

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTION WATCH ASIA PACIFIC
IWRAW Asia Pacific

ANNUAL REPORT
January – December 2003

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PART 1

Background and overview of the programme

IWRAW Asia Pacific was set up in Malaysia in 1993 to work towards the achievement of women's human rights. The organisation plays a critical role in filling the gap between the promise of women's human rights as embodied in human rights treaties and mechanisms, and their actual realisation at the national level. The crosscutting premise justifying its past, present and future areas of work is the need for the mobilisation of women's groups at all levels to draw accountability from their governments on the domestic application of human rights standards.

Initially, IWRAW Asia Pacific worked with 12 countries in South and South East Asia. Today, its presence and expertise have expanded beyond these two sub-regions to countries in other sub-regions (e.g. Central Asia, East Asia), as well as in other regional (e.g. Pacific) and international arenas. The organisation's activities focus on women and women's NGOs, human rights advocates, lawyers, international organisations, and governments.

1.1 Purpose and objectives

IWRAW Asia Pacific believes that women's equality is central to the full enjoyment of human rights, and that human rights treaties and mechanisms play an important role in this. It views these as tools for bringing about change at all levels, the national and international, and in a wide range of contexts (e.g. violence against women, employment, rights in marriage, citizenship rights, rural development etc.) as they provide standards, obligations and monitoring mechanisms on human rights.

The organisation sees itself as a catalyst in building capacity for change and in enhancing the realisation of women's human rights through:

- The effective implementation of human rights standards, as seen through the lens of CEDAW and other international human rights mechanisms, at all levels of society.
- The inclusion of women in standard-setting processes at the national and international levels, and in the formulation of policies and laws.
- The development of new knowledge and methodologies.
- The mobilisation of women to bring about good governance and sustainable change.

1.2 Current focus and activities

With more than ten years of experience in the area of women's human rights, IWRAW Asia Pacific moved into a new phase of work, Phase III, spanning from 2002-2005.¹ For

¹ Phase I (1993-1996) and Phase II (1997-2001) had focused on different areas of national-level capacity building.

this phase, the organisation identified as its main focus, two areas – consolidating the gains of its existing programme, and developing newer dimensions of work. These involve:

i. **A more rigorous understanding of the principles of equality, non-discrimination and State obligation.** This is done in ways that (a) Can be absorbed in all levels of government action; (b) Will demonstrate the positive obligation of States, e.g. to allocate resources, craft effective laws, policies and programmes, and set up remedies and institutions; (c) Encompass advances in the work of all human rights treaty bodies; (d) Build capacity in the use of international law in domestic advocacy; and (e) Build capacity for the use of all other mechanisms to advance women’s human rights.

ii. **Promoting understanding on the interdependence of rights.** Under Phase III, the organisation is expanding its advocacy on women’s human rights to the human rights sphere, namely by working with other treaty bodies and mechanisms for the implementation of women’s human rights that embody the principles of CEDAW. Initially, the focus will be on economic, social and cultural rights. Issues of justiciability and enforceability of these rights, and the impact of trade liberalisation and globalisation on development and women’s human rights will be prioritised.

iii. **Refining work around the domestic application of international human rights standards.** To fully address the intricacies involved in the domestic implementation of international human rights standards, IWRAW Asia Pacific will build capacity for advocacy on: (a) The incorporation and application of human rights treaties in the national legal framework; (b) Strengthening domestic implementation through the use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW; (c) The implementation of the General Recommendations/Comments of treaty bodies; (d) Raising capacity of lawyers for litigation initiatives as a means of building effective domestic remedies; and (e) State obligation on women’s human rights in the context of federalism and decentralisation.

iv. **New levels of technical assistance.** To cater to the growing needs of its target groups, IWRAW Asia Pacific will also further develop its capacity to provide assistance on technical aspects of CEDAW implementation. For example, report writing, review of draft laws, proposals for law reform, assessment of the compliance of the legal system with treaty requirements on women’s human rights, development of a framework for applying implementing women’s human rights and identification of monitoring indicators.

What we contribute

IWRAW Asia Pacific adds value to both local activism and international standard-setting. It provides the much needed link to the “disconnect” that traditionally exists between groups shaping the development of human rights monitoring at the international level and grassroots organisations demanding accountability from their governments, a gap which in many ways trumped women’s access to the means of claiming and realising their own rights.

v. **Expanding and sharpening our influence in standard-setting.** This involves working with other treaty bodies and Special Rapporteurs (e.g. Health and Housing); participating in standard-setting processes (e.g. contributing in the drafting of Concluding Comments to CEDAW and CESCR); collaborating with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on initiatives to follow-up implementation of the Concluding Comments; and taking part in treaty-body reform processes (e.g. the Annual Meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies).

vi. **Strategic information dissemination and application.** To facilitate a better system of compiling, generating, distributing and utilising information, Phase III involves strengthening current initiatives as well as introducing new activities. These include: expert group meetings, a website and listservs, resource centre, and publications.

1.3 Governance

IWRAW Asia Pacific's governance structure involves the following:

1.3.1 The **Board of Directors** provides overall guidance and support in sustaining the philosophy, vision and mission of the organisation, and in the management of its programme. The Board in 2003 comprised Shanthi Dairiam, Ivy Josiah, Maznah Mohamad, Rita Raj, and Noor Farida Ariffin.²

1.3.2 The **Advisory Committee** is entrusted with programme policy decisions. In 2003, the Advisory Committee comprised Savitri Goonesekere, Sri Lanka (Professor of Law, University of Colombo; former member of the CEDAW Committee); Sapana Pradhan-Malla, Nepal (lawyer and women's rights activist); Ruth Manorama, India (community worker and women's rights activist); Shireen Huq, Bangladesh (women's rights activist); Andrew Byrnes, Australia (Professor of Law, Australia National University); Eleanor Conda, Philippines (lawyer), Mere Pulea, Fiji (international law academic and consultant, resigned August 2003); and Ivy Josiah, Maznah Mohamed and Shanthi Dairiam representing the Board.

1.3.3 The **IWRAW Asia Pacific Team** coordinates and runs daily activities of the organisation. In 2003, the team comprised Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director), Maria Herminia Graterol (International Advocacy Officer), Rea Chiongson (South Asia Programme Officer), Bandana Shrestha (South East Asia Programme Officer, resigned 26 December 2003), tan beng hui (Information and Communications Officer), Khadijah Yusof (Administration and Finance Manager, 24 February to 30 November 2003), Liew Siew Yan (Administration and Finance Assistant), Rosfaizai 'Ezza' Che Ramli (Administrative Assistant, joined 14 July 2003), Azlini A. Ghani (Administration and Finance Officer, joined 1 December 2003).

Additionally, several part-time staff also supported our work: Librarian (Tashia Peterson), web designer (Ezrena Marwan), cedaw4change listserv moderator (Brenda Campbell), and

² Please refer to our website for a brief biodata of IWRAW Asia Pacific's Board members. See <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/directors.htm>>.

office cleaner (A. Pudachi). Cathy Corbett (UK), Esther Farkas (US) and Lauren Weisskirk (US), also interned with us in 2003.

1.3.4 Various resource and programme management teams. These include the pool of resource persons who help conduct trainings, the From Global to Local Programme and the OP-CEDAW NGO Campaign Steering Committee, all of which IWRAW Asia Pacific continued to coordinate in 2003.

Pool of resource persons (non-staff):³ Dianne Otto (Australia); Geeta Devi, Madhu Mehra, Manisha Gupte, Ruth Manorama, S.K. Priya, Shantha Mohan, Tulika Srivastava (India); Sapana Pradhan-Malla and Sabin Shrestha (Nepal); Kumudini Samuel and Sudarshana Gunawardena (Sri Lanka).

Global to Local Project Management Team: Alda Facio (Women, Gender and Justice Program - ILANUD), Alice M. Miller (Columbia University), Lee Waldorf (UNIFEM New York), Marsha Freeman (IWRAW Minnesota), Shanthi Dairiam (IWRAW Asia Pacific).

OP-CEDAW NGO Campaign “Our Rights Are Not Optional!” Steering Committee: Alda Facio (Costa Rica), Ana Elena Obando (Costa Rica), Barbara Limanowska (Poland), Caroline Lambert (Australia), Donna Sullivan (USA), Eleanor Conda (Philippines), Leslie Anne Foster (South Africa), Tulika Srivastava (India), and Shanthi Dairiam and María Herminia Graterol (IWRAW Asia Pacific).

1.4 Funders

IWRAW Asia Pacific received funds from the following donors for its activities in 2003:

- Ford Foundation, Delhi
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
- UNIFEM New York
- Rights and Democracy
- Institute of International Education

PART 2 Implementation according to plan

Highlights/Summary

To achieve the organisation’s objectives in 2003, IWRAW Asia Pacific organised its activities around two primary strategies, building capacity for change and enhancing the realisation of rights.

Building Capacity for Change:

Under this, three kinds of activities took place: (a) Training; (b) Technical Assistance; and (c) Information and Dissemination Application Strategy.

³ These provided technical assistance or ran trainings coordinated by IWRAW Asia Pacific in 2003.

The focus of **Training** in 2003 was on Training of Trainers and Training of Lawyers. The former was part of plans to further develop pools of resource persons to take on various CEDAW capacity building activities at the national level in the future, while the latter emphasis sought to build the capacity of lawyers for using CEDAW in legal initiatives, particularly litigation. IWRAW Asia Pacific organised and ran four CEDAW *Training of Trainers* in 2003: two in India, and one each in Nepal and Sri Lanka. The target group in all of these were NGO activists. The training in Nepal also dealt with the subject of the OP-CEDAW. Further, IWRAW Asia Pacific was invited to conceptualise and run another Training of Trainers in the Pacific, organised and funded by UNIFEM Pacific and with participants comprising NGO activists and government officials. The *Training of Lawyers* in Nepal targeted lawyers from both the NGO and government sectors. This activity also provided IWRAW Asia Pacific with an opportunity to pilot-test some sessions of a Lawyers' Training Package that the organisation is currently developing. Although IWRAW Asia Pacific no longer prioritises *General Training on CEDAW* activities under Phase III of its work, it nevertheless undertook two such trainings in 2003. One in India, which focused on women activists working with rural and dalit communities, and the other with Hong Kong women activists preparing for the review of their government's CEDAW report.

As in previous years, the organisation also continued to extend **Technical Assistance** to meet requests received. An important activity in this regard was the assessment of the proposed Gender Equality Law in Tajikistan, done by Shanthi Dairiam. This assistance was in line with efforts by IWRAW Asia Pacific to build on linkages with the Central Asian sub-region.

The **Information Dissemination and Application Strategy (IDAS)** endeavours to generate new knowledge, and share this along with other categories of information continued throughout 2003. Two *Expert Group Meetings* were held in the course of the year, one focusing on the application of CEDAW in legal initiatives, and the other titled "Updating of Training Concepts". The latter was held for IWRAW Asia Pacific's pool of resource persons to discuss critical and emerging issues to be addressed in future training sessions. Other significant activities of IDAS in 2003 included the listserv *cedaw4change* which saw fruitful discussions on the topic of women's political participation; and the IWRAW Asia Pacific *website* which apart from keeping users informed about developments in relation to CEDAW and women's human rights, also saw a new subsection on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW being uploaded. Various *materials* were produced too, most of this being papers that were presented by IWRAW Asia Pacific staff at meetings they were involved in. In addition, a brochure to promote better understanding and use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW was printed and distributed.

Enhancing the Realisation of Rights:

In 2003 activities that took place under this strategy included those organised under: (a) the Facilitating Project; (b) the International Advocacy Project; (c) Networking; and (d) Institutional Building.

In Phase III, IWRAW Asia Pacific and its partners have moved to a new dimension of capacity building and advocacy under the **Facilitating Project**, which apart from sharing

findings and recommendations of the baseline reports now focuses on developing strategies for advocacy on common issues identified, both at the regional and national levels. Towards this end, a **Regional Consultation on Articles 5 and 16** – the first in a series of meetings on common issues of Facilitating Project partners – was held, bringing together core groups from South and South East Asia as well as other participants who had worked on these issues. At the national level, follow-up work on the baseline reports took place in India and Pakistan in the form of a workshop on the **Right to Decide If, When and Whom to Marry** organised by IRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with the Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives (India) and Interrights, and the **Capacity Building Workshop for Women Councillors** organised by Aurat Foundation and supported by IRAW Asia Pacific. In India, IRAW Asia Pacific also supported the **Policy Dialogue on Women’s Political Participation** with members of the Karnataka State assembly; the **National Consultation on Monitoring and Implementation of India’s Concluding Comments** – the concerns here were then presented at the government-NGO **Consultation on India’s Second Country Report on CEDAW** – and a **Workshop on India’s Reservations to CEDAW**.

Apart from its annual *From Global to Local* programme which enables women to participate at the CEDAW Committee’s review of governments’ commitments to women’s equality, IRAW Asia Pacific engaged in other activities under the **International Advocacy** component to expand and sharpen its influence in standard-setting. These included advocacy around activities of **the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** (e.g. participating in the Commission on Human Rights Session; getting involved in Treaty Body Reform discussions at the Inter-committee Meeting of UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the Annual Treaty Body Chairs Meeting, and the Meeting of Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, etc.), **economic, social and cultural rights** (e.g. participation in the ESCR-Net Conference, and co-organising a regional consultation with the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing) and the **Global Campaign on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW** (e.g. the Africa Regional Consultation, the OP-CEDAW NGO Campaign Steering Committee meeting). The organisation also contributed to the development of CESCR’s General Comment on Article 6 (the Right to Work), and was involved in processes around CEDAW’s General Recommendation on Temporary Special Measures.

At the same time, IRAW Asia Pacific participated in a number of **Networking** activities in 2003 and contributed to the outcome of these in different ways. Interventions were made in relation to economic, social and cultural rights; trade and women’s health; indicators for the prevention of child marriage; and the relationship between rights, religion and culture. These meetings were organised by various bodies including UN agencies such as the UNFPA and UNICEF.

The final component of IRAW Asia Pacific’s activities in 2003 centred around **Institutional Building** and towards this end the Fourth Advisory Committee meeting was held, as was a stocktaking exercise in the form of a staff evaluation and planning.

2.1 Building Capacity for Change

In 2003, IWRAW Asia Pacific's activities continued to contribute towards different levels of capacity building. This was done through (a) Trainings; (b) Provision of technical assistance, and (c) The Information and Dissemination Application Strategy (IDAS), all of which also enhanced the application of human rights standards.

After almost a decade, IWRAW Asia Pacific is in a unique position as an organisation focusing exclusively on CEDAW-related work, including the provision of training on the concepts and application of the CEDAW Convention in the context of emerging themes and issues for the promotion of women's rights. In addition, there has been growing realisation of the importance of interlinking the different international treaty mechanisms for advocacy and lobbying in crosscutting issues or themes. This demand came from NGOs, lawyers and governments alike, and although still primarily stemming from within Asia, there had been an increase in requests from other regions as well.

In response to this situation, under Phase III of its programme, IWRAW Asia Pacific shifted its role from an organisation that coordinated and conducted training at the national level to one that develops expertise, in terms of resource persons and training materials, which will address emerging themes and issues. This has resulted in a process by which national organisations undertake to conduct training as a collaborative activity with IWRAW Asia Pacific. At the same time, each organisation has taken steps to strengthen its regional-level pool of trainers and resource persons who are able to take on the different levels of capacity building needed at the national and regional levels. Activities around building the capacity of the different sectors to understand and apply the CEDAW Convention have also contributed to the development and fine-tuning of IWRAW Asia Pacific's training methodology and materials, incorporating their experiences, needs and perspectives.

