

**COMMUNIQUE FROM THE SADC GENDER AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
NGOS TO THE SUB-REGIONAL DECADE REVIEW MEETING ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR
ACTION IN THE SADC,
LUSAKA 26-29 APRIL 2004**

PRESENTED ON APRIL 27, 2004

INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness programme SARDC- WIDSAA in collaboration with the Non governmental organization coordinating council (NGOCC) in Zambia, we, the representatives of women's human rights, women's empowerment and gender and development non-governmental organisations from eleven countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) met in Lusaka, Zambia on 25 April 2004, at a special session devoted specifically to reviewing the achievements, challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by our states in September 1995.

We gathered in Lusaka to undertake a critical review and assessment of the situation and status of African women and girls and to reflect further on new challenges and opportunities that the leaders of our region can take to further add to those strategies that have thus far been moderately successful in advancing women's empowerment and equality.

We recognize and commend the efforts by our respective national governments and parliaments, our regional and continental organisations and national, regional international NGOs, particularly women's rights organisations and gender and development organisations who have over the last ten years remained consistently committed to improving the status and condition of women in the region.

We acknowledge the support that the international women's rights movement, the United Nations agencies, bilateral agencies, the private sector and other communities and stakeholders have provided in raising awareness about the importance of striving towards gender equality and equity.

We further acknowledge that, to successfully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Dakar Africa Platform for Action, the SADC Gender and Development Declaration, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and our respective national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment that there is need to provide stronger and more committed political will.

There is further need to provide and determinedly protect financial and human resources at national and international levels.

We are deeply concerned about the rapid spread of HIV infection in our countries and the millions of deaths caused by AIDS, which is testimony to the continued unequal power relations between women and men in our societies. The June 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS established a clear link between women's inability to exercise their human rights and their vulnerability to HIV infection.

As the majority of the continent's care givers women and girls experience first hand the devastating and severe impact of the diseases.

We recognize that given women's subordinate position and lack of power special measures will be required to protect Africa's women and girls from all forms of public and private sexual and gender based violations.

We note with grave concern the misconceptions that have arisen around 'gender mainstreaming' as the identified approach to give women equal access to opportunities in all sectors. Some governments have interpreted the approach to mean mainstreaming 'traditional gender roles' whereby women are still unable to break through the 'glass ceilings' into decision-making positions.

Gender mainstreaming also has been simplistically defined as the social roles of women and men without any analysis of the unequal power relations within structures, which hinder women's effective participation. This interpretation of the approach has led to situations where gender mainstreaming is viewed as the sole responsibility of women, and it is seen as a 'favor', rather than as a strategic means to bring about gender justice and equality.

A strong review of 'gender mainstreaming' at the continental, regional, national and civil society levels within countries must be undertaken to develop approaches that result in transformation, rather than mere reform, of the patriarchal structures.

Information is a key resource for development, yet the advancement of women has been hampered by the lack of adequate sex- disaggregated data in all sectors to monitor and evaluate women's progress in relation to men. This is a gap in measuring the real gains and setbacks since the 1995 Beijing Conference, and is essential for developing effective and responsive policies and programmes that bridge the inequalities between women and men.

In this regard, we recall and reaffirm our commitment to all relevant decisions, declarations and resolutions in the area women's empowerment and equality, gender and development and human rights.

A. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; and, (B) Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources

We acknowledge the commitments made by SADC governments to eradicate poverty. We make note that despite the concerted efforts of the leadership of the region, there has been a huge increase of poverty among the region's populations and that women and girls form a startling 70% of those living in extreme poverty. It has resulted in a massive growth in cross border trading activities by women informal traders, who often endure dehumanising conditions as they strive to supplement their family incomes.

Poverty also is a result of high levels of corruption and the non-strategic allocation of resources in country's national budgets (e.g. more spending on defence than health or education).

As AIDS increases the numbers of the infirm in our populations women and girls have been over burdened with the twin responsibilities of home based care giving and economic production at the household and community level, all this in an environment of globalisation and economic neo liberalism.

Women's growing food and nutrition insecurity, the increased number of households and especially poor households that are led by women provide overwhelming evidence of the feminisation of poverty in our region.

