

Issues Paper
CSW Interactive Panel Discussion on
“Future perspectives on the promotion of gender equality:
through the eyes of young women and men”
9 March 2005, 10.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

Background

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) noted that “discrimination against women begins at the earliest stages of life and must therefore be addressed from then on onwards” (para 38). It gave specific consideration to issues of young women in nine¹ out of the twelve critical areas of concern. It recognized youth organizations as important and effective partners in development programmes and young women were encouraged to participate in youth organizations. The vulnerability of young women and adolescents, particularly in relations to HIV/AIDS, discrimination, mortality and access to education, was addressed. The need to take up special measures to ensure that young women have the necessary life skills for active and effective participation in all levels of social, cultural, political and economic leadership was also raised. The Beijing Platform for Action also emphasized the need for the international community to make commitments and take special measures to inspire that new generations of women and men work together for a more just society (para 40).

The benefits of non-discriminatory education for both girls and boys and its contribution to more equal relationships between women and men and to promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men were emphasized in the Platform for Action. The development of training programmes and materials on gender equality for teachers and educators, was urged to promote equality, cooperation, mutual respect and shared responsibilities between girls and boys from pre-school onward. The development of appropriate information programmes that make the public, particularly parents, aware of the importance of non-discriminatory education and the equal sharing of family responsibility by girls and boys was emphasized. Governments and international and regional intergovernmental institutions and non-governmental institutions were encouraged to consider to establish educational programmes for girls and boys to foster a culture of peace.²

The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 (para 43) referred to the needs for increased attention to the unmet needs of adolescent girls and young women. It also mentioned that commitments were needed at the international level to strengthen and promote programmes to encourage dialogue among youth between and among developed and developing countries. The need for increased research on men’s and boy’s roles and all forms of violence was discussed in the document. The persistence of negative stereotyping of girls and boys was considered an obstacle in implementing the Platform for Action. Furthermore it was considered that men and boys should be actively involved in efforts to achieve the goals of the Platform for Action and its implementation. Achieving gender equality was required redressing inequalities between women and men and girls and boys, the development of policies and implementation of programmes, particularly for men and boys, on changing stereotypical attitudes and behaviours concerning gender roles and strengthening campaigns and gender equality training among women and men, boys and girls, to eliminate the persistence of harmful stereotypes.³

1

The Commission on the Status of Women discussed issues concerning young women and men in agreed conclusions from its annual sessions from 1997-2004, covering inter alia, violence against women, human rights, the girl child, media and information and communications technologies (ICT) and poverty eradication.⁴

The Commission highlighted the role of youth organizations in preparing young people to build a society based on respect and solidarity. The Commission also emphasized the important links between girls, gender stereotyping and the media, as well the need to ensu