



# **Gender and Sustainable Consumption**

**Bridging Policy Gaps in the Context of Chapter 4, Agenda 21  
"Changing Consumption and Production Patterns"**

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 and the Earth Summit Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, **the issue of sustainable consumption has gained significant importance in international policy.** The Division for Sustainable Development has established an international work programme that has formulated a core set of 17 indicators that can measure "Changing Consumption and Production Patterns" (Chapter 4, Agenda 21). **However, the international work programme has not yet integrated gender issues in its on-going research activities, indicators or workshops. This report calls upon policy makers to integrate a gender perspective into further work on Chapter 4, Agenda 21. Gender as a cross-cutting issue can add value to the on-going work on sustainable consumption. Moreover, an integration of gender provides a structural dimension as gender equality is central and key to any paradigm for sustainable development.**

This report aims to tie together key issues on gender and sustainable consumption from a global perspective that can be useful at various levels of policy making. **A particular focus of this report are the differences between male and female consumer behaviour and its linkages with sustainability. Another focus of this report is on gender inequity in relation to consumption issues.**

### Findings from Chapter 1; Linking "Gender with Consumption"

*"The real issue itself is not consumption but its patterns and effects."* Human Development Report, 1998 (p171)

**The first chapter has shown how women and men have different spending responsibilities, priorities, needs and constraints.** Within a global context women represent the largest group of consumers shopping for the daily needs of their families. It is debatable whether women can make decisions in relation to the purchase of more important and expensive consumer items (cars, property, furniture etc) as research on developing countries has shown that women do not necessarily have control over their income. There is evidence from developing countries on the different income allocation priorities amongst men and women. Men to a much larger extent tend to spend their earnings on themselves while women's income is prioritised on their children and family needs. Evidence from developing countries suggests that women's consumption decisions (ex, allocation of food, clothes medicines, decisions on education etc) and control over resources are key in determining the wellbeing of their families.

### Recommendations and Research Gaps

**1. Policy makers and stakeholders addressing "Changing Consumption and Production Patterns" should integrate a strong focus on consumer behaviour in their on-going work. A focus on consumer behaviour is important with regard to understanding micro-level impacts and forging policy links at the macro-level. 2. There is a need to initiate research on female headed households; there has been an expansion of this category world-wide. Research can focus on whether the consumption decisions of female headed households are leading to more sustainable and equitable lifestyles compared to nuclear and other kinds of family forms. Further research should address the possible reasons**

which account for behavioural differences to further inform the development of measures influencing consumer behaviour.

## **Findings from Chapter 2; "Towards Measuring Gender Differences"**

The second chapter has elaborated in detail on three studies that address gender differences on consumption issues. A comparative analysis of all three studies suggests certain common and varied findings. A Swedish study has investigated travel patterns among different socio-economic groups in Sweden. **It informs us that women use less energy on transport than men in the same age group and within the same income category. It emphasises that gender differences with regard to transport are so large in Sweden that they cannot be ignored in the on-going work for identifying and remedying unsustainable patterns of consumption. The Japanese study has examined consumers awareness and behaviour in Japan. It informs us that in Japan gender is an influencing factor. In Japan women are more responsible consumers and are more aware of environmental problems. In both the Swedish and Japanese study elderly people and especially women show the most sustainable lifestyles.**

The Asia Pacific Region Survey has examined the extent and degree to which the middle class in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam practice sustainable consumption. **It informs us that in many areas and countries of the Region men indicate a more positive practise towards sustainable consumption. However, the "sustainable consumption indicators" used in their survey do not integrate a focus on income allocation priorities by men and women towards their children or consumption decisions in relation to resource use.**

## **Recommendations and Research Gaps**

**1. Policy makers and stakeholders** should aim to integrate structural issues in indicators that are being formulated for "Changing consumption and production patterns", that best reflect regional, national and global realities. The general aim should be to provide- via- indicators - more information on consumption behaviour of different social groups. It is crucial to disaggregate the 17 indicators constructed by UN DSD (1998) on the basis of gender and other variables. **2. Identify 'social categories'** (based on a disaggregation of gender, age, income, ethnicity and location) within countries and globally, whose lifestyles are less or more sustainable and identify the reasons for differences between social categories. **3. Conduct surveys** that examine what factors and motivations contribute to consumer awareness, behaviour and positive actions with regard to the sustainable practices to complement the on-going work on consumption patterns.

