

## **Women in Angola:**

# **An Update on Gender-Based Barriers and Opportunities for Democracy and Governance Work**

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Women in Angola:  
An Update on Gender-Based Barriers  
and Opportunities for Democracy  
and Governance Work

by

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## WOMEN AS RESOURCES FOR ANGOLAN DEMOCRACY

Angola is a tragic and difficult country, but one with great assets and promise. Angolans face social, economic, and political challenges that stem from decades of military conflict and a socialist, state-controlled economy. Unfortunately, outsiders often view Angola only in terms of four factors—war, oil, diamonds, and corruption (with poverty now a strong contender for fifth place).<sup>1</sup> Yet, more than 12 million people live in Angola, and they include women and men who struggle for a decent life for themselves, their families, and their communities. They also include new civil society organizations, community-based organizations, networks, and *some* in political parties and government who are striving for a government serving Angolans.

Among those active in civil society and government are many determined, hard-working women. As a result, in preparation for developing its new Country Strategic Plan, USAID/Angola asked USAID's Office of Women in Development to help it assess the roles women are currently playing, or might play in the future with some assistance. It was also expected that the assessment would identify gender-based issues that could present challenges or offer opportunities for USAID's democracy work in Angola during the next five years.

The author's scope of work calls for a summary report that captures what is (existing condition), what should be (desired condition), discrepancies between the two (problems), and causes of the discrepancies (sources of the problems and how to address the discrepancies).<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, much extends beyond Angolan circumstances. Similar conditions can be observed in countries around the world and are reflected in the Beijing Platform for Action. With regard to Angolan women, however, the answers to these questions may be briefly addressed as follows:

- **Existing condition.** Although some Angolan women are powerful and rich, the average Angolan woman is increasingly poor, uneducated, and illiterate, lacking access to basic services, struggling to support herself and her family, and desiring a better life. Many are also victims of violence in their homes and their communities. Each day, more are injured (or killed) by landmines.
- **Desired condition.** All Angolan women should have access to health care and education/literacy; services and education for their children; opportunities to generate income to support themselves; safety and security; and the opportunity to participate in government, peace making, and local decision making.
- **Sources of the problems.** The problem sources are traditional, gender-based roles; extreme poverty; a lack of education and information; ongoing conflict; restricted

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the *New York Times* article of April 9, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Of importance also will be an analysis of domestic allies and partners, as well as an examination of opportunities for integrating gender into USAID/Angola's Democracy and Governance Strategy and Results Framework.

mobility and an inability to cultivate land because of landmines; and dysfunctional and corrupt government.

- **How to address the discrepancies.** Improving the lives of Angolan women requires three conditions: (1) government use of Angolan resources to deliver basic services (health care, water, electricity, education); (2) removal of restrictions on organizations, civil society, and so forth, to ensure that government is responsive; and (3) availability of resources (financial, training, and information) for self-help and entrepreneurial activities by women's groups. In addition, however, improving women's lives requires that donors, international organizations, and the Angolan government *pay attention to ways in which ostensibly gender-neutral policies may actually harm women*. For example, privatization and land-tenure issues, selection of crops and sectors for economic support, and decisions regarding timesaving and labor-saving infrastructure (such as water systems) all affect women. Similarly, donors' education, training, and hiring policies will influence whether Angola develops gender-stereotyped professions, as well as who will have the capacity to become leaders and whether policymakers will be aware of women's needs.

### THE DIVERSITY AND POTENTIAL OF ANGOLAN WOMEN

The circumstances of Angolan women are varied. In considering these women's needs and contributions, it is important to recognize that just as society, community, and Angolans are not homogeneous groups, neither are Angolan women. When determining needs, engaging partners, or building capacity, USAID and its partners should be aware of several women's subgroups:

- Luanda women, Musseques women, provincial city women, and rural women;
- Internally displaced people (IDPs)—women displaced from their homes, some of whom have moved permanently and some of whom plan to return to their original homes or nearby;
- Highly educated women, women who have a basic education and can read, and the 76 percent of women who are illiterate;
- Young women and elderly women;
- Widows;
- Disabled women; and

#### Socioeconomic Data

- Life expectancy: 44.2 years for women, 40.7 years for men (MINFAMU: 45.6 for women, 42.2 for men);
- Illiteracy rate (1996): 43.3 percent for women, 17.5 percent for men;
- Female heads of household (1996): 31.1 percent;
- Birthrate: 6.8 children per woman;
- Child mortality (less than 5 years): 284 per 1,000 live births; and
- Maternal mortality: 1.5 women per 100 live births.

