

Report on focus groups

Women in Decision Making

Women's Environmental Network

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**Women's
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Network**



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1. Introduction

Aim of research

The research aimed to identify the key gender-related issues which are linked with chemicals policy-making and to recommend how best to have a gender perspective and input to environmental policy and processes.

Introduction

In 2006 Defra commissioned WEN to carry out a literature review and two focus groups to investigate if a gender perspective is needed in environmental decision-making. The research sought to identify what a gender perspective would look like and if included, what difference it would make to legislation concerning the environment and chemicals in products.

WEN has been working on issues linking women, health and the environment for almost 19 years since its beginning in 1988. It has campaigned on dioxins, links between breast cancer and toxic chemicals and more recently on potentially harmful ingredients in cosmetics.

From WEN's experience women are not equally represented in environmental decision making forums or legislative processes nor are they adequately resourced to participate. Yet there is an unspoken expectation and assumption that women and women's organisations will be able to engage actively and have the resources to do so.

WEN organised two focus groups in

London and Edinburgh, Scotland. The groups sought to begin to identify women's own perceptions of decision-making processes and the barriers to greater involvement, as well as some concerns in relation to the environment and exposure to toxic or potentially harmful chemicals.

Participants each had knowledge of environmental justice, gender equality, health or activism at the local, national, European and international level as well as their experience in their specialist fields. It was felt that their vast experience of involving women in decision making transcended specific issues and that discussing the cross cutting themes would be also of specific relevance to involving women in environmental decision making. 'The research was accompanied by a literature review of existing research and data to establish why a gender perspective is required.

In progressing the research aim it soon became apparent that the interrelationship between social, biological and environmental factors cannot be separated out in relation to their impact on the health and the lives of women. The research suggests this impacts on their ability to contribute actively to chemicals policy-making.

The question of whether women should be involved in environmental decision making was comprehensively answered by one of the focus group participants who said "ethically it would just be abhorrent not to have women involved in everything you do around the environment or any other issue."

WEN is aware that women are affected differentially by the environment due to their social and biological condition and that development of international policy hasn't historically taken this into account.

The focus groups discussed a broad range of barriers and possible solutions touching on issues such as stereotypes and images of women, employment and women's pay. Many of these cannot be addressed within the context of the report or by Defra but it was felt that there are wider societal changes that need happen so women may be able to participate in decision making.

Clearly these are outside the control of those involved in chemicals policy making, though the approach taken in this field may have some influence on these wider issues. The recommendations listed on p19 are those that can be applied in environmental decision-making.

Perceptions that came across from these two groups were that human greed is one of the core causes for environmental degradation. There is a danger of postponing action if we think only about future generations. The need is more immediate. There is social responsibility for the here and now. Finding the causes of problems is more challenging than finding superficial solutions.

WEN hopes the recommendations will be taken forward by the UK Government and a commitment made to effectively involving women in all future decision-making concerning our shared environment.

“I think it is also that we do ‘end of the pipeline legislation’ instead of looking for it (the cause) a bit further up stream and finding the basic causes, the really fundamental causes, of why things have gone wrong. That is why it is more difficult, finding the causes, it’s human greed, it’s terrible!”
Scottish focus group participant

“Issues are power and having to challenge hierarchy, including class and ethnicity which have an impact on how people are able to make decisions and whether or not they have a share of the cake.”
London focus group participant

“Women bring their heart and mind into decision-making in place of life experience and women can “think global” but “feel” local we are much more humane and compassionate which is vital in this age.”
Scottish focus group participant

“For me, it is an issue of justice so that is number one and women are half the population they should be involved in decision making - I think we need to take that as our starting point.”
London focus group participant

2. Methodology

This reports the discussion in two focus groups, one held on London on 24/1/07 one in Edinburgh on 19/2/07.

The groups brought together 14 women from a wide variety of backgrounds covering environmental justice, gender equality, health and activism at the local, national, European and international level as well as participants experience in their specialist fields.

The desired outcome of the focus groups was to enable participants to discuss a range of issues relating to women in decision making in an enabling environment. The notion behind the wider subject discussion is that the skills and issues related to women in decision making in general also relate to women in decision making in regards to environmental issues.

A number of questions were posed throughout the afternoon. However these were not presented in a didactic manner, rather processes were set up to enable a free-flowing, more natural and relaxed sharing of ideas, thoughts and concerns. In this way a more profound analysis and contribution of ideas was created. The questions covered are listed below and were raised in a variety of ways.

