

“Celebrating women’s gains.... Confronting emerging gender issues”

UNESCAP will be holding a *High Level Intergovernmental Meeting* to review ten years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) on *September 6-9, 2004 in Bangkok*. A comprehensive regional paper based on reports emerging from UNESCAP member countries’ response to the questionnaire by the UN will be prepared. The outputs from this regional government meeting will input into the *Extended Meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women for the Review and Appraisal of Implementation of the BPFA and the Outcome Document*, to be held in March 2005.

Informal meetings of NGOs held in Manila and in Bangkok revealed that there is a consensus among NGOs that this meeting cannot be ignored, despite concerns that holding such a meeting might open up negotiations of the text of the BPFA. To reaffirm our commitment to the BPFA, the women’s movement must continue to participate in international agenda setting and policy making. We must continue to engage governments and other actors, at all levels, in order to ensure advancement of women’s human rights especially in these critical times with the re-emergence of patriarchal challenges.

The NGOs from Asia-Pacific are convening an *“Asia-Pacific NGO Forum”* from *30 June-July 3 in Bangkok*. The Asia-Pacific NGO Forum is a logical and important follow through by the women’s movement of what, by far, has been an effective civil society engagement with official UN sponsored policy-making processes. The objective of this regional NGO forum will be to set in motion a process for the women NGOs and other civil society groups to prepare, consolidate and advocate their findings and recommendations at the Asia-Pacific level and to conduct follow up at the CSW 2005 and other international fora.

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Specific objectives will include:

1. To consolidate the outputs of NGO monitoring of BPFA implementation, including other UN conventions and conferences as feedback to governments, the UN, international development agencies and the civil society, on the gains achieved and remaining gaps;
2. To articulate the position of women in Asia-Pacific on recent developments in the economy, geo-politics, technology and the environment regarding their impact on society, particularly the new gender issues (or new dimensions to old issues) that have emerged as a result;
3. To catalogue innovative interventions and successful projects with particular focus on the role of NGOs and civil society, and partnerships with government;
4. To establish a mechanism for women's NGOs and other civil society groups to influence the official UN review and appraisal process.

The outputs of the NGO forum will include -

1. "The Purple Book" containing:
 - a. NGO Evaluation of the impact of the BPFA on women's lives, and an appraisal of remaining major obstacles to achieving target outcomes under each of the 12 critical areas of concern;
 - b. NGO Analysis of emerging gender issues, or new dimensions to existing concerns, that require concerted action by development actors;
 - c. NGO Recommendations to governments, inter-governmental bodies, international development agencies and other actors;
 - d. NGO Plan of Action that they themselves will implement, whether in the area of monitoring, advocacy, networking or actual interventions or services addressing gaps and new/emerging issues.
2. Catalogue of Participating NGO Projects in the *Gender and Development Marketplace* showcasing successful interventions across the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPFA, as well as on CEDAW.

The outputs of this Forum are expected to feed into the Intergovernmental Meeting from 6-9 September 2004 and CSW 2005.

We urge you to take part in this important process. You can:

- *Monitor your country's implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;*
- *Support inter-country or regional assessment of progress of women in any of the twelve critical areas of concern;*
- *Recommend successful NGO projects for the Gender and Development Market Place;*
- *Bring your reports, projects and insights to the Asia-Pacific NGO Forum on any of the special sessions.*

The NGO forum welcomes individuals and organizations from various sectors—civil society, parliament, inter-governmental bodies, donors and business. The main criteria is an understanding of gender related issues and full commitment without reservation, to the provisions, objectives and proposed action plan in the BPFA and the CEDAW.

For more information, you could write to:

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