Sources: "1999 Angolan Human Development Report," United Nations Development Programme; and "Women in the Year 2000," the Ministry of Family and the Promotion of Women (MINFAMU).

"In the little socio-economic research realized in Angola in the last five years, the available indicators reflect a strongly unfavorable situation for the female sex." ("Women in the Year 2000," p. 25.)

- Very powerful women—members of the government or the Futungo—in positions of power and influence.

## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICS

When asked how women's societal participation today compares with that of 1997, individuals with whom the author spoke were consistent in their responses: women are participating more now. According to a representative from PACT, "Women's wish to participate is increasing all the time. Within PACT workshops, women are participating much more than men. . . . In the past, it was mainly men who attended PACT training. Now, there are women—and not just numbers of women, but better, more active participants."

Another woman leader said, "Women are feeling a greater need to organize themselves. Three years ago, there was a need to push them forward; now, women are coming forward themselves. They are aware that only [when they are] organized can they contribute."

At the leadership level, there are many women with the vision and capability to be leaders, such as the vice president of the Women Vendors Association. These women are already engaged and active and are ready to do more.

There seem to be several reasons for this increased interest and activity. One is that women have more responsibility today than before: they are heads of households and are focusing on survival. Indeed, a key issue for women is poverty, the resolution of which requires effective governance. Another reason for the greater activity among women today is that they suffer ever-increasing hardships. Adding to their difficulty is the Angolan government's apparent failure to provide services without incentives or pressure. Lastly, women have begun to experience the possibilities of information, organization, and advocacy. Young women, particularly, show potential, at least among those who have managed to acquire some form of education or who are grassroots leaders.<sup>3</sup> For example, young people (both women and men) participate in youth nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), working in peri-urban areas with the elderly and to prevent AIDS.<sup>4</sup> Thus, great potential exists among Angolan women—in terms of both their participation level and their growing interest.

### Key Issues for Angolan Women

- Poverty
- Illiteracy and Education
- HIV/AIDS
- Violence
- IDPs

Women's reproductive health has not come up as a key issue, but UNFPA did a survey in IDP camps of women ages 25 to 35 that showed that the women were not interested in family planning but thought their daughters should be.

<sup>3</sup> One of the donors with whom the author spoke said young, new women are already leading meetings of the women's professional association Rede Mulher (although they need support). They are completely different now, the donor noted—"transformed"!

<sup>4</sup> From discussions with UNFPA.



Yet, women face some impediments to their participation. On a local level, many women exhibit extremely low, virtually nonexistent participation in the public realm—though women are often key decision makers in their homes.<sup>5</sup> Many Angolan women not only are illiterate, but also face language barriers because they do not know Portuguese.

In the political realm, women's participation has decreased since before 1992, when Angola had only one party with a women's unit (the Organization of Angolan Women [OMA])<sup>6</sup>. In fact, OMA managed to reach and engage many women—and, in some ways, it still does—but the unit is partly discredited now for its connections to the MPLA. Lastly, although Angola has some powerful women at a high level, even they do not participate. This may be a combined function of their being women and of society having been fearful of their political activity. They may, however, constitute an untapped resource that could play a large role in civil society.

## WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES IN ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### Women's NGOs

In the past three years, there has been a great leap, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, regarding women's NGOs in Angola. Fifteen new women's organizations have been created in Benguela, Huila, Namibe, Cunene, Cabinda, and Luanda.<sup>7</sup>

### Women's Professional Associations

Angola has associations for women lawyers, journalists, and police officers. These organizations represent their members' professional interests and have done some individualized work as well. Nonetheless, the groups do not yet seem to show much of a sense of social action.

### Examples of Women's Activities

- OMA shelters for battered women in Luanda, with legal counseling.
- The Association of Women Lawyers' study on violence in the home.
- One week training for police, at police headquarters.
- Formation of a new organization: Women, Peace and Development. This organization is planning meetings around the country to build support for peace.
- November 1997: The 10-day "Campaign against Violence against Women" was held, opening up discussion of the issue. In addition, the "Bring the Law Home" campaign was staged to inform people that violence against women is illegal.
- At the time of the Peace Accords signing in 1991, women had not been invited to participate in negotiating or implementing plans for peace. Five years later, the NGO Racines de Paix (Roots of Peace) was established, in December 1996. On July 31, 1999, a silent march took place that culminated in reading a message of peace to the Angolan parliament.