The involvement of participants throughout the afternoon was enhanced through discussions in pairs, small groups and whole group input. In addition, activities

of ordering large cards and using Post It notes to come up with a rich variety of ideas helped all participants to be actively involved.

A short evaluation of the day was provided in the programme, but there was time for this in only one of the focus groups.

The range of questions covered is listed below.

- **Women in decision making**

What is your experience of women in decision-making?

What is your experience of including women or ensuring a gender perspective in decision making?

If you haven't had this experience – why is that?

If yes – why?

Is it important for women to be involved in decision-making?

Are there differences between women and men in decision-making?

Based on your experience of involving women in decision-making, should women be involved in environmental decision-making?

What do women contribute to decision-making?

What are the benefits of having women involved?

What do they bring to the agenda?

- **Consumer Choices**

Who makes most of the consumer choices in your household?

What factors influence your consumer purchasing?

Where do you get that information?

Why do you trust that source?

- **Legislation**

Do you feel that legislation protects us from potential risk in our environment?

Do you feel that legislation safeguards us?

If no, what would safeguard us?

If yes, what kinds of legislation?

What is your perception of the gender participation in legislative processes, at all levels?

- **Barriers to participation**

What are the barriers to involvement?

When have you felt confident and able to participate actively in decision making forums?

What made you feel at ease?

What are the barriers in participation in local, national, EU and international forums noting Barriers/Solutions/Recommendations?

How can we increase women's decision power, at all levels but in particular in regards to creating legislation?

Do you care about future generations? (Particularly in relation to future generations being used as a means to induce guilt about bringing about environmental change).

3. Key Themes

The themes and opinions recorded here, as well as the recommendations and outcomes are those of focus group participants, not the facilitator or organiser.

3.1. Women in decision making

Participants were able to provide a wide variety of experiences both in their experience of women making decisions in a voluntary and paid capacity and how they themselves were able to engender the decision making progress.

As a result of discussion, underlying concerns became apparent. One of these was in relation to the political power of women. There are few women comparatively in high-level groups and even when women are involved, it was felt (in the Scottish group) that the voice of women makes little difference to the eventual outcome. Government bodies have a policy to be representative but do not necessarily specifically target women. Women in the Southern hemisphere have a low impact on decision making even though they are directly affected by environmental issues. It was felt that women are more attracted to social issues and for many this is the reason they become politicised whereas men may be more interested in creating policy for its own sake.

“There are many powerful women but they are not trained politically.”

“Women are not equal to men at any level therefore women are not listened to with equal weight.”

It was noted that women have more decision making power in the voluntary sector. Indeed in some organisations it is the women that make all the decisions, especially in women’s organisations. However, it was also noted that there is now a tendency for men to obtain the higher paid posts in the voluntary sector whereas women retain the voluntary or less well paid posts. For some there was a feeling that much depends on the individual personality rather than gender equality. The experience of some participants was that women in the voluntary sector are more aware than many other women and they provide capacity building and support to those who come into the sector. The experience of women in academia was that women were not included in a direct way but the research and reporting undertaken assisted women.

Women in unequal situations are often blind to their own situation and accept it often without question. Some women bend to authority whether it is women or men in power. Some women do not wish to take on responsibility for themselves.

There is continuing inequality and in Scotland the experience of participants was that men are thought to be more important. For example, boys are given more to eat than girls. In their own lifetimes they witnessed great disparity, for example girls were not encouraged to

stay at school or attend university as their role was to be married and bear children. Education was seen as wasted on girls. It was felt that there is still exclusion and disparity at senior levels and it is often difficult to get the men to understand equality and understand how to involve women. It is challenging to enable the inclusion of women. It was noted that it is a question of power. We need to challenge positions at the top, not just in regard to women, but also ethnicity and class.

“Men don’t want to give up power.”

“In the home women are more involved.”

“It’s hard work to get the men to understand equality and they don’t understand how to involve women.”

Feminine qualities are not valued and are often patronised as “hormonal”. Women are limited by circumstance with single mothers having very little voice or opportunity. It was felt that women must be made aware of opportunities and involved. In Scotland, it was felt that wealth creation is not a priority for women.

