

ISSUE 3:

Women and Sustainable Development – from Local to International Issues

*by Fiona Reynolds &
Jane Esuantsiwa Goldsmith*



UNED-UK

**THE MILLENNIUM PAPERS are a series
of discussion booklets which will be
brought out by UNED-UK between now
and Earth Summit III in 2002**

*The third issue of the Millennium
Papers contains text from speeches given
at UNED-UK events around the topic of
women and sustainable development
from key thinkers in this field*

*The Millennium Papers Issue 3
is edited by Amy Cruse*



The Gender 21 Initiative – Angela Mawle, Co-ordinator

Gender 21 grew out of the Rio Earth Summit and the Beijing Women's Conference, seeking to expand and develop women's identified role as a 'major group' critically important to achieving sustainable development. This role was identified as crucial by world leaders because they recognised that women world-wide are fundamental to the management of local resources and the sustaining of local communities. Yet all over the planet women are the poorest members of society, hopelessly under represented at all levels of authority and often without the power even to decide their own personal destiny. Whilst this horribly distorted imbalance exists the world can never know harmony. Until men and women alike recognise and value the qualities of nurture care and consensuality which are vital to the future care and custodianship of the planet but which have traditionally been denigrated for their association with the feminine Gender 21, society and ecosystems alike will continue to be exploited and degraded

Gender 21 is working towards the coming of a holistic and harmonious 21st Century by liberating the power and potential of women to achieve sustainable development and acknowledging that the care and protection of the planet requires that women and men alike sweep aside the barriers of gender to develop the nurturing and replenishing qualities that form our common humanity.

Gender 21 coordinates independent projects developing the role of women in achieving sustainable development

In its broadest context, this relates to the many commitments made by the world's governments through the UN process. But of course at its heart is the need to empower both women and society such that a true equality develops which positively promotes a sharing of the depth and breadth of human experience and potential within consensually based communities.

UNED-UK Publications

Issue 1: Millennium Papers 'Towards Earth Summit III – 2002' by Derek Osborn **£3.50**

Earth Summit II – Outcomes and Analysis by Derek Osborn and Tom Bigg,
Foreword by Rt Hon Tony Blair MP (Earthscan/UNED-UK) **£17.55**

The Way Forward Beyond Agenda 21 Edited by Felix Dodds (Earthscan/UNED-UK) **£17.55**

Gender and Humanity into the 21st Century (Conference Report) Edited by Amy Cruse **£10.00**

Local Agenda 21 and Gender



Presented by **Fiona Reynolds**

On the 30th November 1998 the Gender 21 Initiative at UNED-UK held the second in a series of half day seminars 'Local Agenda 21 and Gender' co-sponsored by the Local Government Management Board. The aims of the seminar were:

- *To draw out the main problems experienced by women in becoming involved in the Local Agenda 21 process.*
- *To find ways in which these obstacles can be overcome so that guidelines for participation can be drawn up.*
- *To examine why local Agenda 21 Indicators to measure sustainable development are not gender sensitive.*
- *To find ways to ensure that indicators become gender sensitive in the future.*
- *To discuss positive examples and create new practical guidelines.*

The text that follows is edited from the speaking notes of the Keynote address given by Fiona Reynolds – Policy Director for the UK Government's Women's Unit and former Director of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

Introduction

I am delighted to have been invited to speak today. I have a great interest in Agenda 21 and in the gender implications that this comprehensive document brings to light because of my former job of Director of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and my current job as the Director of the Women's Unit.

The connections between environmental sustainability and gender are also evident in the Platform for Action, the outcome document from the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 and the Earth Summit on Environment and Development held in Rio 1992 from which Agenda 21 was produced. Through Local Agenda 21 we can see the connections internationally spreading right down to the local level.

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Women and Sustainable Development – from Local to International Issues

For the UK Ministers for Women who are interested in making a **real** difference to women's lives what could be closer than a connection to the Local Agenda 21 process?

