developments, social forestry and other employment oriented programmes through training and provision of credit, technology infrastructure and marketing
- Setup of National Rural Livelihood Mission to provide diverse, sustainable rural employment programmes for households living below the poverty line
- Enactment of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) to ensure a minimum of 100 days of unskilled work per year for every household, at least one-third of all beneficiaries being women and thus far, 1 billion person days have been generated, 50% of whom are women
- Formation of SHG-Bank linkage programme that has allowed 4.8 women SHGs access to almost Rs. 276 billion worth of microloans
- Enactment of the Unorganized Sector Workers' Social Security Act (2008) which facilitates the formulation of policies and welfare programmes for the workers in the informal sector of whom majority are women
- Formation of the National Health Insurance Scheme (2008) to provide smart card-based, cashless health insurance for the poor and marginalized workers in the informal sector such as domestic

workers and street vendors, thus far reaching 2.8 million women

- Setup of 5,000 Skill Development Centres thus far throughout the country as part of the National Skill Development Programme in which 1,161 trades have been identified

#### *Action Plans*

- Set up Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme to compensate pregnant and lactating women for loss of wages and meet nutritional needs
- Set up a nutrition and healthcare programme for adolescent girls to minimize the nutrition gap and better prepare them to become empowered women
- Enact and implement the Food Security Act to, amongst other things, mitigate the hardships faced by women and girls at the household level
- Set up Female Literacy Mission to target 60 million women over the next five years
- Set up National Credit Fund to provide microloans exclusively to poor, asset-less women with a committed capital of Rs. 5 billion
- Reduce maternal mortality rate from 3.01 to 1 per 1,000 live births by 2012
- Reduce anemia amongst women and girls to half the current level by 2012

#### *Challenges*

- Women's rights to ancestral property and ownership of assets has been difficult to realize despite legislation guaranteeing them

### **Civil Society**

- India currently ranked 114<sup>th</sup> out of 134 countries in terms of the Gender Gap Index, indicating little progress in shortening the gap in status between men and women despite the plethora of gender-sensitive policies and initiatives
- Women's issues need to become a central concern of the national development plan and the development of macroeconomic policies
- The government's social security initiatives are particularly commendable especially since these would directly benefit the lives of women working in the informal sector (who constitute 97% of working women in India) but experience has shown that these initiatives tend to produce only incremental improvements in women's lives due to various impeding factors that were not taken into consideration during the design of these initiatives
- The fact that government has been well aware of the feminization of poverty makes it all the more disconcerting that there is still no comprehensive sex disaggregated data to analyze the issue
- There have been no discussions at the policy-making level about how the government's plans to create new international free trade agreements will affect the socioeconomic lives of women
- The Self-Employed Women's Association, a large NGO comprised of poor women working in the informal sector, provides a broad spectrum of services such as microfinance, healthcare, child care, house building, capacity building and legal advice to enable poor women to earn a living through their own labor or small enterprise

### **Miscellaneous**

#### *Commitments*

- Promote gender equality and empowerment of women
- Employ an entitlement based approach to development as opposed to the welfare approach of the past

- Promote rights to education, information, protection from violence, food security, participation of rights holders and attention to vulnerable groups

#### *Achievements*

- 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitutions have strengthened women's participation in governance at all levels by encouraging more women from disadvantaged sections of society (i.e. minorities, illiterate people, etc.) as well as those who have little to no experience or prior affiliation with politics
- 33% reservation for women of all seats in the Upper House of the Parliament
- Setup of Gender Budget Cells in 56 government ministries and departments thus far to adopt gender budgeting and the number of ministries reflecting their programmes and schemes in the Gender Budget Statement has increased from 9 in FY 2006 to 28 in FY 2011
- Formation of the Reproductive and Child Health Programme implemented by the National Rural Health Mission which has managed to reduce maternal mortality rate from 301 to 254 deaths per live births in five years

#### *Action Plans*

- Increase reservation for women in all tiers of local government from 33% to 50% of all seats
- Improve the sex ratio to 935 by 2012 and to 950 by 2017

#### *Challenges*

- Women's voices in decision-making in the family and the community are still not heard adequately
- Women's political participation still not fully achieved at all levels of government
- Deprived and marginalized women are still the most discriminated
- Gender budgeting needs to be implemented at the grassroots and state level in order to achieve holistic gender mainstreaming in India

## Maldives Country Presentation

### Violence Against Women

#### Government

##### *Commitments*

- ☐ Advocate to stop all forms of VAW in society

##### *Achievements*

- ☐ Ratification of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ☐ Enactment of the Human Rights Commission Act (2006) to combat violations of women's human rights
- ☐ Provision of government-sponsored social and counseling services to VAW survivors at both central and atoll levels
- ☐ Setup of Family Protection Unit at a major government hospital in Male which provide referrals to organizations such as the Society for Health Education and one-stop counseling to VAW survivors identified by the doctors
- ☐ Sensitivity training given to police officers to identify and investigate VAW cases
- ☐ DGFPS provides support and counseling services to VAW survivors as well as empower women through skills building, leadership development and improving self-confidence

##### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Enact and implement the Domestic Violence bill to address VAW
- ☐ Enact and implement the Sexual Harassment bill to provide protection for women in the workplace
- ☐ Setup of more family protection units in other hospitals
- ☐ Construction of a shelter to house VAW survivors
- ☐ Setup of a VAW helpline

##### *Challenges*

- ☐ 1 in 3 women aged 15-49 years reported having suffered some form of violence during her lifetime
- ☐ Limited scope of permissible evidence in VAW cases has made it difficult to get convictions against perpetrators
- ☐ Lack of an established system with proper guidelines and multi-sector procedures to makes it difficult to effectively combat VAW
- ☐ Legal system needs to be strengthened

#### Civil Society

- ☐ Civil society in Maldives is very weak with hardly any community-based organizations to work for the advancement of women's rights
- ☐ Around 7,000 girls are part of the Maldives Girl Guide Association and they are trained to detect early signs of domestic violence and then meet with the potential victims and engage in preemptive dialogue

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- Uphold the fundamental rights and freedoms of both males and females so that they can realize their full potential and participate in and benefit from all spheres of public and private life

#### *Achievements*

- Ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Enactment of the Employment Act (2008) ensures equal pay for equal work, paid maternal leave and establish the Labor Tribunal
- Enactment of the Civil Service Act (2007) ensures equal opportunities for men and women in the Maldives Civil Service
- Enactment of the Pensions Act (2009) ensures equality for women when receiving retirement and old age pensions
- Loan scheme set up for small and medium enterprises by the Ministry of Economic Development with 40% of the funds reserved for women entrepreneurs
- Establishment of economic centres in two atolls thus far to provide easy access to information and economic opportunities for women
- Formation of social safety nets specifically for women such single-mother benefits, elderly benefits, etc.
- Business training programmes on writing proposals, managing finances, running SMEs, obtaining loans, making savings, etc.

#### *Action Plans*

- Enact and implement a citizenship bill that would allow Maldivian women to directly confer citizenship to their children
- Organize a resort forum to link potential resort markets to women entrepreneurs
- Develop one-session schools for working mothers
- Set up day care centres for working mothers with young children

#### *Challenges*

- Only about half the available female labor force are engaged in work as many women are still bound to their household and child care responsibilities
- Women's employment are especially low in the two largest industries in Maldives: fishing and tourism
  - Stereotypes about the role of women still persist in society and are difficult to change, thereby either discouraging women from seeking employment or limiting them to jobs that are deemed "suitable" for them
- Some families are not allowing their daughters to go to school because of false religious pretenses

### Civil Society

- Not enough focus is put on victims of natural disasters – particularly the female victims – even though the South Asia region is prone to frequent disasters of all kinds
- There may be more than 30,000 illegal foreign laborers in Maldives, which puts a significant strain on the economy of such a small country



## Miscellaneous

### *Commitments*

- Constitution ensures equal rights to men and women without discrimination, with special provisions for giving assistance and protection to disadvantaged individuals or groups
- All ministries shall work to address women's issues keeping in mind that men and women have different needs and priorities
- Under the government's strategic action plan for 2008-2013, Policy 1 is to develop and implement policies, legislations and institutional framework to achieve gender equality
- Policy 2 is to empower women by facilitating their access to resources and opportunities
- Policy 3 is to cultivate a culture of non-discrimination and respect for women's rights

### *Achievements*

- President's Office now leads the initiative for gender mainstreaming in Maldives
- Merger of the Ministry of Gender and Family and the Ministry of Health into a new Ministry of Health and Family (2008), under which exists the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services (DGFPS) which is responsible for the advancement and empowerment of women
- Constitutional amendment now makes it possible for women to become President or Vice President
- Ratification of CEDAW
- Ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Signatory to the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality and the SAARC Social Charter
- Gender responsive budgeting included in the National Action Plan
- Setup of Family and Child Service Centres in the atolls to provide decentralized services to women and children there quickly and efficiently
- Setup and training of gender focal points in all ministries with the rank of Deputy Minister
- Awareness campaigns in the atolls to inform women of their rights
- Timely contribution to the SAARC Gender InfoBase

### *Action Plans*

- Develop technical skills for gender analysis and gender-responsive planning and evaluation of all projects and programmes in the ministries and provincial offices
- Allocate funds to sensitize all ministries and agencies on gender-responsive budgeting
- Enact and implement legislation to protect the human rights of conflict and post-conflict affected women as well as ensure gender sensitive approaches to rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts after natural disasters and in disaster preparedness planning

### *Challenges*

- Lack of trained professionals working for gender equality in the country
- The data from the SAARC Gender InfoBase has not been used proactively enough

### Impediments to Reducing Violence Against Women – by Ms. Kamla Bhasin

Kamla Bhasin is a renowned feminist activist and gender trainer in South Asia. She has written extensively on gender issues. In this conference, she gave a speech discussing a unique take on the actual impediments to reducing violence against women.

