



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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04.17

**Response to The United Nations Questionnaire on the Implementation
of The Beijing Platform for Action from The National Council of Women
of New Zealand**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organization representing 42 nationally organized societies. The Council has a long history of encouraging the promotion of social and health issues, particularly as they affect women.

This response is prepared by the Board of Management, and is based on responses received from six Branches of NCWNZ, representatives of two Nationally Organized Societies and one individual as a result of a set of seven questions published in the national newsletter of NCWNZ, "The Circular" in April 2004. Because NCWNZ did not receive the documentation on the questionnaire until 18 March we have been limited in what we could gather from our membership.

Only selected questions were distributed to the membership for a response:

**Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)**

At its 49th session in March 2005 the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will, as mandated in its multi-year programme of work, consider two themes:

"Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly";

and

"Current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls."

It is hoped to identify achievements, gaps and challenges and provide an indication of areas where actions and initiatives need further implementation.

This matter only came to the attention of NCWNZ on 18 March and responses are required by 30 April.

The questionnaire, in 4 parts, is quite comprehensive. Given the short time frame for a response it is suggested that we endeavour to comment on selected issues. These are listed below. If you wish to view the Questionnaire in full please go to:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/2005Review/Questionnaire-E.PDF>

If you want to see the 1998 New Zealand Response go to:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/countrylist.htm> Scroll down to New Zealand



Suggested questions for members to consider:

- 1 Has policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women been adopted and at what level? Has any plan of action or monitoring system for implementation been put in place?
- 2 What is the status of the National Action Plan for Women, its implementation and monitoring?
- 3 To what extent are the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs) used as a framework for policy development?
- 4 To what extent have the CEDAW Report (2002) and the concluding comments of the CEDAW Monitoring Committee affected national legislation and implementation?
- 5 In which sector areas have specific policies, strategies and action plans for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment been developed? Describe progress with implementation.
- 6 What national mechanisms exist for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women? Have focal points for these mechanisms been established within ministries and if so which ministries and what focal points are recommended?
- 7 What important partnerships have been established between government and NGOs in support of gender equality? What levels of capacity building for promoting gender mainstreaming have been achieved?
- 8 Identify any areas requiring future action.

Useful references:

"Towards an Action Plan for New Zealand Women" – Consultation Report and "Action Plan for New Zealand Women" March 2004. Both these documents are available on the Ministry of Women's Affairs website at www.mwa.govt.nz under publications or they can be obtained by contacting the Ministry on Ph (04) 916 5830 or email mwa@mwa.govt.nz "Aotearoa New Zealand Non-Governmental Organization's Non-Maori Report – Status of Women" September 2002. NCWNZ Submissions will also be useful references.

Please send Responses to: NCWNZ, PO Box 12 117, WELLINGTON or Email: ncwnz@ihug.co.nz by 25 April 2004

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

1.1 NCWNZ was pleased to see the Action Plan for Women (APW) launched on International Women's Day 2004. A forward-looking document, it sets out strategies to address:

- The economic independence of women
- The achievement of a greater work-life balance for families
- The improvement of the well being and quality of life for New Zealand women.

We are pleased to see that the APW is to be whole-of-government approach to be undertaken with women, their communities and the private sector and will include:

- Maori women
- Pacific women
- Rural women
- Women with disabilities
- Ethnic women
- Migrant women
- Older women.



We note that the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) will be monitoring the implementation of the APW using key indicators with a review and update by 2006.

1.2 NCWNZ is pleased to see the creation of a new gender specialist position in the NZAid Department of Foreign Affairs to ensure that all projects are considered for their impact on women. An outcome of this is that 49% of the employees within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade are female.

1.3 We recognize that while the Property Relationships Act 2001 clarified the legal status of women with regard to ownership of property in both married, de-facto and same sex relationships it only applies upon the break-up of the marriage or relationship.

1.4 The Paid Parental leave legislation has been extended from 12 to 14 weeks but it still does not apply to women who are self-employed or who are Mothers at home.