<sup>5</sup> Cultural familiarity or comfort with women's leadership may vary within Angola. While parts of Angola are patrilineal, areas in the east (such as Cuando Cubango) are matrilineal. In Zaire Province, men make decisions, but the ideas come from women.

<sup>6</sup> "Until the establishment of multi-party-ism (1991), OMA—the women's organization for the Party—with several thousand women as members, had created structures at the national level for social-cultural support and women's rights, particularly in areas where women have always been the most vulnerable." (MINFAMU, "Women in the Year 2000," p. 11.)

<sup>7</sup> One of the donors interviewed said the women's NGO in Huila is very good.

For example, the journalists' organization apparently has not covered Beijing +5, and the lawyers' group, though it represents women in cases of violence, is not involved in larger advocacy initiatives.

### *Rede Mulher: the Women's Network*

Informally launched in 1995, the Rede Mulher network became official in 1999 and now has more than 100 members.<sup>8</sup> Among other activities, the Rede is working to build capacity among women's organizations, perform advocacy work on issues such as violence against women, partner with parliamentary women, support a women's literacy campaign, and disseminate information regarding women and gender. As part of the latter activity, the group has put on radio programs in Luanda, Huila, and Benguela, held monthly meetings in the provinces, and published a newsletter, called "Accao Genero." The Rede has also been the civil society leader for Beijing +5 preparations. Last year, it held a workshop on Beijing +5 that was to have been extended to workshops in the provinces this spring (Cabinda, Namibe, Bengo, and Huila). The aim is to define priority areas so that the group can adopt provincial plans of action for 2001-2004. (At the time of this writing, there was to have been a National Conference for a National Plan of Action on May 23-25, 2000. For the Principle Actions for 2000-2001, see Annex D.)

### **Ministry of Family and the Promotion of Women**

MINFAMU is doing its best, as a government actor, to promote women's rights and needs in government, civil society, and the private sector.<sup>9</sup> Regarding government, it is seeking to build gender awareness and prepare gender focal points, and it has prepared the Angolan government's Beijing +5 report to the United Nations. Regarding civil society, MINFAMU has established the Strategy Implementation and Coordination Committee and supports women's NGOs and the Rede Mulher.<sup>10</sup> Its focuses include supporting women's human and legal rights through workshops, debates, and seminars; supporting businesswomen and

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<sup>8</sup> Members include the following: in Luanda, 32 national organizations, 2 foreign organizations, 20 individuals, and 2 donors; in Benguela, 22 national members and 1 foreign member; in Huila, 23 organizations and 5 individuals; in Namibe, 8 organizations; in Cunene, 6 organizations; and in Cabinda, 7 organizations and 3 individuals.

<sup>9</sup> The ministry says it works with civil society, but some say there are problems regarding NGO collaboration with the ministry. Although this may be the case at the national/Luanda level, there is apparently good cooperation between MINFAMU's provincial offices and women's groups.

<sup>10</sup> According to MINFAMU's report to the United Nations for Beijing +5 (pp. 5, 10), "It is necessary to note that while implementation of these commitments is government's responsibility, in large part they depend also on a vast network of institutions, as much public as private, and of nongovernmental organizations (at the community, national, sub-regional, regional, and international levels)." (Evaluation des Plate-Formes de Dakar et Beijing, RAPORT Les Femmes en l'An 2000: "Egalite entre les sexes, developpement et paix vers le Xxieme Siecle," Ministerio da Familia e Promocao da Mulher, 1999.) MINFAMU has supported a national seminar on promoting women's business and the creation of an Angolan federation of businesswomen, the creation of Racines de Paix (Roots of Peace), the fourth meeting of Women Lawyers of Lusophone Countries, and working meetings with the Angolan associations of women journalists, women lawyers, and family well-being.

providing them with access to credit (it is now working with 300 families in Musseques as well as with IDPs, and is expanding)<sup>11</sup>; addressing discriminatory legislation; and working with women in political parties to strengthen platforms and women's decision-making within parties.<sup>12</sup>

## Women in Parliament

Of Parliament's 210 members, 34 are women. The women have an organization, the Parliamentarian Women's Group, with officers and work in partnership with MINFAMU, the Rede Mulher, and other organizations. They have three projects relating to law reform in the areas of violence against women, violence against children, and HIV/AIDS. They also participate in the African Network of Women Parliamentarians. In addition, a woman from the Angolan Parliament is the vice president of the Southern African Development Community.

