

Issues Paper
CSW Interactive Panel Discussion on
“Future perspectives on the promotion of gender equality:
through the eyes of young women and men”
9 March 2005, 3-6 p.m.

Background

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) noted that “discrimination against women begins at the earliest stages of life and must therefore be addressed from then on onwards” (para 38). It gave specific consideration to issues of young women in nine¹ out of the twelve critical areas of concern. It recognized youth organizations as important and effective partners in development programmes and young women were encouraged to participate in youth organizations. The vulnerability of young women and adolescents, particularly in relations to HIV/AIDS, discrimination, mortality and access to education, was addressed. The need to take up special measures to ensure that young women have the necessary life skills for active and effective participation in all levels of social, cultural, political and economic leadership was also raised. The Beijing Platform for Action also emphasized the need for the international community to make commitments and take special measures to inspire that new generations of women and men work together for a more just society (para 40).

The benefits of non-discriminatory education for both girls and boys and its contribution to more equal relationships between women and men and to promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men were emphasized in the Platform for Action. The development of training programmes and materials on gender equality for teachers and educators, was urged to promote equality, cooperation, mutual respect and shared responsibilities between girls and boys from pre-school onward. The development of appropriate information programmes that make the public, particularly parents, aware of the importance of non-discriminatory education and the equal sharing of family responsibility by girls and boys was emphasized. Governments and international and regional intergovernmental institutions and non-governmental institutions were encouraged to consider to establish educational programmes for girls and boys to foster a culture of peace.²

The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 (para 43) referred to the needs for increased attention to the unmet needs of adolescent girls and young women. It also mentioned that commitments were needed at the international level to strengthen and promote programmes to encourage dialogue among youth between and among developed and developing countries. The need for increased research on men’s and boy’s roles and all forms of violence was discussed in the document. The persistence of negative stereotyping of girls and boys was considered an obstacle in implementing the Platform for Action. Furthermore it was considered that men and boys should be actively involved in efforts to achieve the goals of the Platform for Action and its implementation. Achieving gender equality was required redressing inequalities between women and men and girls and boys, the development of policies and implementation of programmes, particularly for men and boys, on changing stereotypical attitudes and behaviours concerning gender roles and strengthening campaigns and gender equality training among women and men, boys and girls, to eliminate the persistence of harmful stereotypes.³

¹ Women and Poverty, Education and Training of Women, Women and health, Violence against women, Women and the economy, Women and armed conflict, Women in Power and Decision Making, Women and the Media and The Girl-Child

² Beijing Platform for Action, paras. 69, 72, 83(b), 83(i), 83(l), 146(d).

³ A/RES/S-23/3, paras. 95(b), 22, 58, 52, 82(j), 82(k)

The Commission on the Status of Women discussed issues concerning young women and men in agreed conclusions from its annual sessions from 1997-2004, covering inter alia, violence against women, human rights, the girl child, media and information and communications technologies (ICT) and poverty eradication.⁴

The Commission highlighted the role of youth organizations in preparing young people to build a society based on respect and solidarity. The Commission also emphasized the important links between girls, gender stereotyping and the media, as well the need to ensure women's early and full participation in the area of ICT⁵ and The importance of training young people on the human rights of women.⁶ The links between gender equality, the spread of HIV/AIDS and young women and men was also discussed by the Commission.⁷

The Commission on the Status of Women for the first time took up the discussion on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality at its 48th session. An Expert Group Meeting on the Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality, organized by the Division for the Advancement for Women prior to the Commission provided an input into the consideration of the issue. The Commission recognized in its agreed conclusions that men and boys can and do contribute to gender equality and that their involvement in partnership with women and girls is essential to achieving the goals of gender equality, development and peace. Men and boys were encouraged to continue to take positive initiatives to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender equality. Governments were urged to develop information campaigns specifically targeting boys and young men on the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality.⁸

Incorporating gender equality is essential for the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Young women and men and youth organization are key resources in promoting gender equality. Adopting policies and actions to stimulate the involvement of young women and men in gender equality work can speed up achieving the goals of gender equality and the overall goals of the MDGs.

Issues for Consideration

The discussion should focus on the priorities and strategies of young women and men to promote gender equality as well as the ways and means of enhancing and supporting the engagement of young women and men. Examples of concrete initiatives by young women and men, or by Governments and other actors to support the initiatives of young women and men, and good practices and lessons learned should be shared. Areas of future action should be identified.

Issues covered could include, inter alia, unequal power relations, including in relation to sexual and reproductive health; employment; ICT as an empowering tool; participation in decision-making; violence against women; education for gender equality; the role of media in eliminating gender stereotypes; and the importance of youth organizations for promoting gender equality.

⁴ ECOSOC resolution 1997/17; 1998/12 I, III, IV; 1999/17; 2001/5; A, B; 2002/5 A; 2003/44; 2004/11

⁵ ECOSOC resolution 2001/5; 2003/44

⁶ CSW Agreed Conclusions 1997/4, para 1.

⁷ ECOSOC resolution 1999/17; 2001/5

⁸ ECOSOC resolution 2004/11