

Input¹ NVR (Netherlands Council of Women) for the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on the status of Women , New York 25 February – 4 March 2011

General principles to be observed and key recommendations.

The Netherlands Council of Women and member organizations emphasize that Women's Empowerment requires a holistic approach.

- It is a human right for women and girls to develop their skills and capacities;
- Women and girls have confidence in their own abilities; they need the confidence of others to generate opportunities for participation at all levels;
- A change in attitudes and structures is key to allow for women's full and equal participation in society;
- If given the opportunity, women will take their responsibility;
- Adequate support for resulting women's leadership will create leverage for gender equality in society as a whole.

I. With respect to the theme of CSW 55, the NVR and member organizations support the importance of access for women and girls to education, training, science and technology.

- 1. Access to adequate, non gender biased (primary) education is one of the main keys to capacity development. Sufficient education of good quality facilitates future acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- 2. Exclusion of gender stereotypes in the learning environment will change the mindset of both girls & boys and teachers; with time, this will create a positive attitude towards gender equality. Furthermore, it will build confidence of girls and women to claim their space.
- 3. Extension of learning possibilities beyond formal education is a necessity to address the needs of women of all ages and to facilitate their access to full employment and decent work.

¹ Input was generated during 2 interactive sessions by 87 representatives of the 45 member organizations and NVR expert groups, and endorsed by the Board on February 14th 2011

We, as representatives of the Major Group Women, will take our responsibility in building awareness in our constituencies, in contributing to policy processes and informing governments of positive and negative effects of policies, in stimulating and facilitating the participation of women in project and programmes, and in actively counteracting gender biases at all levels.

We urge governments and the international community to energetically pursue the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on education (MDG2) whereby it is ensured that MDG2 equally applies to girls and boys. We recommend to develop and implement non-formal education in a demand driven way, and to provide adequate financial means that will equally benefit both genders, including for women's organizations to develop their ability to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment on an equal footing.

II. Capacity development involves more than the acquisition and strengthening of individual skills and abilities. Going to school is only effective if subsequently one can put into practice what has been learned.

- 4. An enabling environment has to be present /created to allow women and girls to make proper use of their knowledge and skills.
- 5. Empowerment requires an essential change in attitudes and structures to allow women to participate.
- 6. Participation will bring economic and social independence for women.
- 7. Empowerment is an important instrument in the prevention of violence against women.

We, as representatives of the Major Group Women, will take our responsibility in stimulating women to use their abilities and to be active citizens. We will actively contribute to sensitizing society and push for societal change towards equal opportunities for women and men in all forms of education and in implementing their acquired skills throughout life.

We call for the creation of enabling environments at the international, national, regional and local levels to expand the capacity of women to participate actively and to benefit from the development process in a sustained and effective manner. We urge government and the civil society to go beyond the adoption of policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and actively take their social responsibility. In this context we specifically request support, financially and otherwise, for women's organizations and civil society groups in their actions towards changing the current mindset and attitudes in society.

III. There is a growing acknowledgment for women leadership in promoting economic growth, reducing poverty in improving social welfare and in pursuing sustainable livelihoods for both rural and urban poor.

- 8. Educated women and girls participate more in public life and take up a leading role in the sustainable management of natural resources.
- 9. Supporting women leadership will yield immediate and long-lasting results

We, the women's organizations of the world, are the cradle for women leadership and will continue to build the capacity of our members to take up their positions in society. We underscore that women are not helpless victims but rather actors in their own right, willing and able to share the responsibility and deserving the opportunity to participate fully and equally in the pursuit of sustainable development.

We urge governments to implement policies and programmes which support the empowerment and enhanced participation of women in development through support for education, capacity development, enhanced access to opportunities and resources and through the facilitation of equal participation of women in decision making at all levels.

NVR

The Hague, February 14th 2011