## **Findings from Chapter 3; "Gender Inequity and Consumption"**

Chapter three has discussed how, a disaggregation of 'poverty' shows the differences in poor men and women's consumption needs and opportunities. The extent to which men and women contribute to human development is linked to consumer-related benefits. In developing countries the heavy work burdens that women shoulder and the vital role they play in sustaining their families, is not adequately rewarded. Women are left with hardly any leisure time and have limited options regarding the right to education, health care and other essential goods and services. **There are more poor and illiterate women as compared to men who have been left out of the consumption explosion. As a result more women lack basic consumer necessities which is a paramount consumer and human right. The principal**

**rights of the consumer - access to essential goods, choice, safety, information, representation, redress, consumer education and a healthy environment - are least attainable by poor women.**

A second area of inequity that is central to the debate on sustainable consumption, is the issue of environmental degradation and the implications for the poorest people. **However, although over-consumption is caused by processes at the international and national levels it is poor women in developing countries who bear the heaviest burden of environmental degradation.**

**Chapter three elaborates on advertising as this is linked to issues of consumer pressures and lifestyles.** The section elaborates on how gender stereotyping and sexual objectification are an integral part of advertising. However, recent research is showing that men and children have also become a growing market for the advertising industry. Men today need to take as much part in the 'consuming ethic' as women and are also being objectified in current advertisements. With the growth of advertising in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, advertising companies are especially targeting children. **Chapter three also discusses how conspicuous and excess consumption can have an adverse affect on gender relations when consumer aspirations are motivated by greed and social pressures. This section has also elaborated on the case of dowry-violence in India and its links with excess consumerism.**

### **Recommendations and Research Gaps**

**1. Policy makers and stakeholders should recognise that changing the existing power relations between men and women is crucial for attaining sustainable consumption. Evidence of gender inequity in relation to consumption issues requires that gender is given a major focus in the on-going work on "Changing Consumption and Production Patterns".** **2. The definition of sustainable consumption adopted at the Oslo Symposium needs to integrate; *the need for an equitable distribution of resources amongst gender categories and socio-economic groups for present and future generations* in its current definition.** **3. Policy makers and stakeholders should address factors that influence consumption patterns, such as, poverty, the gendered nature of poverty, rural-urban migration, international migration change, trade and investment, advertising, globalisation and tourism. Household decision-making and the gendered division of labour are also factors which need to be taken into account when formulating strategies towards sustainable consumption.** **4. Policies, new technologies and measures that aim to promote sustainability must be cautioned about the already heavy work burdens that women shoulder. As women are still responsible for the majority of housework and shopping world-wide, activities such as recycling, handling of garbage and buying sustainable products can impact on their time. New technologies and measures should aim to promote equity and the emancipation of women. Services and facilities which help consumers to integrate re-cycling, re-use and other practices into their daily routine, should be put into place at local community level.**

**5. Governments need to define and review guidelines on advertising and marketing of consumer goods and services. They should ban adverts that use children to promote products that are not connected with their needs (as in Sweden, for example). They should review adverts that promote unsustainable lifestyles and review adverts that accentuate violence and gender and income inequalities. National Advertising and Marketing Boards should carry out such reviews in close collaboration with consumer organisa-**

tions and women's groups. **6. Policy makers should draw upon the knowledge and experience of commercial advertising companies on how to effectively target consumers to strengthen their efforts in promoting sustainable consumption (for example, sensitise consumers in order to promote sustainability).** **7. More studies should assess the impact of globalisation on consumer behaviour and its gender-specific implications.**

#### **Findings from Chapter 4; "Grassroots Activism"**

Chapter four 'Grassroots Activism', elaborates on how women's environment and consumer groups have challenged gender inequity in order to promote fairer consumer rights and sustainable consumption practices. It elaborates on five campaigns; A. Campaign for Fair Clothes (An Appeal to Consumers to use their Purchasing Power to Influence Better Working Conditions), B. Environmental Action (Women's Perceptions and Concerns for the Environment), C. Action for Cancer Prevention Campaign (Links with Sustainable Development), D. The Nestle Boycott (Women Unite for Children's Health and Nutritional Concerns), E. Awareness Raising on the use of Sanitary Napkins and Disposable Nappies (Links with Sustainable Consumption Practices). **This chapter discusses the need for more North and South dialogue with regard to achieving sustainable consumption.**

#### **Recommendations and Research Gaps**

**1. Policy makers and stakeholders should utilise the experience and strategies of consumer and environmental groups working on gender issues as they are important actors in the network and effective agents of change.** **2. Policy makers and stakeholders should support and fund North and South dialogue between NGOs and grassroots activists concerning the dilemmas and common grounds for actions with regard to achieving sustainable consumption.** **3. Document and analyse success factors of gender-specific campaigns that have aimed to promote fairer consumer rights and sustainable consumption practices.**

#### **Practical Steps at the National Level**

The complexity of issues surrounding sustainable consumption requires an integrated response involving the collaboration and co-operation of many stakeholders and Governments, including those responsible for environment, transport, trade and industry, education and women's affairs as well as local Government and Non-Governmental stake holders.

