


*P*re-Assembly
Women Meeting Speeches

WOMEN'S
MEETING

EDUCATION AS A MEANS FOR PEACE, TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AND RECONCILIATION

Nurturing future leaders ... transforming today's leaders

Dr. Kezevino Aram
Director, Shanti Ashram, India

Context

“**B**uilding public opinion in favor of peace is the key,” said our founder president Dr. M. Aram. Shanti Ashram has attached great importance to this framework of thinking and working for peace. We also acknowledge that there is a critical need today to build the capacities of leaders and communities and strengthen public opinion and resolve in favor of peace.

The divides we speak about in modern society are many yet in the first decade of the 21st century, there is a striking optimism about an emerging and more inter-connected Asian family. Asia is now considered as the future of the global community. The land of scarcities is being thought of as a land of opportunities, the land of traditional crafts is increasingly perceived as a land of technology and development. This dramatic change is widely palpable.

Change in itself is not enough; it must contribute to a better quality of life for all. As Amartya Sen eloquently argues, increase in income must be accompanied by better health and educational opportunities, if human development in its composite form has to be realized. What happens in Asia is also of interest to the world as we are continuing participants in a societal experiment of different cultures, religions, socio-economic experiences, co-existing together tempered by scientific development and participatory democracy

It is in this context that I take time to revisit Mahatma Gandhi's vision and hope for India. At the dawn of India's Independence, Mahatma Gandhi spoke of *Poornam Swaraj*. The concept of *Poornam* or fullness of life was beautifully prefixed to the notion of *Swaraj* or freedom by Mahatma Gandhi. In his address to the people of India, he emphasized that freedom had many dimensions, and it goes beyond the immediate victory of winning political freedom. This reminder is not time-specific for every individual, family, community or nation, stands to benefit from this eternal call to realize the fullness of life.

The continuing aspiration of an inclusive and peaceful society, where not only each individual experiences the fullness of life but society as a whole, is the key to progress and lasting peace. This aim can be achieved by constructive and informed public opinion.

Education for Peace, Leadership and Reconciliation

Let me start by elaborating the link between education and peace, transformational leadership and reconciliation by answering the following four critical questions:

1. Why do we need to build public opinion in favor of peace?
2. What are there gaps in the current educational and social systems in India that fail to empower professionals particularly the youth to serve society?
3. What kinds of leaders are needed to achieve the twin objectives of *Sarvodaya* and *Anthyodaya* as articulated by Mahatma Gandhi?
4. How can we create a shared space for people in leadership positions to be part of problem mapping, collective thinking and partnership building?

With nearly seven decades of socio-economic empowerment, the young leaders of Asia are better endowed with education, resources and opportunities. They have much to offer in impacting the lives of the most vulnerable as well as to break new grounds in solving problems like poverty, poor governance, gender empowerment, poor health, malnutrition and the deprivation and vulnerability of children.

Public discourse today is giving renewed focus to transformational leadership and public honesty in solving societal challenges, and in doing so linking means to ends. I see 'Peace' as the desired end, and leadership, reconciliation and development as the means. Empowering leaders to build peaceful communities is the inspiration behind this sharing.

Investing in building peace is linked to the nurturing of transformational leaders. Leaders should facilitate transformation at the individual and the collective level. The profound religio-cultural fabric of Asia has a rich legacy of values, religious paths and examples to offer to us that we need to revisit. So that in the 21st century, we can offer to the discourse of peace a lived and enriched model of living together.