Some examples of good practice were highlighted. UNISON asks women what they want without assuming they know already and they reserve seats for women at all events. They also always provide childcare. The National Federation of Women’s Institutes is running a campaign – the Carbon Challenge Campaign with individual carbon credits being

encouraged. The experience of West Lothian Council is generally 50/50 parity. There were differences across countries. In Australia for example there appears to be a greater general awareness of environmental issues whereas in the UK there appears to be less. However in the UK this awareness impacts more on policy.

There was unanimous agreement that it is a moral question of equality that women should be involved at all. Participants considered it ethically abhorrent not to involve women. In addition women are more impacted by poor environments.

“We should ask the question – why wouldn’t you get women involved?”

“We have to get women involved.”

It was noted that the Government tries to be as inclusive as possible though often it is difficult to ensure participation due to the lack of time. For NGOs, it is often a question of resources for women’s groups which are already overstretched. Women’s organisations have the knowledge, capacity and are often asked to consult but no resources are provided. This is a strain on the NGOs without or with few paid staff. There is also an issue of trust, participants suggested, in that it was not clear what Government would do next and if it was worth the time and effort to participate if there would be no result. Without proper time and resources, the inclusivity process becomes a tick box exercise.

During the exercise to tease out which particular qualities women bring to

decision-making, the following points were raised.

- It is an issue of justice with over 50% of the population being female. However even if none of the other issues outlined below were true, women should still be involved as it is a question of justice.
- The more people involved in the decision making process the better, especially those whose lives will be seriously impacted by the solution. If you include people they are more likely to buy into the process and outcomes.
- The argument is given that environmental problems need to be overcome prior to establishing equality. However it is clear that only when there is justice and equality can you solve the problems.
- If a desired outcome is to enable as many people as possible to change their environmental behaviour, there is an imperative need to involve women.
- Women are generally prepared to talk to find consensus.
- Women bring their daily life influences to the table. They bring their practical expertise and their holistic nature to the table. They see how one decision impacts on people’s daily lives. Women have a sense of integration and more developed negotiating skills. They have an ability to think outside the box.

- Women need to be involved so that they can be catalysts for change.
- Women make shopping and daily decisions; for example, using rubbish schemes. Women take up power in the domestic, private sphere but this has a massive impact on the bigger picture.

Participants felt women need to be involved in environmental decision making as rural women are liable to be more vulnerable to decisions that impact on their lives and the most likely to be affected. For example, it was said two thirds of diseases come from environmental conditions. They have endurance and perseverance and feel a responsibility for the next generation.

As much health care is undertaken in the home, it is important that women are aware of the health hazards of environmental issues. They usually take the view that the precautionary approach is essential.

There was a perception that there is a prevalent mind-set which is predominantly masculine in regard to the world. It includes the notion that the world is a resource to control for profit by those who own it. This is in stark contrast to the attitude of women who have an attitude of nurturing. Disadvantaged people have more understanding of disadvantage which enables women to have more empathy and understanding for indigenous people.

3.2. Consumer choices

Who makes the most decisions in your household?

Participant	You	Partner	Other
1	X	X	
2	X		
3	X		Shared with flatmates
4	X	X	
5	X		
6	X	Subject to discussion	
7	Research into decisions		
8	X		
9	50% of the time	50% of the time	
10	60 or 70%	40 or 30 %	
11	X		
12	X		
13	X		

What factors influence your purchases?

(not in priority order and identified by the participants)

- Ethical concerns and justice
- Organics
- Local
- Price
- Whether pesticides are used
- Seasons
- The kind of shop
- Access
- Toxic chemicals in general
- Energy conservation
- Feel of shop – independence
- Friendly personnel
- Clean & tidy shop
- Convenience/ease – lack of time
- Packaging – not too much
- Other pressures
- New versus second hand
- The internet
- Need for child care
- Energy efficiency
- Chemical content
- Toxins
- Who is making the item

Where do you get your information?

- Work
- Media – radio/TV
- People I trust/union info – personal recommendation and networks
- Magazines such as the consumer testing magazine, books and journals
- Co-operative shop
- Internet
- Leaders of faith communities
- Labels
- Leaflets – impact of chemicals on

toiletries for example

- Academia e.g. schools, colleges, university
- WEN
- NGOs – Greenpeace etc
- Government advice e.g. Food Standards Agency
- University departments
- Engender (women’s empowerment organisation)

Why do you trust the source?

