

**The Forty-Sixth Session of the UNCSW
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Pnina Herzog, ICW President's Presentation
on behalf of ICW, IBPW, IFUW, SI, ZI
Plenary Session, March 2002**

Madame Chair, distinguished member of the Panel, delegates of Member States and NCOs.

Following up previous UN sessions on "Gender Equality, Development and Peace", has proved that successful development needs an approach which is multifaceted, multisectorial and comprehensive, and that globalization and advances in communications and technology must be beneficial for people and serve also the poor people.

Poverty is often defined as a lack of food, housing land and other things that make up material well being.

However, poverty is also lack of independence, lack of power and voice and it subjects poor people to exploitation and leaves them vulnerable to humiliation.

Just as definitions of poverty vary by gender, age, culture and other social and economic factors, so are reactions to poverty, gender specific, and vary by the same factors.

Men often react with defeat, while women conceal their pride and enter low income, low status jobs, in order to feed their families.

Only too often, women under such conditions experience sexual harassment.

There are many poor people in developing countries, but there are poor people also in industrialized countries.

The millions of women in our organizations' affiliates in all continents of the globe see it their role and responsibility to empower women of all ages and particularly poor women in order to Help them Help Themselves.

This is being done through awareness raising and empowerment seminars and workshops and by assisting and facilitating developmental projects for women.

While our affiliates in industrialized countries extend a cooperative hand to their sisters in developing societies, they note weaknesses in their own respective countries.

For example:

- Even where legislation provides for financial credit to be equally available to men and women, in practice, discrimination against women still exists in some areas.

- The differences between male and female average incomes and the prevalence of women in part time and non-permanent jobs make it difficult for women to raise capital, save and invest.
- Government agencies' staff fail to advise people of their entitlements. Thus women miss out on financial assistance that they are entitled to by law.
- In many countries old people are abandoned by their children, who seek a better life in towns.
- In countries with high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, elderly parents mostly women, take on responsibility to care for their children dying from AIDS, and they have to take care of their young grandchildren. These grandmothers and their young grandchildren are mostly very poor.
- Public pensions for elders, the majority of whom are women, are under economic challenge and have left old women poor, extremely vulnerable, unable to afford medicines or food and they are forced to beg.

There are many more issues that have to be addressed by governments.

The answers lie in:

- The provision of easily accessible health care facilities, education, vocational training, information dissemination, appropriate legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of services, implementation of laws and monitoring.
- Governments, Member States should be accountable to the UN, and the UN in turn should monitor what goes on in countries and circulate information to all Member States.
Examples of achievements and how constraints have been overcome, maybe of value to other countries.
- Poor people know what their needs are and they should be consulted and be invited to participate in processes that affect them.
- Poor people's groups and networks should be supported and strengthened.
- Services and programmes for poor communities should be comprehensive, addressing physical, mental and emotional problems and based on the Gender Perspective.

And lastly, International NGOs, through their affiliates, reach the grass root levels. They have a tremendous amount of good will, expertise and understanding of the needs of the people with whom and for whom they work.

More direct financial assistance from the UN and its agencies to International NGOs, may help so many more Women Help Themselves.

Thank you.