

Outreach Issues

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Agriculture and Land Have a Women's Face

Women's priorities: women can not be developed, we develop ourselves – and of course appreciate some assistance here and there.



By: Leshia Witmer on behalf of Women's Major Group organising partners

With so much consensus on the floor during CSD 16 and the IPM, women welcome the attention that is being paid to the position of women and especially the specific reference to women as actors and decision makers. Women could expect clear deliverables and a draft negotiating text containing a lot of language on the involvement of women and gender issues. However, after hearing the comments during the closing session of the IPM and yesterday's opening session, a lot of good ideas where, it seems "missed out" on. Good enough reason to summarize them again!

Mainstreaming

The face of the farmer and natural resource manager is primarily female in most of the developing world. Gender sensitization is necessary but not sufficient, for both women and

men at all levels (local and national), to change the prevailing misunderstanding of this fact. Gender mainstreaming and the transformation of policies, institutions and programs is required to develop the conditions under which women (farmers) can be put in the forefront and centre of structures and processes, recognising their roles as primary food producers and environmental managers.

Increasing the voices of women

Governments are urged to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), especially Article 14 focused on Rural Women, and the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa, the recommendations of the CSW 53. Many governments have already set 30% women's participation in decision-making processes as a crucial number for change. This percentage should increase at all levels of decision-making, from national representation to local development projects and in every country.

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Outreach Issues is the civil society newsletter produced by the SDIN Group and Stakeholder Forum. Outreach Issues aims to report with attitude, from the global scene of sustainability.

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CSW recently phrased it as follows:

“Take all appropriate measures to integrate women, on an equal basis with men, in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, including their displacement from income-generating activities, which greatly adds to unremunerated work, such as care giving, and negatively impacts on their health, well-being and quality of life, particularly those whose livelihoods and daily subsistence depend directly on sustainable ecosystems”

Funding

Implementation and achievement of sustainable development in all issues discussed at CSD 17 can only be assured when budget allocations and mandates to develop capacity and strengthen leadership skills among professional women, female extension workers and women farmers and women working in agriculture, rural development and natural resource management are assured and promises delivered.

Sustainable Criteria

Biomass production for bio-fuels are a chance on the road to sustainable developmental, though the wording suggest otherwise. This can be done by small holders and cooperatives. Women strongly believe that production should be certified along social, economic and ecological criteria (as promoted by the EU and others).

Transfer of knowledge and technology that is “women proof”; in the context of the precautionary principle, including informed consent, as agreed in Rio, has to stay the starting point of use of new technologies and practices for example GMO’s. Female farmers see the possible added value, but care even more for the health of their families and environment. The (non) discussion about genetic modification (GMO’s) makesome wary and (somewhat) worried. Women stress at the least the need for more long-term research into health and environmental impacts, seed sovereignty and the need for solid, accessible and timely information.



“Women strongly believe that production should be certified along social, economic and ecological criteria (as promoted by the EU and others)”

Land ownership, safe tenure and safe living conditions are a prerequisite for people to invest in their homes, community and food production. This is also a highly important issue for women and indigenous peoples.

The right to land and safe tenure, the right to water and sanitation and the right to food are linked together and should be implemented in National law and plans. A Rights based approach is essential.

Creation of local markets has to be facilitated by education and information – the use of modern and traditional communication tools like utilising the combinations of radio, internet and local meetings offer avenues for knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Water and sanitation as cross cutting issues, deserve the specific attention of the CSD, women have a central role to play as water managers, and are essential as a prerequisite for agriculture, land management etc.

Knowledge sharing about the multi usage of water is also important.

Training and capacity building including vocational (technical) training to enable them to do the maintenance and daily management, should include women and girls.

Funding

The womens caucus would like a close examination at criteria for awarding funding, at present criteria seem to be having a negative impact by among other things, using a bankers definition of affordability, and not looking at notions in non-money communities and the need for low cost exploitation and not only investment and monetary return. Also using working with cost indicators that are not realistic, looking at the need for training and other type of facilities to be included; this makes gender sensitive alternative solutions for women and girls impossible.