#### **Practical Steps at the International Level**

The UN Division for Sustainable Development, together with other relevant intergovernmental bodies (ex, OECD), should facilitate an international multi-stakeholder working group on gender and consumption to address the following tasks;

**1. Together with UNDP / Human Development Report Division and the UN Statistics Division, develop a Gender Consumption Index to measure differences in lifestyles and key resources. This would enable policy-makers to understand the consumption behaviour of women and men more thoroughly and help to formulate more appropriate**

**measures to promote sustainable consumption. It would also help to develop gender-sensitive indicators on other areas crucial to sustainable development.**

**2. Together with UNESCO and UNEP Industry Office, review existing tools to influence consumer behaviour, review their effectiveness and develop recommendations for an effective mix of tools to promote sustainable consumption patterns which should be widely disseminated.**

**3. Collect, analyse, publish and disseminate examples of good practice of communication and advertising strategies which promote sustainable consumption patterns.**

**4. Collect, analyse, publish and disseminate examples of good practice of local community services and facilities supporting sustainable consumption.**

**5. Address research gaps.**

**6. Strategize on future areas of work.**

**7. Report back to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2000 and 2001, and feed into the on-going work in preparation for the 10 year review in 2002.**

**(The Database provided by this report can be used as a starting point of setting up these working groups.)**

## **Introduction**

### **1. Introducing the Debate on Sustainable Consumption**

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 and the Earth Summit Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the issue of sustainable production and consumption has gained significant importance in international policy. From the debates on sustainable development, sustainable production and consumption has emerged onto the policy agenda

The Earth Summit recognised the links between current consumption patterns and lifestyles and major environmental problems. Agenda 21, action plan for sustainable development adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (UNCED) concluded that environmental degradation is an outcome of the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in industrialised countries. At the Oslo Symposium on Sustainable Consumption, 1994, sustainable production and consumption were defined as "*the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations*". It is the concerns for the global environment that has raised sustainable production and consumption as a timely and critical issue.

Since the advent of the Oslo Symposium, much work has aimed to address production and consumption. Changes in production and consumption patterns and ways of measuring them are being examined in order to promote sustainability. The critical question is, to what extent is gender as a crosscutting issue being addressed and integrated in these policy debates. It is useful to review work that has been initiated on consumption, to get a picture of whether a gender perspective has been integrated<sup>1</sup>.

### **2. Reviewing work on Sustainable Consumption**

The work on sustainable development has led policy makers to measure the concept of sustainable development in statistics (Economics and Social Affairs, UN, 1998)<sup>2</sup>. A set of indicators have been formulated by the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) to measure a nation's prosperity, well being and sustainability (Ibid). A total of 134 internationally agreed indicators are being currently tested by Governments at the national level. These indicators have integrated social, economic, environmental and institutional aspects of sustainable development. Only two of the chapters/indicators focus on gender. Chapter 3, "Combating Poverty" measures the ratio of average female wage to male wage and Chapter 36, "Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training" measures women per hundred men in the labour force.

The DSD has also established an international work programme and an important element of this programme is the identification of a core set of indicators that can measure "Changing Production and Consumption Patterns" (Chapter 4, Agenda 21). However, the international work programme on "Changing Production and Consumption Patterns" has not yet integrated gender issues in the on-going research activities, indicators or workshops.

Moreover, there has also been a move to develop concepts that can measure changing consumption patterns, i.e, "environmental utilisation space", "ecological footprint" and "eco-efficiency"<sup>3</sup>. For example, "eco-efficiency" is a concept that advocates more efficient use of materials and energy in order to

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<sup>1</sup> This report will not be addressing production. The main focus is only on consumption. However, in Chapter 2, the report touches upon the relationship between production and consumption from a historical perspective. For more information on production see Charkiewicz (1998) and Horowitz and Mohun (1998).

<sup>2</sup> The definition of sustainable development that is most frequently used in the literature is, "development that meets the needs of the present generations without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (WCED, 1987)

<sup>3</sup> The definitions of these concepts and further information is available on <http://iisd.ca/susprod/principles.htm> in the section "Instruments for change, definitions and concepts".

reduce economic costs and environmental impacts. However, these concepts do not advocate who is using which resource within a country and how they are being used.

In its study of approaches and tools on consumption, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) pointed out, "*the discussion of 'consumption patterns' has tended to remain at a relatively superficial level because it is difficult to piece together in a comprehensive framework all the influences that shape what and how societies consume.*" The OECD report goes on to say, "*developing effective and efficient policies to encourage behaviour change requires a better understanding of the various facets of consumption patterns and their environmental impacts, in order to pinpoint; (1) where consumption patterns are susceptible to change (2) where in the product lifecycle is the best point, or points for intervention (3) which actors in the network, including government, are likely to be the most effective agents of change.*"

Furthermore, the central theme of the Human Development Report 1998 (UNDP), is on consumption patterns. The report focuses on the consumption of goods and services and elaborates on how this can advance or impede human progress. It brings to light that despite a dramatic surge in consumption, in many countries more than one billion people lack the opportunity to consume in ways that would satisfy their most basic needs. The Human Development Report (HDR, 1998) addresses two issues of consumption, i.e., the poverty and inequality nexus and the poverty and environment degradation nexus. However, if addressed in detail it is in these two consumption issues that a gender inquiry would reveal a different picture.

With regard to the poverty and inequality nexus, the HDR (1998) informs us, that, within a global context there are widespread disparities in relation to what people can consume. For example, 20% of the highest income countries account for 86% of total private consumption while the poorest 20% account for only 1.3%. The richest fifth consume 58% of total energy while the poorest fifth consume less than 4%. On the poverty and environmental degradation nexus, the HDR focuses on over-consumption in developed countries and its effects on the poorest people. According to the HDR, environmental degradation is concentrated in the poorest regions and effects the poorest people. Deforestation is concentrated mainly in developing countries. For example, over the last two decades Latin America and the Caribbean have lost 7 million hectares of tropical forests. Most of this deforestation has taken place to meet the demand for wood and paper but nearly three quarters of it is used in developed countries.