Background to the WU

In 1995 Labour Party launched a consultation document on government machinery for women. This was followed up in 1996 when Tessa Jowell, Shadow Minister for Women, embarked on 'Listening to women' tour which resulted in two policy documents. These were 'Governing for Equality' and 'Strategy for Women' and set out how a Women's Unit could be established and its objectives should Labour win the election.

The Women's Unit was set up in June 1997 after the election. Harriet Harman and Joan Ruddock were the new Labour Government's, first Ministers for Women.

The Women's Unit works towards the Government's objective of ensuring that the women's agenda is at the heart of government. The unit connects with relevant work across departments, adding energy and momentum, and supporting Ministers across Whitehall in their efforts to promote women's interests. The Women's Unit's role is to influence, encourage and co-ordinate cross-department working and drive forward initiatives to make real improvements to women's lives.

The main areas of work in under taken by the Women's Unit in its first year were:

- Violence against women
- Family friendly employment
- Childcare
- Integrating the women's perspective into government
- Women's representation in public life/decision making
- Fulfilment of legal and international obligations.

I arrived as Director of the Women's Unit in June 1998. This provided a great opportunity to put into practice the lessons of policy integration that I'd been championing from an environmental perspective in my previous role at CPRE.

The Cabinet reshuffle at end July resulted in two new Ministers for Women, Baroness Margaret Jay, leader of the House of Lords and Tessa Jowell Minister for Public Health and moved the Women's Unit to the Cabinet office – the heart of government.

The Women's Unit's role is to influence, encourage and co-ordinate cross-department working and drive forward initiatives to make real improvements to women's lives.

Recent developments

On 9th November 1998 the Women's Unit launched 'Delivering for Women: progress so far'. This document details 18 achievements in 18 months of government (eg National Childcare Strategy, draft legislation on pension sharing on divorce, New Deal for Lone Parents). This also fulfils commitment made at Beijing to report regularly on what we are doing to promote the goals of the Platform for Action.

A new strapline, Better for Women, Better for all, has been created. This was deliberately chosen to demonstrate the Government's goal of helping society as a whole, not seeing women as a marginalised group.

We also set out some new priorities, including

- Teenage girls who do well at school, out-performing boys but, often do not fulfill their potential
- Women's incomes over lifetime which on average are significantly below those of men, often leading to poverty in old age
- A new focus for our family friendly work, examining the scope for exchanging good practice between the retail sector and the NHS.

A new nationwide consultation exercise 'Listening to Women' was also launched. The purpose of this consultation is to ensure that the Ministers and Women's Unit's agenda is addressing issues that are priorities for women in civil society. The exercise involves road shows, focus groups, meetings with NGOs and a postcard campaign so that the views of as many women as possible can be taken into account.

Baroness Jay has said "We need to listen, and continue to listen to women. By meeting the aspirations of women in their own right we are also benefiting society as a whole."

The Women's Unit is also continuing its work on:

- Violence against women, with a publication planned in 1999
- Increasing the number of women in public life. The government is committed to principle of 50:50 representation of women and men
- 'Mainstreaming' – which requires policy makers to consider the impact of all policy proposals on women – this is the back bone of the Women's Unit agenda.

'Delivering for Women: progress so far'.

This document details 18 achievements in 18 months of government.

This also fulfils commitment made at Beijing to report regularly on what we are doing to promote the goals of the Platform for Action.

Women and Sustainable Development – from Local to International Issues

In all of this work, we are keen to see gender sensitive indicators developed and used right across Government to help us monitor whether we are making progress. There are many ways in which indicators can be used and we are keen to promote qualitative as well as quantitative indicators to capture those elements that can't easily be measured as well as those which can.

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Local Agenda 21

In my previous role as Director of CPRE I was heavily involved with promoting sustainable development through the effective protection of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources. These issues are still dear to my heart.

The Women's Unit focus is complementary to this process, recognising that sustainable development can be encouraged through social progress which recognises and meets everyone's needs.

How can Local Agenda 21 and the work of the Women's Unit reinforce each other?