- Poverty, inequality and violence are still seriously affecting the lives of women in South Asia despite the plethora of policies and initiatives that have been enacted by both governments and civil society to address them.
- Gender advocates have spent too much time putting up safety nets to support disadvantaged and abused women whereas they should have been trying to address the root cause of all suffering on women. Ms. Bhasin postulates that that cause is the “LPG paradigm” – Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization.
- The LPG paradigm has nurtured a world full of ruthless competitors between kinsmen, races, religions and even between the genders. Some of the common economic indicators of such a cutthroat society are soaring prices, high unemployment and income disparity. These issues, as well as others, lead to a loss of income and livelihood for many men, who then turn to a life of crime and personal degradation (e.g. trafficking, organ trade, alcoholism, drug abuse, solicitation, etc.) Eventually, women suffer the brunt of men’s frustrations in the form of rape, violence and abuse.
- The rampant pursuit of profit comes at a cost of people themselves (usually the less privileged), people’s values and natural resources. This paradigm is also the single motivation behind every major war in today’s world, because the people who subscribe to the LPG ideology believe, either consciously or subconsciously, that human capital is expendable in the pursuit of profit.
- There are many studies that indicate linkage between economic state and VAW. A study in Punjab suggests that there is an increase in trafficking whenever the price of land goes up. In Bangladesh, most acid attacks are a consequence of land disputes. In India, the female to male ratio is lowest in those states where the economic indices are highest.
- Another impediment to reducing VAW is a general lack of analysis and understanding of the modern nature of patriarchy. Patriarchy is systemic and not an aberration of society. The effects of the LPG paradigm have left many men psychologically and emotionally emasculated.
- Good human values are no longer nurtured in men due to the proliferation of industries that commodify women as sex objects such as pornography, cosmetics, motion pictures, etc.
- Violence and ruthless competitiveness are also being nurtured in boys from too young an age by letting them indulge in toy guns, computer action games, professional wrestling, etc.
- There is a belief that, with all things being equal, men are not predisposed to VAW but rather subside to that level of depravity and wickedness after years of psychological and emotional damage caused by any of the factors mentioned earlier.

- Another impediment is the notion that women's suffering and issues are their concern only. Since men are the perpetrators in most gender crimes, logic demands that such issues particularly become men's concerns. It should also be reminded that the pursuit of holistic gender equality must also include the understanding of and catering to men's rights and needs.
- The LPG paradigm also affects women in that the pursuit of profit and power has nurtured individualism rather than solidarity within some women, thereby making it difficult for such women to work together to promote in unison gender equality and women's empowerment. An example of this is the sense of opportunism and competitiveness fostered by microcredit.
- In order for real progress to be made, women's movements need to be linked with other non-gender movements like land rights, property rights, ecological movements, regulation of mass media, etc. This will help women to find security from economic vulnerability.

### Panel on Lived Realities of Women

During this session, three Bangladeshi women who were victims of violence and abuse narrated their experiences to the conference attendees with a general plea for awareness and concrete action to prevent future women from being victimized.

**Marium** is a 25-year-old former garments worker and mother of a four-year-old daughter. She used to live with her elderly parents. Her father is visually impaired and her younger brother is disabled. She went to Jordan as a migrant worker after selling her family sold their village property to pay the manpower agency about BDT 90,000 to fully arrange her employment. At Jordan, instead of getting the job she was promised by the agency in Dhaka, she was forcibly confined in a brothel. After five days of physical abuse, she escaped to the Bangladesh Embassy. But before anyone there could aid her, a representative from that manpower agency took her away from the Embassy and prevented her return to Bangladesh unless she paid an additional sum of money. She was then locked up by the manpower agent and brutally tortured, which included beating, burning and cutting off all of her hair. Eventually, she was given a mobile phone to contact her family in Bangladesh who then sold more of their land to pay her ransom and bring her home.

Marium suffered further acts of ill-treatment upon returning from Jordan. She went to the agency to beg for some money for food but instead they threatened to call the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and drove her away. Another time, she worked as a maid in the household of a businessman in Dhaka and she laments how she was given stale food to eat and made to work really long hours from 5:00am whilst the family members would eat freshly cooked meals and wake up much later. All of her experiences have left her highly skeptical of the presence of any sense of equality in our society.

Her experiences have left her so stigmatized that she no longer feels she can stay in Bangladesh. She can't get back her job in the garments factory so she yearns to go abroad again, some place better of course. She advises anyone interested in migration to learn about the recruiting country and its language, the risks of working abroad and the places to go to for help.

**Tahmina** is a 25-year-old mother, born to a poor village woman, who was tricked to going to Lebanon rather than to Dubai.

Following the example of a neighbor's husband, Tahmina decided to migrate to Dubai for work. She sold her land as well as borrowed some money at interest to pay BDT 80,000 to a manpower agent who was supposed to arrange everything for her. Just before she boarded the plane at the airport, the agent informed her that she would be going to Lebanon instead because Dubai apparently stopped issuing visas. At Lebanon, she was received by a woman and she was forced to work in her household rather in a medical establishment or school like she was promised. The members of this household abused and beat her for almost any excuse, even burning her leg once with an iron. She hardly was given anything palatable to eat for the three months that she endured.

Eventually, her son, whom she had been in touch with throughout this ordeal, managed to seek the aid of BRAC's Migration Facilitation Centre who in turn arranged to have Tahmina moved to a shelter with the help of the Bangladesh Embassy and a Lebanese organization. There she was given medical treatment and proper food to eat, but Tahmina became distressed to find seven other Bangladeshi women who were victimized just like her. Finally, she was flown back to Bangladesh but without any remuneration for her services.

Despite the brutality of her experiences, Tahmina feels reborn and self-motivated to realize her dreams. She has started a small business with several women like her: single women, some unmarried, some widowed, some abused by their husbands and in-laws. They are now making about BDT 15,000 profit per month and she aspires to one day own a factory that employs 200 people. She still believes that well-off people can still affect positive change in the lives of the poor if only they do what they need to and give the same opportunities to the poor as they must've gotten in their lives.

**Hasina** is a 23-year-old victim of an acid attack from Narayanganj district.

When she was 17, her uncle threw acid on her face while she was sleeping with her siblings. She was admitted into Dhaka Medical College Hospital where she received treatment for four months, after which her face was left disfigured and one eye and one ear destroyed. Meanwhile, her father had been paying her medical bills as well as paying the police so that they would continue the investigation of her case. When money started to run out, Hasina's father had to forgo the investigation so that Hasina could continue to receive treatment. After being dismissed from the hospital, she was

taken in by the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) who gave her post-operative care for two months free of cost.

After returning to her village, Hasina was surprised by how people's perception towards her had changed. She started hearing questions and comments such as: "*Why is she alive?*" "*What will happen to her parents?*" "*Who will marry her?*" People developed an apprehension towards her as though she was the culprit of this inhuman crime and not the victim. People refused to allow her at social gatherings like weddings because she was perceived as a bad omen. Thus, she became a social outcaste and this pushed her to leave her village and join ASF as a legal intern. She now works to give the kind of help to other acid attack victims that she herself did not get.

Hasina is pleased that there is now a greater awareness and sensitivity about acid attacks and people's perceptions are starting to change. She has attained her former standing in her village and feels empowered to pursue her dreams and make a life of her own.

### Field Trip to BRAC Safe Migration Facilitation Centre

One half of the total number of delegates who attended this conference opted to visit a BRAC Safe Migration Facilitation Unit in Mirpur, Dhaka.

- This project works with both potential and returning migrant workers, especially women and youth, and provides information on safe migration processes, relevant laws and rights, legal support, social arbitration to recover money from middlemen and skills training.
- There are 6 SMFC's in 17 districts and the project works to protect nearly two million workers. Through community-based Migration Forums, it has recovered USD 176,000 from middlemen on behalf of the exploited workers.
- The Migration Forums take place in the villages where most migrants hail from and are conducted by BRAC migration experts and peer educators who are former migrants and survivors of violence and abuse in recruiting countries.
- The advisory information is divided into three basic categories related to migration: 1) pre-decision i.e. before the worker decides to emigrate, 2) pre-employment i.e. before the worker accepts the position in the overseas company, and 3) pre-departure i.e. before the worker leaves his home to go abroad.
- The information is mostly about the recruiting country, the language, the cultural norms and expectations and most pertinently, the apparent dangers to most migrant workers.
- These forums also provide comprehensive information about HIV as well as some rudimentary form of sex education so that female migrants can learn how to insist for and use condoms (both male and female). There is however doubts about whether such awareness programs are in-depth and penetrative enough to properly equip the migrants with the knowledge they need to be able to avoid being victimized.