While speaking of our strengths let us also not forget the basket of unresolved challenges that we have amidst us:

- The call from this meeting to promote awareness on the need for renewed women's active leadership in building unity is extremely relevant as we still have on our continent significant numbers living in poverty. We have significant Asian sisters also experiencing inequalities from that of basic facilities to one of special opportunities. Where there is inequality one cannot expect justice and freedom. Let us remind ourselves that our work is crucial and should contribute to real unity.
- Education is for life, through life and through-out life said Gandhi again. We have so many living contemporary experiences across Asia of how we can promote empowerment, the *Grameen* model from Bangladesh, the *Panchayat*

Raj legislation from India of political empowerment where 33 percent of local representatives are women, or the mothers of Japan who lead their families in donating a meal campaign to show how social empowerment can begin with the family. In small villages and cosmopolitan neighborhoods alike the school of life has as much to offer as the world of formal education, let us seize it for our collective empowerment.

- A high synergy society is worth an investment because each pillar of society is important: family, religious communities, government, voluntary organizations and citizens group. Together, we can achieve more. Gandhi called this the *Sarvodaya* Society, a society where every one's progress is possible and valued.

Shanti Ashram celebrated 25 years of dedicated service by organizing the *Sarvodaya* Leadership Summit in January 2012. This International Leadership Summit broadly also focused on Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of *Sarvodaya* and the framework it provides for building peaceful and harmonious societies. It was deepened by six identified sub-themes to look at the current impact and future potential of effective governance, active citizenship, dividends of economic progress and its investment for human development.

During the summit, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership & Development was dedicated on 30th January 2012, (the memorial day of the Mahatma) by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, the first Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize winner and a distinguished *Sarvodaya* leader from Sri Lanka and Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, member of Parliament and the architect of the green revolution in India. Participants were drawn from seven faith traditions, including Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism and the Baha'i faith. The presence of South Asian countries namely Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Maldives was also a highlight.

Young leaders, Gandhian thinkers, religious communities, academicians and social development organizations in peace building, conflict transformation and human development that came together urged that the services of the Institute be extended to the participating organizations. On behalf of Shanti Ashram, I extend our full cooperation and friendship in taking this call for action forward from Incheon.

Let our service, knowledge and policy outreach provides a template to learn about leaders, leadership models and dividends of development that have contributed to more peaceful and just societies. In addition we can work with different religious communities to foster inter-religious cooperation and concrete action for the most vulnerable communities at the local, national and international levels.

As Carl E. Taylor said, 'We hope this work will give us a chance to understand the process by which interventions operate in three domains. First, technical, in which interventions can be applied almost mechanically. Second, behavioral, in which new patterns for change are learned. Third, empowerment, in which groups of people, especially women, youth and children, develop a shared vision and commitment,

making the ultimate change process sustainable'. We hope these three aspects find synergy and the spirit of peace and justice form the core of our efforts.

Because after all as Gandhiji told the world, "All work is half done when women are not involved!"



RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING OF PERSON

Rev. A. Elga Joan Sarapung²
Director, Interfide, Indonesia

Papuan Women's testimony: hope for justice, truth, equality and peace in Papua, Indonesia

A. The Context Of Papua

- Most Eastern region In Indonesia
- Tribe: Melanesians
- Very rich with beautiful nature and natural resources: land, forest, mineral, gold, uranium, and sea.
- The number of the population is about 2,851,999 (1,510,285 men, women 1,341,714), 3% of the total population of Indonesia which is 237,556,363 (119 507 580 men, women 118 048 783), 253 ethnic groups and local languages.
- Strong with indigenous and local culture.
- There are five official religions in Papua (Christianit – Protestant and Catholic, Islam, Buddha, Hindu)

B. Violence against women, rights and dignity of Papuan Women

In 2010, Women National Commission on Human Rights together with women's groups in Papua documented 261 cases of violence against women between the period of 1963 and 2009. There are 3 (three) typologies of violence identified:

1. Violence supported and conducted by the state: a) there were 138 women experienced sexual violence: rape, sexual slavery, sexual torture, forced abortion, sexual exploitation, forced use of contraceptives; b) non-sexual violence: murder, attempted murder (shooting), torture, arbitrary detention, exile, destruction and confiscation of property.
2. Domestic violence: There were 98 women experienced physical violence in the form of polygamy, mistreatment, economic neglect, marital rape, restrictions on movement and forced marriage (which lead to contracting HIV/AIDS).