The new Listening to Women exercise should engage women especially those who feel cut off from conventional forms of dialogue with Government. It will identify the issues most important to women, and ensure their views are heard within Government.

The Government's aim of 50:50 representation of women and men in public appointments is a crucial recognition of the contribution women can and should make to decision-making.

Women are often well represented in voluntary sector and community groups but not in formal public sector roles. Although 50:50 will not happen overnight, steady progress has been made and we are working with all government departments to make further progress.

In order to attract more women to take part in public life it is essential that their skills and experience (which are very often different to those of men) are recognised and valued. Advertisements can be off putting and many women simply feel they have too many responsibilities already. We need to understand and address obstacles to women seeking public appointments.

The Government's aim of 50:50 representation of women and men in public appointments is a crucial recognition of the contribution women can and should make to decision-making.

Last but not least, the mainstreaming initiative is designed to ensure that policy makers consider the impact of their proposals on women, ethnic minorities and the disabled at the earliest stage possible in the decision-making process; not as an add-on at the end. Guidelines were issued in November 1998 to civil servants explaining what is required.

Sustainable development indicators

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) have been working with Local Authorities and many others from both within and outside government to develop indicators of sustainable development. Wide consultation was undertaken by means of the Sustainable Development 1 Strategy consultation paper 'Opportunities for Change'.

Within the UK three different levels of indicators are being produced:

Headline indicators

To provide a national high level overview of Progress. These were announced in mid November 1998 with a consultation document on the proposed new national set of 13 high level indicators. The document asked for comments by January 1999. This provided a great opportunity for women and women's organisations to become involved in the process.

... the mainstreaming initiative is designed to ensure that policy makers consider the impact on women, ...

Main national core set of indicators

There are likely to be about 150 of these, some intended to give a high level, national overview, and others will reflect more detailed policy measures. These are intended to be published along with the revised Sustainable Development Strategy in 1999.

at the earliest stage possible in the decision-making process; not as an add-on at the end.

Local indicators

A core menu of between 20 and 30 indicators is being developed through the Local Agenda 21 process which Local Authorities may elect to use. These will facilitate local authority progress on sustainable development benchmarking by enabling them to compare their progress with other similar local authorities, and enabling a national picture to be produced in certain key areas.

Conclusion

I close by saying how pleased I am that UNED-UK and Gender 21 have arranged this seminar. I believe It is vitally important for women to become involved in Local Agenda 21 and I also believe that the government needs and values the input of women. The connections between the two are perhaps the most important thing, where we can demonstrate a real commitment to joined-up thinking at the local as well as the national level. I will do my utmost to ensure issues important to women remain at the heart of government, and to ensure that what we learn filters out into the wider public arena.



International Opportunities for Advancing the Sustainable Development Agenda:

The UN Women's Conference, its implementation and follow up including the Beijing Review 2000

Presented by Jane Esuantsiwa Goldsmith

On the 18th February 1999 UNED-UK held its annual conference titled 'Towards the UN Millennium Assembly'. With the keynote address by Rt Hon Chris Smith MP Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports, the aims of the conference were as follows:

- *To consider the sustainable development challenges of the Millennium from the standpoint various major groups in Society.*
- *To hear from and question the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports.*
- *To review opportunities offered by the forthcoming conferences for the Millennium and beyond.*
- *To identify the common elements in the challenges and opportunities and see how they could be brought together in a more international process at the Millennium General Assembly in 2000 and Earth Summit III.*
- *To play an important part in sharing understanding about shared agendas and objectives of many of these differing processes.*
- *To help establish a route map for plotting a way forward in the various arenas.*

The following text is the speech presented by Jane Esuantsiwa Goldsmith of Anona Development Consultancy and the Gender And Development network (GAD) in the panel session on International UN Conferences on Women.

Catalytic conversion

Have you heard people talk about 'aha! moments'? The moment when the penny drops, moments of enlightenment, and you think "aha!". I want to rewind back to a long time ago to tell you a story about an 'aha moment' that happened to me and how it affected me.