Capacity for advocacy has also been further developed through the Information and Dissemination Application Strategy (IDAS), specifically through the IWRAW Asia Pacific Expert Group Meetings, resource centre, website and listservs, as well as through the provision of technical assistance.

2.1.1 Training

In 2003, IWRAW Asia Pacific's training methodology continued to focus on strengthening the domestic application of human rights norms in relation to women's rights focusing on CEDAW. It:

- Created clarity with regard to the concepts of substantive equality, the principle of non-discrimination and State obligation;
- Promoted a rights-based approach to women's advancement as well as the need for the development of a framework of human rights law that is reflective of the gender-based violations suffered by women;
- Presented that human rights guaranteed by international treaties have to be actively claimed by women, and that this requires the mobilisation of different constituencies and sustained advocacy with the State;
- Emphasised the importance of engaging with the law as an instrument for claiming rights and developed skills in the application of the CEDAW Convention in differing contexts;

- Raised awareness of the need for synergy between local and international advocacy; and
- Provided an introduction to the UN human rights system, the reporting procedures of the CEDAW Convention and women's roles in these, as well as on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

At the same time, new sessions that emphasised skills required to craft comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing specific issues were also introduced. As a result, those trained are able to address conceptual issues at a more advanced level.

Three kinds of training took place in 2003:

- Training of Trainers
- Training of Lawyers
- General Training

Of the four national-level Training of Trainers, two were held in India, one in Nepal and one in Sri Lanka. As well, IWRAW Asia Pacific organised and conducted one Training of Lawyers (Nepal), and provided financial and technical support for a General Training (India). The organisation was also involved in the conceptualisation and running of one other Training of Trainers (Pacific) and a General Training (Hong Kong), which were organised and funded by other institutions.

2.1.1a Training of Trainers

i. March 12-16 | Training of Trainers for Activists on CEDAW. Bangalore, India. Organised by the National Alliance of Women (NAWO, India) with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

The primary objective of this southern regional Training of Trainers was to create a larger pool of trainers or resource persons able to take on different levels of capacity building needed. This includes not only conducting trainings but also providing technical assistance services to governments, NGOs and other national-level institutions working on the implementation of CEDAW.

This training was divided into the following sessions:

- Session 1: Social Construction of Gender – Sex and gender
- Session 2: Social Construction of Gender – Institutions and inequalities
- Session 3: Understanding Discrimination
- Session 4: Towards Substantive Equality
- Session 5: Human Rights Values and Standards
- Session 6: International Human Rights Law and Promoting Human Rights of Women
- Session 7: Understanding Treaties and Differences and Links between Treaties and World Conferences and Plans of Action
- Session 8: The Role of Law and Women's Rights Activism
- Session 9: The History of the CEDAW Convention and its Key Features
- Session 10: The Link between Development and Rights
- Session 11: Principles of State Obligation
- Session 12: Added Value – Exploring the uses of international human rights standards in domestic litigation

Session 13: Reporting Mechanism

Session 14: Validity of the Indian Reservations and Declarations to CEDAW (Article 5a, 16 and 29)

Session 15: Optional Protocol to CEDAW

Session 16: Application of CEDAW to Promote Women's Rights

Session 17: Implementation of the Convention in India

Session 18: Practical Legal Activism (Next steps)

Twenty-six activists from Chennai, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka attended this activity. Trainers were participants from previous IWRAW Asia Pacific training of trainers and included Shantha Mohan, S.K. Priya, Ruth Manorama and Geetha Devi.

ii. October 28 – November 3 | CEDAW Training of Trainers for the Pacific. Suva, Fiji. Organised by UNIFEM Pacific.

The overall objective of this training was to create a pool of trainers with the capacity to:

- Raise awareness among government officials and NGOs, about the significance of the CEDAW Convention as an instrument to plan development and provide rights for women; and
- Be resource persons in promoting and facilitating the implementation of the CEDAW Convention.

Specifically, participants who attended the training would develop some capacity in the following areas:

- Skills in identifying the root causes and various sites of discrimination as well as the interrelatedness of discrimination and rights in order to develop a comprehensive framework for promoting women's rights;
- Understanding of the concept and attributes of rights and have a greater appreciation of the potentials of a rights approach to in promoting the advancement of women;
- Develop an understanding of the law in promoting or hindering women's rights;
- Have greater understanding of the UN system and interventions for promoting women's rights and the relative advantages of different UN interventions and instruments such as treaties, world conferences, special rapporteurs etc.;
- Have clarity on key concepts and principles pertaining to women's rights advocated by the CEDAW Convention: equality, non-discrimination and State obligations under treaty law and have an understanding of the scope and content of the CEDAW Convention;
- Develop some knowledge and skills in developing a plan for the implementation of the CEDAW Convention as well as in the practical application of the principles of the Convention in priority sectors in order to develop a comprehensive approach to women's advancement;
- Be knowledgeable on the procedures by which the CEDAW Convention is monitored by the CEDAW Committee at the United Nations level with reference to:
 - The States party reporting process at the UN level
 - The role and functions of the CEDAW Committee
 - The purpose of reporting, key elements of a CEDAW report and methodology for the preparation of a report
 - The role of Government versus that of the NGOs

- Plan the next steps.

The above objectives were achieved through twenty-two sessions.

There were 30 participants from governmental and non-governmental organisations from the following countries and organisations: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, RRRT, and UNV. Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific) and Dianne Otto (Professor of Law, University of Melbourne) designed and conducted the seven-day training on behalf of IWRAW Asia Pacific. Additionally, the organisation also contributed in the following ways:

- Provision of a comprehensive set of training materials including facilitators' notes;
- Post-training meeting with UNIFEM staff to discuss observations of the training and follow-up;
- Collating the findings of participants' evaluation of the training; and
- Preparation of consultants report on the training with suggestions for follow-up.

Evaluation:

A written evaluation was carried out, and its findings, positive. A vast majority of the participants found that the objectives of the training were competently met and they also found the training very useful to carry out the work in their organisations. As well, they commented that the training was well delivered. One participant shared, "At first (before the training) I was unfamiliar with the processes and procedure surrounding CEDAW. However after one week of training I am very confident in training/lobbying and advocating CEDAW in my country."

While all the sessions were found to be useful, the most useful were the sessions on the concepts of Substantive Equality and Non-discrimination and Using the Convention to Promote Women's Rights. Other sessions receiving special mention were the session on Reporting/Implementation Procedural Session, and the session on Structures that Maintain Concepts/Perceptions/Continuation Of Discrimination: Family/Market/State/Institutions. Also mentioned was the session on information sharing by women about what they are doing, how they are working in their countries, and where they are going.

Suggestions for improvement were also made, but the response to these is as follows:

- Suggestion: More Pacific case studies should have been used.
Response: The case studies were chosen in consultation with UNIFEM and although these were Asian case studies, they were chosen for their relevance to the Pacific. But it was agreed that in particular, it would have been more appropriate if legal case studies from the courts of the Pacific countries had been chosen. This needs to be borne in mind for future trainings.
- Suggestion: There should have been more training methodology suggestions for different target groups.
Response: This would not have been possible given the limitations of time. A great deal of content had to be gone through and there was inadequate time to also introduce different methodologies for different target groups. This was therefore not an intention of the training and was explained at the beginning. However, this is an agenda that needs to be part of the follow-up training.

- Suggestion: Various topics should have been included.
Response: Within the time given for the training it would be impossible to include so much in any one training session. The consultants would like to suggest that they be considered for a follow-up training.

Follow-up suggestions included:

- UNIFEM should maintain contact with the participants and there should be monitoring to see how participants are able to use the training. In this regard participants should be asked to report after a period of six months on what steps they have taken to implement the plans they developed for their follow-up under the session “Next Steps” and what assistance they may be needing. The experiences of the participants in trying to use the skills developed in this training could also form the basis for refresher training.
- UNIFEM should study these plans to see if they could be used to develop UNIFEM’s own regional CEDAW strategy.
- Many requests were made by participants for a consistent flow of information on the status of CEDAW reporting in Pacific island countries, latest progressive judgements on women’s rights, latest developments in law reform, CEDAW reporting status etc. UNIFEM could undertake an information project setting up a clearinghouse through which relevant information is disseminated in the Pacific as well as by setting-up a web page.
- To get this done, a mechanism should be in place for the systematic gathering and sharing of relevant information and data and for the cross fertilisation of information. UNIFEM may want to consider the setting up of a listserv for this purpose.

Additionally, there were some parking lot issues and other topics suggested by participants that need to be considered for follow-up training. These were:

- The rights-based approach to development and mainstreaming CEDAW;
- The Millennium Development Goals linked with CEDAW and the rights-based approach;
- Lobbying techniques for introducing or changing discrimination laws and policies;
- Human rights provisions in each country’s Constitution; and
- Training methodology for different target groups on CEDAW.

Finally, the following participants were identified as having the potential to be further trained as experts to promote CEDAW in the Pacific region: Leonie A. Rakanangu (Papua New Guinea); Adonio-Pau Lynch (Vanuatu); Susie Kofe (Tuvalu); Betty Blake-RRRT (Tonga); and Florrie Alalo-RRRT (Solomon Islands).

iii. December 1-5 | CEDAW National Training of Trainers. Pune, India. Organised by MASUM with the support of IWRAW Asia Pacific.

The objective of this activity was to further develop a national pool of trainers or resource persons on the CEDAW Convention in India. Specifically, this training sought to equip participants with tools to lobby the government of India to implement its obligations under CEDAW through laws and policies that reflect *de facto* equality. It also sought to provide participants with appropriate skills and knowledge to lobby for the removal of reservations to the CEDAW Convention. At the community level, participants were expected to apply

the knowledge and methodology learnt in making other women aware of the State obligation to comply with the Convention.

The training was divided into the following sessions:

Part I Clarification of Concepts

- Session 1: Inequality and Discrimination
- Session 2: Social Construction of Gender
- Session 3: Institutions and Inequality
- Session 4: Discrimination and Substantive Equality

Part II Human rights, the UN System and CEDAW

- Session 5: Rights and Needs
- Session 6: Rights and Human Rights
- Session 7: International Human Rights Law
- Session 8: Overview of CEDAW
- Session 9: The Role of Women's Activism

Part III Obligation, Application and Intervention

- Session 10: State Obligation
- Session 11: Application of the Rights-Based Framework
- Session 12: NGO Responses
- Session 13: Mechanisms and Procedures

During the discussion on “Feedback and Future Plans”, participants stated that they found the programme stimulating and with a lot of room for discussions. They found the sessions grounded in practical realities, especially those that they faced in their work. Appreciation was expressed to the resource persons for their skills in simplifying the concepts and in interacting well with the group.

Participants agreed to make use of the knowledge gained in orientation sessions within their organisations and in training. They strongly felt that they could use the training in advocacy, i.e. by using CEDAW as a framework for analysis on issues of advocacy. They also stated that they wanted to contribute to the process of Shadow Report writing; prepare information packs/handouts on CEDAW; document cases of violations; pool data on denial of health care; and explore the concept of rights by the community.

There was a unanimous call for follow-up training to enable a sharing of experiences with using CEDAW within their communities. Through this, participants may be able to prepare modules relevant to their area of work and translate the training materials into regional languages for greater outreach. They also suggested that they themselves take on the following: (a) Establish an online internet e-group; (b) Publish a newsletter and compile newspaper articles on discrimination; (c) Document case studies of violations of women's human rights; and (d) Form regional networks of NGOs working with CEDAW to pool resources and ideas.

There were 21 participants from Pune, Belgaum, Mumbai, Lucknow, Delhi and Ahmedabad, and the training was conducted by the following resource persons: Manisha

Gupte, MASUM; Madhu Mehra, Partners for Law in Development; and Tulika Srivastava, Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives.

iv. December 3-7 | Training of Trainers on CEDAW and its Optional Protocol. Dulikhel, Nepal. Organised by the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

The main objective of this training was to produce a pool of resource persons in Nepal that can support various aspects of capacity building on the CEDAW Convention, including conducting trainings.

Proceedings began with a session on the Concept of Human Rights and the Development of Women's Human Rights followed by sessions on Discrimination, Equality and State Obligation. Other topics covered included The CEDAW Convention and Other International Instruments; the Domestic Implementation of the CEDAW Convention; and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. At the end of the training, participants developed advocacy strategies on citizenship, marital rape and sexual harassment.

Participants comprised law practitioners, human rights and women's rights activists, university teachers and representatives of the police and media. Resource persons included Honorable Kalyan Shrestha (Judge, Appellate Court); Prof. Dr. Bharat Bahadur Karki (Nepal Law Campus); Prof. Dr. Shanta Thapaliya (President, Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre); Sapana Pradhan-Malla (Advocate and President, Forum for Women, Law and Development) and Sabin Shrestha (Advocate and Coordinator, Forum for Women, Law and Development). IWRAW Asia Pacific provided technical assistance and financial support.

v. December 13-16 | CEDAW National Training of Trainers. Beruwala, Sri Lanka. Organised by Women and Media Collective with the support of IWRAW Asia Pacific.

This capacity building activity aimed at raising awareness of Sri Lankan NGOs on the significance and use of the CEDAW Convention in advancing the human rights of women, and enabling participants to become resource persons who could promote and facilitate the implementation of the CEDAW Convention.

The training developed participants' capacity in the following areas:

- Skills in identifying the root causes and various sites of discrimination as well as the interrelatedness of discrimination and rights in order to develop a comprehensive framework for promoting women's rights;
- Understanding the barriers to establishing women's rights as human rights;
- Appreciating the concept and attributes of rights and the potentials of a rights approach in promoting the advancement of women;
- Understanding the role of law in promoting or hindering women's rights;
- Greater understanding of the significance of the UN system in promoting women's rights;
- Awareness on the role, importance, scope and content of the CEDAW Convention;
- Clarity on key concepts and principles pertaining to women's rights as advocated by the CEDAW Convention (equality, non-discrimination and State obligation);
- Knowledge on the procedures by which the Convention is monitored by the CEDAW Committee at the United Nations level; and
- Planning the next steps.

The format of the sessions was as follows:

- Session 1: Introduction and Objectives
- Session 2: The Social Construction of Gender
- Session 3: Institutions and Inequality
- Session 4: Towards Substantive Equality
- Session 5: Marshalling Arguments in Favour of Substantive Equality
- Session 6: The Principle of Non-discrimination
- Session 7: Women's Rights in Sri Lanka
- Session 8: The Role of Law and Women's Activism
- Session 9: The History and Key Features of the Convention
- Session 10: The Principle of State Obligation
- Session 11: Mechanisms and Procedures under the Convention
- Session 12: The Role of Government and NGOs
- Session 13: Sri Lanka and the Status of CEDAW Implementation
- Session 14: Application of the Women's Convention Framework and Principles
- Session 15: Where do we go from here?

Session 13 was specifically introduced to discuss the status of CEDAW implementation in Sri Lanka, and in the concluding session, participants focused on priority advocacy issues based on their work and the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments to the government's last report. Priority areas included women and armed conflict, domestic violence, and migrant workers.