1.5 NCWNZ is pleased to recognize the work done by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in promoting Gender Analysis across Government Departments. This has resulted in the requirement of government departments to prepare gender implication statements to one cabinet committee, the Cabinet Social Development Committee. Equally important for women is the need for gender analysis on material presented before the Economic Development Committee

1.6 Other points noted that relate to this section of the report include:

- Reports that the Human Rights Commission is picking up complaints about discrimination in employment
- Reports that career guidance material in schools is now non-sexist
- Census data can increasingly be sex-disaggregated
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Statistics New Zealand jointly published a Time-Use Survey, carried out in 2001. It highlighted the fact that while men and women spend approximately equal times in work activities most of the women's work, (79%), is unpaid.
- The fact that the Domestic Violence Act allows the Police to intervene in domestic disturbances without women having to lay a charge
- The fact that Female Genital Mutilation is illegal in New Zealand.

Part Two: Progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of The Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the Twenty-third special session of the General Assembly including obstacles and challenges still to be addressed

A number of issues mentioned in the response to Part One also apply to Part Two.

2.1 Millennium Development Goals:

While our members noted that the APW had been derived from and based on the Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing + Five report and the NZ CEDAW Reports of 1998 and 2002 together with a national consultation, they were dismayed to discover that there was no direct reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 in the APW. However we were pleased to note a comprehensive linking of the goals for the APW with the MDGs in the Government response to this questionnaire.



The following initiatives were seen to be directly related to the MDGs:

- Eradication of Poverty: The introduction of income related rents for state rental housing has had beneficial though limited results
- Primary education: Some work has been initiated to combat truancy. Resources are being developed to address literacy gaps.
- The following goals were seen to be requiring attention in New Zealand:
- Combat AIDS: Ensuring that the incidence of AIDS in women does not increase. Addressing the issue of high teenage pregnancy.
- Environmental sustainability: Only slow progress being made.
- Gender equality: Despite having women in top political, legal and Vice-regal positions the ratio of women to men in parliament declined following the last election.

NCWNZ members are concerned however at the lack of public knowledge of the MDGs.

2.2 CEDAW Reports:

NCWNZ members were pleased to note that the overview objectives in each of the key areas to be developed in the APW, included issues highlighted by the CEDAW Monitoring Committee following the presentation of the 2002 Report to CEDAW.

They are:

- Paid Parental Leave
- Affordable and accessible child care
- Family Friendly Provisions in employment contracts/Work-Life balance
- Gender pay gap
- Family Violence
- Student loan scheme
- Social Assistance to families
- Rural Services – banks, post offices, hospitals, schools, doctors
- Employment contracts

Members did point out however that in the NGO Non-Maori Report to CEDAW 2002 the following concerns came from the NGOs:

- The status of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) within the NZ government and the community in general
- The lack of a coherent strategy to produce dis-aggregated data, particularly in relation to older people, migrant and refugee women and disability.
- The outcomes of the Gender Implications Statements presented to the Cabinet Social Equity Committee by the MWA
- Inconsistencies in the Employment Relations Act
- Income gaps between rich and poor appear to be related to ethnicity.

2.3 Specific Initiatives identified in the APW

Despite a large increase in the number of women in paid employment members are not aware of any policies specifically aimed at improving women's economic independence. If anything there is unease over possible changes in the pay equity legislation currently before the Select Committee that could further widen the pay gap.

Members are aware of a considerable need to review family assistance in order to assist low-income women out of poverty.



There is also recognition of the need to re-examine the impact of the student loan scheme on women.

NCWNZ queries why issues highlighted in the Consultation in preparation for the APW were omitted in the final form of the plan. For example, women had raised the issue of no recognition for experience gained from family responsibilities when they wanted to return to the paid workforce. NCWNZ believes that this is an important issue

Under Work-Life Balance NCWNZ is hoping to see:

- Recognition of unpaid work, largely done by women
- The extension of Paid Parental Leave to include all expectant Mothers
- An improvement in childcare accessibility and affordability.