Participants did not always immediately trust the source but measured and audited the information against their own experience, intuition and other evidence. They also measured the source depending on who funds it.

Other sources related to people they trust and sources that have been proven such as the kite label. Labels were trusted based on the knowledge of the evidence behind the label. NGOs are trusted more than government. Experts and academic research is also trusted when this is backed up by a body of other research.

“Sometimes there is no other information there so you have to trust what is there.”

3.3. Legislation

During the discussion on whether legislation protects us from risk, it was apparent that legislation provides some protection from some risk and this is usually immediate rather than long-term risk. It was felt that the word “harm”

should be used rather than risk. Protection occurs to a degree if it is enforced properly. The question was raised as to how willing the Government is to take risk. It would be better to have strong legislation where the polluter pays and use the precautionary principle because an issue is not yet proven, but this does not happen due to the power of different lobbies. Legislation was thought to be more efficient than voluntary agreements. One concern is that access to the legislation often depend on power and wealth.

It was felt that some legislation safeguards us in theory but it is not so for complex ideas such as the use of chemicals. There are problems with enforcement as much as with the legislation itself. It often depends on the form the legislation takes.

“We make many assumptions about how we are protected such as turning on water and expecting it to be clean.”

“We assume minimum standards of environmental safety.”

“Sometimes those with less power have less access.”

“We think we are protected but we are not – that chemicals in products are safe.”

In Scotland, it was felt that the legislation does not protect currently.

“I don’t feel safe with current legislation because [it is] based on historical evidence rather than current research.”

Much legislation is historic and is behind current research.

Legislation can be improved if a number of criteria are met:

- There is greater world co-operation – much legislation needs to take into consideration world economics;
- there is more education on the issues for the public especially, as public awareness forces politicians into action;
- legislation is ahead of public feeling rather than following it;
- procedures are improved to enable access including to courts and other sanctions;
- enforcement is equal with strong sanctions;
- people and planet are put before profit;
- there are independent inspectors rather than self reporting;
- self interest and collusion are stopped;
- the precautionary principle is used;
- it is based on the norms of the most vulnerable groups;
- legislation takes into consideration global issues such as nuclear power, global warming, pollution and health.

There needs to be a different kind of legislation based on a new thinking. It should not only be related to punishment but also reward. There is a need for new models such as individual carbon accounts. Local taxes could be used more effectively

with communities allocating locally. There is a need for a more informed community that is enabled and well resourced and thus able to make decisions based on robust information. In addition this would lead to greater personal responsibility with a mix of measures in place.

The present system for questioning legislation is too long, complex and expensive. Free expert information should be made accessible to NGOs. Environmental courts should be established with an environmental fund.

“There needs to be a re-visiting of old ways.”

“We must have environmentally safe sustainables.”

“We need to have safeguards that are beyond legislation.”

Other issues raised during the discussion on legislation included questioning of why when women are in power their influence is not felt. In Scotland 40% of parliamentarians are women and yet there appears little result on issues where the feminine principle might have been presumed to have influence, for example, on environmental issues. It appears that women may be subsumed into the party machine and lose independence.

Some legislation has a powerful effect such as the anti smoking legislation. However it was noted that focusing on the responsibility of the individual is an easy option for the Government. Clear

labels and lists of ingredients are also successful.

There is a tension between national and international interests. On the one hand national legislation is limited in a global context. In addition, what may be beneficial for one country may harm another; therefore policies should be made based on the principle of the greater good, i.e. what is good for the world is good for individual countries.

3.4. Barriers to participation

The question was raised on how to increase women's decision-making power at all levels but in particular at the legislation level. It was felt that there is a great need for engendered participation in the legislative process and more women need to be more involved. There is also a question of critical mass and it was noted that it is not merely a question of how many men and how many women are in positions of power, but more of how aware they are of equalities and how they use this knowledge to implement change for the better.

New legislation imposing a duty on public service providers to ensure gender equality, known as The Gender Duty, is to be enforced in April 2007 and the results are awaited with interest. It was noted that regulatory risk assessment topics have to be included in legislation. Stakeholders such as SMEs are included and women should now also be included. There was a question about how gender impact assessments are carried out. At

present they are currently very basic with government departments showing no real knowledge about how things impact differently on women's and men's lives.

There is a lack of disaggregated statistics and there is a need for more university work to be undertaken in this area. Some studies have been undertaken in this area,

for example in Germany, which should be disseminated.