The participants came up with follow-up recommendations which included: meeting with relevant donors to discuss the possibility of funding CEDAW-related activities in Sri Lanka; sharing the knowledge that they had gained at the Training of Trainers by conducting workshops for other organisations and NGOs; and integrating the CEDAW framework into existing organisational activities.

They also discussed the types of coordination that would be required in three areas. Firstly, in training; secondly, for monitoring the implementation of the CEDAW Concluding Comments; and finally, integrating a CEDAW framework into public policy.

The training was done in Sinhala and attended by 19 participants. To ensure full understanding and application of the sessions, the training manual was translated beforehand into Sinhala. IWRAW Asia Pacific provided technical as well as financial assistance for this programme. Shanthi Dairiam and Rea Chiongson represented the organisation as resource persons while Kumudini Samuel (Women and Media Collective) and Sudarshana Gunawardena (Inform) were the other two trainers.

2.1.1b Training of Lawyers

i. November 7-11 | Lawyers Training on CEDAW and its Optional Protocol. Godavari, Nepal. Organised by FWLD with the support of IWRAW Asia Pacific.

This activity aimed at developing skills on the use of the CEDAW Convention for legal initiatives in Nepal, especially for litigation. It also sought to raise awareness on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (OP-CEDAW) and on the need for its ratification.

Sessions included an overview of the CEDAW Convention and its principles, as well as on the OP-CEDAW, its status in Nepal and strategies for getting it ratified by the government. Additionally, the use of CEDAW by the judiciary, parliament, executive and civil society was extensively discussed. Also, to identify areas of discrimination, gaps and challenges, case studies were given out. Lastly, future strategies were identified pertaining to the following areas: nationality, marital rape, sexual harassment in the workplace, and foreign employment.

Participants prepared arguments and a plan of action to lobby the Nepal government to ratify the OP-CEDAW. They also identified a network or support group for this purpose. Apart from that, they came up with legal arguments for cases of sexual harassment in the workplace, the protection of rights of women sex workers, and the protection of the right to nationality of women.

In their evaluation, the participants shared that the training had helped them to understand the principles and functions of the CEDAW Convention and the CEDAW Committee, and as a result, they were encouraged to use CEDAW in their own work.

This activity was also very important as it allowed IWRAW Asia Pacific to pilot-test sections of a lawyers' training package that the organisation is developing.

Twenty lawyers attended the Training of Lawyers. They were from NGOs who worked on women's rights, human rights and public interest litigation as well as from the government (e.g. the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Judiciary; Parliament; Cabinet; the National Human Rights Commission; and the National Women's Commission). Resource persons included Kalyan Shrestha (Judge, Appellate Court); Laxman Aryal (Advocate and former Justice of the Supreme Court); Sapana Pradhan Malla (President, Forum for Women, Law and Development); Sabin Shrestha (Coordinator, Forum for Women, Law and Development); Rea Chiongson, and María Herminia Graterol (Programme Officers, IRAW Asia Pacific).

2.1.1c General Training

i. March 27-29 | CEDAW Training for Women Activists. Hong Kong. Organised by Centre for Comparative and Public Law, and the Women's Studies Research Centre, University of Hong Kong

The overall objective of this training was to create awareness among women of the obligations of the State in ratifying the CEDAW Convention, and to develop their skills to apply the principles of the Convention in planning for the advancement of women.

Specifically, it sought to:

- Raise awareness about the significance of the CEDAW Convention as an instrument to plan development and access rights for women through law and policy reform;
- Create clarity on key concepts and principles pertaining to women's rights advocated by the Convention (equality, non-discrimination and State obligations under treaty law);
- Provide knowledge and skills in the practical application of the principles of the Convention in priority sectors in order to develop a comprehensive approach to women's development;
- Provide information on the procedures by which the Convention is monitored by the CEDAW Committee at the United Nations level and discuss the following:
 - The purpose of reporting and key elements of a CEDAW report
 - The initial report of Hong Kong reviewed in 2000 and the Concluding Comments of the CEDAW Committee
 - Issues pertaining to the implementation of the Convention in Hong Kong
- Make plans for follow-up action.

The training was designed and conducted by Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IRAW Asia Pacific). A total of 25 participants from various women's rights and human rights organisations participated. Hong Kong was on the eve of preparing its second report to CEDAW so participants found the training timely and useful as they felt it would prepare them to produce an alternative report to the CEDAW Committee.

ii. March 28-30 | CEDAW Training for Women Activists. Bihar, India. Organised by National Alliance of Women (NAWO, India) with the support of IRAW Asia Pacific.

This Indian regional training on CEDAW was organised by NAWO and supported by IWRAP Asia Pacific, and involved 35 participants from Bihar. The objectives of the training were to:

- Identify key issues related to women's rights and create conceptual clarity on these;
- Raise awareness about the significance of CEDAW as an instrument to plan development and access rights for women;
- Become more aware of the process of implementation of CEDAW, and to monitor how the government is doing this. The latter will also contribute to the formulation of an alternative CEDAW report;
- Learn how to make use of law as a tool for change;
- Provide information on the UN system relating to human rights, women's rights and the latest developments on the 43rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women; and
- Develop skills in the application of CEDAW to access women's rights.

Participants for the training comprised mostly women who are involved in working with rural and dalit women. The sessions were interpreted into Hindi and some sessions were also translated to the local dialect. Geeta Devi from Bangalore; Bishakha Bhanja and Lalita Missal from Bhubaneswar; and Sudha Varghese from Patna were resource persons for this training.

2.1.2 Technical assistance

IWRAP Asia Pacific extended technical assistance (i.e. expertise that contributed to building capacity and/or further action) on two occasions in the course of 2003.

i. March 4-9 | Discussion on the Gender Equality Law in Tajikistan. Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Organised by OSCE.

Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAP Asia Pacific) was contracted by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to assess the proposed Gender Equality Law in Tajikistan. Her functions were to:

- Provide expertise on the draft versions of the law on gender equality with the following points in mind:
 - Prepare and present a comprehensive assessment that analysed the draft laws and their appropriateness for enforcing gender equality
 - Assess whether the remedies and proposed mechanisms inherent in the draft laws meet their purpose
 - Assess the mechanisms of the law's implementation as proposed in the draft versions
- Assess whether the draft laws were appropriate regarding the fulfillment of international standards and obligations.

The assessment was based on the framework of the CEDAW Convention and the obligation of the State that flows from being a States party to this treaty. The basic questions addressed were: Why have a gender equality law and what should its substance be? Most constitutions contain provisions for equality, but these provisions are very wide. While a constitution is supreme law in a country, in itself it is still not sufficient to

guarantee equality or facilitate the individual's claim to equality without additional legal measures and mechanisms that define discrimination, give a wide meaning to the concept of equality, and provide procedures and remedies for redress when rights to equality have been violated.

Shanthi spent a week in Tajikistan (4-9 March) holding consultations and getting views of key people as well as conducted a round table discussion to perform this task. Her commentary on this law was then discussed with several people in Tajikistan, and through a roundtable discussion held on the 7 March 2003 in which parliamentarians, government officials and NGOs participated.

ii. March 10-12 | Consultation on CEDAW monitoring and implementation in CEE/CIS (Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States).
Almaty, Kazakhstan. Organised by UNDP Kazakhstan.

In January 2003, UNIFEM started a project “CEDAW Implementation, Monitoring and Advocacy in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS”. In the ongoing transition period in CEE and CIS, this project intends to use current opportunities to raise awareness, develop indicators for monitoring CEDAW implementation (in particular, in the economic sphere), create a pool of CEDAW advocates and experts in CIS countries, and support a knowledge network on CEDAW so that its principles are integrated into the processes and institutions of the region, ultimately leading to enhanced gender equality.

As the first step in project implementation, UNIFEM organised a two-day meeting for CIS countries with the following objectives:

- To identify obstacles and countries’ needs in terms of CEDAW advocacy, monitoring and implementation;
- To initially introduce project activities and adjust implementation plans; and
- To develop coordination scheme for future CEDAW related activities in the region.

Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific) was contracted to design and facilitate this consultation. Participants comprised one government and one NGO representative from 12 countries, namely: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. In most cases, nominations were made with the recommendation of UNDP country offices and UNIFEM project staff.

Outcomes:

All the participants worked together and reached a comprehensive vision of the situation. Through plenary sessions, working groups (by country; by region; mixed), case studies, discussions and brainstorming, they came to a common understanding of the principles for practical application of CEDAW in an individual country. They identified obstacles to the full implementation of this treaty in their countries and the region, outlined possible ways out and flagged their priorities and needs for CEDAW implementation. Also, mechanisms for regional and sub-regional cooperation were discussed. All participants brought documents and materials related to CEDAW implementation in their countries (e.g. CEDAW reports, draft laws, national programmes for the advancement of women and others). This can serve as a basis for the creation of common database for the CIS region.

Evaluation:

The participants were very positive about the consultation’s structure, outcome, and organisational matters as reflected in the following quote:

“We came here thinking that we wouldn’t learn anything new about CEDAW because we have been working on it since very long ago. Yet, Shanthi’s approach discovered some very interesting points which are not obvious, and we often forget this in our everyday work”.

(Svetlana Drobysheva, League of women-voters 50/50, Ukraine)

Possibilities for future cooperation, and more clarity in CEDAW-related questions were pointed out in the course of evaluation as the major achievements of the consultations.

In general, the consultation achieved its goals, validated the initial assumptions and strategies of the project and gained initial commitments from governments and NGOs in all 12 countries to participate in common CEDAW-related activities and cooperate with UNIFEM project. Many valuable ideas on the improvement of CEDAW work in CIS were gathered and could be used for further project development.

2.1.3 Information and Dissemination Application Strategy

Under the Information and Dissemination Application Strategy of IWRAW Asia Pacific, efforts to build capacity have taken place through the generation and dissemination of new ideas and knowledge that can enhance the application of human rights standards. This has been done through the activities reported below:

2.1.3a Acquisition of Materials

As part of ongoing efforts to keep up with latest debates and developments in the human rights arena, IWRAW Asia Pacific obtained funds to actively purchase materials for its library in 2003. Orders were then placed for publications that focused specifically on the UN treaty body system, as well as those which covered more general areas of women's human rights. Over 250 publications were acquired over the course of the year including books on international human rights law, discrimination, economic, social and cultural rights, the various UN treaty mechanisms, globalisation and development, and women's rights.

Also, the core collection of materials on CEDAW continued to grow, with materials either being brought back from CEDAW sessions in New York, or downloaded from the web when necessary. Similarly with materials from other treaty bodies – these were sourced and brought back from sessions in Geneva or downloaded from the web.

With the increase in materials acquired and anticipated expansion that will take place, new shelving had to be purchased and the services of a part-time librarian secured.⁴

2.1.3b Website <www.iwraw-ap.org>

Efforts to revamp the IWRAW Asia Pacific website architecture and design were completed in June 2003. Under this new set-up, the following categories of information were either revised or introduced:

- About Us (History, Objectives, Framework, Achievements, Activities, Useful Materials, Governance, Vacancies, Donors, Contact)
- CEDAW Convention (Text, Principles, General Recommendations, States parties, Reservations)
- CEDAW Committee (Role, Reporting Process, Concluding Comments, Committee Members, Elections, Secretariat)

⁴ In 2003 Tashia Peterson, former programme officer at IWRAW Asia Pacific took over the duties of Lia Syed who had helped set-up and maintain the library prior to this.

- Using CEDAW (Why CEDAW, Governments, NGOs)
- Resources (IWRAP Asia Pacific materials, Weblinks)
- News (Call for Action, Current News, Archives)

By December 2003, the section on the OP-CEDAW was substantially revised and the majority of it uploaded.⁵ (Further work continues in 2004 to finalise the remaining subsections.) The following are the kinds of information currently available in this section: About the OP-CEDAW, Text, Signatories and States parties, Becoming a State party, Inquiry Procedure, Practical Application, and Remedies.

Apart from the above, the website now features important calls for action (e.g. countries reporting at the forthcoming CEDAW and CESCRC meetings) in a sidebar on each of the main section pages. Also available are a search tool function (for both searches in IWRAP Asia Pacific's website as well as the WWW), printer-friendly option (for select pages), and a link for users to join the cedaw4change listserv.

There has been positive feedback to the new design and architecture of the website, both which help users to locate information they seek with greater ease.

To ensure that the information on the website reached more users, efforts were also made to continue improving our ranking on major search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo). For this, the services of a professional company were employed, first to fine-tune two key pages within our website (the homepage, and the CEDAW Convention introduction page); and second, to provide weekly broken links reports for a year. The same company also provided an additional free monthly service for a year indicating websites that were linked to IWRAP Asia Pacific's webpages. This information is indicative of how popular the website is and as at December 2003, there were 34 external links made to our URL.

The information on the IWRAP Asia Pacific website is maintained and regularly updated by the Information and Communications Officer, with the help of an external web designer/weaver.

2.1.3c "cedaw4change" and "global2local" listservs

In October 2003, IWRAP Asia Pacific restarted discussions on cedaw4change after a period of inactivity for several months. The objectives remained the same as when the listserv was first introduced in September 2002, i.e. to provide users with an opportunity to share their experiences of the implementation and use of the CEDAW Convention. This, it was hoped, would increase the profile and understanding of the principles of the treaty (equality, non-discrimination, and State obligation), as well as the role of NGOs in influencing the global impact of the convention. After feedback from members of the listserv, a list of future topics was compiled, and discussions started on the theme of women and political participation. This elicited a good response from various parts of the world (Argentina, Israel, Ireland, Sri Lanka, Georgia, Barbados, Sweden, and Kenya), and

⁵ IWRAP Asia Pacific hired a consultant to work with the International Advocacy Officer on the materials for the OP-CEDAW website section.

raised key points on the obstacles to women's political participation, the poor response of the State, and NGO initiatives in this area.⁶

While an external moderator handled the daily functioning of cedaw4change, members of the IWRAP Asia Pacific programme staff regularly contributed feedback and suggestions for further action. The Information and Communications Officer was responsible for the overall coordination of this activity.

Aside from cedaw4change, IWRAP Asia Pacific also continued to host another listserv in 2003 i.e. global2local, so that members of previous From Global to Local programmes⁷ could keep in touch and exchange information with each other on information pertaining to efforts around the CEDAW Convention (e.g. monitoring of Concluding Comments, follow-up activities, etc.), in a safe and confidential environment. Being an unmoderated listserv, discussions here took place sporadically.

2.1.3d Expert Group Meetings

Another activity initiated by IWRAP Asia Pacific during Phase III of its programme was the Expert Group Meetings. In 2003, two such meetings were held focusing on issues that needed to be addressed as the organisation's work continues to expand.

i. May 19-21 | Expert Group Meeting on a Training for Lawyers on Using CEDAW for Legal Initiatives. Bangalore, India. Organised by IWRAP Asia Pacific.

To start the process of implementing a training programme for lawyers, IWRAP Asia Pacific organised the above consultation with the following objectives:

- To elaborate and deepen legal conceptualisation on CEDAW and its key principles (substantive equality, non-discrimination and State obligation);
- To explore the role and potential of lawyers in ensuring women's rights;
- To determine obstacles to CEDAW implementation and identify comprehensive legal strategies and argumentation;
- To explore approaches for using international and national norms in advocating for equality in litigation and other legal initiatives;
- To initiate the development of a curriculum for a training for lawyers on using CEDAW in litigation and other legal initiatives; and,
- To begin the process of drafting a plan for legal advocacy on CEDAW, especially on training for lawyers at the national level.

