

Toward's a Methodology for the Popularization of Women's Human Rights

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TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY FOR THE POPULARIZATION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

By María Suarez¹
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INTRODUCTION

The Decade of Human Rights Education has the objective of "endorsing, enhancing and facilitating the development of formal, informal and non-formal human rights education in all sectors of society throughout the world in the course of the next ten years. Many new initiatives will be created, discussed and implemented. Others that have already been taking place, will be strengthened."³ Hardly anyone concerned about the situation of human rights around the world would doubt the need for such a task, and the need for such a decade. It will take a long range effort to do human rights education.

We live in times when mainstream education and communication have defined human rights according to parameters that do not always recognize that human rights are for and by people; that human rights are for building a fair livelihood for all.

We can think of at least six foci of human rights in mainstream education that are not very useful to the achievement of this goal:

1. The separation, by governments and specialized bodies, of the generations of rights (political and civil; social, economic and cultural; and collective rights), "prioritizing" one or the other according to their political objectives within cold war parameters of east and west, and now north and south, all of which fails to take into account their indivisibility in peoples' lives.
2. The definitions of human rights by governments and specialized bodies, instead of by people, out of our diverse conditions, options and needs, including the gender-specific.
3. The evaluation of the human rights situation around the world by governments and specialized institutions without taking into account people's testimonies of day to day life, which particularly invisibilizes women's human rights.
4. The focus of human rights as a "specialized political science" according to east and west, or north and south conflicts, with little or no reference to sustainable livelihoods⁴ for all that take all species into account.

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³ Shula, Koneing, Exective Director of the Committee for the Decade on Human Rights Education. Interview for FIRE, october 1992.

5. The idea that only states are violators of human rights, leaving those denied by international corporations, civil society and private individuals invisibilized and unaccountable.

6. The idea that the goal of human rights education is to "teach" others what their human rights are, and to "teach" them that they are denied those rights, with little or no reference to the fact that historically it has been the people who have created the human rights that are recognized today out of their needs and their struggles.

The Decade of Education on Human Rights, as a non-governmental initiative, has the possibility of going beyond these traditional limitations in human rights education. From this perspective, there are a few challenges, among others:

- to move from policies of sustainable development to those of sustainable livelihood, which has to do with the indivisibility of human rights, among other things.

- to move from the idea that all rights are already included (in the international legislation) and that they are universal; that our task is only to better the mechanisms of implementation; and that this task belongs to specialized national and international organizations and governments toward strategies of empowering people to determine, integrate and control processes of sustainable livelihood, and to hold governments and specialized agencies accountable for supporting them in doing that.

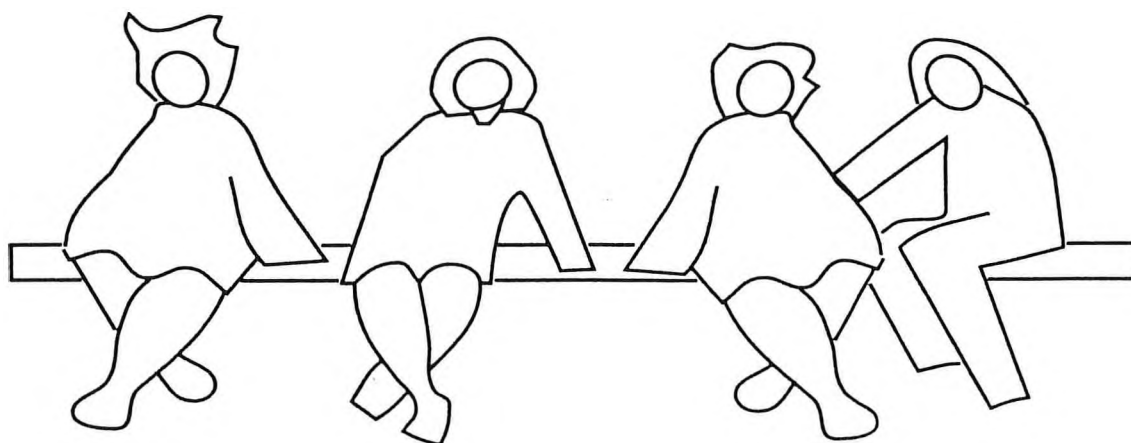
- to move from the idea that rights are for some of the people of the world now, while others have to accept, wait and understand that for them it "takes time", to construction

of rights for everyone now. This argument is especially made with regard to women's human rights, as well as the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights.

- to move from the idea that human rights are constructed, granted and guaranteed by specialized bodies or governments, and that they can be violated only by states, to a strategy of building up civil society's organized capacity to sustain all of life, define human rights and respect all human rights.

In addition to these challenges that we share with all in this Decade on Human Rights Education, women have a double challenge: educating ourselves and each other on the fact that women, indeed, are subjects of human rights; and educating ourselves and others on the fact that human rights are not universal until women's rights are human rights, which requires integration of our gender perspective into the human rights definitions, mechanisms and actions.

⁴ DAWN (Developing Alternatives with Women for New Era). Interview with Peggy Antrobus, FIRE, Brazil, June 1992 (by Maria Suarez).



SOME NEEDS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN IGNORED...

Women's human rights advocacy has a long history at the international level. Women have been struggling for our human rights since the creation of the international human rights systems themselves.

For example, in 1933 the Interamerican Women's Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a Convention on the Nationality of Women, which was the first international legislation on women's human rights.⁵ The Women's Commission of the OAS was born way back in 1928.

In the universal system, that of the United Nations, women fought for the recognition of sex discrimination in the Universal Declaration and the Committee on the Status of Women was created parallel to the Commission on Human Rights itself, at its first meeting in 1946.⁶

These are only a few highlights that show that women have been struggling for our human rights since the time when international bodies were shaping human rights legislation and doctrine.