Debt servicing and economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have disproportionately harmed women, in many cases forcing them to adopt additional mechanisms for economic survival. This has in many cases included transactional sex. Given the regions phenomenal burden of HIV and AIDS, it is critical to provide lasting, rooted solutions that eliminate the economic impoverishment and oppression of women.

Research carried out in the SADC region shows that women and girls did not benefit from economic structural adjustment programmes. In fact SAPs have seriously affected the direction of expenditure to the social services of health and education, sectors that women and girls derive great benefit from.

Women are the majority of the population in the SADC region yet they are minority actors in so far as making critical economic decisions is concerned. Women do not have access to and control over resources and have remained locked into micro-credit, small-scale loans and income generating projects. These have broadly failed to uplift women from poverty permanently.

While economic reforms had the aim of improving the region's economic performance and benefit women who form the bulk of economic contributors in the informal and communal sector, economic reforms have in fact continued to sideline women.

Recognizing these concerns the following actions should be taken:-

Governments

1. Adopt macro-economic and monetary policy frameworks that promote pro-poor growth that has a trickle down effect.
2. By December 2006, all SADC countries adopt pro-poor gender responsive budgeting as the approach for allocating resources at the national and local government levels.
3. By December 2006, all countries in the SADC region should conduct a time-use study and develop indicators to account for the work performed by women as unpaid care work in national accounts.
4. That there be a concerted effort to invest in infrastructure so as to bring resources closer to homes and reduce the burden of women's care work.
5. That women form no less than 50% of all bodies that make decision on economic policy.
6. That to democratize the economic decision making process all Parliamentary Committees responsible for Finance, Industry, Commerce and Trade have no less than 50% of its members as women and ensure that 50 % of all economic resources are targeted towards directly benefiting women and further that 50% of all macro economic, substantive trade and industry business opportunities are made available to women.

7. In force laws that guarantee that women form no less than 50% of the beneficiaries of land redistribution schemes and have access to, control over and ownership of land in their own right.

8. That countries develop monitoring mechanisms to measure the impact of economic policies.

NGOs

1. Develop parallel processes to monitor the implementation and impact of macro-economic policies on women and girls.

2. Provide expertise on gender responsive budgeting to all stakeholders for effective implementation.

3. Lobby governments to include unpaid care work in the national accounts; provide with statistics and indicators illustrating the methodology that may be used to account for unremunerated labour.

3. Raise public awareness and provide fora for public debate on the impact of macro-economic policies on women and girls.

C. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training

We acknowledge the gains some countries have made in advancing towards the target of education for all by providing universal free primary and secondary education to girls, especially those in vulnerable positions and/or living in the rural areas.

The following actions should be implemented to slow the rollback in educational gains in many countries:

Governments

1. Establish commissions to review the quality and content of education with a view to improving declining standards.

2. Revise and rewrite all curricula in a gender responsive manner.

3. Remove school fees and other indirect fees and levies that limit girls' access to education.

4. Put in place scholarship programmes, specifically for girls.

5. Put in place special provisions to enable girls to enter tertiary education institutions, especially in areas where there is a deficit of girls, such as the sciences.

6. Put in place stiffer penalties to punish teachers who sexually abuse their pupils.

7. Allow pregnant girls to return to school after delivery in all countries. This procedure should be backed with a conducive, non-discriminatory policy framework.

8. Make special provisions for girls in difficult circumstances, especially those in households that have been affected by HIV and AIDS, to receive education.

9. Ensure that the curriculum at tertiary institutions includes mandatory modules in women's, gender and feminist studies.

NGOs:

1. Develop public campaigns to build public understanding and attitudinal changes towards allowing the return of pregnant girls to school.
2. Develop public campaigns to raise awareness about the sexual abuse of girls in schools.
3. Monitor the extent of implementation and enforcement of Affirmative Action programmes for girls to enter tertiary education institutions, and report on any gaps in policy implementation.

D. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services

The 1997 SADC Gender Declaration's commitment to making "quality and reproductive health service more accessible to women", reinforces the Beijing Platform for Action's commitment to providing equal access to quality health care to ensure the full rights of women. The socio-economic context of most SADC countries provides a challenge to securing this right as most economies are depressed, and macro economic policies have impacted negatively on socio-economic rights, including provision of quality health care, particularly reproductive and maternal health care for women.