Furthermore women recommend that:

- before developing or deciding on any program, transfer of knowledge and experience takes place. So as to enable stakeholders from all major groups to make informed choices and make it a really demand driven approach;

- design extension services, especially for women farmers that take into consideration the multiple roles of women, their workload and time constraints they have;
- ensure that agricultural institutions at all levels incorporate gender and equity into the way “they do business” including (but not limited to) their internal structures and processes;
- ensure that fiscal, trade and investment policies do not have adverse effects on livelihoods, health and food security especially for poor women, e.g. by using gender budgeting tools;

- create employment opportunities and alternative means of income generating for rural (landless) women and reward their work in providing eco-services.

Why women’s priorities are important?

A distinguishing characteristic of example Sub-Saharan African economies, is that both men and women play substantial economic roles. Women perform 90 percent of the work of processing food crops and providing household water and fuel wood, in Africa (Quisumbing et al., 1995). Existing information does show that women perform these roles under resource and

decision-making constraints. Women represent the majority of the rural poor (up to 70%), especially where migration, marital instability, male mortality and single parenthood have left them as heads of households. As livelihoods are significantly agricultural-based, Land, Agriculture, Rural Development are closely tied up and gender issues under any of them are reproduced in the others. However, Women are still treated as a target group that is offered a solution and not as actors that have the skills and experience and are enabled to make their own informed choices. ❖

Opening Statement – Indigenous Peoples to UN CSD17

Indigenous peoples have one central message to CSD17.

The current social and ecological crisis arises from an industrial development system which privileges natural resource extraction and wealth concentration in the hands of rich and powerful governments and corporations.

Given these roots of this modern crisis, governments at CSD17, must shift focus and emphasis towards valuing ecosystems and the role of indigenous peoples, small farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and land-based producers, and the specific contributions of women. This requires a combined ecosystem approach and human rights-based approach, which revitalizes and strengthens the resilience of ecosystems and local communities, to achieve food, water and energy security and self-determination. 85% of the world’s food is consumed near where it is grown, or at least, within the country. The percentage of world food sold through the industrial food market is uncertain, and big farms are more likely to grow feed, fiber and ornamental crops. Indigenous peoples and peasants have also bred and donated 6.5 million plant varieties for storage in ex-situ seed banks, thus also sustaining the world food system.

Increased support for localization in production and consumption patterns is required, rather than intensified centralization and globalization. Supporting local agriculture means reducing energy and GHG emissions all along the food chain.

The contextual and holistic dimensions of indigenous traditional knowledge, farmers and women’s knowledge must be valued and fully recognized. Local coping and adaptation strategies need urgent support. Our human rights, including land rights

must be secured as well as our full and effective participation in all decision-making and implementation in land use planning and ecosystem regeneration, agriculture and rural development, and drought and desertification.

Nature and poor people are not only victims of the current crises, but also provide central solutions. Safeguarding our interests must be the yardstick in negotiating the outcomes of CSD17. ❖



One Minute is Everything at the CSD

Major Groups react at overly correct time keeping when sessions are closed with lots of time to spare.

By: jgs

"I now invite the Major Groups to present their statements. You have one minute each." Civil society is invited to speak. At an intergovernmental process. The attention of the assembled delegates at CSD in Conference Room 4 in the downstairs basement in the UN is focused on the representatives of the Nine Major Groups. One minute times nine major groups make a total of nine minutes; the time allotted civil society to make their concerns heard is measured.

Civil society address the UN

This is not a new phenomenon – that representatives of civil society address official delegates at UN. Still in many ways the CSD interactive system with the major groups is somewhat of a novelty. Initiated at the last UN summit on sustainable development in 2002, and accepted as rules of procedure by ECOSOC, the foundation was made for an interactive process where civil society and governments would at least be verbal partners. But, one minute statements do not allow for great interactive efforts.

Civil society – only a symbolic value?

Civil society is always important in dinner speeches, and out in the field implementing programmes on sustainable development, or on energy saving, or on conflict resolutions, or with mine clearing, or as doctors and nurses in refugee camps and executing a host of other practical field operations. But civil society is often kept at arms length in intergovernmental processes. Except at CSD. CSD is a long process. Divided into spacious two year thematic cycles, the CSD policy session itself is two weeks long, 10 work days, often lasting 12 hours, sometimes even more with a one minute opening statement for the major groups to make their concerns heard. No wonder one of the concerns for the major groups' representatives at CSD has been to lobby for more time to speak.