However, few women know about these struggles undertaken by women at the international level, despite the fact that these have been the result of women's local struggles throughout the world and throughout history.

What is more dramatic still, is the fact that despite all these struggles, the battle for full recognition and implementation of women's human rights is still to be won, even on the national and international legislative level, never mind the daily lives of women. (In the words of a Nicaraguan woman, "equality in the law is not equality in life for women.")

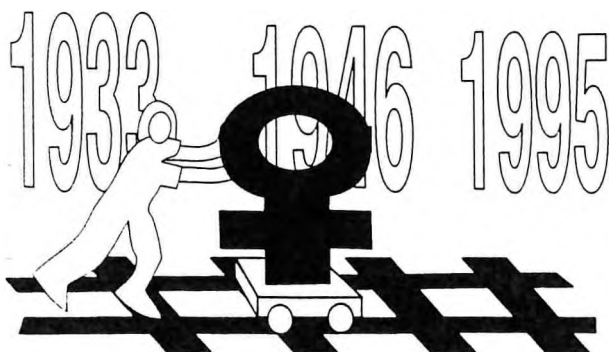
SOME OF THESE ISSUES IN CENTRAL AMERICA...



This is why, what we call in Central America the "POPULARIZATION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS" IS AN URGENT NEED, IN EVERY WOMAN'S LIFE, IN EVERY SPECIFIC COUNTRY AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT BEING BUILT.

What we mean by "popularization of women's human rights", is the processes whereby the women's movements and women in the human rights movement in all its diversity, assume the historical struggle (individual and social; personal-political, national and international) — the struggle through which we discover ourselves and each other as subjects of human rights; through which we recognize and conquer our dignity by constructing our human rights out of our life's experiences and needs as woman-human, and seek to have this be reflected in national and international legislation.

In this process, popular human rights education plays an important role. In Central America, as in other parts of the world, both the women's movements and the human rights movement have done this for many decades, but only recently is a methodology for the reconceptualization of women's human rights and the construction of those



⁵ Interview with Linda Poole, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women. FIRE. September, 1992. (by Maria Suárez).

⁶ Bruce, Margaret. Former Head of the Subcommission on the Status of Women (UN 1962 - 1977). Interview for FIRE. Sept. 1992.

rights out of women's daily life experiences being systematized.

In Central America, among many other experiences, this is happening as part of the preparation for the 6th Latin American Feminist Conference organized by women in the region in El Salvador in November 1993.

We wanted to develop a methodology that would emphasize the construction of human rights out of our daily lives as opposed to the victimization of women; that would transcend the recognition of international and national legislation on human rights, and analyze instead the expression of rights in our daily lives as a starting point, reference, and target in the process of reconceptualization of human rights as women's rights and reconstruction of our lives within and for the transformation of our societies.

The experience gained in the workshops and other places where we have used this methodology has opened new horizons as to what popular education in women's human rights can offer, not only to the popularization of women's human rights, but also in terms of pedagogy itself, as a process of empowering women to re-vision and reconstruct our lives and to build a women's human rights movement, grounded on women as subjects of human rights, and contributing to the broader social transformation grounded on respect and promotion of all human rights, and everyone's human rights.

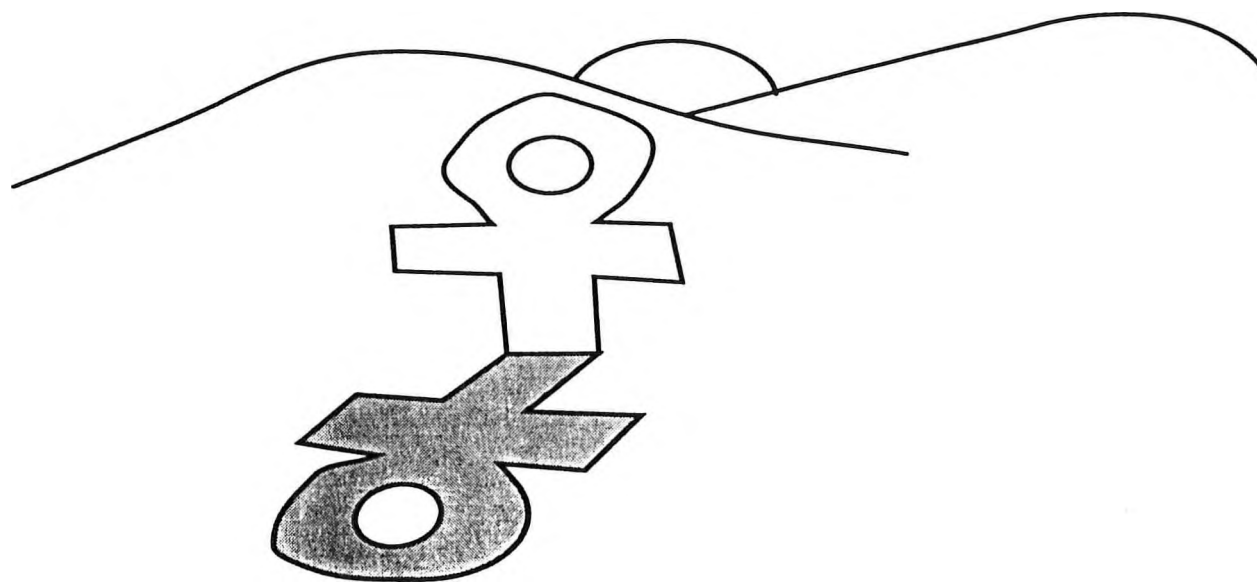
This methodology strengthened us as women human rights activists and feminists, in our commitment to build a movement at the grassroots level, where women find and build answers to their needs, both in our daily lives and by

promoting changes in structures of society in general at the local, national and international level.

