

D' Day

With our knowledge, documents, papers and pencils in hand, we merged ourselves with other NGOs and began our quest to lobby government delegates on issues we wanted addressed.

How did we fare? In a general sense maybe not bad but for the issues raised by the members of the lobby training, the following is a summary.

Preventive health and sanitation was not made as a strong statement in the Social Summit Ministerial final document, **alternative education programs** for women was not included, **shelter for women with special needs** did not make it, **host countries to acknowledge the nationality of children born to migrant workers** was not even discussed among the delegates, **recognition of the needs of indigenous women** was not discussed, **comfort women** were not discussed and the area of **women as consumers** was not discussed. The issue of **Structural Adjustment Programs** was very weakly addressed in the final document.

In Hindsight

While it was apparent that many of the issues would get side-tracked, I felt that some of the responsibility was to be placed on us as NGOs and as providers of information. First of all, the women's issues were not organized as a block among the NGOs, the materials distributed did not show unity and strength. The lobbying strategy among the NGOs was not clearly articulated or disseminated among the participants, especially among the members of the lobby training group.

That's not to say that this Ministerial Meeting for the Social Summit did not represent progress for women. There are enough issues on the Agenda and commitments from governments that NGOs, especially women's groups, can hold States accountable for. But just as *Ms. De Dios* had pointed out, gains made at the international level do not mean much if they are not followed up at the national and local levels. ♀

THE UN, DOES IT MATTER TO PACIFIC WOMEN?



In this section on the Pacific, we feature two interviews, one with *Tauga Vulaono* President of the Fiji National Council of Women and the other with *Vaine Wichman* economist and consultant to the South Pacific Commission. They discuss the impact on women, especially in the Pacific, of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, of women's involvement in UN processes, and future prospects with regard to the two forthcoming UN Conferences, the Social Summit in March in Copenhagen and the World Conference on Women in September in Beijing.

Tauga Vulaono

'On the road to Beijing'

Some background to all the meetings....The first World Conference on Women took place in Mexico at the start of the UN Decade for Women in 1975. The emphasis at this meeting was on Women in Development. However, at the end-of-decade conference on women in Nairobi in 1985, assessments showed that little progress had been achieved for women with this emphasis on WID, women's concerns were segregated from the mainstream and progress had, in fact, deteriorated as far back as 1965.

The Nairobi Conference and the Forward-Looking Strategies (FLS) for the Advancement of Women then shifted the emphasis from WID to the 'mainstreaming' approach, to include women in all spheres of decision-making and development.

Q: How much has been achieved in terms of the Pacific Platform for Action and the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific?

Tauga: If we go back a little... when we had the meeting for NGOs in Manila in 1983, all the NGOs agreed that nothing much had been achieved....because the Nairobi Platform for Action was something that not many women identified with. In that they were either not given the opportunity to look at the Nairobi FLS or very little follow-up occurred. But by this, I don't mean to say that nothing was achieved between Nairobi and now.

For instance, here in Fiji, although we were not looking at the Nairobi FLS, we were still able to convince the government of the need for a ministry or department for

women. So, although the actual FLS was not followed on paper, different countries had been doing their work and had achieved quite a lot. In Fiji, the FNCW did not discuss the FLS after 1975. The Council went under after 1987, during the Coup, a Ministry was created in the Coup's aftermath (but) we cannot say whether it was something that was being followed through from the FLS. I think this is also true of the other Pacific island countries. We agree that the document was tucked away somewhere after Nairobi and we just went about doing the things we considered important.

Q: The Pacific put together a united Platform for Action which was tabled at Jakarta. Could you discuss the contents of this Pacific Platform?

Tauga: The paper talks about 13 key areas of concern to Pacific women, namely, health, education and training, economic empowerment, agriculture and fishing, legal and human rights, shared decision-making, environment, culture and the family, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, violence, peace and justice, poverty and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Q: Do you think the Jakarta Declaration mainstreams women's concerns adequately enough in preparation for Beijing?

Tauga: The Pacific delegation present in Jakarta felt that we had strengthened the Declaration because we had adopted our own Platform, the Pacific Platform for Action. Our delegates also worked hard to ensure that our Platform was attached to the Jakarta Declaration as part of that

document.

Q: How will the two documents facilitate the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies in the region?

Tauga: The ministries of the small island countries have taken back their papers and because NGOs played a big part in the compiling of these papers, we will definitely be working together with governments to action the 13 areas of critical concern to Pacific women which were identified in Noumea and endorsed in Jakarta.

[At the Jakarta conference] *Taufa Vakatale*, the Fiji ministerial representative, was chosen by the Pacific ministers to present the official statement of behalf of the



Pacific. Many of those present, including the Pacific delegates, were surprised to hear her talking about very political issues such as the nuclear free Pacific, Bougainville and indigenous peoples' rights....

Q: At Nairobi, evidence points to a clear ideological division between the concerns of women from first, second and third world countries. Those from the first world wanted Equality, while the second world countries, like the Russian bloc, asked for Peace, and the emphasis from third world countries focused on Development - hence the

themes Equality, Development and Peace.