Major groups are serious players

Being taken seriously is creating commitment and even loyalty. One way of building credibility is to come prepared, know what to say, how to deal with issues, understand the themes discussed, understand the process and respect it. The Major Groups have taken this challenge seriously and organise now training and policy sessions prior to the opening of the CSD. This year, three such training sessions were held on Sunday May 3rd. Close to 150 persons participated and worked to hammer out their positions, diligently working for six seven hours in these sessions. They came from all continents of the world and a host of countries. They represent a vast constituency, and are trying to make sure there is substance to the opening statement found in the Charter of the UN: "We the peoples..." For one year the peoples have worked to be heard for one minute?

Access and time are everything

Access is everything. Access and rules that guarantee the interaction between the Major Groups and the delegates. Access and time as well. Because if there is no time to execute and utilize access, it becomes meaningless. Controlling time can be a crucial way to control access. And it is always a dilemma how much time and space should be allotted civil society at an intergovernmental process. On the opening day of CSD 17 this dilemma became almost a dramatic element in the well staged and well proven choreography of CSD.

Modalities and processes have evolved since CSD 11 in 2003 allowing CSD to become the most interactive, transparent and accountable process within the intergovernmental system. The success of the process is measured by the extent to which civil society is given an active and serious role to play. Still, we know: 'Major Groups, you have one minute each to state your case, and you will be given one min-

ute each to conclude your work during the two weeks.' It has always been like this – at CSD that is. Other systems within the UN have adopted the best of the CSD practices and even expanded on these practices. UN Habitat is one, allowing civil society a very generous time slot to conclude their statements.

The US – our hero this time.

The US representative rose in defense of the major groups on the opening of CSD 17, simply stating in our interpretation how ridiculous a one minute speaking slot was. One minute is not enough time to say anything, he stated, and was adroitly



John Matuszak, U.S. Delegate—Our hero today!

corrected by the Bureau Chair simply – and correctly stating – that one minute was correct by procedure. Which is correct. And as a consequence of this, the Indigenous Peoples were not allowed to finish their statement. Rather rude, some thought; and we all thought how unnecessary to show this incredible need to be correct according to rules, and reduce statements to a question of narrowly defined procedure when the opening day closed the session almost 20 minutes before the stipulated time.

Major Groups – you have one minute each. Access is everything, and control is also politics. ❖

Regions Feeding Cities: Urban Rural Linkages for Food Security

By: Thomas Forster, International Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (IPSA)

A sensible response to the convergent crises of food and energy prices, along with economic and climate vulnerability, is to give communities the tools to create more, not less resilience in the face of multiple crises. The negotiating text for CS17, while bringing attention to the need for new investment in market infrastructure, does not make explicit reference to the important relationship between “cities and their countrysides”.

As research on the power of public food procurement recently has shown, the enormous purchasing power of global cities and their institutions can be an engine for new investment in the rural sector if this power is directed to multiple environmental, social and economic benefits. The “School Food Revolution” in numerous cities in both developed and developing countries has been at the forefront of a new agricultural model bringing back “home grown” feeding at larger scales.

In eastern and southern Africa there are new metropolitan development partnerships that put locally based food production at the center of food security strategies. In New York, where one of six children is food insecure, innovative urban-rural partnerships that bring healthy food to poor neighborhoods through city and country farms are being embraced in city food policy and new food distribution investments.

What national and international farm policy has not been able to achieve—to give farmers fair prices and provide affordable healthy food to consumers—urban rural partnerships with policy support may be able to achieve. Such partnerships can refocus on investment in farm-to-market

supply chains, revitalizing markets where they have been allowed to deteriorate.

The new attention to regional and local food systems need not be parochial, but part of interlinked trade between city-farm regions. During this CSD, local authorities organizations such as ICLEI, NGOs like Heifer International and the International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture and others, have been exploring with other major groups concrete mechanisms to scale up urban food strategies to create sustainable city-regions.