In this methodology we have been able to trace back and re-live those situations that have marked our lives because of human rights denied to us, and those that have contributed to re-building our self-esteem and empowerment as subjects of human rights, through our efforts and the support of others.

Through this methodology we have been able to grasp a better appreciation of women's role as protagonists, as social, economic and political actors, in the development of civil societies in the Central American countries. It has also helped us move beyond the portrayal of women as victims only.

The affirmation and construction of our human rights, because of the existence of patriarchal societies which have invisibilized our contribution and evaded our specific needs as women, require a strategy based, not only on making our contribution and needs of human rights visible to others, but to women ourselves. This will also enhance our contribution to the rest of society.



to understand what happened to women during these past decades in Central America.

Upon participating in these struggles, women learned about human dignity, about our own oppression as women, about our strength, and about our capacity to transform our societies.

When things started changing for others, women realized that they did not necessarily change for us in our daily life needs and experiences. Women also learned that the struggle for women's human rights would not be taken into account in the struggle until women took it upon ourselves.

Experiments to change the situation of basic human rights in the region, such as the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, and now the UNO government; the dual power structure of military confrontation for many years in El Salvador, and now the opening of political space for all; the liberal democracy in Costa Rica; the change toward civil government and electoral processes in Honduras and Guatemala; the process of decolonization of Belize and the post-invasion government in Panama, etc. have not changed the basic status of women.

It is, therefore, necessary for the women's movement and the human rights movement in Central America to ask ourselves: how is it possible that after so many years of struggle for human rights, women are still subject to the same or worse levels of exploitation, subordination and discrimination?

Social change in Central America and all the experiments around it have not dealt with the patriarchal foundations of political, economic and social structures, cultures, relationships and socialization. But it is also necessary to understand why women have accepted the struggle for everyone else's rights, leaving our own behind. That has to be seen in light of what happens to women in those experiments.

In the first place, we have been historically socialized to have patience with respect to our own needs, subordinating them to the needs of others. This plays a role in the subjectivity of women leading us to feel that we cannot have rights until everyone has theirs. (A woman from a political organization in Guatemala once made the following statement to us: "how can we aspire to have our rights in Guatemala, when even the men have not yet achieved theirs?")

Second, society itself does not recognize our needs, and furthermore, if it does in some way, it is not as human

rights. Women have internalized this. (A woman, human rights activist from El Salvador once told us that domestic violence against women is not a human right, but rather a form of dishonest abuse that should be treated as common crime: what happens in the homes is not of the competence of human rights since it deals with what states do or do not do.)

Third, the denial of women's human rights is socially, politically and culturally accepted by most men in general, and by most human rights organizations in the region until very recently. (CODEHUCA and some national human rights commissions two years ago established a program "Los Derechos de las Humanas", to advance women's human rights.)

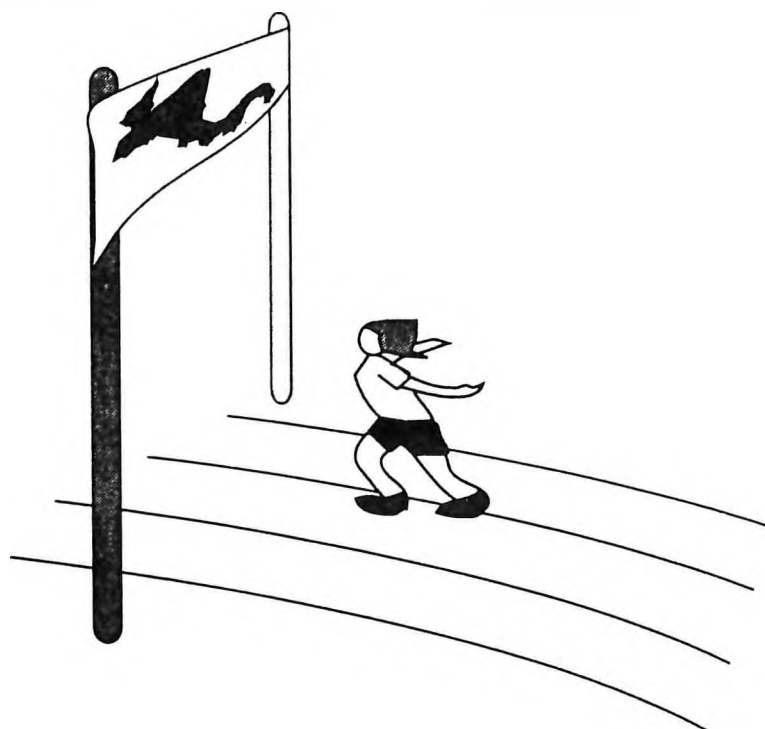
Fourth, the women's organizations have not always given importance to women's human rights in our lives experiences and needs and as part of the political struggle until recently.

(Until recently some women's groups in Central America took the position that dealing with women's rights as human rights would water down feminism. Most recently, many have embraced the issues).

All of these factors contribute to the idea that women's human rights are not human rights, thus, invisibilizing us and our needs on one hand, and on the other, conferring impunity on violators of women's rights whether it be states or individuals.

We have to look to women — the invisibilized protagonists of social change — to develop strategies for their empowerment so as to go beyond cosmetic socio-political reforms and recognize that until women's human rights are respected, there will always be oppression, conflict, repression, social injustice and lack of democracy.

In this situation, the exclusion of and discrimination against women in



SOME OF THE CHALLENGES IN CENTRAL AMERICA...