“Legislation is always gendered but gendered in a masculine way most of the time.”

Barriers, solutions and recommendations were discussed. The table below lists these.

Barrier	Solutions	Recommendations
Women are given spaces in less powerful forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Greater transparency ii. More accountable forums ii. Question why things happen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide guidelines for multi-stakeholder participation ii. Include “informals”
Lack of information on opportunities for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Systematic publicity ii. Strengthen capacity of women to work in environmental issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cross government and NGO website on what consultations are taking place ii. Longer lead time iii. Provision of resources to women's organisations iv. Establish criteria for funding women or women's organisations to participate (many able to demonstrate ability) v. Provide core-funding so organisations can continue to exist vi. Find other ways to talk to other women
Too much jargon and terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Education and awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. All government papers to have an easy read version ii. Don't use jargon iii. Give money to NGOs to create the easy read versions iv. Better use of technology

<p>Other commitments for and competing demands on women's time and attention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Transform gender relations (spread responsibility) ii. Ensure meetings are accessible (rolling times etc) iii. More use of modern technology (some don't have access) iv. Flexi-time for women and men v. Free child care vi. Understanding and committed employers vii. Ensure meetings are widely accessible: suitable frequency, times, locations and venues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Improve meeting styles ii. Provide immediate reimbursement iii. Prove the consultation is worth attending and not a tick box exercise iv. Use appropriate communication for target audience v. Keep women in existing groups as appropriate vi. Implement the Norwegian¹ model vii. Provide paternity and maternity leave viii. Free full day childcare
<p>Women don't risk family security to take on political power (financial and physical)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Find way and means of funding things ii. Enable employers to provide women with time off work etc iii. Provide resources for women (family resources are not seen by women as accessible for furthering their personal career) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Employers pay women to have time off work
<p>Lack of confidence/ fear of failure and humiliation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. More education and training ii. Women only events iii. Capacity building iv. Assertiveness training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Make events appropriate for target audience ii. More women only events
<p>Age discrimination and images of women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Improved confidence building ii. Stop stereotyping including in advertising iii. Stop pornography iv. Improved parenting vi. Reduce female subjugation by religious leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Criminalise pornography ii. Limit the use of the female body to sell things iii. Positive discrimination regarding age iv. Stop pensioner poverty v. Government use media to provide positive images especially on TV vi. Government to actively support women's causes, not just pay lip service vii. Provide more money for NGOs in areas of support for women

Economic barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Proper pay for those working in the caring sectors ii. Ensure equal pay for equal work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide massive pay rise to those working in the caring professions ii. In Scotland provide an on-going public awareness campaign encouraging women into enterprise with resources and support structures in place including at school
Not owning or lack of awareness of inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Women to become well informed ii. Develop a less materialistic society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide equal access to services ii. Provide enhanced education iii Provide educational opportunities in the home especially for young single parents iv. Ensure gender studies are included in the national curriculum v. Include gender and active citizenship in the citizenship curriculum
Exclusion of women from forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Providing an allowance to women to stay at home with children as necessary, including resources for education ii. Provide access to university courses iii Provide child care to enable women to attend events iv. Women in power need to use it well for the collective good v. Men should share power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide support for university and college access courses to female-headed households ii. Create local community centres for education of girls including practical skills and life-long learning iii. Ensure there are more women in charge iv. Establish an awareness raising campaign to show the benefit to men of equality – they can reach the potential that could be theirs if they become champions of equality
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create local facilities ii. Use publicity that reaches hard to reach groups iii Isolated groups can gain hugely from ICT access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Free internet training ii. Free internet access iii. Provide PCs in the home of isolated groups iv. Increase community capacity-building

¹Norwegian Model – Effective January 1 2006, Norway’s government has imposed quotas under which the top 500 publicly traded firms have until 2008 to fill 40% of their boardroom seats with women, or be delisted.

See also Appendix 1 for a list of other barriers identified on post-it notes during the sessions but not discussed. These included lack of recognition for the diversity of women, unfriendly culture, pregnancy, childcare and entering into decision-making later in life due to child-rearing.

The decision-making power of women can also be increased through the following measures:

- co-chairing by women and men of forums and public events;
- criteria for funding based on evidence of women's participation;
- Encouraging feminism;
- making demands on politicians to be more radical
- changing values in society
- altering the kind of space where decisions are made from a traditional masculine space in order to enable women to participate.

