

15 Years of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA)

The meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the 54th session of the United Nations was held between 1 and 12 March, 2010 at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York City, USA. The themes of the meeting included a review of the progress and successes of the implementation of member countries and the critical areas of concern during the 15th anniversary of the ratification of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) released during the Fourth Women's World Summit held in the People's Republic of China in 1995. Thailand as a member country is obliged to submit to the CSW a review and appraisal of progress on implementation over the last five years. The report is written by the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.

Movement in Thailand before the CSW meeting

In 2009, a series of meetings, including two major meetings, were held to review the implementation of the BPFA. First, from 15-18 September 2009, was a meeting at the national level, which included the Thai Women's Forum. A summary report and declaration¹ was made along with a Beijing Declaration from the Women's Forum in Thailand to express concerns for gender equality including the right to quality education and healthcare services, the right to job security and sufficient income to be self-reliant, and the right to receive information to keep up with the world. Apart from the Thai Women's Forum, another major meeting was the Beijing+15 Regional Review Meeting entitled "Accountability and Implementation: Making Change Happen through the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action". The meeting was held to review progress in the Asia-Pacific region as per the Beijing Declaration, with high level delegations from 62 ESCAP countries and international non-governmental organizations during 16-18 November 2009 at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand. Concerns about gender inequalities were raised as well as women's rights at the regional level, which are part of the assessment of progress of the member countries' implementation for the CSW meeting at the 54th session. During the meeting, the Bangkok Declaration for Beijing+15² was issued to mark the 15th anniversary of the BPFA.

Report on the Progress of Women's Status in Thailand

According to the report on the progress of women's status in Thailand³, legal changes have been made to reflect gender sensitivities and to uphold better women's human rights including the enactment of the Protection of Domestic Violence Victims Act B.E. 2550 (2007), and an amendment made to the Penal Code to prevent women from being raped by their own spouse. Indications of gender inequalities were also cited, including in relation to women and poverty since women tend to earn less income than men from doing the same kind of job. In addition, instances of women taking the lead role in female-headed households have increased meaning a number of women have to take care of both domestic and professional work. As for women and the media, the report

¹ Summary Report and Declaration-Thai Women Forum: National Consultation on Beijing+15 Review, 15-18 September 2009, Nonthaburi, Thailand

² Outcome Document of the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at fifteen Years, and Its Regional and Global Outcomes

³ Response to the Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly: THAILAND

indicates that there have been a growing number of women in the media profession at currently around 41%. Meanwhile, Thailand has been campaigning to monitor and prevent the media from featuring gender stereotypes and bias in all kinds of media.

Meanwhile, women's organizations in Thailand led by the Foundation for Women and the Network of Women's Progress and Peace held a meeting during late December 2009 on "New steps for women after 30 years of CEDAW and 15 years of BPFA". It was concluded in the meeting that gender stereotypes are still an obstacle preventing women from having the chance to live the desirable life they choose. Coupled with rapid social and economic changes under globalization, trade and investment liberalizations, natural and environmental disasters, and armed conflicts in Southern border provinces, the situation has become more exacerbated and affects the security of women's lives.

Movement at the International Level during the CSW Meeting

During the meeting from 1-12 March 2010, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women held some parallel forums. One of these was Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) which discussed how issues of food security, the global financial crisis, and sexuality and human rights are interconnected. DAWN released a statement on the Beijing Platform for Action 15 Years After: Surviving Multilateral Dysfunctionality in a Fierce New World⁴. The statement mentions that women are facing a fierce new world with massive political and economic instability. This instability, together with the connections between militarization, economic crisis, food insecurity, violence, climate change and a rollback on sexual rights, hits women the hardest. Issues concerning women's rights and gender equality have been belittled by a neo-liberal model of development which paves the way for multinational corporations and large businesses to have better access to inter-governmental negotiations than civil society does. As a result, policy proposals coming out of international negotiations are geared toward promoting lucrative business in the marketing system rather than to caring for social and human dimensions. In addition, throughout the 15 years since the Beijing conference, issues concerning the human rights of LGBT are still treated as side issues during the meeting of the CSW.

In addition, women's organizations have released the Final Statement⁵ which identifies their concern that the spaces for influencing decision-making by women's organizations at the Beijing+15 Review have been significantly reduced. They called upon the UN Secretary General, CSW Chairperson and member countries to recover the transformative nature of the BPFA by reaffirming the BPFA as both a comprehensive and critical human rights framework that requires full implementation as a matter of urgency and as integral to and prerequisite for the implementation of the MDGs. The challenges have to be reviewed urgently during the forthcoming Millennium Development Goals 2010 and high level meetings of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), ensuring that both civil society and women's organizations are able to participate meaningfully in these and any other related meetings.

⁴ Statement at the 54th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) March 210, New York

⁵ Final Statement Concerning Beijing+15 process Review at Commission on the Status of Women. New York, March 4th, 2010