The major issue that concerns parliamentary women is illiteracy rates among Angolan women. Investing in women's education, training, and access to information, they believe, is "the best way to increase the quality of women in Parliament and in the political process."

**Table 1: Women vs. Men in Positions of Power**

	Women	Men
Legislative Power (1999) (Legislators)	36 (16%)	184 (84%)
Executive Power	9 (13%)	59 (87%)
Ministers (1999)	4 (15%)	23 (85%)
Vice Ministers (1999)	5 (12%)	36 (88%)
Judicial Power (1998) (Supreme Court)	13 (13%)	89 (87%)
Magistrates (1999)	24 (13%)	163 (87%)
Grand Sobas	7	1,890
Sobas	98	9,567
Seculo	62	14,885

## Donors' Work for or with Women

Following is a summary of various donor activities regarding women in Angola.

<sup>11</sup> The MINFAMU Micro-Credit Program is being implemented in two phases (experimental and full implementation) to reach women, including widows, wives of demobilized soldiers, and IDPs. The first phase will reach 250 families of Bengo and Luanda provinces—in the first year, for 100 rural families organized in associations in Funda and Kifangondo communes in Luanda.

<sup>12</sup> According to the Beijing+5 report (pp. 12-13), the ministry's principal programs are developing family policy, defending women's rights, supporting rural women, and supporting women's businesses, microcredit, and "other projects of training (gender) and development."

### *Swedish Donors*

- Conducted a country gender profile (in English, with a Portuguese translation under way);
- Paid for a Swedish consultant to do a study of women's NGOs and develop a strategy for the Rede Mulher;
- Support a weekly program to disseminate information about the Beijing Platform for Action;
- Support the OMA Legal Aid Centers for Battered Women;
- Gave \$50,000 to the Rede Mulher for "small projects" focusing on literacy; and
- Focus generally on humanitarian aid, HIV/AIDS, children, gender, and health, with some additional work in the areas of the environment, human rights, and democracy (specifically, in working with the Ministry of Justice and the Bar Association).

### *United Nations Development Programme*

- Generally focuses on humanitarian aid, poverty alleviation, and governance, each with gender as a priority.
- Funded training in the culture of peace and microcredit (in Bengo, Luanda, and Kwanza Sul).
- Provided the support (to the Rede Mulher) for provincial conferences relating to Beijing +5.
- Has proposed, along with UNESCO and UNICEF, a complete study of education in Angola (the response from the Ministry of Education has been positive, but some issues remain with the Minister of Planning).
- UNAIDS has given a consultancy to Women in Parliament to look at discrimination against people living with AIDS.

### *UNIFEM*

- Has provided funding for MINFAMU to advise the Angolan community about gender perspectives, and has helped the ministry work on gender integration and on establishing gender focal points in other ministries.

### *UNESCO*

- Has provided funding for Racines de Paix.

### *UNFPA*

- Has provided training in gender issues and on Radio Angola (six hours a week) in population, development, gender, health, and youth; and

- Works with the ministries of Youth & Sport, Health, and Family and the Promotion of Women.

### **WHY USAID/ANGOLA SHOULD HAVE AN INTERMEDIATE RESULT EXPLICITLY ADDRESSING WOMEN**

- Women yield results and offer contributions as leaders and good partners.
- Women have extreme or particular needs that are critical in addressing poverty, development, and community welfare.
- If donors and partner organizations do not make a concerted effort to focus on women, women slip off the radar screen. Many people are simply too accustomed to habitual ways of doing things, many of which inadvertently fail to include women or address women's needs. Therefore, existing processes and general programs cannot necessarily be relied upon to include women. An enlightened leader or someone who pays attention to gender can only ensure this focus as long as he or she is in place; with frequent and predictable changes in personnel, the next person may not give gender the attention it requires.
- Women, and their formal groups, are critical for achieving the democracy and governance strategic objective. USAID will not attain its strategic objectives without ensuring the involvement and empowerment of women.
- Any Intermediate Result must be monitored and evaluated to ensure achievement of the strategic objectives. To be sure women are being included effectively, and that gender-based impediments are not hindering results, it is important to build in explicit gender-based monitoring.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CAVEATS