Discussion was organised around three themes: one, the key principles of CEDAW; two, questions concerning application of CEDAW in litigation (including possible uses of CEDAW in litigation, legal arguments for specific rights and for remedies); and three, the role of lawyers and their strategic interventions.

⁶ A full summary of discussions is available on the cedaw4change website. Go to: <http://list.iwraw-ap.org/lists/info/cedaw4change>.

⁷ From Global to Local is a programme that facilitates women's advocacy at the international level. It does this by enabling women from countries reporting to the CEDAW Committee to get involved in the review process, and provide the Committee with alternative information that it can use to evaluate States parties' reports. See also Section 2.2.2a for additional information.

Participants were all lawyers and/or law professors with experience in teaching/training on CEDAW and women's human rights. Some were new contacts while others had worked with IWRAW Asia Pacific before. Each was requested to prepare a two-page discussion paper on an assigned theme. Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director) and María Herminia Graterol and Rea Chiongson (Programme Officers), represented IWRAW Asia Pacific at this meeting.

The meeting was useful in assessing the training materials and methodologies that IWRAW Asia Pacific had built through the years, at the same time introduce new concepts for future training, especially those from a litigation perspective. A planning meeting was also held to ascertain which lawyers trainings participants were willing to assist IWRAW Asia Pacific in, at the same time identifying coordinators, timeframes and other details for implementation.

ii. August 30 – September 2 | Updating of Training Concepts Meeting. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Organised by IWRAW Asia Pacific.

This consultation provided a space for IWRAW Asia Pacific's pool of experts to discuss challenges, concepts and issues that need to be considered in future training activities. In general, its objectives were to:

- Identify concepts that need to be updated and emerging challenges/themes that should be addressed by IWRAW Asia Pacific from 2003-2005; and
- Plan training activities for the future.

Fifteen members of the IWRAW Asia Pacific pool of resource persons, the majority of members of the Advisory Committee, as well two academics specialising on women's rights issues participated. Each received a set of background materials that had been compiled by IWRAW Asia Pacific. The consultation was divided into the following topics and sessions, with guidelines given beforehand to facilitate discussion:

Topic A: Review of CEDAW Specific Principles: Substantive equality, non-discrimination and State obligation

- Session 1: Even When Courts Are Promoting Principles, Why Is There Resistance To The Progressive Implementation Of Rights?
 - a) "Efforts by the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission to Implement CEDAW" by Carole Peterson
 - b) "Crafting a Comprehensive Strategy to Promote Women's Right to Inherit and the Resulting Backlash" by Carole Petersen, Hong Kong University in Nepal" by Sabin Shrestha, Forum for Women, Law and Development
- Session 2: Strategic Approaches to Promoting International Human Rights Standards at the National Level: Practical Uses of the Principles under CEDAW

Topic B: Principles that Apply to Promotion and Realisation of Women's Rights

- Session 3: Application of the Principles of Indivisibility and Interdependence

- a) “ Strategies for making economic, social and cultural rights justiciable and working on rights as interdependent” by María Herminia Graterol, IWRAW Asia Pacific
- Session 4: Universality: Challenging Discriminatory Social and Cultural Norms
 - a) “Making the case for dalit women: a right to be equal to whom?” by Ruth Manorama, NAWO
 - b) “Using CEDAW to Challenge Discriminatory Practices Affecting Rights in Marriage: Extending Protection in the Private Sphere” by Madhu Mehra, Partners for Law and Development

Topic C: Using CEDAW and Other International Standards

- Session 5: CEDAW, other International Human Rights Treaties and the Beijing Platform for Action
 - a) “Comparative advantages of using all international human rights treaties to advance women’s rights” by Professor Andrew Byrnes, Australian National University
 - b) “The Areas of Common Grounds Among Various UN Guiding Principles: Bridging CEDAW and the BPFA” by Shanthi Dairiam, IWRAW Asia Pacific

Topic D: Applying the Convention

- Session 6: Exploring a Comprehensive Framework for Using the Convention in Specific Fields
 - a) “Using Article 4.1: The case of women’s political participation in Pakistan” by Younas Khalid, Aurat Foundation
 - b) “Article 14: A Starting point for addressing Intersectionality and adequate standard of living under CEDAW?” by Professor Diane Otto, University of Melbourne

Topic E: Framework and Mechanisms for Domestic Implementation

- Session 7: Mechanisms for Domestic Implementation: Overcoming Impediments
 - a) “Elements of a CEDAW Implementation” by Shanthi Dairiam, IWRAW Asia Pacific
 - b) “Using CEDAW in the context of Budget Allocation in the Philippines” by Eleanor Conda
 - c) “Main Concerns of Governments when Preparing Initial Reports to CEDAW: Cambodia” by Sapana Pradhan Malla
- Session 8: Planning for Training Activities (2004-2005)

The discussions were very interesting and the consultation provided an ideal means for developing new knowledge and conceptual clarity around a wide range of issues. In terms of results, first, there was agreement on the elements of a framework for updating concepts, identification and discussion of new concepts/issues, and development of arguments to address challenges to the implementation of the CEDAW Convention. Second, there was also identification of clear strategies, direction and plans for coordination of training activities at the national, regional and international levels for 2004-2005.

Documentation of this consultation will serve as a basis for preparation of IWRAW Asia Pacific fact sheets and training materials. Also, all presentations and highlights of the consultation will be compiled and published in 2004. As a follow-up to this meeting, IWRAW Asia Pacific will invite national-level partners to explore ways to apply the CEDAW Convention in a more advanced way.

2.1.3e Materials Produced

To generate awareness of the OP-CEDAW and the NGO Campaign “Our Rights Are Not Optional!”, IWRAW Asia Pacific produced an OP-CEDAW brochure that was then widely distributed. For more effective dissemination, several partners including Forum on

Women, Law and Development in Nepal voiced interest in translating this into local languages as well.

At another level, several papers were written and presented by IWRAW Asia Pacific staff at various meetings throughout the course of 2003. These have been mentioned elsewhere in this report but following is a summary of these materials that are available on the IWRAW Asia Pacific website:

- “Obligations of the State under CEDAW and Other International Instruments on the Right to Decide If, When and Whom to Marry” by Rea A. Chiongson
- “The Status of CEDAW Implementation in the ASEAN Countries and Selected Muslim Countries” by Shanthi Dairiam
- “Guidelines for Addressing Intersectional Discrimination” by Maria Herminia Graterol
- “State Accountability for the Elimination of Child Marriage” by Shanthi Dairiam

Additionally, Esther Farkas, IWRAW Asia Pacific’s summer intern for 2003 wrote a paper titled “Equality in International Human Rights Treaties: An Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” which aims to encourage women to get involved in the OP-ICESCR process. This paper will be published as part of the IWRAW Asia Pacific Occasional Paper Series in 2004.

2.1.3f Requests for Information

In 2003, responding to requests for information continued to be an important component of IWRAW Asia Pacific’s work. While part of this was done to generate better understanding of the organisation and the work it does, a significant amount of time was also spent creating greater clarity on CEDAW and other women’s human rights processes. Much of the information provided was derived from the core collection of library materials, the organisation’s From Global to Local database, as well as the expertise of various staff members. Requests came from different constituencies (women’s NGOs, regional and international bodies, universities, donor agencies, students, etc.) from different parts of the world. The requests can broadly be divided into the two categories below:

CEDAW (35 requests)

- CEDAW processes/Committee/materials (33)
- Writing or reviewing (feedback on Alternative Report for Georgia, article on CEDAW and food for the FIAN newsletter)

General Enquiries (65 requests)

- Clarification and/or referrals (35)
- Request for materials (books, leaflets, publications, etc.) (10)
- Funding/financial assistance (2)
- About IWRAW Asia Pacific (9)
- Miscellaneous (including requests to share information) (9)

2.2 Enhancing the Realisation of Rights

IWRAW Asia Pacific undertakes and supports advocacy through means that enhance women's NGOs expertise and skills. In this regard, partners have been increasingly able to make substantive contributions to processes set in motion at the international and national levels.

In 2003, efforts and activities carried out under the "enhancing the realisation of rights" component encompassed a wide range of initiatives to promote and strengthen women's human rights. As shown in the subsequent sections, national advocacy efforts supported by the organisation in 2003 integrated comprehensive strategies. In many instances, the ways partners have begun to address conceptual issues at a more advanced level have led to important accomplishments in the advancement of women's rights.

Similarly, initiatives undertaken under the international advocacy project have been more substantial and enlightening than initially envisaged by IWRAW Asia Pacific. In this regard, in 2003, IWRAW Asia Pacific started to consolidate its unique position as an NGO with international as well as regional expertise.

Overall, its strategies and actions to enhance processes and conditions for the realisation of rights have generated new knowledge that builds on ten years of consistent work approaching women's rights through the lens of CEDAW. In this way, IWRAW Asia Pacific will continue to undertake and support advocacy beyond 2004.

2.2.1 Facilitating the Fulfilment of State Obligations towards Women's Equality

Background:

Also known as the Facilitating Project, this long-term initiative, which started in 1997, involves research into the elements of discrimination against women using the CEDAW Convention as a framework, and the identification of recommendations for advocacy to facilitate the implementation of this treaty. As part of this project, core groups have been established in 12 countries. Each acts as a monitor and focal point at the national level, and has taken responsibility for the drafting of a research or baseline report that identifies the status of women in relation to a particular priority theme/issue in their country.^{8,10}

The baseline reports utilise a methodology and framework that enables the monitoring of any context of discrimination, and the assessment of CEDAW implementation. This was developed by IWRAW Asia Pacific and its core group partners, and has helped to build the capacity of core groups as experts in this regard. Further, they have acquired the

⁸ ⁰ The core groups have undertaken the following research areas. South East Asia: Indonesia (Violence against women sponsored by the State); Laos (Rural women and their livelihood); Malaysia (Women's rights in marriage and divorce); Mongolia (Implementation of women's employment rights); Philippines (Violence against women); Thailand (Trafficking in women); and Vietnam (Employment of Vietnamese women in market economy). South Asia: Bangladesh (Violence against women); India [(i) Women in armed conflict situations; (ii) Political participation of women; and (iii) Rights of women in marriage]; Nepal (Inheritance rights of women); Pakistan (Political participation of women); and Sri Lanka (Domestic Violence).

capability to disseminate an understanding of these principles and framework to other groups.

Thus this project has led not only to a network of groups within Asia working with a consistent understanding of the principles of CEDAW, it has also contributed to an increased capability of local groups to conduct research and an enhanced analysis of a problem. The strengthening of national advocacy, the increased appreciation for CEDAW and international human rights norms, and the enhanced capacity for analysis gave the core groups have added to their confidence to participate in regional and international advocacy, including contributing to the preparation and writing of the Shadow Reports to be presented to the CEDAW Committee.

Presently, based on the findings of the baseline reports, the core groups together with IRAW Asia Pacific are moving towards developing regional strategies for advocacy on common priority issues as well as creating a forum for dialogue with governments on their implementation of CEDAW, especially of the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments. IRAW Asia Pacific also seeks to strengthen advocacy through regional dissemination of the processes and findings of the baseline researches. The implementation of this project in 2003 comprised activities pertaining to the next phase such as capacity building and advocacy.

National

i. January 6 | Policy Dialogue on Women's Political Participation. Karnataka, India. Organised by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) and supported by IRAW Asia Pacific.

The one-day meeting on Implementing and Monitoring the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments in India was held with members of the State Assembly in Karnataka. Its purpose was to present the findings of the research/baseline study on women's political participation and to discuss and draft advocacy strategies with members of the State Assembly. The topics for the policy dialogue included: (a) Substantive equality; (b) Reporting processes under CEDAW; (c) CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments; (d) Karnataka State Government's Task Force Report on 'Women's Empowerment' and Adopting a CEDAW Framework; (e) Findings of the research/baseline study on political participation; and (f) Evolving a plan of action.

Among the highlights of this dialogue include the members of the State Assembly:

(a) Actively committing themselves to move for the compulsory registration of births and deaths; (b) Conceding to the absence of sex-disaggregated data and the importance of having such information; c) Re-emphasising the importance of reservations for women and the role it has played in preparing women for decision-making positions in governance; and (d) Realising the importance of the State government to acquire more information and possibly, engage in the CEDAW reporting process.

ii. January 21-22 | Capacity Building Workshop on CEDAW for Women Councillors. Organised by Aurat Foundation and supported by IRAW Asia Pacific. Lahore, Pakistan

This workshop was held to impart the concept of substantive equality in relation to CEDAW and the follow-up procedures and mechanisms of the convention to women councillors and NGO activists. It sought to build the capacity of women politicians to enable them to organise themselves as a political constituency. The sessions were divided into the following:

Session 1: Principles of Equality, Non-Discrimination and State Obligation

Session 2: CEDAW – Historical background

Session 3: CEDAW – An overview

Session 4: CEDAW and Domestic Law

Session 5: Practical Implications of CEDAW and the Need for Change

Session 6: Reservations to CEDAW by States Parties and the Optional Protocol

Session 7: CEDAW and Education

Session 8: Future Strategies

Some of the major recommendations made by the participants were:

- The government of Pakistan should withdraw its reservations to CEDAW;
- The government should sign/ratify the Optional Protocol;
- Discriminatory laws, such as the Hudood Ordinances, Qanun-e-Shahadat (law of evidence) 1984, Qisas and Diyat provisions in the Criminal Procedures be repealed; and
- Positive legislation for reforming Muslim family laws and on issues of inheritance, violence against women (public, domestic and custodial), health, political participation, financial credit, should be enacted.

About 40 participants attended the workshop including women parliamentarians, women politicians, members of partner NGOs/CBOs and the Aurat Foundation staff. They showed a keen interest in all the sessions. They were surprised to know that such an important treaty existed and that the State, along with other stakeholders, was not doing anything about it. The women parliamentarians were of the view that CEDAW must be discussed in Parliament and expressed their resolve to raise this issue. Some of them suggested that there should be separate desks or a committee in every political party to look after CEDAW affairs. The media participants suggested a more extensive workshop on the same subject matter for both print and electronic media persons.

iii. February 25-26 | National Consultation on Monitoring and Implementation of Concluding Comments of the UN CEDAW Committee on India's Initial CEDAW Report. Delhi, India. Organised by National Alliance of Women (NAWO) with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

iv. February 27 | National Workshop on the Second Country Report on CEDAW. Delhi, India. Organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and NAWO, with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

The two activities above were held back-to-back. The objective of the national consultation was to:

- Evaluate State actions in relation to CEDAW and the Concluding Comments of CEDAW;

- Disseminate the findings of the three researches/baseline reports as a model for monitoring compliance by the government with its obligations under CEDAW and its implementation of the Concluding Comments;
- Look into India's reservations/declarations on Articles 5 and 16 of CEDAW; and
- Initiate the process of drafting an Alternative/Shadow Report to the next State Party report to CEDAW.