- HIV is a difficult subject to talk about in Bangladesh amongst most rural people because of it being a cultural and social taboo.
- BRAC is strongly lobbying for specially trained counselors to be stationed at the Bangladesh embassies in the recruiting countries to help the VAW victims who are usually traumatized by their ordeals.
- BRAC frequently advises the future migrant workers to create two bank accounts, one to be allocated for savings in their home country. BRAC's experience has shown that workers who do not do this invariably regret it if they ever become victims of abuse or injustice.
- BRAC also has similar forums that deal with domestic abuse. Peer educators who are survivors of abuse themselves provide a layman's form of education on domestic violence using depictive graphics on flipcharts.
- These peer educators live in the villages and work to arbitrate between quarreling couples within their community. They meet with BRAC gender advisors on a monthly basis to receive additional training.
- If peer educators fail to resolve the issues between the quarreling couple privately, they approach the culprit of domestic violence *en masse*, sometimes up to 30 of them, to influence the culprit. If that fails as well, the peer educators seek legal action through BRAC on behalf of the victim.

### Field Trip to One Stop Crisis Centre

The other half of the delegates visited the One Stop Crisis Centre at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

- This is an initiative of the Ministry of Women & Children Affairs jointly implemented by the governments of Bangladesh and Denmark.
- Each centre is designed to provide all required services for women and children victims of violence in one place: medical (physiological and psychological), protective, legal and sociological aid to victims of gender based violence.
- Each centre is usually manned by 4 doctors, 4 police officers, 6 nurses, 1 social welfare worker, 1 lawyer and 1 counselor, as well as other technical support staff.
- There are currently six OCCs throughout the country, each one incorporated into a major hospital or health clinic. Altogether, these six OCCs have cared for a total 10,387 victims since 2001.
- The centre is designed to receive, care for, document and shelter victims of VAW. More serious cases are first treated before taken to OCC for guidance in the aftermath. Recovered victims are also given periodic consultations to ensure healthy reintegration into society.
- The centre follows a strict protocol of care and sensitivity when providing these services, taking into account the severity of the victim's injuries (if any) and psychological state. The first point of contact for the victims is always a female medical and legal practitioner of the centre to create a sense of security in the victim's mind.

- The centre provides clinical psychotherapy for the victims on a continuous basis until victims recuperate from their ordeals. The centre places special emphasis on this because of the lack of expertise and awareness of this field in Bangladesh. The centre's personnel know that such victims are usually shattered by their experiences and thus need special care in order to help them reintegrate into society. Special counseling for more advanced or difficult cases is provided by the National Trauma Counseling Centre (NTCC).
- The centre is also equipped with modern forensic analysis labs to properly determine the extent of the abuse in order to aid the victim in pursuing legal action against the perpetrator of the crime.
- The centres have even strived to provide recovered victims with some form of direct or indirect financial assistance so that they could engage in income-generating activities to sustain themselves and any dependents (e.g. providing sewing machines, textiles, etc.).

## Day 3

## Nepal Country Presentation

## Violence Against Women

## Government

*Commitments*

- 2010 declared as the “Year Against Gender Violence” by the government
- Interim Constitution decrees the state liable to take action against VAW

*Achievements*

- Setup of a VAW cell in the Prime Minister’s office to increase public awareness and to act against VAW
- Setup of a toll-free telephone hotline to the cell in the Prime Minister’s office
- Setup of VAW response teams in four districts
- Setup of paralegal committees in 23 districts to provide mediation and legal assistance to VAW victims
- Gender Equality Act (2006) amended 65 discriminatory provisions as well as corresponding amendments in the Country Code, including definition of marital rape as a crime
- Setup of complaint handling centres in each Village Development Committee (VDC)
- Human Trafficking (Control) Regulation (2008) enacted to ensure the effective enforcement of the provisions in the Human Trafficking (Control) Act (2007) to combat exploitation of women
- Establishment of the Human Trafficking Control Committee to coordinate policy planning, implementation and planning at both national and district levels
- Allocation of a national fund to finance rehabilitation centres and shelters that provide protection and healthcare (medical & psychiatric) for trafficking victims
- Domestic Violence (Control and Punishment) Act (2009) and its Regulation (2010) enacted to particularly combat cases of witchcraft, women working in dance bars and cabin restaurants
- Establishment of the National Women’s Commission to monitor VAW and assist the government to promote gender equality
  - Arrangement of awareness raising and training programmes for both men and women regarding the various types of VAW and discrimination and how to eliminate them from society and culture
- Arrangement of human rights and legal literacy programmes for both men and women
- Development of a national action plan for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 to cater the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction

*Action Plans*

- Development of Standard Operating Procedure to control VAW with a major focus on protection, prosecution and prevention
- Increase efforts to reintegrate VAW survivors into society
- Enactment of the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act
- Legislation against the proliferation of child pornography and child trafficking
- Setup of Paralegal committees in all 75 districts
- Setup of 15 service centres for VAW and sexual harassment victims



- Engage children and youth advocacy groups for more awareness programmes and initiatives

#### *Challenges*

- Sexual gender-based violence tends to increase and be overlooked in post-conflict situations
- Difficulty in reaching out effectively to the public
- Difficulty in reforming the law enforcement agencies
- Difficulty in successfully rehabbing and reintegrating VAW survivors
- Women and children need special measures to protect them
- Difficulty in making gender-based violence a public concern and responsibility

#### **Civil Society**

- In the past, the problem of trafficking was almost entirely between Nepal and India but now it has expanded to include other nations and thus the issue has become more complex despite the advent of several government initiatives to address it
- The brutal nature of the suffering experienced by female migrant workers in the Middle East has become too alarming to neglect and hence the government needs to ratify the 1990 UN convention on migrants soon and there is also a need for a regional caucus and consolidated action to address the issue with a louder international voice
- The lack of any universally accepted labor standards in recruiting countries have made them unaccountable for the injustices that are befalling on migrant workers
- When dealing with trafficking, the focus should now be on prevention of VAW rather than interventions
- Women and girls are afraid of reporting acts of violence and abuse committed against them due to the threat of social and physical repercussions as well as the fear of bringing shame and dishonor to their families
- The rate of suicide amongst girls has reached alarming proportions and hence there is an urgent need to investigate the root issues that lead to suicide and, if necessary, prosecute individuals who are responsible for willingly or unwillingly abetting suicide
- The government's initiative to provide surgical care for women suffering from uterine prolapse is commendable but further efforts need to be made to understand the causes of this condition and prevent it from happening because studies indicate the occurrence of uterine prolapse is correlated with domestic violence, rape and polygamy
- The lack of any legislation governing the issue of internally displaced people and foreign refugees has left these people unprotected and women and children are inevitably most susceptible to violence and malnutrition
- Climate change has led to an increase in natural disasters that have displaced lots of people and women and children usually suffer the most due to lack of access to relief packages, shelter, employment and medical and educational services
- The South Asia region needs a multilateral engendered human rights mechanism to preserve the rights of and seek justice for conflict-affected people
- Cross-border migration such as between Nepal and India is frequent due to the open border and many Nepalese marry Indians but fail to seek privileges such as citizenship and get access to justice mechanisms and other social services due to negligence, lack of knowledge, immobility or violence

#### **Economic Security & Rights**

## Government

### *Commitments*

- Increase women's and girl's access to education and healthcare
- National Plan of Action (2004) guarantees free education up to secondary level for all
- Special incentives for industrial enterprises with female CEOs and 50% female members of managing boards

### *Achievements*

- Poverty level is at 25%, a drop of 5.5% in the past six years, and so the MDG target of 21% by 2015 can realistically be achieved
- Women now possess the right to inherit property as per the Interim Constitution and the Country Code
  - Promotion campaigns to increase the number of female students as well as financial incentives such as scholarships for 50% of girls from poverty stricken families, grants for schools that enroll 45% girls and retain them until the end of the school year and grants for schools that employ 50% female teachers
- 1,288 alternative schools in 23 districts for working women and girls that do not have access to formal education
- Formation of women cooperatives in many villages to get involved in agricultural production such as vegetable farming, coffee farming, sericulture, bee-keeping, livestock raising, handicraft making and other cottage industries
- Development of a policy guideline to regulate the distribution of relief and rehabilitation packages to internally displaced people
- Setup of a national-level microcredit fund that integrates and consolidates existing microcredit providers and encourage them to implement programmes in rural, high-hill and poverty stricken areas

### *Action Plans*

- Create commercial opportunities for VAW survivors to achieve self-reliance and economic independence
- Acquire 33% reservation of positions in government and security services for women

### *Challenges*

- Achieving a meaningful partnership between the public and private sector
- Difficulty in getting access to capital and the market