### **3. Integrating a Gender Perspective**

This report calls upon makers to integrate a gender perspective into further work on sustainable consumption. Addressing unsustainable consumption patterns is an important target for fulfilling the goals set in Agenda 21. Gender as a crosscutting issue can add value to the on-going work on sustainable consumption. Moreover, a gender-based approach is needed, to recognise the power relations between women and men in relation to structures such as the family, communities and institutions. Furthermore, an integration of gender provides a structural dimension as gender equality is central and key to any paradigm for sustainable development. As Eva Charkiewicz (1998p3) points out, "*The attention to gender differences in project and policy formulation improves the effectiveness, equity and sustainable outcomes of development. Gender equality has become an intrinsic, normative goal of sustainable development and practically every chapter of Agenda 21 acknowledges the contribution of women to sustainable development.*"

This report will elaborate on key gender concerns that are of relevance to sustainable consumption. Current research on 'gender and consumption' through the disciplines of history, cultural studies, feminist studies, post-modern studies, marketing research, anthropology and other discipline has not generated a unified field of inquiry (Grazia & Furlough, 1996) and not all work on gender and consumption has an interdisciplinary focus. Moreover, from the point of view of this report, it is important to emphasise that a lot of research on 'gender and consumption' has not been specifically linked to the issue of 'sustainability'.

This report aims to tie together issues on gender and sustainable consumption from a global perspective (developed and developing countries) that can be useful at various levels of policy making. A particular focus of this report is on consumer behaviour through a gender lens and its linkages with sustainability. As Janeen Costa (1994, viii) informs us about gender and consumer behaviour, "*because gender is pervasive, intricate and interwoven with virtually all aspects of human behaviour, further study is necessary if we are to understand more fully this important dimension of society and individual behaviour*"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, further information on consumer behaviour and its gender dimensions is also necessary if we are to understand environmental impacts and formulate effective policies that can bring about sustainability.

Another focus of this report is on gender inequity in relation to consumption issues. According to Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

*"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control."*

Furthermore, the definition of sustainable production and consumption adopted at the Oslo Symposium also focuses on "*the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life.*" However, the use of goods and services, their distribution and how they are consumed have gender dimensions that are worth exploring.

#### **4. Overview of Chapters**

The first chapter, 'Linking Gender with Consumption' elaborates on the links between gender and consumption by providing a historical perspective. It traces the historical association of women with consumption by looking at the origins of production and consumption. The second section discusses consumer behaviour of men and women in relation to daily shopping items and more expensive consumer items. It also discusses consumption decision-making in families in relation to the use and control of resources.

The second chapter, 'Towards Measuring Gender Differences' emphasises that the current indicators being used to measure trends and changes in consumption patterns, need to integrate a comprehensive set of variables in order provide a more complete and realistic picture of consumption patterns. The chapter has elaborated in detail on three studies (Swedish, Japanese and Asia Pacific Region) that have measured gender differences and their usefulness.

The third chapter, 'Gender Inequity and Consumption' focuses on key areas of gender inequity in relation to consumption issues and rights. The first section elaborates on how globally more women than men have been left out of the consumption explosion. This section also discusses how poor women shoulder the heaviest burden of environmental degradation and how they bear the brunt of consumer shortages. The second section discusses the role of advertising in inducing consumer pressures and promoting unsustainable lifestyles. The third section, discusses how conspicuous and excess consumption can effect gender relations when consumer aspirations are motivated by greed and social pressures.

Chapter four 'Grassroots Activism', elaborates on five campaigns that discuss how women environment and consumer groups have challenged gender inequity. It discusses how these groups evolved to be women-specific as many mainstream environment and consumer groups have been and continue to be gender blind. This chapter discusses the need for more North and South dialogue with regard to achieving sustainable consumption.

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed Costa (1994pvi) argues, that, the field of gender and consumer behaviour remains under-explored although it is increasingly common to find special sessions and competitive papers on the topic. According to her, "*it is clear that much remains to be done on the topic.*"

Chapter four is followed by a set of recommendations which aim to contribute to the on-going work on Chapter 4, Agenda 21. The recommendations have also identified research gaps that need to be addressed. A database containing addresses and profiles of academics, researchers, individual experts, consumer organisations, NGOs and networks working on gender and sustainable consumption has also been organised.

### **5. A Note on the term Consumption**

This report will refer to the term 'consumption' from the HDR's (1998) human development perspective of consumption that focuses on the many different ways in which consumption of goods and services affect peoples lives. According to the report (p38) "*From a people's perspective consumption is a means to human development. Its significance lies in enlarging people's capabilities to live long and to live well. Consumption opens opportunities without which a person would be left in human poverty*". In its definition of consumption, the HDR includes non-material consumption, i.e., social security, health, education, childcare and transport. It also includes consumption that lies outside the monetised economy, i.e, goods and services supplied through unpaid work, especially by women.