The NGO consultation was divided into the following sessions:

Session 1: Principles and Key Features of CEDAW

Session 2: Reporting Mechanism and the CEDAW Committee

Session 3: Optional Protocol to CEDAW

Session 4: Alternative NGO Report to CEDAW (January 2000)

Session 5: Concluding Comments of CEDAW on India's Initial Report

Session 6: Advocacy for Withdrawal of Reservations or Declarations

Session 7: Baseline Report on Political Participation

Session 8: Baseline Report on Rights Within Marriage

Session 9: Baseline Report on Women in Armed Conflict

Session 10: Group Work to Critically Review the Concluding Comments; Identifying Critical Areas of Concern and Developing Indicators for the Assessing the Implementation of the Concluding Comments

Session 11: Practical Activism – Next steps

Over 90 representatives of women's groups, working on a wide range of issues concerning women and coming from across the country attended this meeting. Rea Chiongson (Programme Officer, IWRAW Asia Pacific) participated and served as a resource person.

Women at this meeting identified major concerns that were then presented to the government during the National Workshop on the Second Country Report on CEDAW, a government-NGO consultation that was held on February 27, 2003.⁹ This workshop was initiated by NAWO and was convened in consultation with them. It was held by the Department of Women and Child Development and brought together the various government ministries to discuss the status of the implementation of CEDAW and the Concluding Comments in India.

v. March 19 | Workshop on Women in Armed Conflict. Guwahati, India. Organised by the North East Network, India and supported by IWRAW Asia Pacific.

This workshop was held to discuss the findings of the North East Network's baseline report on the situation of women in armed conflict. The 36 participants came from various sectors – the government, human rights groups, academia, NGOs, and the media, as well as concerned citizens from different parts of the North East. They first heard about the different dimensions of violations suffered by women in armed conflict situations. Next they discussed government responses and gaps that existed, before deliberating on the findings and recommendations of the study. The workshop concluded with discussions on how the study would be taken forward to facilitate State obligation to women's rights. The participants also came up with additional recommendations, one set for the State and

⁹ A complete list of these concerns is available from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

another for civil society.¹⁰ The latter included filing a review petition in the Supreme Court with regard to the Armed Forces Special Powers Act; ensuring that women come out to seek help despite social stigma and lack of knowledge about legal remedies; and implementing a multi-level advocacy strategy.

vi. March 22-24 | Consultation on the Right to Decide If, When and Whom to Marry. Lucknow, India. Organised by AALI with the support of IWRAW Asia Pacific and Interights.

This national consultation was convened to:

- Create conceptual clarity regarding the scope and extent of the right in constitutional and international law;
- Share experiences of violations on the right to choose if, when and whom to marry and its causes and consequences, and to highlight the issues identified as a human rights concern for India;
- Identify obstacles in law and practice to the fulfilment of this right and, in this regard, assess the validity of India's reservation to Articles 5 and 16 of CEDAW;
- Provide an analysis of the State obligations under CEDAW to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of women in the specific context of the right to choose if, when and whom to marry;
- Identify international and national standards and mechanisms that promote, protect and fulfil a woman's right to choose if, when and whom to marry; and
- Develop specific local and international strategies for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right and to build a constituency to advocate for this.

There were eight sessions in total:

Session 1: The Right to Marry – A conceptual framework

Session 2: Identifying Experiences and Issues on the Right to Choose If, When and Whom to Marry. The findings of relevant baseline reports were presented in this session. Other papers included the marginalisation of lesbian sexuality and forced marriages within the South Asian communities in the United Kingdom

Session 3: Causes of and Obstacles to the Right to Choose If, When and Whom to Marry

Session 4: The Right to Choose If, When and Whom to Marry – A constitutional and legal framework

Session 5: Obligations of the State under CEDAW and other International Instruments

Session 6: Analysing State Interventions

Session 7: National and International Mechanisms for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Right to Marry

Session 8: Identifying Strategies and Drafting a Plan of Action

Approximately 55 participants attended this meeting. They were representatives of women's organisations, lawyers and academicians from the various states of India as well as members of international organisations. Government officials were also present. Salma Khan, a member of the CEDAW Committee took part in this event too.

¹⁰ A more comprehensive workshop report is available from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

Together the participants came up with the following recommendations:

- Perspective Building: It is necessary to create a framework for the exercise of the right to decide if, when and whom to marry, particularly in reference to notions of choice and authority and their interconnectedness;
- Law reform: Perspective building will provide the standards for law reform. However, on a short term basis, the following measures were suggested:
 - Review provisions in the personal laws that are contradictory with each other;
 - Implementation of the law, where the laws appropriately addresses the problem;
 - Review of the special marriage law;
 - Specific legislation focusing on the girl-child;
 - Exploring an equality law; and
 - A comprehensive review and reassessment of laws to include a rights perspective;
- The State must look into comprehensive strategies and activities for rescue, rehabilitation, welfare and humanitarian interventions and legal initiatives in addressing the violations against the right to decide if, when and whom to marry.
- There is a need to review the practices of institutions, especially the police, judiciary, National Human Rights Commission, National Commission of Women, State Commission of Women, welfare bodies, shelters among others, and determine where there is a necessity for reform and strengthening.

Recommendations also addressed the need for capacity building and training, preventive measures, support services for advocates, data collection, mobilising the community, use of media, adequate budgets and international advocacy.

IWRAW Asia Pacific contributed to this consultation in various ways (e.g. in the drafting of the programme, identifying and providing reading materials and documents, contacting resource persons). Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director), Rea Chiongson (Programme Officer) and Cathy Corbett (Intern) represented the organisation. Shanthi and Rea presented papers too.

vi. September 27 | National Consultation on India's Reservations. Hyderabad, India. Organised by NAWO with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific.

At the National Consultation on the Monitoring and Implementation of the Concluding Comments of the CEDAW Committee on February 25-26, 2003, a working draft of a paper on the validity of India's reservations to Articles 5 and 16 was presented. This paper was commissioned by the National Alliance of Women (NAWO, India) and written by Indira Jaising, a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India and Executive Director of the Lawyers Collective – Women's Rights Initiative. The paper tested the legitimacy of India's reservations using both international and constitutional frameworks, and provided advocacy strategies for its withdrawal.

To create a constituency around the above piece of research, NAWO organised a workshop on India's reservations. This was divided into four sessions:

- Presentation of the paper;
- Responses from lawyers and activists;
- Group work on the implications of the removal and recommendations for its removal; and

- Strategies for advocacy.

Some of the strategies identified were:

- Creating awareness on State obligation and reservations/declarations;
- Making publications such as pamphlets, simplified CEDAW, CEDAW kit;
- Introducing CEDAW in administrative training institutes;
- Launching a media campaign;
- Initiating state-level campaigns;
- Submitting memoranda to the government;
- Involving the National Commission on Women, the State Commission on Women, the National Human Rights Commission, Women's Development Corporation, etc; and
- Involving law colleges and universities.

Regional

viii. October 9-12 | Regional Consultation on Articles 5 and 16 of the CEDAW Convention. Colombo, Sri Lanka. Organised IWRAW Asia Pacific with logistical support by Women and Media Collective.

This Consultation brought together IWRAW Asia Pacific's core groups in South Asia and South East Asia that had worked on baseline research on Articles 5 and 16 under its Facilitating Project, as well as other groups that are working on this issue.¹¹ Of the 29 participants, most were from countries that had already reported to the CEDAW Committee. The meeting sought to:

- Contextualise Article 16 with respect to the social, cultural, historical, economic and legal background and to analyse State obligation under the said article;
- Share experiences of violation of rights under Article 16 and its causes and consequences;
- Analyse how States have interpreted their obligation under Article 16 and implemented the Concluding Comments relating to Articles 16 and 5;
- Assess the validity and legitimacy of the reservations on Articles 16 and 5 made by some countries and to analyse the impact of these reservations on women's rights in marriage;
- Understand how religion and culture are exploited and politicised for violation of rights under Article 16 and the link between communal identity and its effect on rights in marriage;
- Exchange examples of positive activism strategies in overcoming obstacles;
- Identify international and national standards and mechanisms that promote, protect and fulfil rights of women in marriage;
- Develop holistic advocacy strategies to hold States accountable for implementation of their obligations under Article 16 and 5; and
- Develop regional networking in order that the groups can work together with a stronger voice to influence and access national, regional (ASEAN and SAARC) and international level human rights mechanisms.

¹¹ These groups came from seven countries i.e. India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Malaysia.

The Consultation was divided into the following sessions:

Session 1: Introduction – The socio-economic and political context in which Article 16 of CEDAW has to be implemented

Session 2: Presentation – Jurisprudence of CEDAW Article 16

Session 3: Country Presentations – Identifying experiences and issues relating to rights within marriage and the family

Session 4: Panel Discussion – The influence of culture and religion

Session 5: Presentation – The politics of gender and the State

Session 6: Presentation – The validity of India’s reservation on Article 5 and 16 of CEDAW

Session 7: Presentation – The usefulness on international mechanisms

Session 8: Future Strategies

Resource persons included Salma Khan, Member of the CEDAW Committee and Radhika Cumaraswamy, former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. IRAW Asia Pacific made two presentations: Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director) presented a paper on “The Politics of Gender and the State” while Rea Chiongson (Programme Officer) discussed “The Usefulness of International Mechanisms”. The implementation status of the Concluding Comments issued by the CEDAW members in respective countries in relation to Articles 5 and 16 were also given to the participants as an additional resource.

Outcomes and Strategies:

One outcome of the Consultation was the exchange and sharing of experiences of different practices and methodologies used to overcome the obstacles and difficulties faced in advocacy relating to women’s rights in marriage. Another was the building of a constituency of women at the regional level, so that they can form a larger voice and stronger force to influence and access national, regional and international level human rights mechanisms. This was reflected in the strategies – national, regional and international – that were mapped out.

National:

The participating groups had identified the following issues to be relevant and important to their countries:

Bangladesh: Equal Right in Entry and Exit of Marriage

India: Recognising Choice in Conjugal Cohabitation Relations

Malaysia: Women’s Rights to Confer Citizenship to Children Born Overseas

Maldives: Domestic Violence

Nepal: Child Marriage

Pakistan: The Same Right to Enter into Marriage

Sri Lanka: The Same Right to Enter into Marriage and Reproductive Rights within Marriage

The groups agreed to pursue a plan of action based on the issues identified. Activities include: How to gain the recognition of the right, how to exercise the right, how to address violations, and how to sustain gains that have been achieved. The national strategies surfaced included consultations, building awareness, education, training, mobilisation, documentation, monitoring and reporting, providing support systems as well as building

alliances, not only with the NGOs but also with the related government departments and agencies. Some countries also included specific media strategies for lobbying of issues. Most identified the various relevant national commissions such as the National Human Rights Commission and the women's commissions or ministries as important advocacy targets. The call for law reform was also evident and most were also willing to identify cases to be tested in the courts. In recognising the rights, there is also a need to reform the infrastructures of the government agencies and departments and formulation and implementation of relevant administrative procedures.

Regional:

At the regional level, apart from the exchange and sharing of experiences, views and success stories through the mechanics of workshops, seminars and forums, future strategies included:

- Exploring the regional instruments and alliances that provide for regional cooperation such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), lobbying for regional recognition of rights and formulation of declaration on choice and consent in conjugal cohabitation and to lobby for State recognition and support for consensual relations between citizens across boundaries;
- Looking at comparative research and laws and learn from the past experiences leading to successful drafting of legislation on this issues;
- Identifying similar violations and discrimination at the regional level and mobilising to advocate for these violations and discrimination to be addressed;
- Gathering information on Muslim Law reforms on similar issues and identifying applicable strategies; and
- Sharing information and strategies with the aim of evolving/strengthening inter-country activities, share strategies used at national and regional levels in order to reach all relevant decision making bodies such as SAARC and NGO networks.

International:

- Creating pressure on Government for withdrawal of reservations and to fulfil implementation of the CEDAW Convention as well as other treaties that the countries have ratified to;
- Submitting Shadow reports to CEDAW Committee and other related treaty bodies and include NGO participation in review process;
- Locating special fund allocation for implementation of Article 16;
- Making States effectively accountable in the absence of recognition of a broader concept of conjugal cohabitation and where there is a violation of individual rights around consent and choice;
- Increasing understanding and usage of integrated international legal redress system;
- Documenting and monitoring situations that enable the transparency between international positioning and domestic situation (alternative reports, special rapporteurs etc);
- Monitoring the implementation of the Concluding Comments;
- Advocating for the ratification of Optional Protocol to CEDAW as well as ratification of the ICCPR and ICESCR;
- Using international law to address the problem;

- Promoting international networking, publications, media highlights and cases brought up to the international courts and the provision of relevant information to relevant treaty bodies;
- Using CEDAW Committee recommendations made to countries with similar situations under Article 16 (i.e. CEDAW Concluding Comment to Maldives: using progressive jurisprudence in other countries);
- Bringing together national and regional strategies and lobby at the international level through institutions such as CEDAW Committee, UNFPA etc.; and
- Approaching and formulating campaigns (media) with strategies to bring in international media institutions that will seek to profile reproductive health rights

2.2.2 International Advocacy Project

In 2002, IRAW Asia Pacific made the decision to actively participate in processes that shape the evolution of international human rights standards. Bearing this in mind, in 2003 the organisation started to expand its areas of focus within the UN system¹² and building links with women's groups beyond the Asia Pacific region.¹³ It is evident that on-going exchanges of experiences and expertise at the regional and international levels have created more avenues for sharing knowledge in ways that ultimately strengthen the work of our partners in the Asia Pacific region. Needless to say, the focus in Asia keeps the organisation grounded through in-depth understanding of women's experiences of discrimination.

Activities under Phase III of the International Advocacy Project have inspired IRAW Asia Pacific to develop more materials on the practical applications of the CEDAW Convention. All output resulting from advocacy efforts have also been integrated into our technical assistance and capacity building work in ways that benefit local activism.

Activities under the International Advocacy Project in 2003 were:

2.2.2a From Global to Local

In 2003, IRAW Asia Pacific, in collaboration with UNIFEM New York, ran the From Global to Local project for a seventh successive year. This initiative contributes to women's advocacy at the international level by enabling women activists from countries reporting to the CEDAW Committee, to participate in the review process. Participants in From Global to Local receive assistance not only to directly observe proceedings, but also get guidance on how to provide alternative information that the CEDAW Committee can use to evaluate the States parties concerned. Through this process they thus contribute to the setting of human rights norms and standards, at the same time monitor and challenge

¹² Although the main focus continues to be CEDAW, IRAW Asia Pacific is now actively seeking to influence the work of other UN treaty bodies and monitor developments that are taking place in the UN Commission on Human Rights.

¹³ IRAW Asia Pacific's main partners are in Asia, however, through advocacy efforts, linkages with organisations in Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America are being strengthened. At the same time, IRAW Asia Pacific is now establishing contact with women's groups in Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific. At another level, IRAW Asia Pacific is working in collaboration with more international and regional NGOs.

their governments to live-up to their obligations under this treaty. In turn, this enhances the application of international human rights norms in their home countries.

i. January 13-31 | “From Global to Local”. 28th CEDAW Session. New York, USA.
Organised by IWRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with UNIFEM NY.

ii. June 26-6 July | “From Global to Local”. 29th CEDAW Session. New York, USA.
Organised by IWRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with UNIFEM NY.

The CEDAW sessions covered by the From Global to Local Project in 2003 were the:

- 28th Session (13th to 31st January 2003); and
- 29th Session (30th June to 19th July 2003).