In regards to decision-making in the environmental sphere it was recognised that women are more likely to be vulnerable to poor environments and by giving them the power to change these, more sustainable results will ensue.

Women should be involved as a matter of justice and not just because they give birth and are perceived as more caring of future generations.

“We need training for transformation.”

“Women need to know the rules, use the rules and change the rules.”

“Women are only allowed in when bodies lose power.”

3.5. The effect of “future generation” terminology

The use of terminology including children was thought to be effective when sincere. However women were sceptical of the use of this terminology if it is perceived to be superficial. Women are concerned for the future of their children, but as a whole feel that everyone should be concerned about the future and take responsibility. Indeed we should be concerned over the future of tigers, polar bears etc as a matter of justice – extinction is unforgivable. Language should be used carefully and “future generations” is a better term than solely using the word “children” as some people don't have children.

Also the definition of families has changed over the last 40 years with the proportion of all households comprising a mother and father with dependent children falling from 38% in 1961 to 23% in 2001, while the percentage of lone-parent households tripled over the same period, from 2% to 6%.

In addition though, the use of the concept of the future prevents immediate action. There is a danger of postponing action if we think only about future generations. The need is more immediate. There is social responsibility for the here and now. Finding the causes of problems is more challenging than finding superficial solutions. Human greed is one of the core causes for environmental degradation.

Young people need to understand the issues better and there is a danger that they have been desensitised to the challenges by an increased acceptance that global warming is inevitable.

“We have more laws - but no change.”

“We have to enjoy ourselves to show young people that life is for living.”

“I am terrified for my kids.”

“Politicians use it [concern for future generations] as a ploy.”

“There is no leadership.”

“The profit motive drives choices to the detriment of society.”

3.6. Other themes

During the discussion participants raised other issues in addition to those on which there were specific questions. The discussion was wide-ranging and touched on numerous topics. It was clear that there is an inter-linking of issues that affect women’s participation in society. Overall, it was clear that women bring many values and skills to the table without which real, improved and lasting change is impossible.

One issue that was raised was the current tendency to focus on legislation relating to individual actions. It was felt that individuals are easy targets and hypocrisy is prevalent. It is more difficult to target corporations and yet the risk is as great or

greater from other forms of pollution than, for instance, smoking or other lifestyle-related health risks. One move could be to increase the age of driving to prevent deaths due to traffic accidents. This may also decrease the number of cars on the road, thereby addressing both individual behaviour and a wider pollution problem. Another measure could be to increase the legal age of alcohol purchase. There was a perception that the tobacco industry is too powerful and has in the past increased the nicotine level and that the Government has a vested interest in retaining the tobacco industry due to tax income.

Women tend to “play by the book” and are unaware that there are unwritten rules and often decisions are already made before “consultation” begins. Yet women are important in mobilising on environmental issues.

A number of measures were put forward to improve the contribution of women to society. These included:

- realistic training;
- mentoring;
- shadowing;
- positive role models;
- ensuring campaigns do not increase the burden on women;
- women should not adopt male positions when in power;
- policies must reflect equalities; the refusal of legal aid for women suffering domestic violence in Scotland a sign of continuing inequality;
- media campaigns should avoid using scare tactics.

4. Recommendations

Numerous recommendations were put forward during the events. The key ones for involving women in decision-making are:

1. Well-resourced inspectors, independent of government and industry, to police implementation of legislation.
2. A cross-Government and NGO website with full information on current and future Government consultations.
3. Improved processes for Government consultations such as longer lead times and resourcing of women's organisations to take part.
4. Provision of core funding to women's organisations to enable them to continue to exist and commissioning of them to undertake activities such as creating easy to read versions of consultation documents and reaching women in hard-to-reach groups/communities.
5. Improve arrangements for meetings and consultation events including appropriate venues, timing, chairing and immediate reimbursement of expenses.
6. Improve publicity to enable participation.
7. Provide incentives to employers to enable women to participate in public life.
8. Ensure reserved seats for women in all decision making forums and also consultation processes.
9. Free full day childcare.
10. Leadership and assertiveness training for women.

“Politics is male dominated.”

“Of course women should be involved in decision making at the legislative level.”

“They (women) think very practically and very holistically. They see the links about how one decision will impact different lives.”