## Part I - Chapter 1 - Linking Gender with Consumption

### 1. A Historical Perspective of Gender and Consumption

Several sources have elaborated that consumption is a gendered process (Costa, 1994; Firat, 1994; Grazia & Furlough, 1996; Horowitz and Mohun, 1998; Lubar, 1998; MacDonald, 1995). Moreover, research has also indicated how consumption is more closely associated with women than with men (Wells & Sim, 1987; Grazia & Furlough, 1996; Horowitz and Mohun, 1998; Lubar, 1998, Macdonald, 1995). Horowitz and Mohun (1998) emphasize that the patterns of consumption have changed a great deal since the days of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century but the importance of gender and the role of women in consumption has persisted.

To understand how women came to be associated with consumption it is useful to engage a historical perspective. Within the 'Anglo-Saxon' world it is important to take note of the two consumer revolutions. According to Steven Lubar (1998) the first consumer revolution began in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. As he points out (1998, p9) "*Over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century first in England and then in America there was a proliferation of goods, along with the new ideas of comfort: more objects were more affordable, more available and more desirable than ever before. By the 1830s America seemed to many observers to be a nation obsessed with economic gain, consumerism and materialism*". The second consumer revolution was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "*the rise of department stores, the vast increase in both the size and the culture authority of the middle class and the changing role of women were all part of this new era*" (Lubar, 1998p12).

Historians have tried to analyse the time in history when consumption came to be associated with women. Lubar (1998) points out, that, according to recent scholarship the strong associations of women with consumption began in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Myra Macdonald (1995) since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century women have been particularly associated with consumption

Scholars have been interested in analysing why women in particular came to be associated with consumption. According to A. Fuat Firat (1991, p378) the historical relationship between gender and consumption requires that we look at the relationship between production and consumption. Firat (1991) argues that the concept of consumption as separate from production seems to have its roots in other separations - the separation of the public from the private sphere<sup>5</sup>.

Given the gender division of labour, consumption came to be associated with the private domain while production came to be associated with the public domain<sup>6</sup>. Firat (1991) argues that a cultural myth and ideology developed alongside the transfer of productive activity to the public domain, i.e, it came to be associated with value producing activities. This aspect contributed to the belief that men's work was worthy and therefore needed to be officially counted to national income. On the other hand, the private domain came to be associated with 'non-work' activities such as; recreation, leisure, family life and consumption. This aspect contributed to the belief that women's work and responsibilities in the private sphere were not as worthy.

Thus, from a historical perspective women in particular have been associated with consumption. The divisions of the public and private based on gender ideals contributed to false and stereotypical perceptions that women were consumers (or were associated with consumption) while men were the producers (or were associated with production)<sup>7</sup>. However, this historical perspective cannot be generalised for all cultures but applies mainly to the Anglo-Saxon world. There are many cultures where the

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<sup>5</sup> The public sphere has been usually associated with men and the 'workplace'. The private sphere has been usually associated with women and the 'domestic domain'. As women in many cultures are particularly associated with childbearing and nurturing, cultural constructs and stereotypes associate them with the domestic sphere.

<sup>6</sup> This historical perspective has been understood and taken from Firat (1994; 1991) and Lubar (1998).

<sup>7</sup> See Horowitz and Mohun (1998). Their book touches upon stereotypes of women as passive consumers and men as producers and how these have been historically constructed.

divisions and hierarchies between public/private and producer/consumer and their associations with gender do not apply (Firat, 1991; Moore, 1989)<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Consumer Behaviour and Consumption Decision-Making

Women represent the largest group of consumers or shoppers world-wide (Beckmann, 1997; Mananzan, 1998). According to Troth Wells and Foo Gaik Sim (1987...Foreword);

*"All of us are consumers, women and men of all nationalities, all social classes and groups. But women are the largest group of consumers, buying for others as well as for themselves."*

According to Suzanne Grunert-Beckmann (1991, p625);

*"Women represent the largest group of consumers. They take part in the consumption cycle - choosing, buying, using and disposing - both for themselves and for others. The second task is often the dominant one, because a woman is responsible for most of the shopping does not necessarily imply that she uses what is brought. On the contrary, as the family manager she often buys what suits her husband and children rather than herself."*

Globally, women are the ones who make the purchasing choices of daily items. Women are mainly responsible for the everyday shopping of their households. In the UK, according to a study women make over 80% of consumer decisions (Mawle, 1996; Vajpayi, 1996). According to Janeen Costa (1993), in the US women are often responsible for consumption activities - shopping, preparing items for consumption, gift buying and disposal of used items. She points out that in some cases American men are typically more responsible for the purchase of certain types of goods than are women. Costa (1994) argues that some of this gender dichotomisation is currently breaking down but much of it remains resilient to change.