- Tensions exist between MINFAMU, the Rede Mulher, and Women in Parliament, and one can already see different donors allied with each. USAID should not get dragged into turf battles and choosing favorites. Instead, the agency should try to work with the three entities, as well as with professional associations and NGOs, recognizing that each requires technical assistance.
- USAID should be patient and remember that if the NGOs, government units, and networks knew how to work effectively and collaboratively, democracy would be functioning well and there would be no need for assistance. The fact that a group is weak or has made mistakes is not a reason to dismiss it; rather, it is a reason to work with it.
- Caution should be exercised when reaching women outside of Luanda. This cannot be done effectively by women lawyers trying to reach illiterate women at the grassroots level; better partners for grassroots work would be OMA or ADEMA.
- The focus should be on young women. It is also important to think about the “pipeline” for future women leaders (in government, for 30 percent representation, but also in civil society and business). This means looking for young women in NGOs, where they have a good base for learning. It has been suggested that suitable young women may also be found in schools, markets, and religious organizations.
- Although some women will focus on democracy with a capital “D,” others will emphasize issues of critical importance to them and will need democracy to help them participate in advocacy, protect themselves, gain resources, and so on.
- Opportunities to work with women are available at different levels, including legal literacy, women’s advocacy initiatives, women’s associations and NGOs, and women in politics.
- Women may be strong when working with other women but ineffective within mixed groups. For this, they need experience at the community level. In the past, women have often faced greater obstacles than men, such as poverty and illiteracy, which have compromised their involvement.

**ANNEX A**  
**LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**





## **LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**

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**ANNEX B**

**UNDP ADDRESS TO MARCH 31 CONFERENCE ON  
WOMEN FACING THE ELECTIONS OF 2001**



## **UNDP ADDRESS TO MARCH 31 CONFERENCE ON WOMEN FACING THE ELECTIONS OF 2001**

The focus was on women and poverty. Liss Schanke, the keynote speaker, noted the great disparity between rich and poor—and the feminization of poverty. She noted that 76 percent of women work in the informal market (as compared with 73 percent of men in the formal market). She suggested that women's poverty might be addressed through politics, through health education and security (relating to war, crime, and violence in the home) sectors that affect poverty. Because of their life experiences and responsibilities, women set priorities differently: when women's participation increases, health, education, and security improve.

Regarding women's participation, it is important to focus on quantity as well as quality. A certain percentage of women is needed to provoke real social change. While SADC in 1997 in Harare set a 30 percent goal for women in government, Angola is far from that point. In addition, there continue to be traditional leaders who represent the power of men over women at the local level.

Improving women's political participation requires direct contact between government and the governed, transparency, and some real influence by citizens. The impediments to women, however, are illiteracy and the lack of money. (These are impediments to men as well, but are worse for women.)

Specific needs are:

1. Do not have projects only for women; rather, integrate women into other processes. This is the way to change the system.
2. Build connections between women in civil society and women in government.
3. Improve work conditions for women working in the public sector.
4. Provide more information dissemination for women (but not limited to printed media, because of high levels of illiteracy).
5. Provide capacity building for women in advocacy.
6. Foster the building of coalitions and alliances between women and NGOs, political parties, and so on.
7. Promote solidarity among women.

General recommendations for approaching the upcoming elections:

1. Establish a Women's National Campaign for Elections: 30 percent by 2005.
2. Push for full attendance in school (currently only 31 percent of children are in school).

3. Involve all major political parties.
4. Include men.
5. Disseminate information by ALL means.

**ANNEX C**

**INFORMATION ON WOMEN FROM 1999 UNDP ANGOLA HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT REPORT**



## **INFORMATION RE WOMEN FROM 1999 UNDP ANGOLA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Women as a vulnerable group: Followed the children are the women, which by their vulnerability are more exposed to violence, being discriminated in various aspects of life. They are more excluded from education and /or good jobs, political participation and from adequate health . . . (p. 34)

The Women's Network as a model network partner: The search for partnership with other civic entities is an indicator of the complementary needs and synergies. A good step on this sense is the creation of networks, like the Women's Network and the Human Rights Defense Network. (p. 39)