It is in this sense that education and the popularization of women's human rights should be a priority among all those who pretend to move towards the construction of societies where a culture of human rights prevails as a fundamental basis for sustainable livelihood.

The task of popularizing women's human rights is necessary for various reasons:

First, there is a lack of knowledge amongst most women, especially at the grassroots level, about issues, struggles, advancements and challenges at the international and national levels on this issue, despite the fact that it has been precisely these women at the grassroots level, the ones that have, through their struggles, opened spaces and defended everyone else's rights to life and all human rights in Central America these past decades.

Second, the very process of reproduction of life has been almost entirely in the hands of women. Women have assumed the daily struggle, plus the political struggle for the right to life itself, when it has been threatened by war and other repressive state policies as well as by individuals who use violence as a method of conflict resolution in daily life, and who use discriminatory practices and practices of subordination to silence and oppress differences.

We know what the costs of the denial of human rights and of this violence have been in Central America: thousands have been subject to torture, summary executions and disappearance in Guatemala and El Salvador, to repression in Honduras, as well as disrespect for sovereignty in Nicaragua and Panama, etc.

Women have been at the forefront of the struggles to defend the right to life and other basic human rights in Central America in this context.

To understand why these same women that have been at the forefront of the struggle for everyone else's rights in Central America are now bringing up their own rights as a challenge in the transformation of our societies, we have

the human rights movement must be addressed, not only in terms of recognition as such, but also, and most importantly, in terms of development of strategies to overcome it; strategies that come from the women in the first place.

In this process, it is of utmost importance to reach grassroots women and facilitate processes by which they themselves bring forth their rights out of their daily experiences; by which they decide their agenda; learn about the different legal mechanisms of prevention protections and defense; develop alternative, non-formal mechanisms; and articulate strategies of action both legal and non-formal, to strengthen and build a women's human rights dimension to our movement and the human rights movement overall.



ONE OF THE PROPOSALS TO WORK THESE ISSUES IN CENTRAL AMERICA...

It is towards this effort that we have designed the METHODOLOGY: BUILDING WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS OUT OF OUR DAILY LIVES, NEEDS, AND EXPERIENCES.

The General Objective of this methodology is to contribute to the construction of women's human rights in the daily livelihood efforts of women, so as to strengthen civil society's movement towards a transformation of our societies, deeply rooted in respect, promotion and protection of all rights, and the rights of all.

This methodology has specific objectives, which have to do with women in particular:

1. To identify the main rights that women consider have been denied, invisibilized and disregarded in our daily lives, and which have no expression in national and international legislation.
2. To identify those rights gained by women in our daily lives, deriving from our struggle, strength and support from others.
3. To contribute to build new pedagogy on human rights education where women go through a process of appropriation and reconceptualization of human rights instruments as "instruments" of the people to fulfill needs in life.
4. To develop strategies that help us rebuild a body of women's human rights for prevention, protection and promotion of our dignity, together with the qualitative transformation of our lives, status, and our societies.

STEPS OF THE METHODOLOGY:

STEP 1:

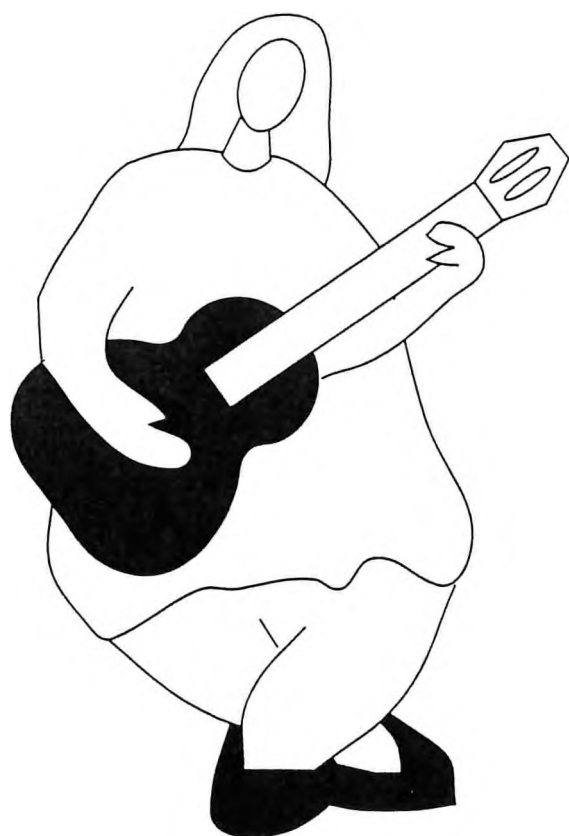
Out of testimonies of our lives, build each woman's herstory (testimony) of the first significant right denied her because of being a woman, subject of discrimination and subordination.

Exercise to generate herstory (testimony): try to reconstruct the first time you remember, where you felt a right was denied you, because you are a woman.

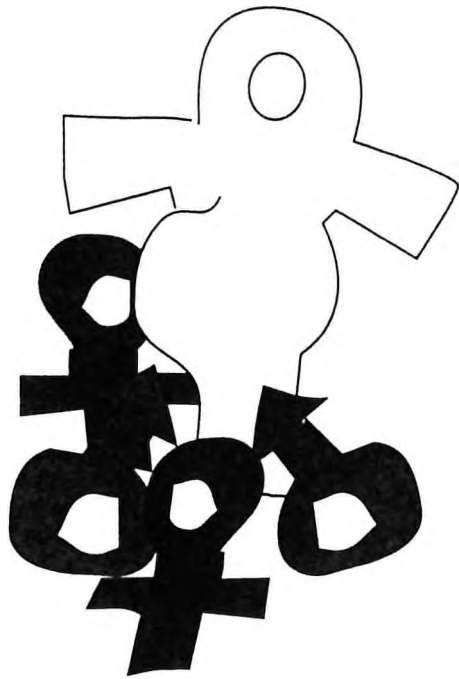
Techniques that can be used in this step:

a-) each woman can write her story on a piece of paper or she can prepare to dramatize her story, or she can tell it in a song or poem or she can tell her story through a mimic or a drawing.

b-) each woman can write in a card the name of the right denied.