Indeed, Firat (1994) puts forward an interesting perspective on consumer behaviour in the context of post-modern transformations<sup>9</sup>. There is much speculation that the West is adapting itself to a post-modern culture while there are suggestions that the character of gender and consumption may be changing. Firat reiterates, *"specifically there may be an increasing disintegration of the close connections among sex, gender and consumption (1994p215)."*

According to Firat (1994) despite the resilience of strong gender categories (i.e, confined gender roles), men and women are now encountering a culture that is more tolerant of them participating in roles and meanings attached to both gender categories. For example, today both men and women represent the feminine and masculine during different times in their lives, i.e, more men participate in the activities of the private sphere and more women participate in the activities of the public sphere. According to Firat, (1994) post-modern society is moving in the direction of less dichotomisation with respect to gender roles. Firat foresees that the deconstruction of gender roles in post-modern culture is likely to create radical transformations in both consumer behaviour and marketing. However, the deconstruction of gender roles in post-modern culture is viewed quite sceptically by some scholars who argue that little has changed from modernity to post-modernity (MacDonald, 1995).

### A. Developing Countries

With regard to developing countries it is important to probe into the consumer behaviour of men and women. It is necessary to distinguish whether women can make consumer decisions vis-à-vis men in the family, with regard to the purchase of more important and expensive consumer items, (for exam-

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, since the International Decade for Women 1975, feminists and scholars have been challenging false and stereotypical beliefs that advocate men to be producers (or to be associated with production) and women to be consumers (or to be associated with consumption). Empirical evidence has shown how women are equally involved in production processes and are producers in their own right.

<sup>9</sup> It is not easy to encapsulate the term postmodernism in one single definition as it is rather an amalgam of fluid ideas. Post-modernism emphasises differences, diversity, plurality and deconstruction in theorising issues.

ple, automobiles, TVs, furniture, property, etc). These items do not form part of the daily shopping routine. Research has shown that although women contribute to household income this does not necessarily imply that they have control over their income (Kabeer, 1997; Status of Women in Karnataka, 1994). Thus, we cannot assume that women can always make choices or demand the purchase of more important/expensive consumer items.

There is also evidence from developing countries of the different income allocation priorities amongst men and women. Evidence indicates that men to a much larger extent tend to spend their earnings on personal consumption (for example, cigarettes, liquor etc). On the other hand womens earnings are prioritised on their children and family needs. As Bruce & Dwyer (1988, p5) argue, *"At issue is not simply the ways in which womens income is used, but the degree to which men and women differ in taking personal spending money from their earnings. Though the specifics of womens consumption responsibilities vary (in Africa and across the world) it is quite commonly found that gender ideologies support the notion that men have a right to personal spending money which they are perceived to need or deserve and that womens income is for collective purposes"*.

Moreover, it is also important to examine the nature of major consumption decisions that men and women make in the family as this is linked to the use and control of resources (for example, allocation of food, clothes, medicines & decisions on education etc). There is compelling evidence from developing countries that resources under the control of women are more likely to be devoted to children and are likely to contribute significantly to the well being of the family (Bruce & Dwyer, 1988; Moore, 1994, Thomas, 1990). Thomas (1990) found that income that was controlled by Brazilian women increased the health and survival chances of their children twenty times greater compared with income that was controlled by the father (Moore, 1994).

Furthermore, as the nature of family forms is changing world-wide, i.e, there has been an expansion of female headed households (Moore, 1994), it would be useful to initiate research into the consumer behaviour of this category<sup>10</sup>. Are the consumption decisions of female headed households (FHH) leading to more sustainable and equitable lifestyles compared to nuclear and other types of family forms. For example, nutrition data from the Northern Province of Zambia shows that children under five in female-headed households are less likely to be malnourished compared with children in slightly better off households where both parents are resident (Bid). This has been attributed to womens improved access to child care and to networks of sharing amongst female headed households (Moore, 1994).

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<sup>10</sup> See Moore (1994p7 & 8), "One major recent change in family/household structures which has attracted much comment has been the reported rise in the proportion of households headed by women. The reasons for this increase like its rate and magnitude are diverse but it is a trend which has been noted for many different countries in the world at varying stages of economic development." ..... "One significant cause for the rise in female headed households in developing countries is labour migration,"

## Chapter 2 - Towards Measuring Gender Differences

### 1. The Significance of Studies that have Measured Gender Differences

As mentioned in the Introduction, the on-going work on "Changing Consumption and Production Patterns" has not yet integrated gender issues in their initiatives. The first report that has proposed a set of 17 indicators has been written by the UN, Economics and Social Affairs (1998), "Measuring Changes in Consumption and Production Patterns, a Set of Indicators". The report specifies that the indicators are provisional since they need national testing, evaluation and further discussion as to what additional information can be added. The core set of indicators formulated by the Economics and Social Affairs (ESA) is divided into two broad categories "key resources" and "consumption clusters". None of the indicators, have yet been disaggregated on the basis of gender and other variables that could provide a more realistic and complete picture of consumption patterns.

The following section elaborates on studies that have examined gender differences. As the HDR 1998 (p171) argues, "*the real issue itself is not consumption but its patterns and effects.*" A study of 'patterns and effects' requires an integration of structural issues such as gender differences and other variables such as, age, ethnicity, income and location.