Women in Labor force: Unemployment is a strong indicator of imbalance of the work market and its level illustrates the difference between the offer and the demand. The female population corresponds to 48.6% of the total, being concentrated mainly on the informal sector, with 63.5% of employment... The level of unemployment within women are 35.6%, 7% higher than men, in the same are. (p. 72)

Women's illiteracy: Illiteracy by sex is obviously unfavorable to women, which represents 26.8% of illiterates, compared to 9.7% for the man in the same sector. (p. 73)

Women in the informal sector: There is a strong occupational segregation in the urban informal sector. Women have a tendency to associate a strait scale of economic activities, mainly in small transactions of the commercial sector with 83%, whereas men are found more in a small scale of manufacturing which requires more financial capital ...The non-integration of women in other sectors of economy such as transport, construction, and industry, is determined by their low educational level and inadequate professional qualifications and low quality, allied to their null or low initial capital and access to credit. (p. 73)

Women's economic activity as survivalist: The majority of women working in the informal sector have watching the commercial activity, which was lucrative before, becoming just a survival economy. The market is no longer a profit fount, but a place for a dairy survival battle. The women from the informal sector face serious constraint that really defer from those that men face to take on their activities...There is a visible stratum on the sector between women's groups who sells in bulk and women's group who sells in retail. (p. 75)

The poorest women, and policies as a threat: The women who deal with foreign exchange . . . face different situation in comparison with the Hairdressers or restaurants owners. They are frequently subject to harassment by the police that they have to bribe in order to continue working, taking/bringing the women to gain a law profit. The majority of women, who sells in retail are generally less informed with regard the treatment given to the authorities, like economic agents (such as request for an official invoices when buying the merchandise at the warehouses). The number of families headed by women in the informal sector is twice



bigger than in the formal sector. They represent a high risk group in terms of education and social mobility, given that 42% are illiterate . . . (p. 75)

Microcredit from Ministry of Family and promotion of women: The Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women is executing an experimental phase of micro-credit program to attend about 100 families located at Cacuaco municipality in Kifangondo and Funda. (p. 77)

Widows: The widows' situation is also socially fitted in. Normally, the distribution of goods ceremony at the time of the husband's death is agreed with the family at the marriage time. The family already knows the responsibility of each part in case of death. In traditions where the widow has no right to inherit the husband's good, it happens in occasions when the women's family has received goods at the time of marriage, which should receive her and help looking for a new marriage with a new "alembamento" In the families controlled by the woman the children goes with the mother, and normally they live with the grandparents instead of living with the mother and the step-father "to avoid suffering in the step-father's house". In the families controlled by the man, the children grow up with the father's family. In this case the family meet to decide if the children stay all with one person and then everybody will support, or they are distributed among various families. In the peri-urban and urban environment, these mechanisms of social regulation are very weak and, in many cases, don't work. (p. 89)

Between the women who change money in the informal market (Kinguilas) that work in a specific place, we can also observed an interesting kind of social solidarity among them. Some times they work in a group of three, but it is more frequent to see various groups in the same area. This way they protect themselves against any external violence . . . (p. 96)

**ANNEX D**  
**PRINCIPAL ACTIONS FOR 2000-2001**



## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS FOR 2000-2001

At this moment, the Women's Network is in a restructuring phase, with the support of an international consultant from Sweden. The restructuring is taking place to redefine the Women's Network objectives and their members to elaborate a strategic plan for the next five years.

1. Capacity building for NGO members;
2. Capacity building for women and future leaders;
3. Capacity building for spokespersons (women and men);<sup>1</sup>
4. Capacity building workshop for Women's Network personnel;
5. To create a Documentation and Information Center specializing in gender issues and women;<sup>2</sup>
6. Plan of action for organizations (monitoring Beijing Platform of Action); and
7. Advocacy campaign in:
  - Increasing women participation in decision making
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Violence against women
  - Gender and budget

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<sup>1</sup> This is an interesting idea: making sure that people who have expertise on issues of importance to women—from violence to AIDS to pensions to credit—have the skills to serve as spokespersons with the media.

<sup>2</sup> MINFAMU mentioned that it has established a center of this sort—there should be one, run jointly by government and civil society, and accessible to all. This is an area in which to be careful about redundancy, communication, and cooperation. In fact, perhaps it should not be located in the ministry, where access is a problem, but at a university, such as the Catholic University.