Very few countries still provide free access to health care for expectant mothers, and post maternity support. Few countries have reviewed primary health care services, and no serious inroads have been made to reduce maternal and infant mortality. There are few campaigns to provide women with more information on their reproductive rights, as well as those aimed at tackling the socio-cultural issues impacting on women's ability to negotiate both their reproductive and sexual rights.

We recommend that:

Governments

1. Remove user fees for all women seeking health care services.
2. Reduce maternal mortality in line with the Millennium Development Goal No. 5 (i.e. reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio).
3. Provide expectant mothers with ARVs to reduce parent to child transmission of HIV and ensure that once HIV positive women have given birth, they are placed on comprehensive ARV treatment programmes for their own health.
4. Reduce infant mortality or underweight births.
5. Provide access to a broad range of female controlled protective devices such as microbicides and condoms as contraception and protection from HIV and STIs.
6. Revising macro-economic policies to ensure that they are pro-poor; and national budgets are

gender sensitive to take into account women's health care needs.

7. Conduct medical research in the field of women's health care needs and ensure health care service provision responds to women's specific health care needs.

8. Widen rights through legislative reform that permits access to safe and affordable abortion

NGOs

1. Undertake massive campaigns to raise awareness of and advocate for health care services in the areas of cervical and breast cancers

2. Advocate for the pro-poor gender responsive national budgets

3. Lobby for legislative reforms so as to permit widespread access to safe and affordable abortion

4. Advocate for the provision of high quality, gender friendly public health care institutions and services

E. Violence Against Women

The 1998 SADC Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children is a significant accomplishment of the region. It makes provision for law amendment, review, enactment, legal services and legal literacy as strategies to eliminate violence against women.

We acknowledge that there has been progress in legislating against gender violence, in particular domestic violence and sexual offences. A number of countries in SADC have now widened the concept of rape, to include the rape of men and boys; recognized marital rape as a criminal offence; provided for stiffer penalties, including higher minimum penalties for perpetrators of crimes against women; provided a broad definition of domestic violence, including the concept of family to protect the rights of men, women and children. Some countries now provide supportive structures for counselling crime survivors, have instituted victim friendly support units and courts.

There is now provision for in some countries in the region post sexual violence medical therapies and counselling including anti-retro viral drugs to reduce the risk of contracting HIV. Penalties are now in place for perpetrators of incest, particularly to protect the rights of the girl child.

Despite these provisions we note with grave concern that violence against women and girls is reported to have increased to endemic proportions right across the SADC region.

To ensure that the region takes very seriously the matter of protecting its female citizens from all forms of violence, we recommend that:

Governments

1. Implement judicial reforms by putting in place gender sensitive structures to provide legal services and counselling for women and girls seeking protection from violence

2. All SADC countries provide post sexual violence medical therapies for women and girls and especially those therapies that prevent and reduce the transmission of HIV and STIs.

3. All countries enact legislation that makes marital rape a criminal offence.

That all countries enact legislation that criminalizes domestic violence and sexual offences committed in both the public and private spheres

4. All SADC countries report at the annual meeting of ministers substantively on the extent of violence against women, measures that have been taken to eradicate violence against women and targets for the following year of reducing further violence against women

5. All SADC countries ensure that they make and protect budgetary provisions for implementing measures to protect women and girls from violence

NGOs

1. Lobby for judicial reforms that put in place gender sensitive structures to provide legal services and counselling for women and girls seeking protection from violence

2. Lobby for the provision of post sexual violence medical therapies and services for women and girls who have survived violence.

F. The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation

While the equal participation of women and men in peace processes is important to the attainment of sustainable peace and democracy, the involvement of women in the preparations and implementation of peace agreements in the southern African region remains minimal. Peace negotiations and agreements as well as the formal and informal process leading up to them are not engendered.

The heightened increase and vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of gender-based violence during armed conflict is unacceptable and violates their right to human security and life.

In light of the adoption of the Protocol, which identifies rape as a war crime, governments, humanitarians aid organisations, UN agencies working in conflict areas must give more public attention to the issue of gender violence in armed conflict and view gender violence during armed conflict as punishable offences.