## Civil Society

- Initiatives need to be taken to offer migrant women more lucrative and more respectable commercial opportunities rather than the usual domestic labor which usually exposes them to a greater threat of VAW
- Most acts of injustice on migrant workers perpetrated by employers in the recruiting countries and hence the onus should be on them to take action to prevent such crimes
- Women's participation in the rural level administrative councils is very important because it would help to get relief to conflict-affected women faster

## Miscellaneous

*Commitments*

- ☐ Ensure equal rights to men and women as per the Interim Constitution
- ☐ Ensure 33% women's representation in state machineries through legal, policy and institutional reforms, taking also into account proportionate representation of the various ethnicities
- ☐ Protection of human rights as per the Interim Constitution

*Achievements*

- ☐ Undergoing complete overhaul of the government structure: from a monarchy to a republic, from a centralized structure to a federal structure, from being a Hindu state to a secular state
- ☐ Formation of the Gender Responsive Budget Committee in the Ministry of Finance to oversee gender analysis and gender-sensitive budgeting and ensure that 33% of all ministerial projects and programmes are aimed at benefiting women
- ☐ Gender budget allocation increased to 17.3% in current fiscal year from 13.7%
- ☐ Formation of gender focal points with the rank of Joint Secretary in all ministries at the central level and all line agencies in the district level
- ☐ Formation of a committee comprised of representatives from justice and gender ministries as well as civil society to examine discriminatory laws and submit proposals for constitutional amendments
- ☐ Formation of a women parliamentarians' caucus that cuts across party lines to push forward gender issues
- ☐ Women Development Programmes established in 3,043 VDCs thus far provide loans, skill training, social mobilization and literacy programmes as well as other things in order to achieve poverty alleviation, gender equality and social inclusion at the rural level
- ☐ Contribution to the SAARC Gender InfoBase with linkage to the Nepal Census 2011 and focusing on three areas: trafficking, health and feminization of poverty
- ☐ Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Project in 2 districts with JICA
- ☐ Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Project in 15 districts with ADB
- ☐ Setup of informal training programmes on gender related issues at the village level
- ☐ 32.7% of the Constituent Assembly occupied by female representatives, slightly below the allocated 33%
- ☐ Enactment of the Local Self-Governance Act mandates women's representation in councils, executive boards and ward committees at district, village and municipal levels
- ☐ Enactment of Citizenship Act (2007) automatically confers citizenship to children of Nepali citizens
- ☐ Establishment of a national rapporteur to monitor human trafficking

*Action Plans*

- ☐ Translate new government policies and legislations into real action on the ground
- ☐ Sensitize all political parties on women's rights and gender issues
- ☐ All 3,915 VDCs to have Women Development Programmes

*Challenges*

- ☐ People's expectations from the government are constantly increasing and evolving
- ☐ Election process and guidelines have not yet been finalized since the 2008 federalization process began and hence Nepal currently does not have any elected local government in place
- ☐ Limited resources

- Difficulty in creating and strengthening local institutions
- Capacity building
- Getting meaningful and informed participation of women in decision making
- Social and cultural taboos against women are deeply ingrained
- Insufficient sex disaggregated data thus far

## Sri Lanka Country Presentation

### Violence Against Women

#### Government

##### *Commitments*

- ☐ Take measures to prevent VAW and trafficking

##### *Achievements*

- ☐ Enactment of Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2005) which has provisions for victims to apply for court protection
- ☐ Two government-sponsored shelters to house victims of domestic violence
- ☐ 14 counseling centres set up by the Women's Bureau and staffed by professional counselors
- ☐ Six of the counseling centres have women's resource centres coupled with them to provide support services to elderly women who have suffered social exclusion
- ☐ Sexual harassment listed as a criminal offence in the Penal Code
- ☐ Sticker and poster campaign arranged by the Transport Board and Women's Education & Research Centre to discourage sexual harassment aboard public transports
- ☐ Programme on gender, international convention on VAW and women's and children's rights during armed conflicts, organized by the human rights unit of the Sri Lankan Army for their senior officers
- ☐ Legal Aid Commission set up by the Ministry of Justice provides legal assistance to VAW survivors
- ☐ Awareness campaigns about gender issues such as VAW and trafficking organized by the Women's Bureau and transmitted through television and radio programmes

##### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Setup of more shelters for VAW survivors
- ☐ Organize empowerment programmes which will include inter-faith dialogues and awareness raising campaigns on the oppressive and discriminatory nature of certain cultural and religious practices

##### *Challenges*

- ☐ Lack of awareness of the domestic violence act even amongst law enforcement officers and NGOs
- ☐ General lack of awareness amongst women regarding legal procedures and constitutional rights
- ☐ There are too few shelters in the urban areas and hardly any in the rural areas to augment the effectiveness of the domestic violence act in combating VAW
- ☐ Lack of awareness of the seriousness of sexual harassment as a criminal offence amongst the public
- ☐ Sexual harassment and exploitation via mobile communication is highly prevalent and unchecked
- ☐ 8% of pregnancies are amongst teenagers but the actual rate is believed to be higher and the ensuing rate of abortion, although unknown, is also feared to be very high
- ☐ Lack of reliable data on domestic violence as many cases still go unreported

#### Civil Society

- ☐ There is a need for accurate monitoring mechanisms to gauge the exact causes and challenges

pertaining to VAW

- Forum Against Gender-Based Violence, which comprises of representatives from NGOs, UN agencies and government women machineries, periodically releases awareness programmes through mass media to educate the public about the wrongness of VAW and these have been quite effective
- Women need to be more deeply integrated into the planning of programmes for conflict-affected women so that their needs can be better understood
- There is a higher marriage rate amongst girls in the conflict-affected regions and this needs to be investigated and addressed concretely
- There is still no national plan of action to implement UN Resolution 1325 to address the needs of conflict-affected women and hence this matter needs more attention from the government

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- Stimulate women's entrepreneurship at the grassroots level
- Eradicate poverty via multiple avenues, one of them being women's economic empowerment

#### *Achievements*

- Setup of a myriad of self-employment programmes by the government, NGOs and provincial councils that focus on vocational training, skill development, providing marketing assistance and microcredit
- Setup of a microcredit venture by the Women's Bureau
- Women's Bureau employs a one-on-one strategy of identifying a particular problem and resolving it accordingly such as special economic programmes designed for households headed by women

#### *Action Plans*

- Reform of labor market regulations to narrow the gender wage gap in key industries such as tea, garments and domestic labor

#### *Challenges*

- Significant segment of the population still living below the poverty line with women being more affected by it than men
- Increased employment has not yet remedied the income disparity between the genders
- Women's unemployment much higher than men's unemployment
- Higher life expectancy for women means there are many poor women who are of old age and cannot provide for themselves
- Nearly 1 in 5 households are headed by women, a significantly high ratio that brings with it the related economic concerns and difficulties
- Negative attitudes of bank managers have prevented women from easily obtaining loans despite abundant state and private banks
- Majority of the women employed in the informal sector work low paying, unskilled jobs in unstable economic environments, which makes it difficult for government self-employment programmes to achieve sustainability and outreach with such women

### Civil Society

- Women's economic contribution particularly in Sri Lanka's most lucrative sectors (e.g. the tea plantations, free trade zones and migrant workers) is poorly assessed by patchy censuses and this makes it difficult to develop effective policies and action plans for women
- National Policy on Labor Migration seems to have disappeared under the radar since its development less than two years ago
- There has been no assessment done on the effectiveness of the many microfinance ventures in alleviating poverty amongst women and improving their status in society
- There is very little women's involvement in the development of macroeconomic policies and trade practices even though majority of the workers employed in primary level production phases are women
- Women are not yet benefiting from the various initiatives currently being taken to enhance tertiary education and vocational training, mainly because women are still limited to traditional roles and unskilled jobs
- Women's social mobilization and entrepreneurship are being met with discrimination

## Miscellaneous

### *Commitments*

- Constitution guarantees equal rights without discrimination based on gender
- "Mahinda Chinthanaya" is the government action plan that outlines public policies with special emphasis on ensuring gender equality, economic empowerment of women, providing support services for VAW survivors and increasing political participation of women
- Updated National Plan of Action for Women has been expanded to include new areas such as disaster preparedness, legal policy reforms and peace building

### *Achievements*

- Ratification of CEDAW
- Formulation of Women's Charter (1993) to ensure justice, equity and gender equality in all spheres of life in Sri Lanka
- National Plan of Action for Women (1996) was updated in 2007 in collaboration with NGOs, researchers and academics, in order to be implemented between 2008-2012, taking into consideration new perspectives and changing paradigms of gender development
- National Women's Committee is tasked with developing public policy to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, whilst the Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka is tasked with implementing that public policy
- Setup of gender focal points at senior levels in all ministries, coordinated by the Ministry of Child Development & Women's Affairs
- 45 workshops on gender mainstreaming and budgeting conducted by the Women's Bureau thus far
- Formation of a New Cadre comprising of 325 Women Development Officers assisted by 115 Relief Sisters to implement all gender programmes and activities and coordinate gender mainstreaming work at the divisional level, all supervised by the Women's Bureau
- Establishment of a Parliamentary Women's Caucus which cuts across all political lines to lobby for women-friendly legislation and policies
- Women's life expectancy is higher than that of men due to dedicated government health policies
- Awareness programmes about public interest litigation organized by the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, as well as sensitivity programmes aimed at members of the judiciary to

highlight the important of public interest litigation in the promotion of gender justice