Rationale:

The CEDAW Convention is an international treaty that has been ratified by 177 countries worldwide. Since its strength lies in this mandate, it is important to enhance the effectiveness of the expert body – the CEDAW Committee – that monitors its implementation via the reporting process. One of the ways to do this is by facilitating the participation of women’s rights activists, so that they can provide alternative information and directly observe their governments reporting to the CEDAW Committee, at the same time interact with the Committee members to raise their awareness about issues critical to women in their respective countries.

It is also through this process of interaction with the CEDAW Committee that women’s perspectives can be integrated into the interpretations of the articles of the CEDAW Convention, and their scope for domestic applicability, and in the formulations of General Recommendations. Women’s participation in these processes thus has the effect of transforming the CEDAW Convention into a truly living instrument.

To date, From Global to Local has remained unique in its attempts to facilitate the participation of women in the CEDAW reporting process in a structured and purposeful manner.

Goals and objectives:

The overall goal of From Global to Local is to enhance the dynamism of CEDAW by enabling women to link local-level advocacy with international official processes to monitor the implementation of the CEDAW Convention. Its objectives are to:

- Promote the compilation, analysis and dissemination of alternative information on the status of women in countries reporting to the CEDAW Committee. In this process, participating groups will build their own capacity to approach women’s issues according to international human rights standards that should be fulfilled and claimed at the national level;
- Familiarise women activists with the mechanisms set-up by the UN for the monitoring of the implementation of the CEDAW Convention, in particular, the dynamics of the reporting and review process, and the role NGOs can play within this;
- Enable women activists to observe and monitor the performance of their State party during the review of its country report to the CEDAW Committee, and to interact with

CEDAW Committee members to share pertinent issues related to the position of women in their respective countries. Through this NGOs will be able to contribute added perspectives to the Concluding Comments that are produced; and

- Assist women activists with plans to monitor their government's follow-up to the session, in particular, their compliance with the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments.

Participants:

A total of 30 women's rights activists were able to participate in the above CEDAW Sessions through the From Global to Local project:

Four at the January 2003 28th session

- Kenya (combined 3rd & 4th periodic report)
- El Salvador (combined 3rd through 5th periodic report)

Twenty-six at the June/July From Global to Local training and mentoring programme, and the 29th CEDAW Session. Out of this, 13 were from the six countries reporting at the 29th CEDAW Session:¹⁴

- Brazil (initial through 5th periodic reports)
- Costa Rica (initial through 4th periodic reports)
- Ecuador (combined 4th & 5th periodic reports)
- France (combined 3rd through 5th periodic reports)
- Japan (combined 4th & 5th periodic reports)
- Slovenia (2nd & 3rd periodic reports)

Another 12 were from the seven countries scheduled to report at the 30th CEDAW Session (January 2004):

- Belarus (combined 4th through 6th periodic reports)
- Bhutan (combined initial through 3rd periodic reports)
- Ethiopia (combined 4th & 5th periodic reports)
- Kuwait (combined initial & 2nd periodic reports)
- Kyrgyzstan (2nd periodic report)
- Nepal (combined 2nd & 3rd periodic reports)
- Nigeria (combined 4th & 5th periodic reports)

There were also five others who did not participate directly in the From Global to Local training, but received other forms of technical and financial assistance (e.g. forwarding of Shadow/Alternative Reports, guidelines on writing reports, help with lobbying CEDAW Members, etc.):

29th CEDAW Session

- Morocco (2nd periodic report)
- New Zealand (5th periodic report)

30th CEDAW Session

- Germany (5th periodic report)

¹⁴ Not all were funded by From Global to Local. Brazil and Costa Rica raised additional funds to send one extra participant each, while all the participants from Japan (3) and France (1) were self-funded.

Project implementation:

IWRAW Asia Pacific serves as the Secretariat of the From Global to Local Project. In this, the organisation is supported by a core team of resource persons¹⁵ who helped in the identification of participants, planning and running of the project.

The January programme involved facilitating the presence and involvement of From Global to Local participants, whose countries were reporting to the CEDAW Committee, at the review. The June/July programme, on the other hand, brought together participants from both countries reporting at the June/July CEDAW Session as well as those from countries scheduled to report at the next reporting session (i.e. January 2004). Both groups underwent an intensive training-cum-mentoring programme together. Given that the substantive input of the From Global to Local project takes place in the June/July Sessions, the next section describes the specifics of the programme during this time.

Identification of Participants

The process of identifying suitable participants for the From Global to Local Project commenced in January 2003. Nominations were compiled through:

- Previous From Global to Local participants' lists;
- Regional/international networks and contacts in reporting countries; and
- Recommendations by members of the Project Management Team.

A final list was obtained by assessing which nominees best fitted the following criteria:

- Women members of NGOs who are working on the CEDAW Convention;
- Willing to prepare a shadow/alternative report to the government report in collaboration with other women's groups; and
- Willing to carry out follow-up activities such as de-brief women's groups, publicise the CEDAW review, and monitor the implementation of the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments.

¹⁵ These were: Lee Waldorf (UNIFEM New York), Alda Facio (Concertacion Interamericana de Mujeres Activistas, Costa Rica), Ali Miller (Gender, Health and Human Rights, School of Public Health, Columbia University), and Marsha Freeman (IWRAW, Humphrey Institute, Minnesota, USA). In New York, IWRAW Asia Pacific was represented by Shanthy Dairiam, Bandana Shrestha and tan beng hui. Additional Secretariat assistance was provided by Meg Satherthwaite and Carole Njoki (UNIFEM New York).

Pre-Session Technical Assistance

Prior to the training and mentoring programme, and the actual 29th CEDAW Session, IWRAW Asia Pacific extended participants technical support in the following ways:

- Provided information on how to get involved in the Pre-Session Working Group for the 29th CEDAW Session;
- Shared information on how the CEDAW review process works. This included updating materials on our website to ensure that the latest information was available;
- Provided guidelines on the writing of Shadow/Alternative Reports; and
- Coordinated the compilation/reproduction and dissemination of Shadow/Alternative Reports to the CEDAW Committee. In this regard, it should be noted that for the first time since the inception of the From Global to Local Project, IWRAW Asia Pacific has been tasked as the official conduit of NGO Shadow/Alternative Reports to the CEDAW Committee.

Three-day Training /Orientation Programme

The Training/Orientation and Mentoring Programme is an integral component of the From Global to Local Project. Prior to the start of this programme a questionnaire was sent to all the participants to determine their understanding of and the level of work done in relation to CEDAW. This step was introduced in 2003 to further improve the training and assistance provided. Members of the Project Management Team also met for a day before the Training/Orientation started to finalise details of the programme. The Programme took place before the start of the 29th CEDAW Session and lasted for three days (26-28 June 2003). During this time, participants became more familiar with:

- The normative content of CEDAW. This included learning about the process of becoming a States party to CEDAW, reservations, the main features of the CEDAW Convention, General Recommendations and Concluding Comments;
- The political aspects of working with the CEDAW Committee. This component provided participants with an overview of the UN treaty body system and other human rights mechanisms. In terms of CEDAW, participants learnt about understanding the nature of constructive dialogues, how CEDAW Committee members are elected, how the CEDAW Committee works, and the areas of expertise of each individual member; and
- Effective advocacy approaches at the UN level. During the Training/Orientation programme, participants whose governments were reporting at the 29th CEDAW Session received tips on how to maximise their five-minute presentations during the Informal Meeting session with the CEDAW Committee.

On the final day of the programme, two representatives from a coalition of New Zealand women NGOs joined the training and were given a separate briefing on the CEDAW review process. A similar briefing was organised for the participant from Morocco who arrived much later into the CEDAW Session as the government of Morocco was scheduled to report only in the third week of the session.

All participants were given a set of relevant training materials, background reading, as well as a list of optional reading materials.

NGO Presentations to the CEDAW Committee

On the first day of the 29th CEDAW Session, participants from Brazil, Costa Rica and France made five-minute presentations to the CEDAW Committee during the Informal

Meeting slot that had been allocated.¹⁶ They, like the other participants, had received assistance in the writing of these short speeches in order to highlight their most important issues to the CEDAW Committee. This document was also helpful in lobbying the Committee members later.

Observation of the Review Process and Advocacy with CEDAW

The next component of the June/July 2003 session gave the participants first-hand experience observing the CEDAW reporting process, and to be mentored on related advocacy and lobbying aspects. They were able to observe how the CEDAW Committee reviewed the reports by the governments of Brazil, Costa Rica and France; including how Committee members raised questions to the representatives of these States parties, and how, in turn, the representatives responded to these questions. During this time, the NGO participants from these countries also lobbied the Committee members and provided them with alternative information or explanations to the information given by their government delegates.

Daily Debriefing

At the end of each day of the official review process, a daily debriefing session was held. Here participants were able to share their experiences observing the reporting process, collectively analyse the issues or problems raised, and strategise for appropriate follow-up action. Those from countries whose governments had reported were asked to comment on how effective they had been in raising the awareness of the CEDAW Committee members on issues pertaining to discrimination of women in their countries, and whether this was reflected in the questions posed by the Committee members to the governments concerned.

Evaluation and Planning

A one-day evaluation session was held on 6 July 2003. Participants not only discussed the lessons they had learnt through the programme, but also planned for follow-up action back home. This included organising meetings with women's organisations to share their experiences and observation of the review process, and to give wide publicity to the Concluding Comments. Participants whose governments were scheduled to report the following week took the opportunity to prepare their five-minute presentations for the informal meeting with the CEDAW Committee. Similarly, those whose governments were scheduled to report in January 2004 – Belarus, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Germany, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Nigeria – developed strategies on formulating and producing Shadow/Alternative Reports. They also made an initial list of critical questions to be given to the Pre-Session Working Group for the 30th CEDAW Session. A brief input was on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW was also given.

¹⁶ The Informal Meeting between NGOs and the CEDAW Committee took a slightly different format to that of previous years in recognition of how not all NGOs could be attend the Informal Meeting if it was only held during the first week of the CEDAW Session. As such for this Session, the Informal Meeting slot was divided into two days, one on the first Monday of the Session, and the second on the following Monday. NGOs from Brazil, Costa Rica and France participated in the first Informal Meeting slot on the 30th of June 2003, while those from Ecuador, Japan, Slovenia, New Zealand and Morocco made their presentations on 7th July 2003.

Project evaluation:

Participants of the From Global to Local project unanimously agreed that such an initiative was very useful and should take place on an annual basis. In their evaluation forms, they stated that they had benefited from the Training/Orientation Programme in several ways including:

- A clearer understanding of the principles and concepts of the CEDAW Convention, and how the CEDAW Committee and review process worked;
- New knowledge on the different ways in which the CEDAW Convention could be applied to advance the human rights of women locally;
- Introduction to CEDAW Committee members and their interests, expertise and politics;
- Ways to identify critical issues for inclusion in Shadow/Alternative Reports so that priorities are clear and information accessible to Committee members; and
- Methods to advance organisational agendas at the CEDAW session.

A sample of the feedback received is presented below.

“[The training/orientation] make it possible for us to do more effective advocacy work with the CEDAW members, and to think about the use of the Convention in our country work....”

“The programme allows one to know CEDAW and learn to use it as a tool for women’s rights advocacy. If women rights activists have knowledge on CEDAW they can use it to oblige their governments to comply with this Convention.”

“The programme has immensely contributed to my work. It has an added value on what I have already perceived as women’s rights and how to go about making a difference.”

“The assistance provided was particularly helpful in making our 5-minute speech more effective. We actually revised our speech in a way that explained out main issues, in the order of priority, and gave concrete suggestions for improvement.”

“The most useful session was the one on advocacy strategies. It gave a lot of advice on how we should approach the experts, what to do and what not to do.”

“The CEDAW at the moment is the only international human rights treaty that specifically addresses and articulates the issue of women’s human rights. In this regard, the CEDAW forms the legal basis of the bulk of our advocacy work and this programme further strengthens our capacity in working with the Convention.”

By facilitating the presence of a fairly large group of NGO women at the CEDAW Session, the From Global to Local project in 2003 continued to encourage openness and transparency during the review process. More importantly, it gave representatives of NGOs from the reporting countries, a chance to exert additional pressure on their government delegations to be accountable for their statements to the Committee. Indeed, governments seem to have greater respect for NGO representatives when they see them as part of an international lobby. The presence of NGOs representatives also meant that they were in a better position to monitor their governments’ actions once they returned home,

and see if how they went about implementing the Concluding Comments of the Committee.

Last but not least, NGO efforts in providing the CEDAW Committee with alternative information pertaining to women's rights in their country yielded positive results as reflected in their inclusion in the Concluding Comments for their respective countries.

2.2.2b Advocacy around activities of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

The list of advocacy activities described in this section were carried out taking into consideration the need to help UN bodies gain a better understanding of the challenges encountered by governments and NGOs, especially those from the South, seeking to promote and implement international human rights standards at the local level. Furthermore, in 2003, IWRAW Asia Pacific made a series of recommendations regarding better means to enable women's NGOs to participate and contribute to the work of UN Committees and Human Rights Bodies more effectively. The organisation also participated in four crucial and interrelated meetings organised and convened by the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR) in Geneva, Switzerland.

i. March 28 – 9 April | 59th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Geneva, Switzerland. Organised by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Bearing in mind the need to share the experiences it gained during Optional Protocol to CEDAW negotiations, IWRAW Asia Pacific decided to get involved in the processes leading to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR).¹⁷ This decision was also based on how partner organisations in Asia had expressed an interest to work closely with NGOs specialising on economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights in order to develop a better understanding of how to use CEDAW to promote these rights for women.

As the question of the OP-ICESCR began to gain momentum in 2003, the UN Commission on Human Rights established an Open-Ended Working Group to discuss options for the elaboration of an OP-ICESCR. In this connection, IWRAW Asia Pacific's contributions were timely and beneficial to all involved. As well, joint efforts with other NGOs resulted in the formation of the NGO Coalition for an OP-ICESCR.¹⁸

One of the first actions of IWRAW Asia Pacific in relation to the OP-ICESCR was to set up a lobbying team. For the UN Commission on Human Rights meeting, IWRAW Asia Pacific invited two members of the Steering Committee of the Global Campaign of the

¹⁷ This optional protocol would create a procedure that allows individuals to bring forward individual complaints regarding violations of the rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

¹⁸ IWRAW Asia Pacific is in the Steering Committee of NGO Coalition. Other NGOs represented include ICJ, FIAN, COHRE, OMCT, the Social Rights Advocacy Centre, and Plataforma Interamericana.

OP-CEDAW¹⁹ and three national-level women's rights advocates²⁰ to be part of the OP-ICESCR lobbying team. Together with Shanthi Dairiam and Maria Herminia Graterol who represented IWRAW Asia Pacific, these five advocates held discussions with delegations from countries on different regions on the need of an OP-ICESCR. At the same time, the team also worked in collaboration with other NGOs advocating for the OP-ICESCR.

Many States openly oppose further developments in relation to ESC rights. This was more evident immediately after the UN Special Rapporteur on the Question of the OP-ICESCR presented his second report to the Commission on Human Rights and the negotiations of the text of the resolution on the establishment of a UN Open-Ended Working Group began. IWRAW Asia Pacific and other groups were able to follow discussions and share the lessons learnt from the OP-CEDAW experience with supportive governments. Specifically, the IWRAW Asia Pacific lobby group focused on: (a) Raising awareness of NGOs and some friendly governments on the ways the OP-CEDAW process could inform the OP-ICESCR process; (b) Developing materials to encourage women's groups working at the national level to get involved in the processes that may lead to the OP-ICESCR; and (c) Assisting in the coordination of the formal establishment of the OP-ICESCR NGO Coalition.