Among the policies needed to strengthen the resilience of communities and their countrysides, governments can promote an enabling environment for increased urban rural linkages in all regions. The exchange of good practices and needed policy at local, national and international levels requires networking between communities pursuing urban rural linkages. CSD major groups are calling on

governments for these kinds of policy support.

The side event Regions Feeding Cities at 6:15 pm on Tuesday the 5th of May (conf. room 2) will highlight the important role of cities in diverse partnerships with civil society to promote new investment and enabling policy for local and regional food systems found around the world. The importance of policies supporting public food provisioning through new market infrastructure and home grown school feeding will be highlighted by speakers for inclusion in the CSD 17 policy decision.

Related to the Regions Feeding Cities side event, a CSD “Vibrant Markets Tour” will be held from 7:30 am to 3 pm on Saturday, the 9th of May. Delegates of governments and international civil society may reserve space on this free tour by visiting <http://vibrantmarketstour.eventbrite.com>, or for the City Farms tour, visit <http://cityfarmtour.eventbrite.com>. ❖



Global Partnership on Nutrient Management

By: Hannah Stoddart, Stakeholder Forum

A global partnership of scientists, policy makers, private sector, NGOs and international organizations has been formed to address the problems of nutrient over-enrichment, and the need for progress towards food security to combine the goals of increased productivity with conservation of natural resources.

The partnership has been developed by the UNEP/GPA office in conjunction with core partners, notably the Governments of the USA and the Netherlands, as well as with the support of UN agencies and representative bodies from industry and science.

Nutrients, such as nitrogen, are a key part of delivering food security and sustainable development. But excess use and inefficient practices leads to soil acidification, groundwater pollution, and the undermining of marine and coastal ecosystems and the livelihoods they support. Nearly all countries can benefit – both economically and from the conservation of natural resources - from more efficient nutrient use, including for example in relation to good agricultural and sewage management practices. However, ministries and agencies in countries do not always have the initial capacity and knowledge base to take action.

The GPNM will provide a one-stop shop for information and capacity building, pointing policy makers and practitioners to good practices, training opportunities and the possibilities for action. A primary goal is to facilitate knowledge based partnerships between and within countries, which identify and implement cost effective and



“Nutrients, such as nitrogen, are a key part of delivering food security and sustainable development ”

workable solutions, tailored to the circumstances of different countries.

The GPNM will operate as a voluntary network of organizations and individuals, who are willing to take opportunities and work together on nutrient related activities The UNEP/GPA Coordination Office is initiating the GPNM by establishing a web-based platform that contains information, tools and training opportunities from nutrients related projects of the Global Environment Facility as well as those from partners.

The platform will also bring together all reports and overviews on nutrients from around the world, enabling the Partner-

ship to produce nutrient source-impact guidelines that integrate policy messages and available management tools.

There will be a full partnership meeting later in the year, at which together partners can review progress, and work out a detailed programme of action and road map for taking the Partnership forward. The Partnership will be launched at UN CSD on 6 May.

For further information about the partnership and how to participate please go to www.gpa.unep.org, or contact Mr Anjan Datta (UNEP/GPA) anjan.datta@unep.org

The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), a non binding multi-lateral environmental agreement addressing the links between watersheds and coastal systems using an ecosystem management approach. ❖

Live from the CSD



I can clear that up for you – AGRA is not working on GMOs. So said Gary Toenniessen of the Rockefeller Foundation during the first edition of Green Table, one of the Stakeholder Forum/BBC World Service Trust radio programmes being recorded and podcast during the CSD – this one on the subject of whether Africa needs a green revolution.

Suspicion that AGRA and its backers were attempting to introduce GMOs to African farms and African shops is clearly one of

the reasons behind the lukewarm reception that the initiative has received in the NGO community. Mr Toenniessen didn't promise that AGRA would never try to bring the technology on – there was no “philosophical opposition”, he said – but for now, other issues such as improving soil quality and microfinance for farmers were higher on the agenda.

Nnimmo Bassey, executive director of the environmental rights advocacy group Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria,

seemed to appreciate the clarity of the current position – “the most definitive I've heard and I'll quote you on this” – but reserved concerns about the wider issue of biotech in Africa, which he regards as a potential threat to human health and ecological wellbeing. He also doubted whether Africa does need a green revolution, pointing to the stabilisation and decline of yields in regions of the world fertilised by the hybrids of the 1960s.