#### A. Un/Sustainable Lifestyles and Equity in Resource Use

In a study researched by Anna-Lisa Linden et al (1999) "Gender, Travelling and Environmental Impacts", the authors investigate travel patterns among different socio-economic groups in Sweden<sup>11</sup>. Their focus on transportation is important as they inform us, that, a sustainable transportation system is one of the most critical features for achieving a sustainable society. According to the authors, the estimated goal for sustainable energy consumption for travelling is 11,000 MJ per person per year.

Data on gender differences in travelling patterns, i.e, distances travelled, modes of transportation and number of passengers in the car, were obtained from a database developed as part of the National Travel Survey (NTS) in Sweden. The following means of transport were examined; walking, bicycles, moped and motorcycles, car drivers, car passengers, taxi, lorry, train, commuter train, tram, bus, aeroplane and other modes of transportation. The measurement period of the NTS was from April 1994 till 1999. In their study on "Gender, Travelling and Environmental Impacts", data was used from the year 1996. The sample covers 50,000 people over the age range of 6-64 years.

According to the findings of their study; 1. Elderly persons, persons with low income and women in general do not travel extensively. The ones who come closest to the goal for sustainability are elderly women in the age group of 75-84 who consume 12,000 MJ energy per annum. 2. Middle aged persons, persons with high income and men travel much more. Men in the age group of 45-54 years with high incomes consume the most energy, i.e, 94,000 MJ per annum. This is in contrast with men of low incomes who only consume 23,000 MJ energy per annum for their travelling.

According to the authors, womens lesser use of transport is related to their domestic responsibilities and choice of employment. Women more often than men rear young children and may abstain from working outside the home. When they do work outside home, they may choose to work nearby. Womens employment is often within care and service sectors located in the centre of cities. Most public transportation is oriented in centre periphery directions which makes it easier for women to take public transport.

Men with high incomes travel longer for work and have more energy demanding vehicles than women. Men have been shown to have different preferences than women in relation to leisure activities. Women spend their leisure time in the neighbourhood while men may travel to sports arenas at

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<sup>11</sup> See Anna-Lisa Linden & Annika Carlsson-Kanyama (1998) and Anna-Lisa Linden, Annika Carlson-Kanyama, Asa Thelander (1999) and <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/scistud/esf/title.htm> for more information. This report acknowledges the use and integration of their work.

some distance from their homes. Moreover, high income earners often live in low density areas with detached houses located far away from subway stations. This could lessen their chances to use public transportation to work or to do daily shopping by using a bicycle or walking. This is in contrast to low income earners who live in high rise buildings where public transport is easily accessible.

The authors point out, that, the differences in men and womens energy use cannot only be attributed to differences in employment rates but possibly to differences in sectors of employment, ownership of a driving license and car and varied income levels. More men have driving licenses compared to women. The authors also stress the importance of income as influencing both the amount of travel done for work and leisure.

The main conclusions of the study are that, gender differences, i.e, women in the study use less energy than men in the same age group or with the same income are so large that they cannot be ignored in the ongoing work for identifying and remedying unsustainable patterns of consumption. Moreover, the differences in energy consumption among socio-economic groups in Sweden are so large that they can be compared to differences in resource use commonly found among average citizens in developed and developing countries.

The importance of this research is that large disparities in consumption can exist even within a seemingly homogeneous and egalitarian society such as Sweden. Moreover the usefulness of this research is the identification of a category (based on a disaggregation of gender, age and income) whose lifestyles are less sustainable when compared to other categories. The study has also examined why low income categories (for example, low income men) and women spend less time on travelling compared to high-income categories. According to the authors, these findings can have important policy implications for the middle aged population of high income earners, who can be encouraged to change their travelling habits. However, policies must be accompanied by moves towards more sustainable infrastructure and means of transportation.

## **B. Consumer Awareness and Behaviour Concerning Environmental problems**

In order to unravel consumption patterns in Japan, the Sumitomo-Life Research Institute conducted a survey (1996) "Consumers Awareness and Behaviour Concerning Global Environmental Problems and their Impact on Corporate Business Strategy in Japan"<sup>12</sup>. The survey focused on four issues; 1. To what extent do consumers think they are responsible for environmental problems. 2. To what degree does their knowledge on environmental problems influence their ideas concerning responsibility and their behavioural pattern. 3. What actions do consumers take towards resolving environmental problems. 4. To what extent do consumers believe they are able to speed up industry action to improve the environment<sup>13</sup>.

In their survey, gender was one of the many attributes that were examined along with age, income, socio-economic status and family size. Altogether 2000 adult men and women between 20 to 74 years were interviewed in September 1995. The areas covered in the study were Kanto, Chukyo and Kinki.

According to the findings of their survey; 1. Consumers' awareness regarding environmental problems varied according to age. Respondents in lower age groups have a "strong sense of crisis" regarding environmental problems but are less willing to translate their awareness into action as compared to those in higher age groups. By contrast those in the 30-50 age group strongly believe they must do something about the environment as they feel responsible for having caused environmental problems. Those over 60 years do not feel responsible for the current environmental crisis but their willingness to take action is strong.