We therefore recommend that:

Governments

1. Put in place mechanisms to strengthen women's participation in national and regional peace-building and reconstruction initiative and processes

2. Work with international humanitarian agencies to map out strategies and put in place mechanisms to protect women and girls from sexual exploitation and violence during conflict situations.

3. Establish tools to integrate gender at every stage of a peace process such as guidelines on the role of women in peace processes and reconstruction. A gender checklist must be provided for all those involved at every stage of the peace process to strengthen their capacity to promote gender equality and ensure that women participate effectively must be designed.

4. Ensure that peace agreements lay the foundation for women's equal rights to participate in and benefit fully from measures directed at the economic restructuring
5. In collaboration with UNCHR and other key agencies establish safe spaces in refugee camps where abuses and violations of women and human rights in the camps can be reported

NGOs

1. Organisations working in armed conflict areas must be provided with a regular forum to present gender concerns that must be brought to the attention of the intergovernmental organs working on the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements.
2. Increase the monitoring, documenting and dissemination of reports on women and girls' experiences during conflict situations in their countries in timely fashions to the governments, international and national media, church organisations, among others to speed up the response time to violence and abuse in conflict situations.

G. Inequality between men and women in sharing of power and decision-making at all levels

We recognize the growing acceptance of the importance of women's participation in decision-making. Affirmative action policies in place in some SADC countries have contributed to women's advancement in decision-making.

However, women's participation in decision-making continues to be low. For example, as of January 2004, only Seychelles, South Africa and Mozambique had reached the SADC target of at least 30 percent women in their Parliaments. The majority countries have not and will not meet the SADC target due to various political, economic, social and cultural factors that impede women's progress.

The following actions should be taken:-

Governments

1. Meet the African Union's target of 50% women in managerial and decision-making positions in all parastatals, public institutions, regional bodies, media institutions, the judiciary, the public service and trade unions.
2. All public and private institutions should use gender and organizational development models to review institutional structures and values in order to restructure them to operate in a gender responsive manner, and to permit the fair and full participation of women.
3. Enact special measures to increase women's participation in structures and policy-making processes at all levels from the village, to the national and regional levels.
4. Redefine political priorities, the political playing field that ensure good leadership, national democracy and governance reflects women's specific concerns, values and experiences and needs.
5. Work with civil society to mount civic education, which aims to eliminate discriminatory attitudes, and practices that discourage women from holding decision-making positions,

especially in the public sector.

NGOs

1. Raise awareness about the importance of ensuring that women are part of the decision making structures and processes.
2. Monitor elections so as to ensure that they are conducted in a manner that permit the full and equal participation of women as voters and as candidates.
3. Build capacity of and provide support for women so that they can be strong, empowered candidates for public office.
4. Conduct campaigns to overcome the public's attitudinal barriers with respect to supporting and voting for effective women candidates.
5. Monitor and hold governments accountable for the implementation of the commitments and report on the gaps in reaching the targets to gender equality.
6. Conduct studies that illustrate qualitatively and quantitatively the differential impacts women bring to decision-making and power sharing.
7. Lobby for a conceptual and structural redefinition of the patriarchal structures of governance and decision-making that present blocks to women's effective participation.

H. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women

Almost all SADC countries have some form of national machinery responsible for gender, as well as gender focal points within various ministries.

However, in the 10 years since Beijing, these units, departments or ministries have become weak and unable to be responsive to the challenges presented by the struggle for gender justice. Poor resource bases, few staff and no power or authority within governments to advance equality and justice for women are just a few of the constraints, among others, national machineries face.

Political will to gender equality is demonstrated through strong, well-resourced (financial and human) structures with power and authority from the highest level to act. Without such structures, Southern African governments will continue to experience a rollback in important gender justice gains which are intrinsic to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and stemming the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The UN General Assembly 2001 Special Session on HIV/AIDS made a clear link between women and girl's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS with the unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys, and to women and girls inability to exercise their human rights.

Recognizing the above the following steps are needed to move forward:

Governments

1. Rebuild the institutional mechanisms for advancing gender equality to well-resourced and well-staffed offices placed at the level of full ministries or in the President's Office by 2006. Progress in this regard should be checked at the SADC Annual Heads of

States Meeting.