For example, a 62 year old Costa Rican urban dweller in San Jose told us at one of the workshops that when she was 13 years old, her father made her marry the man, 10 years older than her, who had just raped her. She explained that she had 11 children with this man, and that her life has been on lease ever since she was made to marry him.



b. Many women's first conscious experiences of denial of rights arise from comparing the socialization process of boys in contrast with that of girls. Thus, we learn very young, that men have rights that women do not have. This makes evident both a double standard of rights and discrimination based on differences.

The testimonies we have gathered in this first step of the methodology, reveal some important insights:

a. Most of the experiences that are remembered by women have to do with the "private" sphere of their lives, and in classical human rights terms, these are not human rights.



STEP 2:

Out of testimonies of our lives, build each woman's herstory of the construction of rights, despite discrimination and subordination at all levels, out of a process of consciousness of being subjects of rights, empowerment to act on it, and support of others to do it.

Exercise to do herstory: try to reconstruct the first time you remember, when you realized you had rights because you gained a right out of your process of recognizing needs, dignity and power.

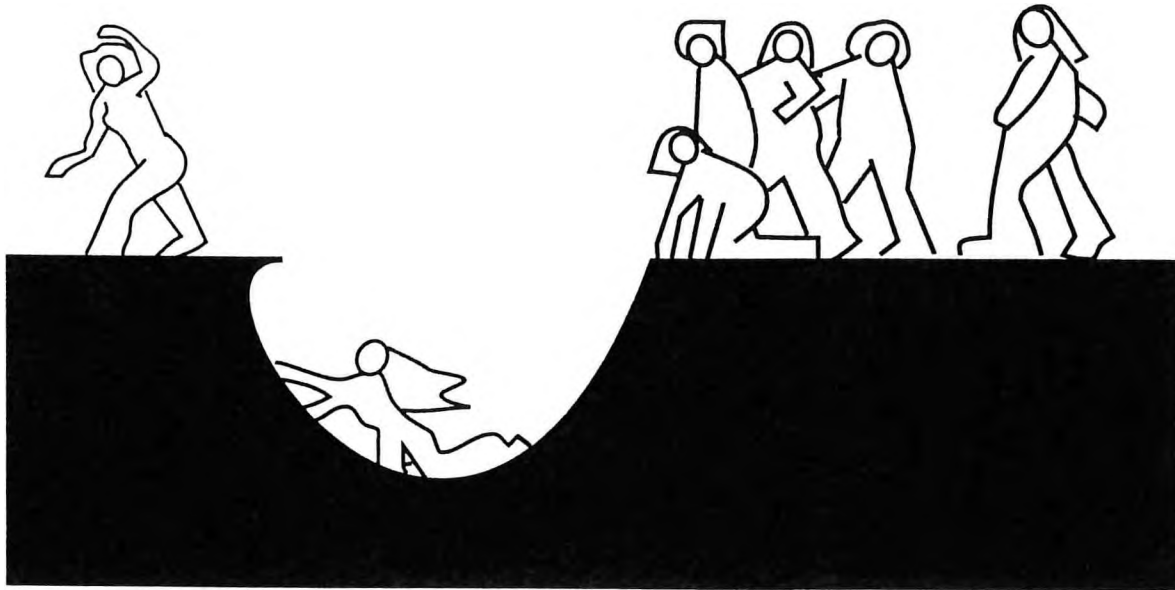
Techniques that can be used in this step:

- a-) Each woman can do it in any of the following ways: write it, dramatize it, tell it in a song or poem, or draw it.
- b-) Each woman can write in a card, the name of the right conquered.
- c-) After each woman has undergone steps 1 and 2, then they come together as a group. Those who want to, can share their stories in the group, and also the name of the rights denied (step 1) and the name of the right conquered (step 2).
- d-) After the presentations, the group can draft a list of the rights that appeared in the stories.

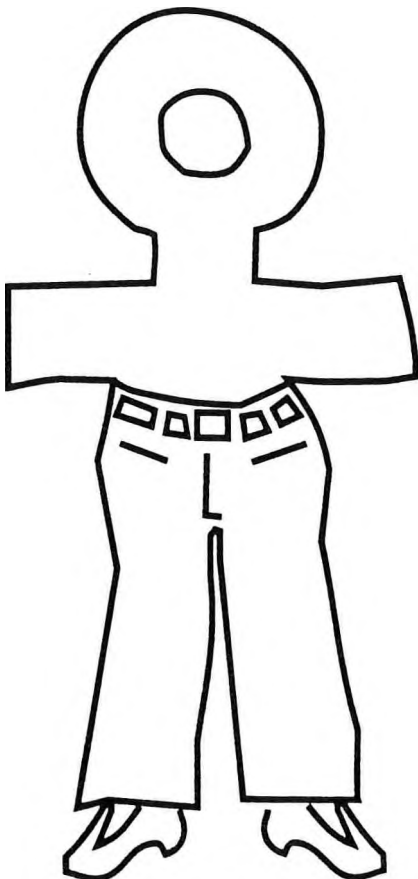


An example of this is the same Costa Rican woman's testimony, who said that the first right she had gained out of developing her own strength was two years before, when, at 60 years of age, she graduated from 6th grade in night school.