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When I was teaching in a school in the bush in Tanzania 20 years ago. Students and teachers had to grow the school dinners on the school Shamba. Going to the Shamba one morning with my class, I forgot my jembe (hoe), so I had to walk a mile back to my house to fetch it. On the track home, I came across a woman trying to get a tree on her head, 10 feet long, a foot in diameter. We struggled to get it on her head. I will never forget the look of pain and concentration on her face. Then she took up her axe and two carrier bags of brush wood, one in each hand for balance, and set off down the track, baby on her back, at a trot, in the baking sun, dust rising behind her.

I have never seen anybody run with a tree on her head before or since. I knew the nearest village was a mile and a half away. As she turned the bend she passed a man on a bike. “Pole mama” he said in Swahili. It means “Sorry mother” which is the usual sympathetic way of greeting any one carrying a heavy load.

I have to admit I just sat down by the track and cried after I’d watched the woman disappear – (I was also feeling sorry for myself because I also had another mile to walk to the shamba in the hot sun.)

That moment I had in Tanzania was not just an ‘aha moment’. It was more like a Yarrrrrgggggghhhhhh moment. (I think you spell that with lots of hs, rs, and gs like they do in comic books.) It was full of emotion and rage and incomprehensiveness, helplessness. A sense of complete injustice.

Because I knew this was so wrong that women had to live like this. It didn’t make any sense. It brought together everything I already knew and pointed the way along the track I had to go for the rest of my life.

That enduring image of the woman with the tree will be with me and has been with me all my life. It brings into focus so many issues, health, environment, consumption, transport, technology, workload, children, gender division of labour, power.

We’ve come a long way since then

That was 1979. Now it’s 1999 and we all know a lot more. We know that:

- When women carry home trees on their heads for the family fuel its called housework.
- When men provide electricity and gas for fuel they call it the gas board and the electricity board and they make big profits.

That enduring image of the woman with the tree will be with me and has been with me all my life. It brings into focus so many issues, health, environment, consumption, transport, technology, workload, children, gender division of labour, power.

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- When women carry all the water to their families it's called housework.
- When men pipe water to a local population they call it the water board and make big profits.
- When women grow the food for their family it's called subsistence farming.
- When men provide the food outlets, they call it Tesco, we all go shopping, and they make even bigger profits.

This results in some mind-boggling statistics:

- Of the world's 1.3 billion poor people, it's estimated that nearly 70% are women.
- Women earn about 3/4 of the male wage for the same type of work.
- Rural women produce 55% of food grown in developing countries.
- In most countries women work more than twice the amount of unpaid time men do.
- The value of women's unpaid housework and community work is estimated at over \$11 trillion.

The Platform for Action which came out of the Beijing conference in 1995 is the most comprehensive document ever produced by the UN because gender is about everything.

The majority half of the world's population (women) and their relationship with the other half (men). That's just about everyone, I think.

Four UN world conferences in 20 years have provided a focal point for information-gathering and dissemination of data worldwide.

The UN process has provided a framework for sharing and developing our ideas and our analysis of gender policies and politics.

It has provided a catalyst for evolution in the women's movement worldwide.

We have a lot more knowledge and statistics and theories and analysis which have evolved over the last 20 years. The way we think about the woman with the tree has changed. I think it's more widely recognised now that the woman with the tree is centre stage and has the right to be consulted about and participate in her own empowerment. Sustainable development just doesn't happen otherwise.

The Platform for Action (PFA)

The Platform for Action which came out of the Beijing conference in 1995 is the most comprehensive document ever produced by the UN because gender is about everything. The majority half of the world's population (women) and their relationship with the other half (men). That's just about everyone, I think.

Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption patterns and approaches to natural resource management.

The Platform for Action on Environment:

“Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption patterns and approaches to natural resource management.”