What, in your opinion, will the themes be for the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing and where do you think the split, if any, will occur this time - along ideological or geographical lines?

Tauga: The themes are going to be the same: Equality, Development and Peace, because of the Forward-Looking Strategies. I think that as far as the split is concerned, it will probably be a geographical, rather than an ideological one because many people are looking at all the themes as a whole and this is reflected in the Pacific Platform for Action and the Jakarta Declaration. But we will be divided geographically in the sense that we are emphasising certain things which differ from other regions, such as the

problem of poverty and its definition.

Q: What are your hopes for women of the region after Beijing?

Tauga: I hope that the issues that have been brought up as specific to the Pacific will be addressed by women in the region. Eventually one of the most important things that we need to work on is information dissemination to all women, at all levels, to ensure that women are aware of these documents and what they mean. We cannot have a repetition of the FLS, which failed because it was not discussed at any level. It should be the task for women at all levels, those who have had any input into the Platform for Action for the Pacific or the Jakarta meeting to disseminate information now and after Beijing. To me, it is their role and duty to call women together and share ideas with them and address the issues which they



consider important. I am keen that women take this paper and make everybody understand. This paper is not just a women's paper. The issues are Pacific issues - for all people.

Source: **Pacific Mainstreaming News**, Vol. 2 No. 2, August 1994, UNIFEM Pacific Mainstreaming Project, c/o UNDP, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji. Tel: (679)301-178 Fax: (679) 301-654.

Vaine Wichman - Pacific Economist talks about the UN Social Summit and the future of Pacific Island Countries.

Interviewed by *Luz Maria Martinez*, Isis International Communications Program

Vaine Wichman a representative to the October 1994 Ministerial preparatory meeting for the UN Social Summit held in Manila, is an economist on rural development issues from the South Pacific Commission (SPC), located in New Caledonia. In preparing for the Social Summit, she has been providing governments of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) with data, support and input into the documents and is a general advisor to governments in the Pacific.

The South Pacific Commission (SPC) represents 22 Island governments and was

earmarked to undertake coordination activities for the Pacific Island Countries for the UN Social Summit. With this responsibility the SPC is providing technical and financial support to other island governments. The SPC provided technical support to PICs at the ESCAP Ministerial meeting.

For *Vaine*, in the Manila Declaration of the preparatory Social Summit meeting, the Pacific Islands made three major gains. Firstly, the inclusion of a statement that the Pacific continues to receive 'preferential treatment' despite the free

trade agreements being made at the international level. According to *Vaine*, "The liberalizing of international trade agreements will have an adverse effect on the Islands but the Islands are not a threat to the international market, so we asked that we continue to be given preference in our exportation of products, GATT recognized this disadvantage and included a clause to protect the Islands through continuing the same 'preferential treatment'."

The second gain was the inclusion of Marine sustainability. This "...recognizes that women are also part of the fishing industry, it is the women who do the cleaning, preserving and gleaning of the fish so the language in the document was changed to 'fisherfolk'."

Thirdly, as with the World Bank Overview report, the document recognized the low growth of the Islands and agreed that special measures need to be taken in order

Vaine . . .

to help them meet their goals.

She stressed that the interests of the Pacific Islands that were furthered at this meeting must be strengthened in the future by Pacific governments and NGOs *"Staying active and visible. Most of the regional meetings usually focus on the Asian countries and the Pacific Islands are not given much attention. By keeping ourselves visible we remind the other governments that we too must be taken into consideration."*

"Our responsibility now is to disseminate this information to as many people as possible. All the governments here who have made a commitment to this document should now be held accountable. They



have deliberated over the issues and made commitments to reach the goals established. NGOs should be part of making sure that at their next meeting in 1997 many of the goals are reached and that the people in each country know what those goals are."

She also made the revealing comment that *"While I found the meeting to be good because it gave the social issues a lot of attention, it has been interesting to see which countries send their high up representatives. For example, the countries who give high priority to the social issues send their higher level representatives, others do not."*

I found Ms. Wichman's observations to be accurate.

There were countries who were represented by their Prime Ministers or Deputy Prime Ministers, while others sent their lower staff. One country was represented by the sports minister who stopped over to represent his country after the Hiroshima Games.

Pacific Women and the 2nd Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development.

The outcomes of the 2nd Asian and Pacific Officials and Ministerial preparatory meeting for the Beijing World Conference, that took place in Jakarta in June 1994, marked the first solid step towards recognition of Pacific women's concerns in forthcoming UN world conferences.

It provided the opportunity for Pacific women's concerns to be heard and included in the

region's preparation for the Beijing Conference. In particular, the Pacific Platform for Action was tabled and all the Pacific issues were included in the Asia Pacific Plan of Action. The Pacific Platform for Action was included in its entirety as part of the region's submission to the Beijing World Conference in 1995. This in itself is an achievement for Pacific NGO Women.

Source: **WINFO-TONGA**, Vol. 3 No. 4, July/August 1994, P.O. Box 62, Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga. Tel: 21 300 Fax: 23 888.