She explained that she had been forced by her father to marry her rapist, and by the rapist immediately to have children. She would have been able to graduate at 14 years of age instead of having to postpone it for 47 years, to graduate at 60.



Some relevant insights drawn from the testimonies gathered from the second step are:



a. Most of the first experience of rights for women have to do with a sense of self-determination to fulfill a need denied because of being a woman. ("the first time I wore pants and dared to leave the house in them", "when I left my house to be able to live my own life", "the first time I dared say no when I did not want to make love with my husband", "the first time I ate when I was hungry, instead of doing so after all the rest had eaten".)

b. Many testimonies have to do with bridging the gap between private and public, going beyond the domestic sphere and the roles demanded of women.

c. Many testimonies demonstrate the indivisibility of self-determination and the guarantees of social, economic and cultural rights. For the Costa Rican woman, graduation was an act of self-determination which could only be achieved in the context of social conditions which made education possible.

d. Many testimonies demonstrate moments in the process of learning to say "no" to others, and "yes" to our own needs.

STEP 3:

Out of the testimonies, compare and contrast them to the international human rights instruments; the history and herstory of those Declarations, Covenants and Protocols, to see if they find their rights denied and gained reflected in those instruments or in the historical interpretation of the rights stated in them.

Exercise: Women are given the appropriate selected documents and asked to compare and contrast the rights described with their own herstory. (Different techniques to study the international legislation and its history can be used: films, videos, small talks, dramas, written history or excerpts, etc.)

Techniques that can be used in this step:

a-) Each woman uses her two cards with the name of the rights denied and gained in her life.

b-) Each one is given a copy of CEDAW.



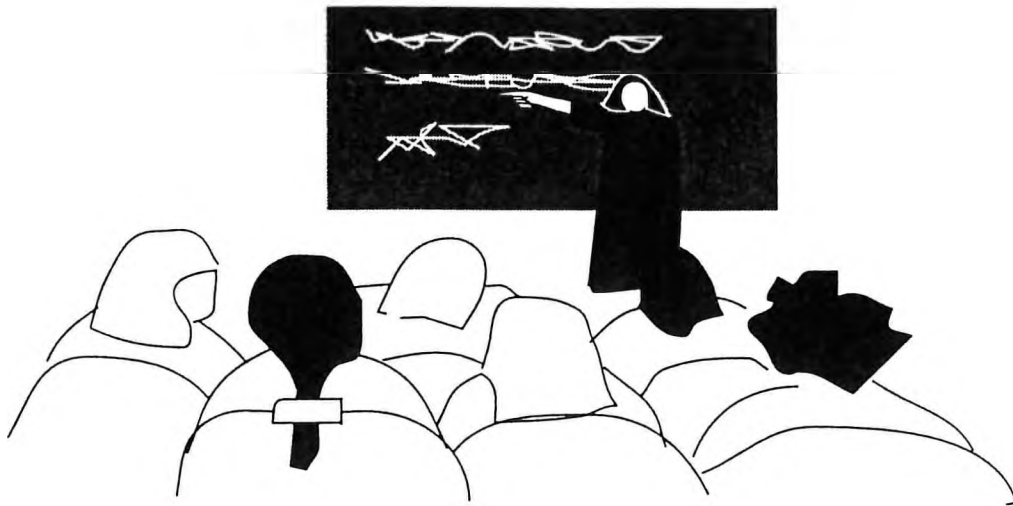
c-) They read the document individually, looking to see if the rights in their own cards appear in the document. (If there are illiterate women an audio tape or oral presentation can be provided.)

d-) The group comes together to share each woman's findings.

e-) The facilitator provides additional information about the Convention. For example Resolutions in U.N. Conferences where interpretations have been expanded, etc.

f-) They then undertake a discussion about the historical interpretation of those rights according to the UN, in contrast with their own interpretation. What are the limitations and assets?

g-) They share what it means to have or not have the human rights mentioned by them, in the convention.



There follows an exposition or dramatization by each woman and discussion of results of the comparison and contrast, involving comments, questions, answers and other information. Everyone in the group will contribute their knowledge and reactions on all issues raised.

Declaration. They had talked about their mothers being battered, their own experiences of sexual harassment as kids, and about double sexual standards applied to their brothers and themselves, etc. We had to tell them that if they found their rights in the documents, it was a product of their imagination and interpretation, because all the experiences they had mentioned had to do with the domestic sphere, not recognized as human rights.



An example: A group of students of international human rights law went through the process and then were asked to find their rights expressed in the Universal

Some relevant insights drawn from the presentations and discussions in this step are:

- a. Women study and look into international legislation, not as a formal, cognitive exercise, but as related to their needs.
- b. In this process, the center and core is not "the rights", but "the life" and how it is reflected or not in international human rights legislation.
- c. This process helps us understand the limitations of dichotomies that stem from the androcentric view of rights, the separation of private and public, divisions between the generations of rights, etc.



STEP 4:

Out of this discussion, suggest actions and strategies, to overcome these limitations, to work on this together with others engaged in similar efforts, both for women in our daily lives, and for the advancement of respect for the human rights of women and all people.