*Action Plans*

- 2011 National Survey will cover gender responsive budgeting initiatives as well as other measures to ensure that women's economic contributions, particularly in the agricultural and informal sectors become visible in the national accounting system

*Challenges*

- Gender mainstreaming work progresses slowly because government officials are moved around from machinery to machinery quite frequently
- Gender focal points lack effectiveness
- Resource allocation at ministry level lacks equity due to gender insensitivity
- Surveys and research studies still do not concentrate on collecting comprehensive sex disaggregated data for key economic indicators such as land ownership, level of education, etc. and this has impaired development of policies and programmes
- Stereotyping and representing women in traditional roles and demeaning situations are still prevalent in mass media and pop culture
- Women's participation in governance across all levels is very poor compared to other SAARC countries mainly due to traditional stereotypes against women and the preventive effects of the civil war that lasted nearly three decades



## Pakistan Country Presentation

### Violence Against Women

#### Government

##### *Commitments*

- ☐ Constitution guarantees non-discrimination based on gender as well as affords protection of the marriage, the family, the mother and the child
- ☐ Prevent VAW and ensure investigation and prosecution of VAW perpetrators
- ☐ Provide support services and shelter to VAW survivors

##### *Achievements*

- ☐ Setup of Gender Crime Cell in the National Police Bureau to collect and analyze data on all forms of VAW
- ☐ Setup of 25 Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Crisis Centres thus far to provide support services to VAW survivors
- ☐ Setup of 24-hour Complaint Cells staffed by female officers in all police stations
- ☐ Provision of free legal aid to VAW survivors through government-run Women Centres
- ☐ Induction of female police officers into VAW cases and this in turn has encouraged more and more women to join the police service
- ☐ Establishment of the National Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Women

##### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Enact and implement the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection bill
- ☐ Establish a National Commission on Human Rights

##### *Challenges*

- ☐ Perpetrators of VAW are currently enjoying a sense of safety from public censure of their acts
- ☐ Culture and tradition has long been used to justify the subjugation of and violence against women
- ☐ There are deep-rooted patriarchal and feudal mindsets that make it highly difficult for Pakistan to overcome VAW
- ☐ There needs to be a joint mechanism at the SAARC level to combat VAW

#### Civil Society

- ☐ The issues affecting women's lives in South Asia, such as VAW and political and socioeconomic discrimination, are systemic to the region and so the efforts to change this reality have expectedly been slow, but nevertheless, this should not deter the civil society from continuing to pursue change by collecting data, conducting research, organizing pilot programmes and lobbying political figures
- ☐ The women's movement is an ongoing process with frequent turnover of actors in both the government and the civil society and hence the new activists joining the fray need to be quickly engaged so that movement does not lose momentum
- ☐ VAW has been highly publicized in electronic and print media by the civil society which in turn has helped the government to mobilize strategic interventions to address VAW
- ☐ Research done by organizations such as Aurat Foundation, Shirkat Gah, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Madadgaar Helpline are helping to increase the knowledge base that helps to formulate effective policies and strategies to combat VAW and enhance women's

## empowerment

- Sensitization of law enforcement officials on the issues of VAW survivors have been carried out by NGOs and human rights organizations
- The aggregation of data from different regions may not be as useful as previously perceived because the mitigating factors behind a gender issue such as VAW are diverse and vary widely based on religion, ethnicity, caste, social status, economic status, etc.
- Landmines along the volatile segments of the India-Pakistan border continue to pose a threat to women whose livestock sometimes stray into these hot zones
- Women's sexual desire and orientation suffers double standards in society when compared to men's sexual desire and orientation, which has led to women being sexually objectified and commodified, an issue that has not been raised audibly enough neither by the women's movement nor by the government

## Economic Security & Rights

### Government

#### *Commitments*

- Constitution ensures full participation of women in all spheres of national life

#### *Achievements*

- Formulation of the Medium Term Development Framework (2005-2010) which, amongst other things, advances gender mainstreaming through sector-specific efforts and enhancing the availability of microfinance for women
- Formation of the Benazir Income Support Programme initially budgeted at Rs. 34 billion to provide stipends and other social safety nets such as life insurance policies to ultra-poor households, particularly women-headed households
- Development of the National Social Protection Strategy (2007) to provide ultra-poor people, particularly women, with food security
- Setup of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) which has thus far disbursed Rs. 13.6 billion to women in the form of various initiatives such as microfinance, training programmes, development of utilities and infrastructure and provision of education and healthcare
- Expansion of microfinance facilities throughout Pakistan by both the government (e.g. Jafaqsh Aurat Project) and private banks which altogether given out Rs. 28.7 billion worth of microloans in 2009 to 1.7 million people, majority of whom were women
- Enactment of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace act (2010) , coupled with the amendment of the Criminal Law to include an updated definition of sexual harassment, serves to deter such acts by means penalties such demotion, compulsory retirement and dismissal of perpetrators

#### *Action Plans*

- Formulate and implement the People's Five Year Plan (2011-2015) to alleviate poverty with special emphasis on enhancing the lives of poor women
- Develop and implement the National Policy for Home Based Workers to formulate initiatives at the local and provincial level to protect the economic rights of nearly 8.52 million home-based workers
- Enact and implement the Working Women (Protection of Rights) Act to safeguard the life, property and honor of working women from exploitation

- Amend the Factories Act to make working conditions favorable enough for women to work comfortably and still have the energy and well-being to take care of their households
- Enact and implement the In-House Working Women Protection Act to recognize and protect the rights of women working at home
- Distribute holdings of 4 to 20 acres of land to needy women to grow food
- Amend the Family Courts Act to ensure speedy trial for cases pertaining to women's inheritance by fast-tracking them into the schedules of family courts
- Amend the Muslim Family Laws bill to ensure compensation for a breast-feeding divorcee from her ex-husband beyond her "waiting period"

#### *Challenges*

- Only about one in five employable women are working
- More than three-quarters of working women are involved in vulnerable employment
- Almost 75% of the 11 million female workers are informally employed in agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing and domestic work and paid half of the wages paid to men
- Unemployment rate of women is currently 8.52%, double the unemployment rate of men
- 98% of women in Pakistan don't own any land
- Disaster affected women cannot physically compete with men when trying to get their hands on relief packages, nor is the National Disaster Management Authority adequately staffed with enough women to cater to the specific needs of such women

#### **Civil Society**

- Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) are civil society organizations that are partnered with the PPAF and are present in 94 of Pakistan's 111 districts
- Setup of 46,000 Community Organizations by the RSPs to provide microfinance, vocational and enterprise development training to 700,000 women thus far
- Although the natural disasters of the past decade have been hugely detrimental for the people and economy of Pakistan, the government and civil society were brought together by their common goal to help the country recuperate from the disasters and this created an opportunity for the government to review its infrastructure and social mechanisms pertaining to women's needs and simultaneously, the civil society found the government to be more amenable to new policies and strategies that they had been lobbying for all along
- The religious minorities in Pakistan suffer discrimination and neglect and have difficulty accessing social safety nets and reaping the benefits of any socioeconomic development

#### **Miscellaneous**

##### *Commitments*

- Gender equality guaranteed in the Constitution

##### *Achievements*

- Formation of the National Commission on the Status of Women to provide recommendations to policy makers on achieving gender equality by reviewing discriminatory laws and regulations and monitor the progress of gender mainstreaming initiatives
- Formulation of the National Gender Reform Agenda by the Ministry of Women and Development to implement gender mainstreaming processes on an ongoing basis
- Gender sensitization and capacity building of the Federal Bureau of Statistics so that it can

- adequately collect, compile and submit sex disaggregated data to the SAARC Gender InfoBase
- ☐ Sensitization of CEDAW implementation in all initiatives of the line ministries and provincial departments
- ☐ Allocation of Rs. 25 billion to support women-specific programmes since 2005, as well as expenditure on enhancing the lives of the poor amounting to 5.86% of GDP
- ☐ Ratification of CEDAW
- ☐ Implementation of gender responsive budgeting with its six tools in all ministries
- ☐ Setup of CEDAW Provincial Committees throughout the country
- ☐ Ministry of Human Rights working with UNDP to address the issue of forced child marriage in some tribal areas
- ☐ Arrangement of awareness and advocacy programmes as well as various gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment initiatives by the Women Development Department of each provincial government
- ☐ Huge increase in women's registration for the National Identity Card which came about as a result of their desire to become eligible for the many social safety nets offered by the Benazir Income Support Programme which one cannot redeem with the ID card

#### *Action Plans*

- ☐ Amend the Guardians and Wards Act to allow mothers to keep custody of minors
- ☐ Amend the Criminal Law to criminalize certain practices and customs that indignify women
- ☐ Translate into Urdu and disseminate the CEDAW report to all stakeholders

#### *Challenges*

- ☐ One of the lowest ranked nations in the world in both gender development and global gender gap indices
- ☐ The ongoing conflict with the Taliban, the 2007 humanitarian crises in Swat, Malakand and South Waziristan and the 2010 floods (the worst natural disaster in the history of Pakistan) have altogether severely hampered all socioeconomic development in the country and affected the lives of over 24 million people, most of whom are women and children
- ☐ Progress towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment has been steady but slow
- ☐ Cultural traditions have been erroneously linked to religious injunctions and this has spawned a new type of soft conflict between the conservative and liberal sides of society

### Impact of The Financial Crisis on Women – by Mr. Farooq Sobhan

Mr. Farooq Sobhan is a former Bangladeshi diplomat and civil society leader. He served in various capacities in the Bangladesh government and Foreign Service as one of the leading diplomats of the country. He was Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary from 1995 to 1997, the highest ranking diplomat in the country. Currently, he is the President of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, a renowned private think-tank that focuses on private sector development. In his speech, Mr. Sobhan shared his views on the impact of the current financial crisis on women in South Asia.