2 Director of the Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia (Institut DIAN/Interfidei), <http://www.interfidei.or.id>

3. Layered violence in public. There were 25 women experiencing various forms of abuses mentioned above, including tribal battle and exploitation of natural resources.

The forms of such violence are still going on until now. The questions are, when will the Papuan women get the concrete experience of what we mean with respect for human rights, dignity and well-being of person? What is the role of State in addressing this issue? What are being done by religious institutions to assist and free Papuan women from all forms of violence?

C. What have been done and what are currently being carried out?

Several activities have been and are being carried out at the local and national level, either by the government, specifically the National Women's Commission for Human Rights, NGOs, Coalition for Justice and the Revelation of the Truth, where we also joined or by the Papua Peace Network.

The activities conducted are the following: study, research, publication, education, advocacy, establish a coalition for justice and the revelation of the truth, hearing the testimony of the victims, which accompanied by citizens' councils, healing process, etc.

D. Hopes

- We need concrete and serious actions from the State, especially in terms of effective and efficient law enforcement in order to assist victims to recover their dignity as women and as human beings.
- Religious leaders must take the lead in undertaking trauma healing and other healing processes to assist the women victims. Moreover, they can encourage the government to undertake necessary legal action in preventing abuses and in serving justice to the perpetrators.
- Through the initiative of religious leaders, all stakeholders such as the government, the military, NGOs, religious institutions, universities, local custom councils and others should come together and cooperate to stop the violence against women.



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND STEWARDSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Lilian Sison

Chair, ACRP Women Committee

Director, Office for International Relations and Programs

University of Santo Tomas, Philippines

This paper concentrates on gender issues relative to sustainable development and the stewardship of the environment.

Findings of several studies indicate that gender inequalities in social and economic roles and responsibilities create negative impact on the economy of a country and lead to social inequities and environmental degradation. In the economic sector, gender discrimination in employment practices undervalues women's participation in the labor force. This is a reality in most countries including those in advanced economies, where women do not have the same opportunities in the work force as men, and when they do, earn 18% less. (1) This can be a cultural consequence or the point of fact that women suffer from lack of mobility because of the universal practice that they bear most of the responsibility for the care of children and households. One very significant problem for working women is the lack of adequate childcare. Highly developed countries with government funded childcare and mandated family oriented employment practices such as France and the Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) have both more women workers and higher birth rates than those without gender sensitive policies such as Japan and Korea which are experiencing ageing populations. Engendering government policies toward family friendly practices such as child care, flexible work and extended leave will increase the labor force participation of women and produce more babies to provide a future young labor force and spur a more sustainable growth and productivity.

In developing countries, the Export Processing Zones are the biggest employment generators particularly for women. The EPZ's are the so-called "vehicles of globalization." They are export-oriented enclaves which provide the infrastructure, facilities, administrative and support services for a wide variety of enterprises mostly manufacturing garments, footwear, toys, household products, pharmaceuticals, and assembly of electronic components. EPZs are employers' strategy for low cost exports. The World Bank estimates that there are 3000 EPZs in 135 countries accounting for over 68 million direct jobs. In Asia, China alone accounts for 40 million employees. Currently the Philippines has 360 EPZs and SEZs. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India have extensive EPZ strategies. The judicious management of EPZs also fuelled the growth of the Tiger economies and much of the technological and financial prowess of Malaysia and Singapore developed on the basis of investments and steady productivity increases in EPZs.(2)

So what's wrong with EPZs? The EPZs in many countries in Asia saw the feminization of labor as a result of low skill and low paying jobs. Women with median age of 16-25 years, unskilled or semi-skilled, account for 90% of EPZ's labor force. But EPZs are hampered by a reputation of low wages, poor working conditions, the almost total absence of social welfare facilities such as childcare and where workers are denied the right to freedom of association and lack of social dialogue.(3) Therefore, if the full employment and productivity potential in the global economy of EPZs is to be met, investments in social infrastructure especially those needed by women workers are essential in making EPZ employment more stable and attractive.