So what did Serge Benstrong, head of the Seychelles Farmers' Association and an active producer of pigs, fruit and vegetables, make of the argument? His priority is support of all kinds to enable farmers to produce more. If science helps – why not? ❖

Stakeholder Forum Buscará Llamar la Atención en la Importancia del Agua

La sesión inaugural de la Comisión de Naciones Unidas sobre desarrollo sostenible comenzó con un vivaz llamado de su presidenta, la ministra de agricultura de Los Países Bajos, Gerda Verburg, a los delegados para enfrentar las conversaciones con un espíritu constructivo, buscando alcanzar acuerdos concretos. El reto está lanzado.

Agricultura, desarrollo rural, desertificación, Africa, sequia y cuidado de tierras, son los seis principales temas que abordarán los delegados de los países miembros, bajo la atenta mirada de la sociedad reunida alrededor de diversas organizaciones dedicadas a fijar la atención

en esos asuntos que muchas veces están fuera de la agenda practica de las naciones, del “dia a dia” dell debate.

Este año el The Stakeholder Forum, entre otros temas, buscará llamar la atención en la importancia del agua y cómo el tema debe ser visto como un asunto que involucra casi todos los aspectos del debate sobre desarrollo sostenible en el planeta. En la sesión inaugural, por ejemplo, Masakazu Ichimura, de la Comision Economica de NN.UU. en Asia, graficó con especial dramatismo la situación en esa región: las necesidades del recurso por parte de la cada vez más creciente población supera largamente la oferta disponible. Sólo en el

caso de Kenia se estima que apenas el 2% del territorio esta cubierto por vegetación, para hablar de otro continente.

Podría decirse que los temas revisten tal importancia y requieren tan profunda discusión que nadie esperará una solución inmediata, pero es la conciencia que van adquiriendo los países y los tomadores de decisiones en el mundo, y sus ciudadanos lo que permite pensar que esta decimo sétima reunión del comité nos mantendrá a todos muy atentos de cara al logro de los objetivos trazados, de resultados. La invocación de la presidenta va muy bien en ese sentido, pero como sabemos, no depende sólo de ella. ❖

Food for Thought...

Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum

“Life on Mars”

“My name is Sam Tyler. I had an accident, and I woke up in 1973. Am I mad, in a coma, or back in time? Whatever's happened, it's like I've landed on a different planet. Now, maybe if I can work out the reason, I can get home.”

The BBC brought out a wonderful series, a couple of years ago, called Life on Mars, which is where this quote is from. It was about a policeman going back to 1973. It seemed a different planet with glam rock, David Bowie, T-Rex and a Michael Jackson we could all still listen to. It was also a time before the Reagan and Thatcher era of economic liberalism. It was for me a time when I still went to discos in red thigh high boots and had a lot of hair.

If you look back at the twentieth century, one could say that after the market crash at the end of the 1920s, in the 1930s people turned away from belief that unregulated markets worked. It became a time of the New Deal and a growth in governmental regulation.

By the end of the 1970s people had enough of government control. It had got to a silly level, in the UK for example in government owned social housing the government was deciding what colour your door could or

could not be. There was much discussion that taxation had risen far too high for the highest earners at 83p in the pound with the new UK budget it will go up from 40 to 50p in the pound over incomes greater than 150,000 pounds. The prevailing view was that governments were infringing too much on peoples lives and that a return to a more free market approach could and would be better.



Few remembered what it was like to have unregulated banks and other financial institutions. As the 1990s became the 21st century, left and right wing governments deregulated and privatised public goods across the world.



We have all been living with the consequences of this deregulated world. Now at least the discussion has progressed onto what works and what doesn't work, as far as deregulation is concerned. What role should a government have in health care, education, internet, equity and the environment, public goods in other words? We live in even more complicated times as society begins to realise the consumption of public goods has inter generational consequences.

It's funny, in reflection I think we have all been living on Mars and maybe now at least we can all really try and secure a sustainable earth. ❖

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