NCWNZ members made favourable mention of the visibility and effectiveness of the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust. The incentives they give to business, both large and small, new and established are to be commended.

Under Well-Being NCWNZ recognized the need for attention to:

- Mental health
- Violence against women
- Obesity

While NCWNZ recognizes that the “Te Rito: Family Violence Prevention Strategy” was released in 2002 we would like to see proof that it is being implemented. It needs to be seen as a useful document in communities not just in government departments. It could usefully be cross-linked and related to violence on TV, and anger management programmes.

The members of one of the Maori Women’s Welfare League branches asked that the following question be included:

What is being planned to alter the attitude of men and boys towards women?

It was noted that a positive outcome of the change to Primary Health Organizations (PHOs) should result in greater access to health care for women, i.e. movement towards gender equality in health.

Rural women report that there has been considerable promotion of women in agriculture with the establishment of field days for women.

Part Three: Institutional Development

It is NCWNZ’s opinion that the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in NZ is very fragile in that it is a small Ministry with a very small budget. It was suggested that it should work closely with the Human Rights Commission since many of the issues it is dealing with are human rights issues.

We commend it for having three focal points and suggest a further set of issues:

- Women’s health
- Older Women
- Superannuation for Women.

Rural women in particular believe that the MWA serves them well. They are appreciative of the information they receive via NCWNZ and of the opportunities that they have to participate in



dialogue and have confidence that their views are heard and noted. They believe that the creative partnership between MWA and NCWNZ and the diverse community organizations must be fostered and preserved.

We do believe that work being carried out in government departments on behalf of the MWA does need to be ring-fenced so that the objectives can be achieved and the money spent accounted for.

MWA does attempt to consult but needs to gain the confidence of a wider cross-section of NGOs. It needs to be linked into the Community Task Force network so that it reaches more and different networks.

It should be a key voice on the Equal Pay for Equal Work Taskforce since it is the spokesperson for 50% of the population. NGO representation on such Task Forces is essential for credibility.

NCWNZ strongly urges that the MWA continue to be adequately resourced in order that it can maintain its networks and fulfil its obligations to the women of New Zealand.

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

The main challenge to improving gender equality and the empowerment of women in New Zealand is to implement and monitor the Action Plan for New Zealand Women across government in the three priority areas identified from consultation with New Zealand women: Economic sustainability; Work-life balance; Well-being.

NCWNZ has recognized that:

- MWA will be working directly with government agencies through the Chief Executive of each agency, to develop policies that will improve the outcomes for women under each of the objectives identified in the APW;
- MWA will continue to lead gender analysis across government departments;
- MWA will encourage women into leadership and decision-making roles by providing leadership on policy initiatives;
- MWA will be monitoring the implementation of the APW using key indicators with review and update by 2006.

NCWNZ acknowledges that while the APW identifies the objectives to be achieved for each of the focus issues, identifies which lead agencies will be involved with each particular issue and sets milestones to be achieved, it is concerned about whether the government agencies themselves have allocated personnel and resources to achieve the various milestones. NCWNZ also has a concern that some of the milestones are unrealistic, given that the APW was not launched until 8 March 2004 yet initiatives and evaluations are expected to be achieved by June 2004.

Another matter for concern identified by NCWNZ is the need for recognition of parenting as work by allowing couples who combine paid and unpaid work to form partnerships that would be recognized by the Inland Revenue Department. This would require the development of a policy that gives recognition to parenting as work without expecting those who carry out the parenting role to compromise their social and economic status to do so.



Respondents are also concerned that the stakeholders listed in the APW are government agencies for the most part and do not include sectors like Community Councils, Trade Unions, Manufacturing, Business, Agriculture and Forestry.

NCWNZ also believes that some references to or indication of methodology as to how the action plan is to be implemented together with key indicators of progress at target time intervals would result in more confidence in it.

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