Beyond the question of the OP-ICESCR, IWRAW Asia Pacific also used its presence at this meeting to follow-up discussions around the right to health, the right to housing, and violence against women. In particular, the organisation worked closely with a large number of women's rights NGOs in advocating for the extension of the mandate.

ii. June 18-20 | Second Inter-Committee Meeting of UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies. Geneva, Switzerland. Organised by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

One of the main objectives of the meeting was to exchange views and make recommendations related to a set of suggestions by the UN Secretary-General on new streamlined reporting procedures for treaty bodies. Each of these Committees²¹ was represented by its Chairperson and one or two other members.²² The following were discussed:

- Actions needed to ensure consistency in treaty body practice;
- Consistent understanding of the role of national human rights institutions in the reporting process;
- Procedures for preparing joint or parallel general recommendations; and
- The Secretary-General's report on recommendations for treaty body reforms.

¹⁹ Tulika Srivastava (India) and Barbara Limanowska (Poland).

²⁰ Brenda Campbell (Ireland), Ivy Josiah (Malaysia) and Marlene Libardoni (Brazil).

²¹ Human Rights Committee (HRC); the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR); the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC); Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Committee Against Torture (CAT).

²² For more details on the meeting please refer to the report by the UN OHCHR, UN DOC HRI/ICM/2003.5 (2003).

Other issues considered were the level of technical assistance that should be provided by the OHCHR to reporting States as well as improvement of processes to widely disseminate concluding observations or comments.

As these issues are critical to NGOs working with treaty bodies, IRAW Asia Pacific decided to attend this meeting. The organisation was represented by Shanthi Dairiam and Rea Chiongson. During the dialogue session with non-governmental organisations, they presented and distributed a paper entitled “Enhancing the Effectiveness of Treaty Bodies.”²³

IRAW Asia Pacific was able to use lessons learnt from work with NGOs and governments in Asia to propose recommendations that complemented the substantive discussions which took place during the meeting. IRAW Asia Pacific also signed on to an NGO document which contained suggestions²⁴ specifically addressing the treaty body reform process in relation to State reporting.

Some of the critical points identified and raised by IRAW Asia Pacific during the dialogue with NGOs and Committee members focused on:

- The potential role that the OHCHR could play when providing technical support to governments preparing initial or periodic reports to UN treaty bodies;
- The need to undertake on-going capacity building, taking into consideration political as well as technical reasons for non-compliance with obligations of the State to implement the treaty and report on the progress made, as means of ensuring States parties develop a clearer understanding of their obligations under UN human rights treaty law;
- The obstacles and difficulties government officials and NGOs face when submitting information to treaty bodies (i.e. lack of clarity on the content of rights for women under CEDAW, lack of statistics, etc); and
- The approaches for enhancing the effectiveness of the Concluding Comments which include giving importance to strengthening and supporting processes led by NGOs and other member of the civil society.

After the session, feedback received from NGOs and Committee members that participated in the dialogue was very positive and the issues raised by IRAW Asia Pacific were well accepted.

The meeting also provided IRAW Asia Pacific with an ideal opportunity to gain a better understanding of the differences and similarities of the working methods of each UN treaty body. At the same time, it was interesting to see how other NGOs monitoring the process viewed the proposals made by the Secretary-General. Overall, participation in the meeting provided a conducive space for IRAW Asia Pacific to establish linkages with representatives of other UN Committees while advocating for the need to include national experiences, and specifically local women’s groups, in the work of treaty bodies.

Finally, IRAW Asia Pacific has continued to follow-up with the OHCHR regarding the next steps and documentation that resulted from the meeting.

²³ A copy of this paper is available on the IRAW Asia Pacific website. Go to: http://www.iwraw-ap.org/news_a.htm.

²⁴ This paper was presented at both this meeting and the meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies. For details, go to <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/news/archive08.htm>.

iii. June 23-27 | Fifteenth Annual Meeting of Chairpersons of the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies. Geneva, Switzerland. Organised by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

At this activity, Rea Chiongson and María Herminia Graterol (Programme Officers, IWRAW Asia Pacific) prepared and disseminated a statement on behalf of the organisation.²⁵ This raised the need for all treaty bodies to actively contribute to processes that were recently set in motion such as the Open-Ended Working Group on the OP-ICESCR. Moreover, IWRAW Asia Pacific also stressed the importance of ensuring the participation of national-level NGOs in the treaty body process.

The main issues discussed by the Chairpersons dealt with the conclusions agreed upon at the Inter-Committee Meeting. Also, the Chairpersons took the opportunity to share experiences arising from the work of each committee since 2002. Updates provided by each Chairperson served as an ideal and very dynamic means for all treaty bodies to exchange information and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of each Committee. Chairpersons also took this opportunity to have individual meetings with States parties, specialised agencies, and the Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights, among others.

As follow-up to this meeting, IWRAW Asia Pacific joined a group of NGOs that will continue to monitor proposals towards a possible reform of the treaty body system.

iv. June 24 | Tenth Annual Meeting of Special Rapporteurs, Representatives, Independent Experts, Chairperson of Working Groups of the Commission on Human Rights. Geneva, Switzerland. Organised by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

IWRAW Asia Pacific took part in the dialogue between special rapporteurs and independent experts with NGOs and specialised agencies. On this occasion, María Herminia Graterol and Rea Chiongson outlined the ways linkages between the work of experts and the human rights Committees could be strengthened. In addition, they illustrated how the impact of the work of these experts has benefited and provided momentum to national-level efforts.²⁶ Issues raised included contributing to the progressive interpretation of human rights standards; and moving towards a common agenda and exploring joint interventions of UN human rights mechanisms.

2.2.2c Advocacy Around Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

In 2003, IWRAW Asia Pacific began to actively seek to influence a series of processes that specifically relate to the progressive interpretation of economic, social and cultural rights. At one level, this is challenging because the organisation is now using its expertise to explore issues that relate to the gender dimensions of economic, social and cultural

²⁵ A copy of this intervention is available on the IWRAW Asia Pacific website. Go to: http://www.iwraw-ap.org/news_b.htm

²⁶ A copy of the paper they presented is available on the IWRAW Asia Pacific website. See <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/news_d.htm>.

(ESC) rights and that, due to their complexity, have not been addressed by other women's NGOs in Asia. At another level, it has decided to commit resources in order to facilitate the participation of partners and developing materials on these processes on the on-going basis.

i. June 8-11 | ESCR-Net Inaugural Conference. Chiang Mai, Thailand. Organised by ESCR-Net.

As a way to ensure the effective participation of women's groups from the region at this activity, IRAW Asia Pacific facilitated the presence of women's rights activists from its network: Eleanor Conda (Philippines), Caroline Lambert (Australia) and Tulika Srivastava (India).²⁷ Shanthi Dairiam and María Herminia Graterol also participated on behalf of the organisation.

Most of the group focused on encouraging NGO involvement in the OP-ICESCR process as well as in raising awareness on strategies for using the OP-CEDAW to promote women's ESC rights. In addition, Shanthi Dairiam participated in various activities coordinated by ESCR-Net's women's working group and addressed the plenary on behalf of the IRAW Asia Pacific team. She made a presentation on what the women's movement and advocacy has contributed to the human rights movement.

In relation to specific efforts around the OP-ICESCR, IRAW Asia Pacific organised a meeting one day before the conference to bring together representatives from NGOs involved in the process. Having been initiated at the 59th Commission on Human Rights, the NGO Coalition for the OP-ICESCR was formalised at the ESCR-Net meeting and its Steering Committee established. A set of common objectives and strategies were outlined and later discussed with other NGOs throughout the conference. This mostly took place during informal evening meetings of NGOs interested in supporting the OP-ICESCR and in the workshop on the OP-ICESCR.

During the conference, IRAW Asia Pacific also coordinated a workshop titled "Strengthening Legal Strategies Around the Justiciability of Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: The Optional Protocols to CEDAW and the ICESCR." Three speakers from NGOs working together in the NGO Coalition for the OP-ICESCR made presentations: Eleanor Conda (IRAW Asia Pacific); Malcolm Langford (COHRE) and Edwin Berry (ICJ). Around 50 participants representing 30 NGOs from various regions participated in the workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Raise awareness on the critical need for an OP-ICESCR to ensure equality and justiciability of ESC rights;
- Raise awareness on the OP-CEDAW as a tool for claiming human rights at the national level; and
- Share information on the current status of national and international activism around ensuring justiciability of ESC rights and more specifically, the OP-ICESCR process.

²⁷ All members of the Steering Committee of the Global Campaign for Ratification and Use of the OP-CEDAW.

In this connection, some of the discussions during the workshop raised concerns regarding: (a) The mandate of the UN Open-Ended Working Group set up to discuss the elaborations to the options to OP-ICESCR; and (b) The minimum standards that must be ensured to make the optional protocol an effective tool for victims of violations of the rights encompassed by the ICESCR.

2.2.3 The Global Campaign on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW

In 2000, IWRAW Asia Pacific launched a global campaign for the ratification and use of the OP-CEDAW called “Our Rights Are Not Optional!”. The Campaign has sought to respond to the need to develop capacity of women’s groups to access justice through the OP-CEDAW procedures and to craft strategies for the ratification of this instrument.

To date, the CEDAW Committee has not issued final recommendations on any individual complaints received. For this reason, all efforts carried out through the Campaign have focused on supporting advocacy efforts for the ratification of OP-CEDAW by as many States Parties to CEDAW as possible. In this connection, the OP-CEDAW Campaign accomplished the following:

i. November 19-21 | Global Campaign for the Ratification and Use of the OP-CEDAW. Africa Regional Consultation. Cape Town, South Africa. Organised by Masimayane and supported by IWRAW Asia Pacific.

Representatives of the Steering Committee of the Campaign²⁸ decided to raise funds and coordinate a series of consultations on the OP-CEDAW in their respective regions. Each regional consultation seeks to build the capacity of key women’s organisations to lead efforts on the OP-CEDAW and develop a regional framework for effective use of the instrument. The first regional consultation undertaken by partners of the Campaign took place in South America in 2001. In 2003, a second regional consultation focusing on English speaking countries in Africa was organised by Masimayane, IWRAW Asia Pacific’s main partner in this region.

The objectives of the consultation were to:

- Build the capacity of national-level NGOs on the CEDAW Convention, its Optional Protocol and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa;
- Explore strategies to ensure these treaties are ratified by governments in the region;
- Share experiences on successes and challenges at the national level;
- Encourage effective use of the protocols as tools for change;
- Assess regional priorities and map out a regional plan for action; and
- Explore legal and advocacy initiatives in the region and promote opportunities for further exchange.

The following sessions were held:

²⁸ Members: Caroline Lambert (Australia); Eleanor Conda (Philippines); Ana Elena Obando (Costa Rica); Donna Sullivan (Costa Rica); Alda Facio (Costa Rica); Tulika Srivastava (India); Barbara Limanowska (Poland); Lesley Ann Foster (South Africa) and Shanthi Dairiam (IWRAW Asia Pacific).

Session 1: Overview of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – Principles, rights and potential

Session 2: CEDAW in Action – Sharing experiences of African NGOs that have applied the Convention

Session 3: Overview of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW

Session 4: Celebrating our Accomplishment – The Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

Session 5: Strategies for Ratification and Effective Use of the OP-CEDAW In Africa

Some of the strategies proposed were:

- Preparing a publication on the benefits of ratifying CEDAW, the OP-CEDAW and the African Protocol on Women’s Rights for women in Africa;
- Monitoring of the incorporation of CEDAW into human rights legislation at the national level;
- Carrying-out strategic training and advocacy efforts to raise awareness of CEDAW and the OP-CEDAW among high-level government officials and parliamentarians; and
- Raising awareness on the OP-CEDAW and CEDAW by linking national activities around the 16 days of activism to end violence against women to CEDAW.

Masimayane was able to raise funds for over 25 participants from Africa to take part in the consultation. IWRAW Asia Pacific supported this initiative by assisting Masimayane in the development of the agenda of the consultation, preparing the package of background materials distributed to all participants, and enabling the participation of María Herminia Graterol and all Steering Committee members of the Campaign as resource persons. The last brought international perspectives and expertise to the consultation. Additionally, María Herminia Graterol, Tulika Srivastava (India), Lesley Ann Foster (South Africa), Stella Makanya (Kenya) and Thoke Matshe (Zimbabwe) with the facilitation of sessions.

ii. November 22 | OP-CEDAW Campaign Steering Committee Meeting. Cape Town, South Africa. Organised IWRAW Asia Pacific with logistical support by Masimayane.

The Steering Committee of the Campaign met to review achievements of the Campaign since 2001 and suggest new directions for the future. Although it was originally envisaged that the agenda items would be discussed over two days, the Steering Committee was able to cover all items for discussion in one day.

The main items discussed at this meeting were:

- Updating of work done by Steering Committee members and IWRAW Asia Pacific from 2001 to 2003;
- Feedback on the OP-CEDAW toolkit, website and brochure;
- Review of the Campaign’s objectives, scope and governance structures;
- Ideas for the Global Consultation on the OP-CEDAW planned for 2004; and
- Future activities lead by partners (regional consultations and national campaigns).

Moreover, there were opportunities to discuss substantive issues such as a proposed set of guidelines for engaging with local groups that have an interest in bringing forward communications to CEDAW.

One of the major accomplishments of this meeting was a re-evaluation of the objectives of the Campaign in light of current global advocacy trends around women's rights issues. Essentially it was decided that the Campaign would be a programme of IWRAP Asia Pacific and as such, it would draw on the organisation's expertise in the following ways:

- The development of materials and resources to support the work of lawyers and women's rights advocates at the national level;
- Facilitate linkages between national NGOs bringing cases and experts with international NGOs and individuals who have expertise on OP-CEDAW related processes; and
- Document experiences of national groups.

In 2005 the Global Consultation on the OP-CEDAW is expected to consolidate this new level of work.

2.2.4 Initiatives Around the Development of General Recommendations

In 2003, IWRAP Asia Pacific participated on the Day of Discussion of the CESCR on the right to work. It also continued to monitor and contribute to the drafting process of CEDAW General Recommendation 25 on Temporary Special Measures (Article 4.1) and the CESCR General Comment 16 on Men and Women's Equal Enjoyment of Economic Social and Cultural Rights (Article 3). These activities are reported below.²⁹

i. November 24 | Day of General Discussion on the Right to Work. Geneva, Switzerland. Organised by the CESCR.

The Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights held a day of general discussion on the Right to Work at its 31st session in Geneva. This discussion was to assist the Committee to prepare a General Comment on the right to work, Article 6 of the ICESCR. Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAP Asia Pacific) participated in the discussion and made a submission to the Committee on the need for special attention to be paid to women's right to work as neutrality and formal notions of equality between women and men do not benefit women.³⁰ She gave examples of why bringing in a gender perspective on the right to work was critical.

ii. Follow-up on CEDAW General Recommendation 25 on Temporary Special Measures

Although there were not any specific advocacy activities around CEDAW General Recommendation 25 in 2003, IWRAP Asia Pacific continued to monitor the drafting process. Since the organisation participates in every CEDAW session, it had several opportunities to informally discuss the draft with Committee members.

