

# Observation of Preparatory Activities on Gender for WSF

## 1. FEMNET FEMINIST DIALOGUE PROGRAMME

Feminist Dialogues (FD) began since 2001 Porto Alegre (but FDs held pre-WSF started in Mumbai -2004). Objective is to use WSF as alternative to UN space that hitherto provided forum for feminist discourse for popular feminist interchange between women's movements to engage and shape UN, as well as UN member states and related international institutions.

However, WSF is a contested space, hence pre-FD are held two days prior to WSF for strategising and mentoring old and young feminists on how to influence WSF and beyond for women's empowerment.

### 1.1 Bamako FD (January 2006)

No pre-WSF session due to limited funding. Outcome from polycentric

- i) About 300 women from all walks of life attended the session – offering translation and organisational challenges! – Adequate space and professional interpreters needed for all social forum sessions;
- ii) Acceptance that feminism has generated debate and discussion all over the world. Creating awareness about feminism and its practice in the African women's movement (perhaps by using African Woman's Day on September 29 – could be used as follow-up to WSF and preparations for next WSF);
- iii) Use of FDs for mentoring upcoming feminists – and also speaking to and reaching out to others (both young and old, women from the local level) through ICTs and the tradition media
- iv) Insisting on the equal involvement of African women as session Chairs, facilitators, speakers during the WSF – to make appeal to ASF Council and IC;
- v) Establishing partnerships with Asian and other southern women as well as with northern/western women before the WSF;
- vi) Pooling of resources and solidarity essential for establishing base for upcoming young women activists.
- vii) Advocating for domestication & implementation of existing regional and international law;
- viii) Advocated for early planning for WSF 2007;

### 1.2 Nairobi Pre- Feminist Dialogue (August'06)

- i) Held a 3<sup>rd</sup> planning meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, for the second pre-FD meeting in Nairobi, Kenya a day or two before the WSF
- ii) The Pre-Feminist Dialogue held in Nairobi and hosted by FEMNET brought women together to know more about WSF in January and to talk about their work. It motivated the participants to talk about talking in view of the danger that they can run the risk of being quiet forever even within the movement.
- iii) Participants were global feminists from all regions: Europe, N. America, Latin America, Asia and Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia)
- iv) Feminist dialogues be part of sessions at national and sub-regional forums
- v) FD's Coordinating Group (CG) comprises 12 networks (includes African CSOs: FEMNET, DAWN-Africa, Akina Mama wa Afrika; Baobab, AAWORD). Some of the CG members (from Asia and Latin America) are on IC of WSF

### 1.3 Feminist Dialogue (17-19 January 2007)

Issues emerged to be taken up during FD 2007:

- o Feminists struggles of inclusion, democracy, space within social movements
- o Need for interrogating feminists position in the WSF in the context of lack of reciprocity from other movements
- o Analysis of state and citizenship rights in the context of loosening state monopoly to other players
- o Demystifying feminism
- o Construction of feminist movements versus construction of feminist cultures and practice of politics within one's own movement and in other movements
- o How the feminist movement in FDs will organise for a feminist movement or for linkages with other linkages with other movements and transformation of political structure?

### 1.4 Interventions suggested for the World Social Forum. They include:

- o a controversy dialogue on anti-war and fundamentalism.
- o A central panel to interrogate radical citizenship,
- o Women's rally
- o an inter-belief dialogue

### 1.5 Logistics

- o An information and communications strategy that would include an information desk, listing of events to be made available to all participants and webpage of FD link with other web

(<http://feministdialogues.isiswomen.org>).

- Participation at FD is by invitation – open application by e-mail – but about 300 will be picked based on info given
- in application (mindful of representation of categories: regions, age, themes, etc.)

## 2. SASF GENDER PROCESS

National forums included gender components that constituted part of inputs into the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of SASF held in Malawi (13-15 October 2006). ONLY two countries had held national social forum before SASF.

### Gender Cluster (October 2006)

- 2.1 There were 10 clusters under which similar thematic issues were discussed, 2 hours per session and self-organised events (i.e. each with its own speakers, rapporteurs, translators in English and local language – Chichewa) and summarised on final day by delegates themselves); However gender issues were tackled in generic clusters too.
- 2.2 Uniquely the gender cluster was Tent 1, which was a rare advantage since it meant that its summary was heard first and thus set the tone for subsequent reports!
- 2.3 Summary of 21 recommendations/outcomes relevant to WSF:
  - i) Use of interpretation into local languages to ensure meaningful participation of grassroots women
  - ii) Across board diversified delegations along: sex; gender, age; rural/urban; poor/middle/high income, disability, themes, etc.;
  - iii) Female parity representation on each panel due to multi-discipline effects of gender issues (national, sub-regional, regional and global levels);
  - iv) Intensifying the principle of feminism in African activism at all levels of discrimination: i.e. political & economic protocols, constitutions & laws, culture & tradition, education syllabus, religion, media, etc;
  - v) Implementation of women's human rights treaties;
  - vi) Formed a "SASF Gender Network" to spearhead inclusion of gender issues within SASF process and beyond e.g. organisation of a gender cluster as a mandatory event – about 108 founding members at the forum (comprising: Malawi (75: F63/M12); South Africa (2F); Zambia (37N: F35/M2); Zimbabwe 2N (2F).

### 3. Ghana Feminist Dialogue (November 2006)

A pan-African session was organised in Ghana that included how to mobilise African women and girls to participate and influence the discussions at Nairobi WSF. A report can be obtained through FEMNET Secretariat in Nairobi.

### 4. Suggestions for ASF Plan of Action

- i) Provide solidarity funding to women delegates to WSF to ensure diversity of gender issues by different actors – these could be identified through secretariats of national and sub-regional social forum
- ii) All countries and ASF council should aim at gender equity in their delegations – to follow the SASF Gender Cluster resolution above (2.3.iii)
- iii) Panel organisers should adopt Bamako FD resolution above 1(iv) - that women should be represented at all panels as speakers and a critical mass of representation of females among chairs and facilitators.
- iv) ASF should be given copies of reports by organisers of social forum (local, national and sub-regional levels) – these should inform the ASF secretariat on current mobilisation methods, recognised gender issues and level/scale of participation of women – this info could form day one issue of *African Flame*.
- v) Host central events including "Women's Court" or "Peace Tent" and a session on 'Reform of International Institution's' by co-organising with notable thematic movements – the first is now an institutional feature of ASF and the second has also been well managed by women civil society organisations at past women's UN forums and the latter covers the four main themes of ASF (gender, trade, debt and labour).
- vi) Link up with registered African organisations and individuals in order to:
  - Inform them of African events e.g. 'women's court', 'peace tent', 'women's rally', etc and request their input in terms of banners, relevant display material, helping out (volunteering), to name few.
  - persuading delegates with events to work in coalition where their themes overlap
  - Cooption into ASF panels since they would already be sponsored and available
  - Future link for subsequent social forum activities concerning gender and other issues of the region.

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