“I wonder if a recommendation could be to make gender studies part of the school curriculum – because that would raise awareness”

“When it comes to big issues that affect women, like breast cancer, for instance, all the care and the compassion come from voluntary groups, it is not government backed.”

“I think that if you include people in decision making then they are more likely to buy into the end product that they would be if they hadn't been involved.”

5. Outcomes

Participants appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the focus groups and wished for more such events. They also valued the methodology used for the events.

It was felt that it would be useful to have male-only events discussing the same questions.

Participants valued the chance to discuss at this level with other women and discover how much they shared views in common with others.

Women in general need more information and opportunities to have this kind of conversation.

Government should be called to account and encouraged to go further in environmental legislation becoming more visionary, globally linked and radical.

Appendix 1 Lists

Qualities women bring to decision-making

London event

1. Justice/ethics
2. Success/better decision
3. Space
4. Participation
5. Negotiation
6. Women talk – men fight
7. Once you involve more women more women become involved
8. Responsibility for others
9. Differences amongst women/different lives = different perspectives/important not to generalise
10. Integration
11. Think outside the box
12. Practical
13. Critical mass does make a difference
14. New perspective
15. Men like to think they know answers rather than asking
16. Women make domestic organisation, shopping decisions

Edinburgh event

1. Women are the necessary half of the whole/ balance/ women are at least 50% of the population
2. Women can “think global” but “feel local”
3. Women bring their hearts as well as their minds to decision making (as opposed to men making decisions through thoughts, logic and reasoning)

- far more than their hearts)/women bring heart as well as head because of their female standing (not 100%)
4. More intimately involved in future generations
 5. The real perspective values, needs, the female voice – life experience
 6. Willing to admit when one doesn't know the answer – to be wrong
 7. Flexibility
 8. Expanding the care element from home/family – an easy step to take from this to caring for the planet
 9. Women bring a holistic approach
 10. Common sense
 11. Multi-tasking

Barriers

Post It notes of barriers and some solutions noted by participants but not covered during the facilitation.

London event

- Ability to express yourself
- Guidelines
- Gatekeepers
- Informality
- Lack of mentors
- Unfriendly culture
- Rolling back of commitment to balance
- Lack of information/ education – formal and informal
- Lack of time
- Don't recognise diversity of women
- Lack of resources
- Technical (technology) issues
- Finding it boring – motivation
- Education
- Time

- Good chairing
- Know people
- Confident as I got older
- People like you – not being the only one
- Feeling that its worth while
- Supportive environment – not hostile even if different
- Need to have confidence in your own beliefs
- Fear of failure/humiliation

Edinburgh event

- More confidence when you have knowledge
- Starting into decision making late (due to child rearing)
- Disparities in services, education and opportunists
- Equal provision to all services (solution – public awareness on rights etc; resolution – equal opportunity/pay/training/retraining)
- Pregnancy (solution – support structures)
- Childcare (solution – money to stay home)
- Isolated (solution – work from home opportunities)
- Age & image (solutions – confidence building)
- Male and female flexible working hours
- Free childcare
- Positive role models
- Training
- Capacity building
- Assertiveness training

Participants

Edinburgh

Moira Adams
Jo Argyle-Robertson
Morag Parnell
Jan Martinez
Catherine Mclauchlan
Anne Milne
Maureen Sier

London

Maria Adebawale
Belinda Fairbrother
Sascha Gabizon
Sharon Greene
Celia Roberts
Mary-Ann Stephenson
Jane Stratford

Appendix 2 Facilitator

Serene Communications' track record in the development of effective training projects is extensive across all community, public and commercial sectors. Most notably, Serene Communications has gained a significant understanding of facilitating and training over many years of developing and implementing training and facilitation for diverse groups.

Serene Communications designs and delivers events that build on the skills and expertise of those involved in the workshops and as such are highly participatory and experiential.

Participants from previous workshops have commented on the structure of the event, the style of the facilitators and the information and skills learnt through the workshops. Clients have commented that the events have fulfilled their goals, been entertaining as well as enlightening and have taken their organisations forward.

Serene Communications' consultants have proven experience as activists in the community sector in the areas of faith-based work and with children, young people, women and environmental organisations. As such they have invaluable experience of working with volunteers and others working in the voluntary sector, in addition to their own experience in these fields and in working in the public and private sectors.