2.2.5 Other Advocacy Initiatives

²⁹ Efforts around the CESCR General Comment 16 are reported under the section on "Networking".

³⁰ This submission is available from the IWRAP Asia Pacific website. Go to: http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/cescr_shanti.htm.

The year 2003 also saw IWRAW Asia Pacific getting involved in advocacy in relation to the UN Special Rapporteurs, in particular the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, and the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing.

i. April 4-6 | Women Human Rights Defenders Consultation. Bangkok, Thailand. Co-organised by IWRAW Asia Pacific, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, and Amnesty International (International Secretariat).

This consultation was held to:

- Initiate the development of a framework for the full exercise of Article 2 of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration) by women human rights defenders (WHRDs);
- Identify different forms of violation committed against WHRDs particularly those committed directly or indirectly by States; and
- Make recommendations that provide enabling conditions to ensure the realisation of women's rights to defend human rights, including measures to address violations of their rights.

Thirty participants coming from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Switzerland, Thailand, United States and United Kingdom attended this meeting. The UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani, also participated. Rea Chiongson represented IWRAW Asia Pacific and contributed to the framework of the Consultation, and presented a paper as well.

The participants consolidated key observations and concepts from which a framework for women human rights defenders can be surfaced. Further, out of the key consultation points, they elaborated on recommendations for action for the State, the human rights movement, the international community, and women human rights defenders.³¹

ii. October 28-31 | “The Interlinkages between Violence Against Women and the Right to Adequate Housing”. Pre-Consultation Training followed by Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing. Delhi, India. Co-organised by IWRAW Asia Pacific, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions and Habitat International Coalition-Housing and Land Rights.

The main objectives of this activity were to:

- Examine the interlinkages between Violence Against Women (VAW), and the right to adequate housing in order to promote substantive equality for women, and through this inform the normative content of the right to adequate housing through women's experiences and testimonies; and

³¹ For a copy of the key points of this consultation, go to http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/a_report.htm.

- Create a platform to mutually strengthen strategies and collaboration between women's groups working on VAW and housing rights groups for the advancement of women's rights.

There were two parts to the programme:

Part I: Pre-consultation Training (October 28-29, 2003)

The training presented a methodology for monitoring women's right to housing. This included presentations on the toolkit developed by Habitat International Coalition; the expanded elements of the right to adequate housing; substantive equality and non-discrimination as key CEDAW principles; and the violence against women framework.

Part II: Consultation Proper (October 30-31, 2003)

In the consultation, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing presented his mandate while participants had the opportunity to present their testimonies to him. This allowed for the links between the right to adequate housing and VAW to be drawn and examined.

Participants were women migrant domestic workers, dalit women, women refugees, women nomads, fisherfolk, indigenous hill tribe women, women plantation workers, women subject to domestic violence, women working on eviction issues in urban slums, human rights commissions, women's human rights organisations, and housing rights organisations. They came from Malaysia, Georgia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Hong Kong, Korea, Burma, Mongolia. Their presentations were done under five main themes: domestic violence; armed/ethnic conflict; fundamentalisms and militarism; discrimination and segregation in evictions and housing; legal and cultural obstacles to land inheritance and property rights of women; and globalisation.

IWRAW Asia Pacific was represented by Rea Chiongson (Programme Officer) and also brought to the meeting, Ratna Shrestha (Forum for Women, Law and Development, Nepal). Both made presentations while Rea assisted in the conceptualisation of the meeting as well.

A summary of agreed key conference points is available with IWRAW Asia Pacific and can also be accessed through its website.³² A publication of the conference proceedings is presently being finalised. Key discussions of the conference and the testimonies will contribute to the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing's 2005 report on women and housing rights.

2.3 Networking

i. February 15 | Human Rights Training Programme. Port Dickson, Malaysia. Organised by the Kuala Lumpur Bar Council.

³² Go to <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/key_conference.htm>.

The Kuala Lumpur Bar Council conducted a human rights training for about 100 lawyers. Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IRAW Asia Pacific) was invited as one of the resource persons. She led the discussion on equality and non-discrimination as critical rights for women and raised awareness of the significance of CEDAW as an instrument to promote women's rights. She distributed a paper called, "The Elimination of Discrimination: Issues to Consider."

ii. March 17 | Roundtable Discussion on "Rights and Obligations under CEDAW". Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Organised by Suhakam (the Malaysian Human Rights Commission).

The International Treaties Working Group of SUHAKAM (the Malaysian Human Rights Commission) organised a high-level roundtable discussion on CEDAW aimed at increasing awareness on the steps taken to implement CEDAW in Malaysia. The discussion provided an ideal opportunity for government officials and NGOs to develop a clearer understanding of the process leading to Malaysia's initial report to the CEDAW Committee. IRAW Asia Pacific was consulted during the planning of the roundtable discussion and provided assistance in preparing the concept paper. Shanthi Dairiam, Bandana Shrestha and María Herminia Graterol represented IRAW Asia Pacific in these discussions. Shanthi Dairiam wrote and presented a paper titled "The Status of CEDAW Implementation in the ASEAN Countries and Selected Muslim Countries."³³

iii. April 23-25 | Regional (Pacific) CEDAW Reporting Workshop. Apia, Samoa. Organised by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community organised the above workshop for government and non-governmental groups to build skills on CEDAW report writing. Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IRAW Asia Pacific) was one of the resource persons. She presented a paper on the "Role of NGOs in CEDAW Monitoring".

³³ For a copy of this paper, go to <<http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/papers.htm>>.

iv. May 22-24 | Human Rights Training Programme. Penang, Malaysia. Workshop organised by the Malaysian Bar Council.

More than 100 Malaysian lawyers attended this programme. Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific) was invited as a resource person to address the topic, “The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: A brief outline and its application in our domestic laws.”

v. June 16-20 | Women’s Rights Watch Project. Second Exchange Week “Exploring how CEDAW can be used as a holistic framework”. Utrecht, Netherlands. Organised by the Humanistic Committee of Human Rights (HOM).

IWRAW Asia Pacific, represented by María Herminia Graterol (Programme Officer) participated in this activity which also brought together activists from Bangladesh, Nicaragua, Kenya, along with several organisations in the Netherlands. Participants discussed the ways CEDAW could be used to determine elements to be included in a tool that could explore the connections between development cooperation and women’s right to health. As part of the exchange programme, a series public meetings were held including one which focused on violence against women and the ways CEDAW can be used to raise the awareness of the police in various countries. Participants also had an opportunity to share some case studies on the linkages between women’s rights to health, trade and international cooperation. At the end of the exchange, HOM undertook to continue developing an impact assessment tool in consultation with the groups that had participated in the exchange.

vi. July 19-20 | Expert Group Meeting on “General Comment 16: Article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Equal Right of men and women to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights”. Toronto, Canada. Organised by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA).

This meeting was organised by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) and was held in Toronto, Canada. ESCR-NET and IWRAW Asia Pacific provided support to CERA in the preparation of the meeting. Over 20 international experts, two CEDAW Committee members and the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) participated. Shanthi Dairiam and María Herminia Graterol attended and contributed ideas on elements that could be considered by the CESCR in the process of drafting the forthcoming General Comment on Article 3. Although discussions focused on the elements that should be taken into consideration when developing the draft General Comment, the meeting provided a very good opportunity to develop consensus and a better understanding pertaining the gender dimensions of ESCR.

Work around this general comment is still in progress. It is expected that the final draft will be adopted in Nov 2004 or in May 2005. Notwithstanding this, IWRAW Asia Pacific will continue to be active in the process. It is expected that the General Comment will provide a good reference point for women’s groups and governments in Asia Pacific wanting to approach work around the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) more comprehensively.

vii. September 8-9 | International Civil Society Forum on “Civil Society Partnerships for Democracy”. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The International Civil Society Forum (ICSF) was held as a prelude to the Fifth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies (see below). Participants came from all over the world and focused on the practical ways to promote partnerships and strengthen commitments to democratic governance locally, nationally and internationally. The discussions were held in plenary sessions and 18 breakout discussions focusing on specific aspects of the work of civil society.

Based on the understanding that democracy is a universal good and an ever-evolving process, the participants set forth nine principles of democratic governance and adopted 59 concrete recommendations addressed to governments, civil society organisations, and intergovernmental organisations or the donor community. They also adopted a plan of action which endorsed the creation of the ICSF Follow-up Mechanism that is expected to take concrete action in implementation of the outcome document. This will encourage and facilitate the creation of national and regional “Democracy Watch” networks, promote information sharing and continue to maintain and update the ICSF website. As well, it will promote national and transnational civil society networks to monitor follow-up to ICSF recommendations and progress in such areas as access to justice and the rule of law, conflict prevention, peace-building and transitions from conflict, mechanisms for monitoring and compliance with human rights norms and democratic practices, promoting inclusiveness and greater participation in democracy. The follow-up mechanism will also elaborate ICSF’s institutional memory and report annually to ICSF members. It was decided that the next ICSF be held some time in 2006 prior to or parallel with ICNRD-6.

viii. September 10-12 | Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on “Democracy, Good Governance and Civil Society”. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) attracted more than 450 representatives from 119 countries and over 10 intergovernmental organisations. Thirty-one delegates from the ICSF, held prior to this conference, participated and presented the ICSF’s outcome and recommendations to the conference. They also took part in the thematic discussions that focused on specific issues. One of the areas of the conference’s focus was strengthening civil society in new and re-emerging democracies.

Delegates adopted the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and a Plan of Action. The declaration laid out in detail six principles of promoting democracy. It recognised that democratic societies had certain qualities which delegates considered superior to theirs, particularly those concerned with their participatory, representative and equitable nature, and that democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms were interdependent and synergic.

The Plan of Action specifically focuses on the concrete actions that need to be taken by new and re-emerging democracies to promote and depend on democratic reforms. Thus it called for adoption of national plans of action for strengthening democracy as well as

development of national democratic indicators' databases to be better able to monitor their progress in democratic and social development. It was suggested that the database be developed with the participation of civil society. As well, the Plan of Action called on the executive and legislature to hold regular consultations with citizens to ensure that they are well aware of their needs and able to address them accordingly at the highest level.

The participants called on governments to help promote human rights monitoring capacities of NGOs and the media, to include civic/democracy/human rights education in their school curricula, facilitate citizens' access to information, draw up regional plans of action, create regional networks of policy-makers and civil society members to study conflict prevention and consensus-building in democracies, etc. It was decided that ICNRD secretariat will coordinate its work with the ICSF Follow-up Mechanism. The conference also decided to work closer with the United Nations and the ICNRD President would initiate discussions with the Chair of the Community of Democracies to exchange views on ways to bring closer the two movements. Since there were concrete ideas to institutionalise the ICNRD, the President was asked to establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a working group to examine all the suggestions with a view to make the conference more effective and efficient.

Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director) attended both the ICSF and ICNRD meetings on behalf of IWRAW Asia Pacific.

ix. September 25-27 | Third ASEAN People's Assembly. Manila, Philippines. Organised by ISIS Philippines.

Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific) attended this meeting as well as the post-APA Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming.

x. November 11-13 | Expert Group Meeting on "Developing Universal Indicators for the Prevention of Child Marriage". New York, USA. Organised by UNICEF.

Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific) participated in this meeting and presented a paper titled, "State Accountability: Political and Legal Indicators for the Prevention of Child Marriage".³⁴

xi. November 19-21 | UNFPA Retreat on Religion, Culture and a Human Rights-Based Approach to Population, Reproductive Health and Gender Equality. Queenstown, Maryland, USA. Organised by UNFPA.

Shanthi Dairiam (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific) was invited to contribute to the retreat the aim of which was to help UNFPA:

- Refine its collective thinking regarding the relationship between human rights, religion and culture;
- Highlight basic principles for deepening the dialogue between religion, culture and rights;

³⁴ A copy of this paper can be downloaded from the IWRAW Asia Pacific website. Go to: <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/papers.htm>

- Expand and refine approaches to operationalising better relationships between religion, culture and rights; and
- Equip staff to engage constructively with religious opposition

The outcome of the discussion can be divided into three main sections. The first examined the impact of religion and culture on UNFPA's current human rights-based agenda. The second section looked at four processes that can help UNFPA staff and their NGO allies work with religious groups. These approaches were guided by a background paper prepared for the retreat by Reverend Sabina Alkire, "From The Inside Out: Religion and Rights-Based Approaches to Reproductive Health." This section examined ideas to make these processes more readily applicable. The third section drew on the retreat's discussions to sketch a framework for action to help UNFPA constructively engage religious and cultural groups. Participants also explored ways in which UNFPA and non-governmental organisations can benefit one another.

2.4 Institutional Building

In 2003, IRAW Asia Pacific's staff members together with representatives of the Advisory Committee took time to review successes, evaluate operation systems, explore ways to streamline operations, and formulate plans for further expansion of members of the staff. For this to be possible, IRAW Asia Pacific approached various funding agencies in order to explore the possibilities of receiving institutional grants for the future.

i. August 28-29 | IRAW Asia Pacific's 4th Advisory Committee Meeting. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Six Advisory Committee (AC) members, two members of the Board of Directors, and IRAW Asia Pacific programme staff attended this meeting. They discussed matters arising from the previous AC meeting;³⁵ updating of work done by the AC members; review of the 2002 programme; review of the organisation's new thrust and direction (2003-2005); possible change of the organisational name and the revised IRAW Asia Pacific brochure; activities under 2003-2005 which looked at the principles of its activities, framework for undertaking its thrust during this duration and its programme of work; and institutional matters pertaining to current funding situation, staffing, governance structure and strategic planning/external evaluation exercise.

ii. December 5-8 | IRAW Asia Pacific Staff Evaluation and Planning. Port Dickson, Malaysia

Equally important, the organisation held a strategic planning and evaluation meeting, the first time in ten years that IRAW Asia Pacific had undertaken an activity of such nature.³⁶

³⁵ The last Advisory Committee meeting was held in 2001. Due to funding constraints, the 2002 meeting was postponed.

³⁶ In the future, IRAW Asia Pacific will continue to seek support to organise such meetings annually.

The main purpose of this meeting was to bring the staff together to reflect on ways to improve systems and operations that would strengthen IWRAW Asia Pacific; plan activities; discuss lessons learnt and propose recommendations for improvement. The exercise also served as an opportunity for team building. Specifically, the meeting brainstormed on:

- Future direction of the organisation – the vision, mission and goals of IWRAW Asia Pacific; environmental analysis which looked at the external environment (opportunities and threats) and the strengths and weaknesses of the internal environment;
- Organisational development and sustainability – the organisational structure; personnel, leadership and management, financial and other material resources; administrative and other operations-related matters and networks and partnerships;
- 2004 plan of activities – individual mapping of work plans and timeframes, wish-lists, wrapping up of old projects; hiring and replacement of staff vis-à-vis hiring of a Deputy Executive Director, replacement of the Executive Director and a Programme Officer who would be resigning, etc.; and
- Systems and operations – identifying issues that need to be addressed after the meeting.

Eleanor Conda from the Philippines, also a member of the Advisory Committee, facilitated the meeting. The methodology used for this meeting was participatory discussions and group work. The meeting ended on a happy and satisfactory note with respective action points to be followed up and addressed by IWRAW Asia Pacific.