- The financial crisis of 2007 to the present is a crisis that was triggered by a liquidity shortfall in the United States banking system. It has resulted in the collapse of large financial institutions, the bailout of banks by national governments, downturns in stock markets around the world and collapse of the global real estate bubble. This crisis is deep-rooted and pundits expect that it will take a long time for the world economy to recover.
- According to the World Bank, there will be 22-50 million unemployed people by the end of this crisis and about 1.5 billion people living below the poverty line. Although the effects of this crisis are global, women are expected to and indeed have suffered the most.
- The vulnerability of women in a poor economic climate is further aggravated by a lack of skill and a low literacy rate which is compounded by inadequate access to social safety nets and financial resources.
- It is generally perceived that men have a greater need for jobs and thus women are usually the first casualties of rampant unemployment. A similar phenomenon is seen during a food crisis, when women are “expected” to reduce their own nutritional intake in order to satisfy the men’s needs. Also, whenever household income drops, the education of young girls is one of the first expenditures to be sacrificed, forcing the girls to drop out.
- Loss of household income also directly leads to an increase in domestic abuse.
- The financial crisis has put a constraint on the funds available for dispensation as microcredit, which has arguably been the most effective driving tool for women’s economic empowerment and security.
- The governments in South Asia have indeed been very active in making gender-sensitive policy change and legislation to improve the status of women. However, it is equally important to immediately engage in direct poverty reduction strategies starting at the grassroots level.
  - < The top priority arguably should be broad-spectrum skill training for women. There are plenty of economic opportunities in the world right now, both locally and abroad, which women can take advantage of, such as the global shortage of nurses. Such vocational programs should be devised by all gender stakeholders i.e. the government, international organizations and civil society.
  - < Women’s entrepreneurship should be linked with social business. Promoting social business through the value chain can be a very effective way of increasing women’s employment. Any corporation that takes pride in its corporate social responsibility should make women’s employment their top priority.
  - < There needs to be more commercial innovations such as the Grameen Village Phone to give women more opportunities to become self-sustainable.
  - < IT literacy is hugely important for women so that they do not fall behind the men and do not miss out on the lucrative opportunities that the IT industry presents such as e-commerce.
  - < The standard of tertiary education in local institutions needs to be improved so that they can produce more capable, market-ready graduates. Curricula need to be formulated and grants need to be given for those fields of work that are in highest demand (e.g. Bangladesh needs more graduates in textile engineering).

- The single greatest problem hindering progress in the region is the fact that governments are not getting things done on the ground. Admirable policies and legislations are not translating into real projects and programmatic interventions that can help people at the grassroots level. This problem can only be addressed effectively by handing a greater role to civil society.
- Women should be given more roles to play in helping the world come out of the financial crisis. They must have a central role in addressing the issue of poverty alleviation by helping to determine the economic priorities and budget allocations in governments, multilateral and donor organizations.

### Comments from the SAARC Secretariat – by Mr. Riaz Hamidullah

Mr. Riaz Hamidullah is the Director of Agriculture & Rural Development and the SDF at the SAARC Secretariat. He had served extensively in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in various positions before taking up his current position in February 2008. During his speech, he spoke briefly of some of the initiatives being taken by SAARC on gender-related issues. He also explained how gender stakeholders in the region could work the SAARC Secretariat to make their concerns heard and advance their agendas.

Mr. Hamidullah began by highlighting two of SAARC's most prominent gender-related initiatives. One is the SAARC Technical Committee on Women, Youth & Children, which is a charter body tasked with addressing gender issues with concrete action. This committee provides the right kind of space for all gender stakeholders to raise the concerns and interests emanating from the ground regarding policies, strategies, programmes and projects. Mr. Hamidullah strongly encouraged UNIFEM to take advantage of this "forum" and mainstream the proceedings and commitments from this conference into the SAARC processes using either of the following channels:

- < Forwarding them to the SAARC Secretary General for him to determine which concerns and initiatives could be taken forward at the national government level. Mr. Hamidullah frankly revealed that there is little hope of receiving government backing for initiatives that do not concur with each government's national agenda. However, those that do can be pushed forward for action through the Technical Committee.
- < In the 16<sup>th</sup> Summit, it was decided to broaden the existing scope of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women & Children for Prostitution. This is a big opportunity for stakeholders to engage their government partners to discuss which new factors and elements pertaining to trafficking should be included in the expanded scope.

Mr. Hamidullah also encouraged the formation of national caucuses of legislators as it presents a tactically useful avenue for bringing gender issues to the table for the legislators to deliberate. Once they have reached that level, it becomes very easy to advance the issues on the ground in terms of strategies and programmatic interventions.

Mr. Hamidullah remarked the vigorous progress made by the SAARC member states in addressing various issues affecting women and children such education, healthcare, accommodation, climate change and the environment. But he also highlighted that despite the plethora of actions, issues that are of a cross-border nature remain somewhat neglected. These need to be addressed either by creating regional public goods or by collectively engaging with the countries. Therein lays the significance of the SAARC process and the way it is engaged in roping in the member states into action.

Mr. Hamidullah candidly expressed that the SAARC Secretariat felt that more could have been achieved from the time between the last biennial meeting and the current one. While it is important for a space to be created for larger collaboration amongst member states, at the same time it would be prudent to engage with the small stakeholders at the grassroots level with introductory projects and activities. This would allow for the demonstration of deliverables which could then be brought up for discussion at higher levels. The strength of the results of these minor projects on the ground would go a long way to convincing the governments and SAARC of pursuing much larger strategic interventions which the governments might not have previously seen eye-to-eye on.

Mr. Hamidullah concluded his speech by reminding the non-government stakeholders to maintain contact with their respective line ministries so that the commitments of this conference can be constantly followed up. It is important that when the Technical Committee meets periodically, the issues of primary concern are duly flagged and raised for discussion in the hope that a common denominator will be found amongst the member states. If so, it would ensure that those issues would get executive level backing and consequently the initiatives to address those issues would move seamlessly and more rapidly.

## Adoption of The Resolution

### **DHAKA RESOLUTION**

Adopted at

Seventh South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference Commemorating Beijing

3 – 5 October 2010

Dhaka, Bangladesh

WE, the Ministers, and representatives of the Governments in South Asia, women's organisations/networks, and members of civil society gathered at Dhaka from the 3rd to 5th October 2010 for the Seventh South Asia Ministerial Conference jointly organized by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the UNIFEM South Asia Sub-Regional Office

#### **RECOGNISING THAT:**

1. The countries of the South Asian region have made positive strides towards creating an enabling legislative environment to promote women's empowerment;
2. Such legislation has translated into strong policies, programmes and greater resource allocations, that are enabling the achievement of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action;
3. The efforts to mainstream the principle of gender equality in development frameworks, programmes and national plans needs to be further strengthened;
4. In some countries in the region, women still remain under-represented in decision making at all levels, and the voices and experiences of women remain largely unheard, in particular the voices of those women who have been impacted by disparities of class, caste, religion, ethnicity, geographic location, sexuality, and/or disability, and therefore face violence and economic insecurity;
5. Unforeseen challenges emerging out of continuing conflict/post-conflict situations, natural disasters, climate change, the economic crisis, and violence and HIV and AIDS, have compounded the marginalization of women;
6. Unsafe migration and human trafficking remains a major challenge across the region;
7. Violence against women continues to remain a priority concern in attainment of gender equality;
8. Poverty is exacerbated as development priorities shift to disaster management and internal security;



9. Responses to women's needs remain inadequate due to the rise/return of conservatism and religious fundamentalism in some countries, entrenched barriers to women's access to equal opportunities to resources, power and justice, gender stereotypes, and the lack of accountability mechanisms to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels;
10. There is a need to take measures for full implementation of international and regional human rights treaties, including the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
11. Women continue to face social exclusion as persons with disabilities, widows, single women-headed households, and women affected by HIV and AIDS and/or conflict/natural disaster; and
12. Access to economic resources, while essential, does not by itself guarantee economic, social and political empowerment and equality.