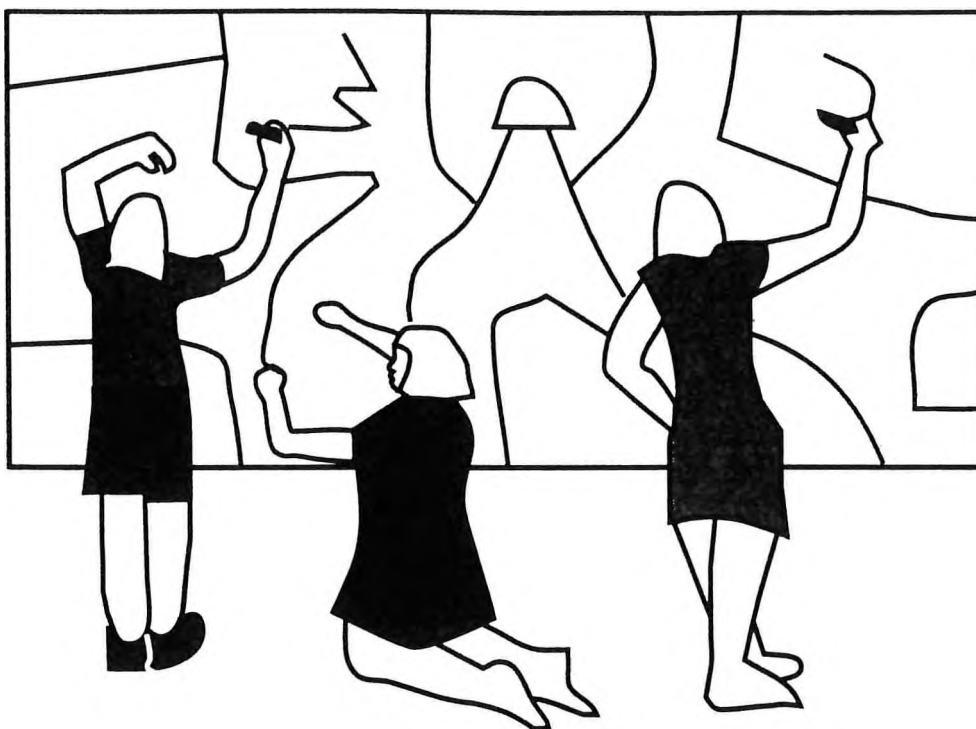


Exercise: The group will draft a list of all the limitations and goals identified in the contrast and discussion. It will suggest actions and strategies at the different levels (daily lives, local, national and international) to build women's human rights together with the process of transformation of our societies towards respect of all rights for all peoples. It will also compile a list of all groups known to defend, promote, protect and reconceptualize human rights at all levels, and discuss how they do it and where they can be contacted.



Techniques that can be used:

- a) The group can draw a collective chart of limitations, challenges and referencies of actions undertaken by women.
- b) They can discuss how to use the convention and other instruments to fulfill their needs.
- c) They draw a list of what appeared in steps «a» and «b»
- d) they draw a list of groups, institutions and organizations that they can link to for support.
- e) They draft a plan of action from what appears in the list.



Example: In a workshop in Guatemala in 1991, the indigenous women mentioned women in the human rights commissions as their possible support group. In Costa Rica, women who themselves are human rights activists have appealed to the support of women's groups in facing domestic violence themselves.

Among the insights that emerge from this process are:

- a. Women include actions to change daily life, such as battered women's houses and other support groups that help women develop self-sufficiency through productive projects, etc.
- b. They come up with many non-formal strategies which they have used to survive as victims of abuses.

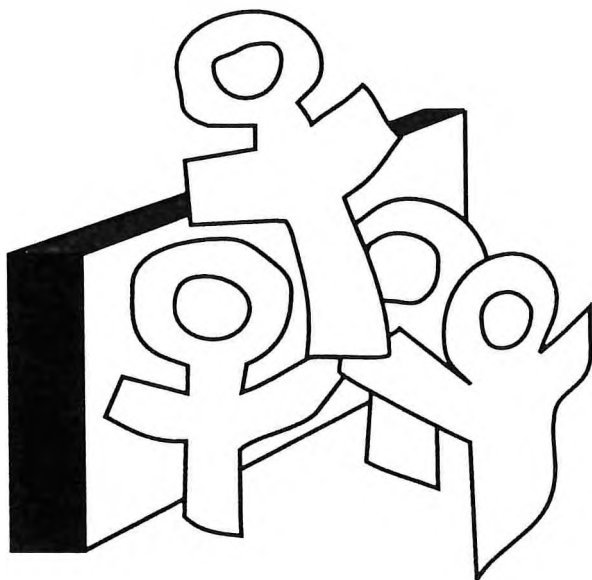


- c. They suggest changes in international law which:

- overcome the separation between the private and the public;
- reconceptualize human rights to include our experiences and our rights; and
- affirm the indivisibility of human rights.

STEP 5:

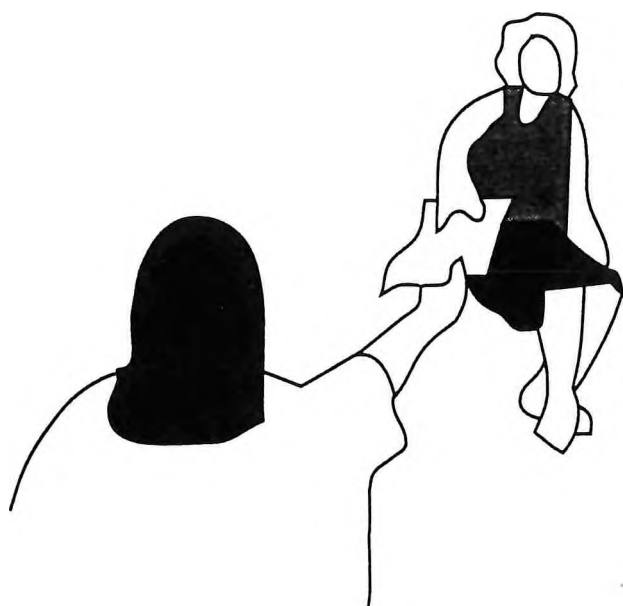
This step consists of sharing our concerns and fears about implementing the strategies and actions suggested, where the fears and concerns come from, who perpetuates them in us, and who supports us in overcoming them, etc. It broadens the strategies, by including actions that have to do with their own plans of actions.