When it comes to the social pillar of sustainable development, there is a need to confront the adverse social trends expressed in many Societies. The widening income disparities between rich and poor, rising unemployment and a persistent gender gap need to be addressed. Ensuring women's access to basic services such as education, health care and housing and ensuring female participation in the decision making process in the governance forum is important for sustainable growth and development.

Resource consumption has environmental impact that also affects sustainability of growth and development. Women's pattern of consumption tends to leave a smaller ecological footprint than men. Generally, women are more likely to buy the cheaper basic essentials such as food, clothing and household goods, akin to family consumption, whereas men buy more resource intensive products such as cars, electronics, sports gadgets. Women also tend to be sustainable consumers since they are likely to recycle and buy eco-labeled products. They also tend to make more ethical consumer choices, paying closer attention to issues such as pollution, resource depletion, child-labor and sustainable livelihoods (OECD, 2008). In their consumption decisions, women throughout their lives affirm their reproductive role and concern about the longer-term well-being of families and children.

While it may be said that women are generally more environmentally conscientious than men, statistics reveal that the disrupting effects of climate change severely affect women more than men. For example, the 1991 cyclone disaster in Bangladesh 90% of the victims were women. In the 2004 Asian Tsunami, more than 70% of deaths were women. Their incapacity to cope is largely due to their social roles and impoverished conditions. Coping with the effects of climate change and damage from extreme weather events and environmental disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, storms, floods and cyclones tends to fall on women who hold together families and households. Large scale devastation from environmental disasters negatively affect resource supply e.g. water and fuel; damage infrastructure e.g. houses, hospitals and schools; and threat to the safety of women and girls with hundreds of thousands facing the very real risk of violence, including sexual exploitation, abuse, rape, forced marriage and trafficking. (6) Gender roles dictate that women become the primary caretakers for those affected by disasters – including children, the injured and sick, the elderly, and their homes which hamper their own rescue efforts in almost all types of natural disasters.(6) It is in this vein that the Beijing Agenda for Global Action on Gender-Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction recommends a plan of action to improve and mainstream a gender perspective and equal participation between men and women in the coordination of disaster preparedness humanitarian response and recovery through capacity building and training.(7)

At this point let me cite the case of ACRP Philippines in “**Empowering women in responding to environmental crisis situations**”

When super-typhoon Haiyan hit the Visayas Region in the Philippines in 2013, its devastation led to the death of over 6,000 individuals and injury to hundreds of thousands. Many families lost their homes and livelihood and hundreds of thousands more were displaced by what is considered as one of the strongest typhoon in the world’s history. Typhoon Haiyan had literally caused massive and unimaginable destruction not only in infrastructure but also caused horrible impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals and families who had fortunately survived this harrowing experience. As rehabilitation commenced in the township of Batan, Aklan with providing livelihood and rebuilding homes, Religions for Peace Philippines focused on addressing the psychosocial needs of individuals and families who were negatively impacted by this tormenting event. The adopted community, Barangay Songcolan has a total population of 1,240 individuals composed of 301 families 50% of which are below poverty line and whose main livelihood is crab fishing. 141 of the 256 houses were completely destroyed and 115 partially damaged. Only 20% of the families have the capacity to rebuild their homes. The program aimed to effect the recovery of the community, especially the children, and help them go back to their pre-crisis functioning and daily living.(8) The recovery was achieved through stabilization of the symptoms that are sequels of the traumatic event, prevention of the development of more serious conditions, and by providing them psycho-social interventions such as debriefing, play activities, counseling and psychotherapy, and promotion of good coping mechanisms. Another objective of the program was to empower the community women in responding to crisis situations and the promotion of a community trauma healing mechanisms. It was achieved by educating the women about the nature of trauma and its debilitating effects, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed for crisis response, and enabling them to become prepared for any future calamity by being able to respond before, during and after crisis situations.