#### **AGREEING THAT:**

1. Responses to these challenges necessitate overcoming the barriers to gender equality within the dynamics of the changes taking place in South Asia;
2. The pace of responses needs to be accelerated and the frameworks for implementation need to be time-bound and targeted;
3. Legislative and policy initiatives to attain women's equality need to continue, and these should be implemented and monitored effectively through institutional mechanisms;
4. It is vital to undertake concrete actions within the upcoming two year period that involve making women agents of change and that are measurable through qualitative and quantitative analyses to be used by policy makers and planners to further inform programmatic action; and
5. We shall expedite work on implementing the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and further, continue the dialogue among South Asian countries on unsafe migration.

**HEREBY RESOLVE** to further strengthen our cooperation on a regional level AND to identify national initiative(s) that impact on the lives of women, and engage programme implementers and rights-holders to:

1. Undertake qualitative and quantitative research to identify specifics of the issue(s) to be addressed, generate gender-disaggregated data in the identified initiative, to develop programme design and facilitate their use for advocacy, capacity building, programming, policy and decision making Create awareness on the issue(s) at multiple levels;
2. Promote a process of removing existing gender stereotypes that impede gender equality, through the use of, among others, educational curricula and media;

3. Adopt concrete measures to enact and implement relevant legislative commitments and judicial orders to further gender equality;
4. Build multi-level capacities of critical stake-holders for responding to the nuanced needs of women in sector programmes, for programme implementation and long term sustainability;
5. Improve implementation of the initiative(s) by promoting democratic decentralized structures with equal participation of women;
6. Conduct social /gender audits against set indicators to measure programme effectiveness;
7. Draw upon performance and process indicators which directly measure and impact well-being with respect to gender equality, and
8. Engage the youth in promoting a society based on gender equality.

**WE URGE UN WOMEN** to assist Members States with technical and programmatic and institutional support to address gender-based violence and women's economic security.

**WE COMMIT** to move forward with implementation of this Resolution to ensure that women continue to realize their rights to substantive equality and continue to be active agents of change.

This resolution may be placed before the appropriate SAARC mechanism with a request to consider and integrate gender equality in the mainstream of the SAARC process.

**5 October 2010**

## Press Conference

The press conference was chaired by Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, the Bangladesh State Minister of Women & Children Affairs, and attended by Ms. Anne Stenhammer, Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM South Asia (part of UN Women) as well as the heads of the seven other delegations attending the conference. Before receiving questions from the press, Dr. Chaudhury presented a brief synopsis of the conference and its background, its relevance to the Beijing Platform for Action, the objectives and structures of the meeting, the topics discussed by the delegates and finally, the intended outcome, which is the Dhaka Resolution.

The Dhaka Resolution was still being deliberated by the delegates at the time of the press conference and hence was not available to be disseminated to the members of the press. Dr. Chaudhury and Ms. Stenhammer both explained to the press how the Resolution serves to bind the SAARC countries to a mutual commitment to achieve a set of targets to reduce VAW and enhance economic security for women in the region. Furthermore, Ms. Stenhammer appealed to the press to ensure that the Dhaka Resolution received ample coverage in all forms of media so that the regional stakeholders in gender equality and women's empowerment can get the motivation and impetus to hit the ground running to realize the targets of the Resolution before the next meeting in 2012.

When asked about whether the UN would provide any assistance, Ms. Stenhammer elaborated that the UN's technical support would be focused on aiding the government to engender policy making and mainstream gender into the national structure so that initiatives can become sustainable and, in the long run, gender equality becomes a way of life.

The press inquired as to whether any collective action will be taken by the SAARC member states to address the issue of trafficking. Mr. D. K. Sikri, the head of the Indian delegation, informed that a recently concluded home ministers' convention had finalized a set of standard operating procedures regarding trafficking and the member states are now heading towards implementing those procedures as soon as possible.

The press conference was concluded with a series of short statements from each of the heads of delegations. In general, the delegates were very pleased with the conduct and outcome of the conference and with the hospitality and competence of the host country in organizing the conference. They echoed the dire need to reduce VAW and the holistic importance of empowering women with better economic security and rights in South Asia. They were looking forward to the next meeting with a general feeling of optimism about the future of gender equality in the region as a result of the Dhaka Resolution.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 List of Delegates & Participants
- Appendix 2 Conference Agenda
- Appendix 3 *Everyday Equality: Be The Change*  
<http://www.unifem.org.in/PDF/Everyday%20Equality.pdf>
- Appendix 4 *Bell Bajao*  
<http://www.bellbajao.org>

## Appendix 1 : List of Delegates &amp; Participants

NAME	TITLE/DESIGNATION
<b>Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</b>	
Dr. Husn Banu Ghazanfar	Acting Minister of Women's Affairs
Ms. Anjuma Naimi	Director of Economics Dept., MoWA
Ms. Mari Wida	Head of Organization for Afghanistan Development
Ms. Mariam Rahmani	Country Representative, Afghan Women's Resource Center
<b>People's Republic of Bangladesh</b>	
Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury	State Minister of Women & Children Affairs
Dr. Hameeda Hossain	Co-Chair, South Asian Centre for Human Rights
Dr. Mahmuda Islam	Executive Member, Women for Women
Dr. Maleka Banu	Gen. Secretary, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad
Mr. Ashraf Hossain	Director General, Department of Women Affairs
Mr. Gulam Kibria	Joint Secretary, MoWCA
Mr. Mohammed Mijarul Quayes	Secretary, MoFA
Mr. Muhammad Hafizar Rahman	Additional Secretary, MoWCA
Mr. Ranjan Karmakar	Steps Towards Development
Mr. Reaz Ahmed	Joint Secretary (Development), MoWCA
Mr. S. K. Mojibul Hoque	Manager (Advocacy & Human Rights), BRAC
Mr. Tariq-Ul-Islam	Secretary-in-Charge, MoWCA
Mrs. Aroma Datta	Member, National Human Rights Commission
Mrs. Chem Ara Begum	Member of Parliament
Mrs. Meher Afrooz	Member of Parliament
Mrs. Nazma Akhtar	Member of Parliament
Mrs. Nilufar Zafarullah	Member of Parliament
Mrs. Rasheda K. Chowdhury	Executive Director, Gono Shakkharata Obhijan
Mrs. Rawshan Jahan Sathi	Member of Parliament
Mrs. Shahin Anam	Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation
Mrs. Shirin Akhtar	President, Karmajibi Nari
Ms. Ayesha Khanam	President, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad
Ms. Badrun Nessa	Deputy Secretary (Admin.), MoWCA
Ms. Hosne Ara Khan	Executive Director, USHA
Ms. Ismat Jahan	CEDAW Committee Member and Ambassador to Brussels
Ms. Mashuda Khatun Shefali	Executive Director, Nari Uddyog Kollan
Ms. Rokeya Kobir	Executive Director, Bang. Nariprogati Songha
Ms. Saida Muna Tasqem	Director General (UN), Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ms. Salma Ali	Executive Director, Bang. National Women Lawyers Association
Ms. Salma Khan	President, Women for Women
Ms. Shilpa Hafiza	Director (Advocacy and Gender, Justice & Diversity), BRAC
Ms. Sultana Kamal	Executive Director, Ain-O-Shalish Kendro
Prof. Husna Akhter	Member, Executive Committee
Prof. Momtaj Begum	Chairperson, Jatiyo Mahila Sangstha
<b>Kingdom of Bhutan</b>	
Mr. Dasho Bap Kesang	Ambassador, Royal Bhutanese Embassy