Exercise: Women are asked to look at the strategies and actions which have been written on large poster paper or a blackboard. Then they have to register their first emotional reaction to each one of them. Each one presents their reactions to the group, explaining them and suggesting how to overcome them or how to implement them.

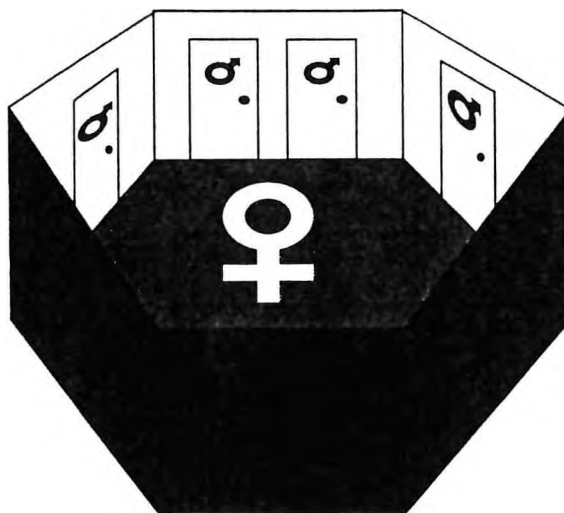
Techniques that can be used:

- a) The facilitator gives out blank cards to each participant and explains that they have to write down the first emotional reaction they feel when they hear the actions.
- b) The women share what they have written down.
- d) they discuss the reactions and how to overcome or strengthen them.
- e) These are integrated into the plan of action.





Example: One human rights activist said that she experienced the discrimination against women in the human rights movement as overwhelming; that it evoked a deep sadness that stemmed from the realization that it is going to take many years and generations to change all of this, and that many backlashes will have to be faced, despite it being a fair and just struggle.



Amongst the insights that stem from the development of this step are:

- a. That women appropriate these strategies and actions only after the fears and concerns have been also dealt with, as an integral part of the process.
- b. That this dimension empowers women both personally and collectively, and promotes the creation and strengthening of group support emanating from the workshop groups in this process.
- c. The process helps identify actions to face obstacles—social conditions, persons, structures, etc— which perpetuate gender roles, positions of subordination, and victimization of women.

(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

ARTICLE 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

ARTICLE 4

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

ARTICLE 5

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

- (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either

of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

ARTICLE 6

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

PART II

ARTICLE 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

ARTICLE 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

ARTICLE 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.

2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

PART III

ARTICLE 10

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to

eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;
- (b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;
- (c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;
- (d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;
- (e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;
- (f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;
- (g) The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;
- (h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

ARTICLE 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;
- (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;
- (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;
- (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;
- (e) The right social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;
- (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

ARTICLE 12

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

ARTICLE 13

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to family benefits;

(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;

(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

ARTICLE 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures

to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

- (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
- (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
- (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
- (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
- (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;
- (f) To participate in all community activities;
- (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
- (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

PART IV

ARTICLE 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.

3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with

regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

ARTICLE 16

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same right to enter into marriage;
- (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
- (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
- (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
- (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;
- (f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
- (g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;
- (h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

PART V

ARTICLE 17

1. For the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) consisting, at the time of entry into force of the Convention, of eighteen and, after ratification of or accession to the Convention by the thirty-fifth State Party, of twenty-three experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention. The experts shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of the different forms of civilization as well as the principle legal systems.

2. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals.

3. The initial election shall be held six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention. At least three months before the date of each election the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to the States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The Secretary-General shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties.

4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

5. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. However, the terms of nine of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

6. The election of the five additional members of the Committee shall be held in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 of this article, following the thirty-fifth ratification or accession. The terms of two of the additional members elected on this occasion shall expire at the end of two years, the names of these two members having been chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

7. For the filling of casual vacancies, the State Party whose expert has ceased to function as a member of the Committee shall appoint another expert from among its nationals, subject to the approval of the Committee.

8. The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide, having regard to the importance of the Committee's responsibilities.

9. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

ARTICLE 18

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:

- (a) Within a year after the entry into force for the State concerned; and
 - (b) Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.
2. Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfillment of obligations under the present Convention.

ARTICLE 19

- 1. The Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure.
- 2. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years.

ARTICLE 20

- 1. The Committee shall normally meet for a period of not more than two weeks annually in order to

consider the reports submitted in accordance with article 18 of the present Convention.

2. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee.

ARTICLE 21

1. The Committee shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the States Parties. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be included in the report of the Committee together with comments, if any, from States Parties.

2. The Secretary-General shall transmit the reports of the Committee to the Commission on the Status of Women for its information.

ARTICLE 22

The specialized agencies shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their activities. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities.

PART VI

ARTICLE 23

Nothing in this Convention shall affect any provisions that are more conducive to the achievement of equality between men and women which may be contained:

- (a) In the legislation of a State Party; or
- (b) In any other international convention, treaty or agreement in force for that State.

ARTICLE 24

States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

ARTICLE 25

- 1. The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.

3. The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

4. The present Convention shall be open to accession by all States. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

ARTICLE 26

1. A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any State Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.

ARTICLE 27

1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

2. For each State ratifying the present Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

ARTICLE 28

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession.

2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.

3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to this effect addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States thereof. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received.

ARTICLE 29

1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.

2. Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of this Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this article. The other States parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.

3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

ARTICLE 30

The present Convention, the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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