2. Provide a certain fixed percentage of the national budgetary allocations for the institutional mechanisms, and this percentage should be protected and guaranteed by an act of Parliament.
3. Starting in 2004, institutional mechanisms should not be downgraded further in any country as a sign of SADC government's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and other instruments they have signed.
4. Governments should set up and enshrine in law commissions on gender equality or an equal opportunity commission, with the mandate to oversee the legislative framework and to keep government and all institutions accountable to gender justice and equality. These entities also should develop areas of research and study for the generation of gender disaggregated data and introduce consistently policy papers on the status of women within their countries; and interface with all sectors of society to ensure accountability and the incorporation of gender justice into the public, private and civil society sectors.

NGOs

1. Civil society groups working in the areas of gender and human rights should form by 2005 an umbrella body or coalition in countries, where such an entity does not exist, to serve as a focal point on gender justice activism in the country.
2. Women's coalitions or umbrella organizations should set up a task force within to be responsible for the regular monitoring of governments' attainment or non-attainment of targets set by national, regional and international commitments on gender equality. Reports from these monitoring exercises should be distributed at all levels in the public, private and civil society spheres, and forms the basis for continued lobbying.
3. NGOs should make a concerted effort to be key players in providing gender expertise, knowledge, and information to the development of policies and laws in all sectors of society.

I. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women

We acknowledge that SADC governments have adopted, ratified or acceded to important frameworks for promoting women's human rights. As of March this year, all SADC countries had ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, only four countries in the region have either signed or ratified the CEDAW Optional Protocol.

Recognizing that gender equality is a fundamental human right, SADC adopted its Gender and Development Declaration in 1997. In 1998 SADC signed an addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children, recognizing that gender-based violence is a gross human rights violation.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted by the African Union. Only six countries in SADC have signed the Protocol; none have ratified or acceded to the Protocol.

The SADC Charter on Fundamental Social Rights, adopted in August 2003, which seeks to

reaffirm the social rights of SADC nationals. The Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS adopted in July 2003 which, amongst other things, recognizes that the pandemic is a development issue, and it also recognizes the fundamental rights and freedoms of people living with HIV/AIDS and the specific connection between HIV and AIDS and gender inequality.

Whilst the adoption, ratification and accession records of SADC countries are relatively good, we are concerned that SADC state parties to CEDAW have failed to report regularly and periodically on progress. Most CEDAW reports are extremely late, some by more than four (4) years; this signifies little commitment to the implementation of the Convention. Failure by SADC countries to ratify or accede to the Option Protocol to CEDAW curtails the full range of rights that would be available to groups or individual women to present issues of gross human rights violations to the relevant UN body.

Commendable efforts have been made in enacting empowering gender sensitive laws. These important inroads in the area of legislation have included women's equality in marriage including protection from marital rape; women's equality in the acquisition of movable and immovable property rights; women's labour rights with respect to equal pay for work of equal value, maternity benefits, as well as protection from sexual harassment in the work place and affirmative action.

The non-binding nature of all the Declarations adopted by SADC and their non-domestication at country level, places limitations on the extent to which the region's female citizens can formally claim protection for their rights.

SADC governments have failed to provide easily accessible legal facilities; the responsibility has largely been carried by NGOs.

There are weak pro bono or pro deo systems, and there is a narrow conceptualisation of service provision for indigent persons in these systems. Review documents languish on shelves for some time before action is taken. The complexity of legal processes in most formal courts persist, mostly based on colonial precepts of meting out justice. Context oriented solutions to justice delivery must be put in place - procedures have to be simple and accessible to women.

Few Law Review Commission structures in SADC countries have prioritised the mandate to address gender and law concerns. Few Attorney General's Chambers and Offices are proactive in providing technical assistance to governments vis a vis gender sensitive legislation; increasingly this responsibility is being carried by civil society experts.

There is a lack of gender parity in most judicial structures in SADC and a lack of proactive approach in interpretation in most judicial structures - international human rights law instruments such as CEDAW are just 'paper rights'.

Despite these significant improvements in the law, gaps remain.