The different components of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program for Brgy. Songcolan, Batan, Aklan has benefited a total of 520 individuals who are direct recipients of the services and programs of the project. 283 of these received direct services through counseling, psychotherapy and psychosocial processing. These individuals were helped in their healing and recovery from the negative psychological effects of the Typhoon. Also, 130 individuals received psycho-education services from the training team. They were given information about the nature of trauma, its impact and consequences and how it should be addressed. Consultations were also provided to them since they have family members, relatives or friends who were directly affected by the Typhoon.

Ninety eight (98) community leaders (89% women teachers, guidance counsellors, barangay leaders/workers, and church workers) received training and were able to gain new knowledge and skills on psychotrauma management and psychosocial processing. Forty two (42) school children also benefited indirectly from the training program because they received psychosocial processing through the defusing session conducted by the teacher-participants.

Indirectly, the whole project has an impact and contribution to the whole township of Batan, Aklan with a population of 30,312 (2010 census). While the target was to provide

services to the 1,240 individuals from Barangay Songcolan, more people from nearby communities also benefited from the impact of the program through its different services, especially the training program. The whole town benefits from the project because when the participants apply their skills or share their knowledge to the members of their communities and schools, these individuals also gain new knowledge or are being helped to recover from the devastating effect of the Typhoon.

Below are some of the testimonies of the women trained in the program.

“It was great. I felt relief after expressing and sharing my harrowing experiences. I realized that people really need temporary aid after experiencing a terrifying moment so that it can help them lessen the tension, stay calm and be able to cope and make better decisions in life.”

“I learned different techniques on stress debriefing, stress management exercises, defusing children, how to conduct psychological first aid, enhancing self-care, managing compassion fatigue and the capability for self-transcendence and many more... .. the most important thing is I now have an idea on how to help and share what I know to my family, friends and to other people especially in moments of crisis.”

RfP Philippines program was an interfaith initiative with the collaboration of Catholic Parish Church and the Disaster and Calamity Company of Won Buddhism with financial help from Friends of Peace, Korea and partially from China Conference of Religions for Peace.

Based on the women issues raised on the economic, social and environmental factors of sustainable development, one concludes that a gender sensitive approach can be a powerful force for empowering women to compete in land, labor and product markets enabling them to make more meaningful contributions to sustainable development.

Let me end by quoting a great contemporary thinker:

“Advancing gender equality may be one of the best ways of saving the environment, and countering the dangers of overcrowding and other adversities associated with population pressure. The voice of women is critically important for the world’s future – not just for women’s future.” (Amartya Sen)

References

1. Stevens, C. (2010) “Are Women the Key to sustainable Development? Sustainable Development Insights, The Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer Range Future www.bu.edu/pardee retrieved 0/23/2014.
2. ILO (1998) Export Processing Zones Growing Steadily.
3. Ahmadu, M. (1998) Labour and Employment Conditions in Export Processing Zones A Socio-Legal Analysis in South Asia and South Pacific. *Journal of South Pacific Law* Vol. 2, 1998.

4. OECD (2008) Gender and Sustainable Development: Maximizing the Economic, Social and Environmental Role of Women” www.oecd.org retrieve 07/09/2014.
5. Peacock, L. “Typhoon Haiyan: We are failing thousands of girls at risk of rape or trafficking” Telegraph Media Group Limited 2014.
6. Neumayer, E. (2006) The gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002. London School of Economics.
7. The Beijing Agenda for Global Action on Gender-Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction adopted at the International Conference on Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction (April 20-22, 2009).
8. Project Report: Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program. Brgy. Songcolan, Batan Aklan. University of Santo Tomas Psychotrauma Clinic. April 10, 2014.