NAME	TITLE/DESIGNATION
Dr. Meenakshi Rai	Head of Community Outreach, RENEW
Mr. Karma J. Thinlay	Senior Desk Officer (Multilateral), Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Lobzang Dorji	Chief Administrative Officer, National Assembly of Bhutan
Mrs. Kunzang Lhamu	Chief Planning Officer (R&E), Gross National Happiness Commission
Ms. Tshewang Lhamo	Assistant Planning Officer, National Commission for Women & Children
<b>Republic of India</b>	
Mr. D. K. Sikri	Secretary, Ministry of Women & Child Development
Dr. Pam Rajput	Executive Director, Women Resource & Advocacy Centre
Mr. Shailesh Lakhtakia	Under Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of External Affairs
Ms. Rashmi Shukla Sharma	Joint Secretary (PR), Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Ms. Sangeeta Verma	Economic Adviser, MoWCD
Ms. Sonali Khan	India Country Director, Breakthrough
<b>Republic of Maldives</b>	
Ms. Mariya Ali	Deputy Minister of Health & Family
Ms. Fathimah Afiya	Network of Violence Against Women
Ms. Mariyam Sama	The President's Office
Ms. Sousan Luthufi	Commissioner for Programmes, Maldives Girl Guide Association
<b>Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal</b>	
Mr. Mahendra Prasad Shrestha	Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children & Social Welfare
Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti	SAATHI
Justice Kalyan Shrestha	Supreme Court
Mr. Diwakar Devkota	Director General (Women Development), MoWCSW
Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi	Joint Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
Mrs. Sapana Pradhan Malla	President, Forum for Women, Law & Development
Ms. Anjana Sakhya	Core Member, SAWW and Member (Steering Committee), APWW
Ms. Nainkala Thapa	Chairperson, National Women's Commission
Ms. Tika Dahal	Chairperson, Nepal Disabled Women's Association
<b>Islamic Republic of Pakistan</b>	
Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman	Adviser to Ministry of Women Development
Dr. Zille Huma	Parliamentary Secretary, MoWD
Mr. Kamran Michael	Provincial Minister of Women Development & Minorities, Punjab Gov.
Ms. Khawar Mumtaz	Executive Director, Shirkat Gah
Ms. Nighat Saeed Khan	Director, ASR
Ms. Salma Qureshi	Additional Secretary (Women Development Dept.), Balochistan Gov.
Ms. Sitara Ayaz	Prov. Minister of Wom. Dev. & Social Welfare, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Gov.
<b>Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka</b>	
Mr. M. L. A. M. Hizbullah	Deputy Minister of Child Development & Women's Affairs
Dr. Sepali Kottegoda	Director, The Women & Media Collective
Mrs. P. G. D. Pradeepa Serasinghe	Director, Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka
Ms. Kala Peiris	Executive Director, Siyath Foundation
<b>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)</b>	
Mr. Riaz Hamidullah	Director (Agriculture & Rural Development and SDF), SAARC Secretariat
<b>UNIFEM South Asia (part of UN Women)</b>	
Ms. Anne Stenhammer	Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM South Asia

NAME	TITLE/DESIGNATION
Mr. Adil Yazdanfar	Translator & Programme Assistant, UNIFEM Afghanistan
Mr. Anindit Roy Chowdhury	UNIFEM SARO
Mr. Govind Kelkar	UNIFEM SARO
Mr. Nurul Ameen	UNIFEM Bangladesh
Mrs. Laiqua Tabassum	UNIFEM Bangladesh
Mrs. Sabina Saeed	UNIFEM Bangladesh
Ms. Aisha Mukhtar	Programme Officer, UNIFEM Pakistan
Ms. Alice Harding Shackelford	Country Programme Director, UNIFEM Pakistan
Ms. Christine Ouellette	Country Programme Director, UNIFEM Afghanistan
Ms. Gita Gupta	UNIFEM SARO
Ms. Khadija Khondker	UNIFEM Bangladesh
Ms. Madhubala Nath	UNIFEM SARO
Ms. Naheed Mustafa Ahmed	Country Programme Director, UNIFEM Bangladesh
Ms. Samar Erum Nadeem	Programme Officer, UNIFEM Pakistan
Ms. Sangeeta Thapa	UNIFEM Nepal
Ms. Sushma Kapoor	UNIFEM SARO
Ms. Yamini Mishra	UNIFEM SARO
<b>Resource Personnel</b>	
Mr. Farooq Sobhan	Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Ms. Kamla Bhasin	India
Ms. Naina Kapur	Sakshi
Ms. Sara Hossain	Dr. Kamal Hossain & Associates
Ms. Smita Bharti	Sakshi
Prof. Madhura Swaminathan	Indian Statistical Institute

## Appendix 2: Conference Agenda

Day 1	Sunday, 3 <sup>rd</sup> October, 2010
10:00 – 11:15	INAUGURAL CEREMONY
09:30 – 10:00	Guests take their seats
10:00 – 10:05	Arrival of the Chief Guest
10:05 – 10:15	Recitation from The Holy Quran, The Bhagavad Gita, The Bible and The Tripitaka
10:15 – 10:20	Cultural performance
10:20 – 10:25	Chairperson of the Inaugural Ceremony: Mr. Tariq-ul-Islam Secretary-in-charge, Bangladesh Ministry of Women & Children Affairs
10:25 – 10:35	Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM South Asia (part of UN Women)
10:35 – 10:40	Special Guest: Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury Bangladesh State Minister of Women & Children Affairs
10:40 – 11:15	The Chief Guest: Sheikh Hasina Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
11:15 – 11:45	TEA
Session I	MODALITIES OF THE MEETING
11:45 – 13:30	GUEST SPEAKERS
Session I A	Modalities of the Meeting
11:45 – 12:00	Nomination of the Drafting Committee Presenter: Ms. Sushma Kapoor
Session I B	Equality: Be The Change A presentation on the background document for the conference Chair: Ms. Anne Stenhammer Presenter: Ms. Naina Kapur Bell Bajao
Session I C	A presentation about an Indian innovation at work Chair: Ms. Anne Stenhammer Presenter: Ms. Sonali Khan Measuring Poverty With a Gender Perspective A presentation on gender equality
Session I D	from an economic perspective Chair: Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman Presenter: Prof. Madhura Swaminathan
12:00 – 12:30	
13:30 – 14:20	LUNCH
Session II	COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS
14:20 – 16:00	
Session II A	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Presentation by the Government of Afghanistan Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Mr. M. L. A. M. Hizbullah (Sri Lanka) People's Republic of Bangladesh Presentation
Session II B	by the Government of Bangladesh Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Mr. Mahendra Prasad Shrestha (Nepal)
14:20 – 15:15	
15:15 – 16:00	
16:00 – 16:30	TEA
16:30 – 17:15	OFFICIAL GROUP PHOTOGRAPH
19:30	DINNER HOSTED BY THE BANGLADESH MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILDREN AFFAIRS



Day 2		Monday, 4 <sup>th</sup> October, 2010	
Session I	09:00 – 11:10	RECAP COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS GUEST SPEAKERS	
	09:00 – 09:10	Recap of Day 1 Presenter: Ms. Madhubala Nath	
Session I A	09:10 – 09:55	Kingdom of Bhutan Presentation by the Government of Bhutan Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Mr. D. K. Sikri (India) Update from the 54 <sup>th</sup> CSW on Beijing +15	
Session I B	09:55 – 10:10	Chair: Ms. Naheed Ahmed Presenter: Dr. Pam Rajput Republic of India Presentation by the	
Session I C	10:10 – 10:55	Government of India Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Mr. Dasho Bap Kesang (Bhutan)	
	10:55 – 11:15	TEA	
Session II	11:15 – 13:30	COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS GUEST SPEAKERS	
Session II A	11:15 – 12:00	Republic of Maldives Presentation by the Government of Maldives Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman (Pakistan) Impediments to Reducing Violence Against Women	
Session II B	12:00 – 12:45	Chair: Ms. Ismat Jahan Presenter: Ms. Kamla Bhasin Panel Discussion on Lived Realities of Women	
Session II C	12:45 – 13:30	Chair: Ms. Naina Kapur Co-chair: Ms. Kamla Bhasin Panel: Ms. Marium Akhtar, Ms. Tahmina Begum and Ms. Hasina  Akhtar	
	13:30 – 14:20	LUNCH	
Session III	14:20 – 19:00	FIELD TRIPS	
	14:20 – 15:35	Assembly in the lobby for departure	
Session III A	15:35 – 18:00	BRAC Safe Migration Facilitation UNIT / One Stop Crisis Centre Field trips to local NGOs working on VAW and Economic Security	
Session III B	18:00 – 19:00	Facilitated de-brief of field trips	
	19:30	DINNER HOSTED BY UNIFEM (part of UN WOMEN)	

Day 3		Tuesday, 5 <sup>th</sup> October, 2010	
Session I	09:20 – 11:15	RECAP COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS	
	09:20 – 09:30	Recap of Day 2 Presenter: Ms. Sushma Kapoor	
Session I A	09:30 – 10:15	Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal Presentation by the Government of Nepal Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Mr. Ashraf Hossain (Bangladesh)	
Session I B	10:15 – 11:00	Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka Presentation by the Government of Sri Lanka Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Ms. Mariam Rahmani (Afghanistan)	
	11:00 – 11:30	TEA	
Session II	11:30 – 13:00	COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS GUEST SPEAKERS	
Session II A	11:30 – 12:15	Islamic Republic of Pakistan Presentation by the Government of Pakistan Reflections from civil society Facilitated discussion Chair: Ms. Mariya Ali (Maldives) Impact of the Financial Crisis on Women Chair:	
Session II B	12:15– 13:00	Presenter: Ms. Fathimah Afiya Mr. Farooq Sobhan	
	13:00 – 13:50	LUNCH	
	13:50 – 15:30	Country group work	
	15:30 – 16:00	TEA	
Session III	16:00 – 19:00	DRAFTING OF THE RESOLUTION GUEST SPEAKERS	
Session III A	16:00 – 16:45	Comments from the SAARC Secretariat Chair: Ms. Anne Stenhammer Presenter: Mr. Riaz Hamidullah	
Session III B	16:45 – 18:30	Discussion and adoption of the resolution Chair: Mr. Riaz Hamidullah Co-chairs: Ms. Anne Stenhammer and Ms. Ismat Jahan	
Session III C	18:30 – 19:00	Closing Remarks Facilitator: Ms. Sushma Kapoor	
	19:00	PRESS CONFERENCE	