We recommend that:

Governments

1. Adopt far reaching measures within the framework of the elections unfolding in the region over the next 18 months, to fulfill the commitment of reaching the target of a minimum of 30% women

in strategic political and decision making positions by December 2005.

2. All policies and programmes mainstream a rights based approach so that all persons in SADC acquire full citizenship rights.
3. Enact legislation that domesticates all regional and international instruments that are legally binding - the role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the SADC Secretariat must be recognized.
4. Enforce the effective and gender sensitive administration of the law.
5. Transform declarations entered into by SADC countries into Protocols.
6. Strengthen a peer review mechanism on gender at the highest level in SADC, which must also include experts from the civil society sector.
7. Amend all constitutions urgently to eliminate the provisions that currently exist for the discrimination of women and girls through customary and personal law.

NGOs

1. Lobby and advocate for the target to fulfil the commitment of a minimum of 30% women in strategic political and decision making positions by December 2005 to be met.
2. Lobby for the enactment of legislation that domesticates all regional and international instruments that are legally binding.
3. Monitor the extent to which the administration of law is conducted in a gender sensitive manner and report oversight.
4. Lobby that the SADC Gender and Development Declaration becomes a protocol.

J. Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media

Recognizing that every citizen should be guaranteed the right to freedom of expression, and that this right should be protected against sexist, racist and other forms of biases which are forms of censorship; and

Acknowledging the research findings of the 2003 Gender and Media Baseline Study of women and men in the news in Southern Africa which revealed that in over 300 media in the region women comprised only 17% of the known sources.

The following actions must be part of concerted planning and action to achieve democracy in and through the media:

Governments

1. Create the space and regulatory environments that are conducive to the development of a free, independent and pluralistic media in all Southern African countries;

2. Set the example for all sectors in society by adopting and implementing policies that advance gender justice; and by eradicating all laws that promote all forms of sexism in the public and private sphere.

3. Make the findings of the 2003 Gender and Media Baseline (GMBS) Study, both regional and country - level reports known to all policymakers, ministers, parliamentarians, judiciary, commissioners, etc. to create awareness at the level of decision-makers on sexism in the media.

4. Set targets for the advancement of women in the media; and set up independent regulatory media authority to monitor the implementation of these target, and which ensures all media houses have instituted editorial and employment policies which eradicate sexism in the media.

4. Enshrine and guarantee within national constitutions the right to access to information for all individuals.

Media

1. Develop editorial and employment policies which prohibit discrimination against women in the workplace, ensure their promotion to key positions and develop policies which mitigate against sexist stereotypes, negative portrayal and the absence of women's voices and perspectives in the media. The media should give a fair and balance portrayal of women in the media in all of their diverse roles.

2. Revisit outdated style manuals and editorial policies, where they exist to ensure that these documents are not gender blind and promote the highest professional standards.

3. Gender justice should be covered in the media from a rights-based approach and should not be relegated to only a few columns or placed on special pages periodically; gender justice should rather form part of the regular coverage in the media of political, economic, reproductive, health, social, civil rights for all citizens.

4. Women's voices and perspectives in the media should move from 17%(2003) to at least 30% of sources by (2006) through a concerted effort by the media to access women as sources on all issues within countries' media. Each country should use the national GMBS report as a starting point to set internal target on women as sources, to contribute to the 30% regional goal.

NGOs

1. Incorporate media literacy into their programmes to build awareness on how to read the media for gender.

2. Gender and media activism centered on campaigns for women's right to freedom of expression should be developed within women's coalitions in the SADC countries.

3. Conduct regular monitoring of the media for gender bias, stereotypes and women's absence of voice should form the basis of regular 'complaint' reports to the Ombudsperson, independent media or human rights commissions within countries who make public reports.

4. Use May 3 -World Press Freedom Day to present independent analyses of gender in the media and/or wage campaigns in and through the media on women's right to communicate.

5. Gender activism should become more pronounced at the national and regional level to influence Media and ICT Policies;

6. Ensure that the country's National Gender Policies include a well-developed section on media in the context of freedom of expression and gender bias as a form of censorship against women; and gender should be integrated into countries Information and ICT Policies.

K. Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment

Women have the responsibility for managing household resources, but they typically do not have managerial control. Given the variety of women's daily interactions with the environment, they are the most keenly affected by its degradation. In Southern Africa environment issues include deforestation, decreasing availability of water and desertification. Increased deforestation leads to soil erosion and flooding, reducing agricultural productivity, contributes to decrease water availability and contributes to the burden of women.

Deforestation makes it more difficult for women to collect wild herbs, fruits and natural medicines, or fuel wood for cooking and boiling water. When women must travel further distances and take more time to collect fuel wood and water, girls are often taken out of school to assist. In areas where water is in particularly short supply, women use even more energy, putting them at risk of malnutrition and reducing their economic productivity.

The participation of women in environmental protection and management has continued to be inadequate, and hampered by limited access to technical skills, resources and gender insensitive environmental policies.

We recommend the following action:

Governments

1. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, including as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects;

2. Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

3. Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environment policies on women.

4. Governments must make financial and human resources available for the involvement of women in environmental and natural resources management.

5. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, including as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects; Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environment policies on women.

6. Take urgent measures to avert on-going rapid environmental and economic degradation in their countries that generally affect women and children in rural areas suffering drought, desertification, and deforestation, natural disasters and aftermath of the use of unsuitable agrochemical products.
7. Implement measures to protect farm workers, the majority of whom are women from exposure to certain agricultural and industrial chemicals, which increase women's vulnerability in pregnancy and childbirth.
8. Establish official channels to give women a voice in environmental decision-making. More often than not, women are not associated with discussions on the environment and very often the decision about location of water sources, types of water sources, and who will maintain the operation of the facilities are made without consulting women resulting in no-one taking responsibility.

NGOs

1. Raise public awareness on the importance of women's involvement and demand that space be created for the effective participation of women as decision makers in matters of environmental and resource management.
2. Undertake research and publish findings on women's roles and responsibilities in protecting the environment so as to build credible knowledge in the field of gender, environment and development.
3. Monitor the enforcement and administration of environmental legislation to ensure that its provisions protect women's environmental rights.
4. Ensure that all research in the field of plants and medicines is gender responsive and has clear benefits to women who are the guardians of knowledge about natural herbs, fruits and medicines.
5. Take steps to develop new technologies that eliminate women's dependence on fuel wood for cooking and boiling water so that there is less pressure on natural resources.

L. Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child

We note that SADC governments have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We commend states for the efforts made especially in the areas of education and providing legislative measures for the protection of children from abuse, particularly through such practices as child labour.

Yet the development indicators across the region reveal that the status and condition of the girl child remains extremely low in our societies. There has been limited progress in ensuring that African girls in the SADC region do not top the statistics of children living in poverty, without adequate education, nutrition, shelter and in conditions of violence and conflict.

Over the last 10 years, girls have become increasingly subject to the growing unscrupulous trade in trafficking and are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse by men who believe in the myth of virgin cleansing as a cure for HIV. Deteriorating public health care facilities have meant that girls are also increasingly carrying the burden associated with caring for people living with HIV and AIDS.

We recommend that the following measures be taken:

Governments

1. Stiffer penalties for perpetrators of incest to protect the rights of the girl-child.
2. Enact legislation to protect girl children from abduction.
3. Enforcement of the rights of girl children against labour, including labour related to HIV and AIDS home-based care.
4. Enact new legislative measures to protect welfare rights of child-headed households, particularly girl headed household.
5. Implement effective legal interventions to protect teenage mothers' rights to education.
6. Adopt victim friendly measures that ensure effective reporting on violence against girls.
7. Introduce reproductive health education as a compulsory subject in the school curricula from primary school.

NGOs

1. Raise public awareness about the need to penalize perpetrators of incest.
2. Lobby for the adoption of legislation that protects girl children against abduction.
3. Lobby for the protection of girls from labour abuses, especially those related to performing work related to HIV and AIDS home based care.
4. Lobby for the revision of macro-economic policies to ensure that they protect the rights of girls.
5. Lobby for the gender responsive allocation of national budget resources so that they are pro-girls.
6. Monitor the administration of legislation to ensure that provisions that protect the rights of teenage mothers to education are implemented.