

Tools For Advancing Gender Equality

1.

Develop a Human Rights Methodology to Understand and Address the Multiple Ways Women are Oppressed

A woman may find her rights violated simply because she is a woman. She may also find that she is targeted for rights violations because she is a woman of a particular racial or ethnic group, or because she is from a country other than the one she is living in. When the various aspects of her identity combine to multiply the violations of her rights, she is experiencing “intersectional discrimination” or “multiple oppression”. Oppression is the unjust exercise of power to create privilege by domination over another person or group. A human rights methodology can be a tool to help recognize intersectional rights violations and develop alternatives to address them. Such a human rights methodology would involve:

Knowing the Basic Facts

Determine what rights have been violated and what identity factors contribute to the violation of rights: e.g. race, ethnicity, descent, citizenship status, class, sexual orientation, etc. Sources would include both statistical data and women’s testimonies.

Understanding the Context

Identify the root causes and the context of the problem, for example: the legacy of slavery or colonialism or ancient animosities; religious and cultural differences, both actual and imagined.

Reviewing Policies and Systems of Implementation

Evaluate policy initiatives and systems of implementation to see how well they address the problems faced by different women in their different identities.

Designing and Implementing Intersectional Policy Initiatives

Use all of the information gathered to develop new strategies to eliminate and reverse patterns of multiple oppression that have been identified.

For further details see: *Women at the Intersection of Racism and Other Oppressions, a Human Rights Hearing*, a 35 minute video, with companion study guide. Center for Women’s Global Leadership, website (www.cwgl.rutgers.edu).

2.

Use the CERD to Address Multiple Discrimination and National Accountability

The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is a UN treaty that has been ratified by 162 nations. By ratifying the treaty, these nations have committed themselves to taking measures to abolish racial discrimination in both law and practice. The Convention covers racial discrimination in areas such as security of person, education, political rights, work and health.

In 2000, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination created a “General Recommendation” (#25) on *Gender Related Dimensions of Racial Discrimination* – making it easier

to now monitor the impact of multiple oppression with a new tool for advancing rights claims. In the

- recognizes the unique experiences of women;

- takes into account the intersection of racial and gender discrimination;

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For further details: CERD Secretariat, website (www.cerddocs.org)

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3.

Use the CEDAW to Address Multiple Discrimination and National Accountability

The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a human rights treaty that calls for States to adopt measures to ensure women’s human rights. One hundred and seventy nations have ratified or acceded to the Convention and 97 have signed it, thereby committing themselves to non-violation of its terms.

As a follow-up to their work on the WCAR, women’s groups have found that CEDAW can be used to address intersectional discrimination. The Convention calls on States to take “temporary special measures” (affirmative measures) in order to achieve the goal of equality between men and women.

Gender and Racial Justice

on women, and providing women's organizations
e recommendation, the Committee:

nique and specific impact of racial discrimination on

into account the link between gender factors and
l discrimination;

works to develop a systematic approach to moni-
toring and evaluating racial discrimination against
women.

Each year, the Committee reviews the compliance
reports of several countries. NGOs may submit
additional "shadow reports" that provide new
and/or alternative information on treaty viola-
tions and treaty compliance. The content of such
reports can provide a basis for Committee recom-
mendations to countries for additional action toward
pliance. In 2001, for example, several US groups
ted a shadow report on US non-compliance, high-
equal access to housing, healthcare and education
ace. The shadow report proved to be a useful tool
ducation efforts to address multiple oppression, as
ng ongoing racial discrimination.

(www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/cerd.htm).

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n's organizations are outlining ways
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more speedily. In July 2001, women's NGOs proposed to the Committee on the Elimination of the Discrimination against Women that such "temporary special measures" were also necessary to address violations of women's rights that resulted from intersectional discrimination. Women's organizations are now also encouraging the Committee to adopt a "general recommendation" similar to CERD that would address race-related dimensions of gender discrimination.

For further details: *The Intersection of Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Context of Temporary Special Measures*, website (www.iwraw-ap.org). For further information on the CEDAW: website (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw).

Women's organizations in countries that have not ratified CEDAW (including the US), are taking steps to implement CEDAW at the state and local levels. Organizers in nine US cities are working towards or have succeeded in getting the CEDAW adopted legislatively, to ensure that staffing and budgetary decisions reflect a commitment to gender equality. Many women's groups around the world have also used the treaty provisions as an advocacy tool and a model for shaping national legislation, regardless of whether or not their countries have ratified the treaty. As a follow-up to the WCAR, women's groups are now initiating campaigns to link CERD and CEDAW, and to challenge cities, national governments and the UN system to adopt laws and/or policies to end women's experience of multiple discrimination.

For further details: *Bringing Equality Home: Implementing CEDAW*, UNIFEM, 1998, website (www.unifem.undp.org/resources); WILD for Human Rights, website (www.wildforhumanrights.org/cedaw_around_us.html); Amnesty International USA, website (www.amnestyusa.org).

4.

Link Gender, Racial and Economic Justice to Anti-Militarism and Peace Efforts

The new geo-political landscape, post-September 11th 2001, defines security not as a measure of peace and the fulfillment of all human rights, but as a measure of increased militarization and the suspension of rights for some. In this context, the most vulnerable will suffer the most again—particularly women, who also suffer from poverty and exclusion based on the intersection of multiple oppressions. The links between global economic liberalization, racism/xenophobia, fundamentalism, militarism and peace and women's rights have never been clearer. Women's organizations are launching campaigns and other forms of political action to make their voices heard:

- Some 650 women from 94 countries met in Guadalajara, Mexico under the theme "Reinventing Globalization" at the Association of Women's Rights in Development Forum. They spoke out against "the proposed US-led aggression against Iraq, which is contrary to international law and violates fundamental human rights." See website (www.awid.org).
- Women are joining in the creation of a grassroots coalition of racial justice organizations in the US seeking to build a movement for peace and justice within communities of color, and emphasizing the impact of the "war on terrorism". See website (www.coloredgirls.org).
- Women are also making connections across national boundaries. The MADRE campaign "Every Child Has a Name: No War on Iraqi Families" includes: a US speaking tour of women leaders from Pakistan, Jordan, Nicaragua and the US; humanitarian shipments of milk and medicine to Iraq; a collaboration among women's organizations around the world to pressure the UN to assume its responsibility and protect the human rights of Iraqi women and children. See website (www.madre.org).