1. It makes the link between poverty and environmental degradation, and that everyone's co-operation is needed to eradicate poverty to achieve sustainable development.
2. The Platform highlights the contribution and potential of women to sustainable development.
3. Through their management and use of natural resources, women provide sustenance to their families and communities.
 - Women's indigenous knowledge of ecological linkages and ecosystem management are the main labour force for subsistence production.
 - Women are more likely to be around, more stable part of the population—they are more likely to make a long term commitment and investment in their communities.
 - Women have often played leadership roles or taken the lead in promoting an environmental ethic re-cycling, local level activities.
 - There's been a rapid growth of women's NGOs working at local, national and international level.

Women remain largely absent at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making in natural resource and environment management.

- Their skills and experience are marginalised in policy making.
- Women are rarely trained as professional natural resource managers, planners, agriculturalists.

What needs to happen

The Platform points out that we're not going to get there without women's input: *"Sustainable development will be an elusive goal unless women's contribution to environmental management is recognised and supported."*

- A sound environmental policy means a holistic approach. Women's participation and leadership is essential to every aspect of that approach.
 - There has to be an active and visible policy of mainstreaming.
 - We must promote women in environmental decision-making.
 - Increase women's access to education and information.
 - Promote women's participation in development of local communities in rural and urban areas.
 - We must protect and use women's knowledge.
 - Protect women from environmental hazards at home, work, and other environments.
 - Women need to be Empowered as producers and consumers.
 - There must be a gender perspective in design of technology and participation of women in the design of technologies which meet their needs.
 - We must assess the impact of environment policies and programmes on women.
 - And for all this to happen, we need co-operation between governments, NGOs, public and private sector institutions.
- Sustainable development will be an elusive goal unless women's contribution to environmental management is recognised and supported.*

Beijing Plus 5 in the year 2000

Opportunities:

1. *Reinforce the importance of co-operation and consultation between women's NGOs and government.*

I was on the official Government delegation to Beijing. The first time the UK government had included NGO representatives as official members of the delegation. This should be standard practice. NGOs have experience, partnerships with Southern NGOs, expertise in issues such as environment. Strengthen NGOs and Women's movement.

2. *Ensure that UN conferences re-enforce each other: Social summit, Environment and development, population, habitat. All coming up for review. Ensure progress is not lost, the spirit and the language is preserved. Make connections.*

3. *Mainstreaming: means that Gender and Development is everyone's business.*

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meets every year in March in New York and its been reviewing and assessing progress on the PFA's critical areas of concern. **'Institutional mechanisms'** is one of the big issues to be discussed at the Commission on the Status of women in March in New York this year. (Along with health). It's about how to make all this happen, it's the most important area.

Mainstreaming:

means that Gender and Development is everyone's business.

The Department for International Development (DFID) has a special hearing next week on gender and development: a worthwhile exercise because the spin-off is that people have to look really closely at the gender perspective in their work. I was talking to senior civil servants last week in the Social Development Department. Every department has to produce fat documents on gender analysis. It's only when you look at what you do through a gender lens that the penny finally drops and you get those 'aha! moments'.

And I'm delighted to have been asked by DFID to lead a workshop for MPs on Gender and Development in February this year. Mainstreaming means that politicians have to be gender aware and understand the issues, not just pay lip-service. We all need to have those Yaaaaarrggggghhhh moments when you don't just see it and do it and understand it, you **Feel** it as well.

“Women should be fully involved in decision-making and in the implementation of sustainable development activities (and in) research, data collection and dissemination of information.”

Agenda 21, Chapter 24

UNED-UK's primary objective is to promote sustainable development through facilitating the involvement of stakeholders in the work of the United Nations and in monitoring the work of the UK in implementing international agreements on sustainable development.

UNED-UK aims to encourage activities that result in a multi-sectoral approach to the promotion of sustainable development; environmental protection, social equity and economic development, through:

- facilitating the involvement of stakeholders in the policy work of the United Nations and other inter-governmental institutions in the area of sustainable development and in particular in the work of the UN Environment Programme, the UN Development Programme, and the UN Commission for Sustainable Development;
- helping to mobilise the UK political process, through all relevant institutions and particularly through the UK parliament and the EU;
- contributing to the preparation of national reports to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development;
- dissemination of information.

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For small and local NGOs, local authorities and branches of trade unions	£ 70
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