

## **Cyber dialogues summary one WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Date:** 2 March 2005

**Theme:** Women's Human Rights

**Panelists:** Athaliah Molokomme (High Court Judge, Botswana), Gladys Mutukwa (Acting Regional Co-ordinator, WILDAF), Yifatt Susskind (Associate Director, MADRE) and Charlotte Bunch (Executive Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership)

**Quote for the day:** *"There are no quick fix answers and we know that we have to go on and on in order for rights to be protected. Having instruments and laws is a threshold that must be accompanied by actions in all areas? Human rights are indivisible and inalienable. WE don't get them as gifts from governments at all. The fight has to go on."*  
Gladys Mutukwa

### **1. What have been the key gains for women's rights over the last ten years?**

- The Ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.
- Widespread corruption in amongst government officials in many parts of the world present obstacles.
- In Togo people can speak openly about women's rights and there are women's organisations advocating for women's human rights.
- In Southern Africa women's rights have been recognized as human rights and women are more aware of their rights.
- Gender issues have been institutionalized enhancing women's rights.
- In several countries courts of law have upheld the rights of women.
- More women in government.
- The SADC Declaration on the eradication of violence against women and children.

### **2. Do you think the BPFA has helped improve women's human rights?**

- In Cameroon it has contributed to curbing environmental hazards for rural women.
- It provides a comprehensive list of women's basic rights.
- Beijing has become a word that is synonymous with human rights; it has put human rights on the agenda.

### **3. What are some of the challenges we need to address?**

- Female genital mutilation.
- There are still many women who do not know their rights.
- Most information and communication on women's rights addresses macro issues not the local conditions women are in.
- People often see women's rights and religious belief systems as contradictory.
- The contradictions that exist between customary and other systems of law.
- The perceived contradictions that between cultural beliefs and women's rights.
- Women who assert their rights experience back lash.
- Women have power in women's groups but cannot exercise that power in the home.
- Few women outside organisations know about the BPFA.

- The lack of implementation of the BPFA.
- Globalisation has marginalised women further.
- Limited political commitment from government.
- The violation of women's rights in conflict areas.

**4. How can we address some of these challenges? What innovative projects are happening in your country? Action points.**

*Education and awareness raising*

- Educate women and girls about their rights.
- Educate boy children about girl's rights.
- Need to foster solidarity amongst women.
- Translate laws and declarations into local languages.

*Policy and legislation*

- In Cameroon there are free law clinics.
- Need to have more women in positions of power so that they can influence national, regional and international policy frameworks.
- To establish women's rights violation tribunals in conflict areas.

*ICTs*

- In India there is a Community Media Trust, rural women are trained in video journalism, make documentaries about issues that affect them and show them in other villages.
- Need to develop information and communication strategies that address local community needs.
- In Uzbekistan, girls have been linked to technology as way of educating girls to be leaders.

**5. Results from the poll question**

The majority of people who responded to the poll question believed that girls should be given a choice when they were pregnant, they should be able to choose between staying and finishing school or leave to have the baby and come back to school.