Profile of facilitator

Zarin Hainsworth believes that the best way to enhanced understanding is through discussion and practical experience and she is an experienced creator of events and courses using these methods. She has been developing and presenting courses, consultation and facilitation for over 20 years. Testimonies of participants in events attest to the success of this method, enabling people to better understand the issues and develop practical skills in an enjoyable and secure atmosphere. Zarin is passionate about building on the skills and expertise of the people present in any particular event as this use of group dynamics empowers individuals and creates an enriched sharing and learning environment for the group.

Some Career Highlights

- Member of Chartered Institute of Journalists since 1985
- Chair, PR Division of Chartered Institute of Journalists
- Currently provides material for local, regional and national print, radio and TV media
- Provides modules for Forum for the Future on consultation and facilitation for MA programme
- Provided communications training for Department of International Development and the British Council for women's organisations in Iraq
- Creates and implements media skills training for community organisations and business

- Member of the Faiths Forum for the South East and RAISE (The civil society organisation for South East England Development Agency)
- Provided communications training for NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) for over 400 community and public sector organisations and agencies working in the field of adult education
- Represented NGOs at the UN Commission on the Status of Women every year since 2000 and at other UN fora.

Career History

Building on more than 20 years experience in enabling organisations to improve how they communicate, Zarin Hainsworth has been the Director of Serene Communications since 1997. She has extensive experience in promoting community, public and private sector organisations and has enabled clients to achieve profile in all sectors of the media including BBC Business Breakfast, The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Guardian, Woman's Hour, Evening Standard, The Voice and numerous periodicals, regional and local print, radio and TV media.

Zarin's Parisian radio production company expanded to develop work with local radio stations in the UK in addition to French radio stations until she became a public relations consultant in London.

Zarin has worked with a number of

organisations, increasing her understanding of diversity, gender and communication issues from the "coal face" and assisting a number of third sector organisations in their communications strategies.

She began working on seminar and course structure and implementation over 20 years ago and continued to develop this work both in a voluntary and commercial capacity. In addition she has worked in the arena of consultation and facilitation for many years. Experience of working with people in voluntary, corporate and public sector environments has enabled Zarin to build on expertise in this field both in terms of event content and structure, recognising the needs of individuals and organisations to reach goals whilst still recognising the value of a quality experience for the individuals.

Assisting organisations with their communications enables Zarin to maintain her experience of the media though working on behalf of clients in front of the microphone or camera and thus remaining live to current media trends in additions to keeping abreast of communication challenges in organisations today.

Zarin continues to play a role at the national level, serving on the Board of a number of NGOs such as National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) as Chair, UNIFEM UK, Widows Rights International, All Party Group on Women Peace & Security, GAPS (Gender Action for Peace and Security) and as an advisor for the DTI on women and trade. Her commitment to family life and children

together with continuing local voluntary and community work keep her feet firmly on the ground and in touch with current concerns, whilst activism in the international arena provides a larger vision.

“Can we recommend to limit the use of the female body to sell things!”

“We know we are exposed to so many toxins and we don’t know quite the effect of what that build up is, over long periods of time. The legislation does not protect us at all, even in the work place. We’ve got limitations and we’ve got exposure limits and they don’t protect one person and you can see that by some of the recent scientific papers.”

“I’m not talking here about bad men/ good men, I’m talking about men that make bad decisions for women.”

“Quite private decisions like shopping, or what you are going to have for dinner, are the basis of bigger political decisions.”

“For me from personal experience once you involve women and more women become involved its a role model thing. Once you’ve got women involved you begin to create a cultural change around the way meetings are held and the facilities you give those people ... when we have a conference we have crèches.”

Appendix 3 About WEN

Women's Environmental Network (WEN) is the only organisation in the UK working for women and the environment. Founded in 1988 it aims to:

- educate, inform and empower women and men who care about the environment
- campaign on environmental and health issues from a women's perspective
- enable people to use their consumer power as a force for positive environmental change
- carry out thorough independent research to provide clear and comprehensive information that allows people to make informed and educated decisions on environmental issues

- offer positive alternatives and provide simple and effective ways to take action
- link individual women and organisations to help each other and the environment through the sharing of information and experiences and the creation of strong international coalitions
- take and encourage action which prevents harm and enhances our environment.

WEN is a charity (registered no 1010397) and membership organisation, based in London but with a network of local groups across the UK.