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<sup>12</sup> This report acknowledges the use and integration of the Institute's report and information passed on to us by Ms. Takako Katsuragawa, Senior Researcher at the Institute.

<sup>13</sup> This report will only elaborate on the first three issues.

## Perception of Responsibility (Table 2, p22)

### We should work to preserve the environment for the coming generations

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
overall	70.3	24.7	2.3	0.8
Age (20-29)	58.3	33.7	3.2	1.2
Age (30-39)	64.1	31.0	1.8	1.1
Age (40-49)	71.1	23.4	2.8	0.8
Age (50-59)	79.3	17.3	2.2	0.3
Age (Over 60)	74.6	20.7	1.7	0.7

2. Among middle and older age groups it is women who are more likely to have a stronger level of awareness regarding the environment. Some 60% of 'environmental leaders' persons with strong awareness about the environment, are women most of them in the age group of 40-50 years<sup>14</sup>. Full-time housewives have played a central role in informing consumers about recycling and sustainable activities. Adult men on the other hand, have hardly in the past known to take part in environmental actions such as recycling or handling garbage. However, in recent years, more men have been involved in house work following an increase in the ratio of employed women.

3. More women are involved in resource-conserving activities as compared to men. More women according to the survey; avoid using paper towels, turn off lights in rooms that are not being used, adjust air conditioning to moderate temperatures and avoid using cars when it is possible to use public transportation. More women make environmentally conscious selection's of daily goods, ie, women refrain from buying drinks in non-returnable bottles, use products in refill containers, use recyclable materials from note books, use toilet paper made from recyclable materials, buy organically grown food, use natural products instead of synthetic products and refrain from buying plastic products. More women are likely to take environmentally conscious actions, i.e, buy products with the Eco-friendly label, buy at stores selling environment-friendly products, buy from manufactures making efforts to prevent pollution and consider the energy required for transportation by buying preferentially local products.

### Daily Activities Opted Frequently by Respondents (%) (Table 3, p23)

	Overall	Male	Female	Age 20-29	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50-59	Age 60	Over
Do not use paper towels when Wiping hands	61.4	56.3	66.1	48.8	55.9	59.9	69.8	70.2	
Do not wash garbage or oil down the drain	57.6	48.4	66.1	40.5	52.7	57.8	63.9	69.8	
Turn Off Lights Often	42.6	40.4	44.6	29.8	40.9	37.0	44.4	60.3	
Do not use paper cups or paper napkins	40.4	34.9	45.5	32.5	33.1	38.6	46.9	49.5	
Set air conditioning to moderate temperature	37.1	33.8	40.1	29.4	30.6	32.4	46.0	46.4	

<sup>14</sup> The respondents total scores on environmental awareness, daily action and purchasing behaviour were both classified into three groups; high, medium and low. The group with highest scores were labelled 'Environmental Leaders'.

The usefulness of this survey is that it provides insights into consumer awareness, behaviour and environmental actions by men and women in different age groups. In Japan gender is an influencing factor as more women are aware of environmental problems and are willing to translate their awareness into action. People in older age groups are more environmentally conscious compared with those in younger age groups. These findings can be used to encourage changes in the consumer behaviour of those categories that are less environmentally conscious.

**C. Un/Sustainable Consumption Practices**

The Consumers International, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (CI ROAP) undertook an exploratory survey (1997), "A Discerning Middle Class, A Preliminary Enquiry of Sustainable Consumption Trends in the Asia Pacific Region"<sup>15</sup>. The objectives of the survey were to investigate consumption patterns among the middle class in the Asia and Pacific region and to determine the extent and degree to which the middle class practices sustainable consumption.

According to CI ROAP, the middle class was chosen because of their growing size and lifestyles that may impact on the environment. Accordingly middle class households in Bangladesh (no. of respondents - 459), India (819), Indonesia (914), Malaysia (536), Nepal (986), Philippines (811), Thailand (712) and Vietnam (1,002) were interviewed. In nearly all countries the largest number of respondents were in the age group of 30-39 years. The percentage of women respondents varied from a low of 26% in Nepal to a high of 56% in Thailand. The study explored variables such as location (urban-rural), gender, age and income in relation to sustainable consumption.

The CI ROAP study (1997, p10, diagram 7) included the following variables in their indicator on sustainable consumption;

- .....  
I avoid buying throwaway items  
.....
- I recycle papers, cans, bottles  
.....
- I encourage others to recycle  
.....
- I do not litter or throw rubbish wherever I like  
.....
- I buy organically grown food  
.....
- I look for eco-friendly products  
.....
- I look for food grown locally or products that are made locally  
.....
- I consider the reputation of the company regarding the environment, labour and other ethical practices before I buy.  
.....
- Even if I have a motor car, I walk or use public transport  
.....
- I avoid animal products because they require more resources than vegetables to produce  
.....
- I participate in environmental campaigns  
.....
- I buy clothes only when I need them  
.....
- Whenever possible, I repair things that are broken rather than buy new ones  
.....
- I prefer to buy second hand or used items rather than new ones  
.....

The findings of their survey are; 1. In Bangladesh, there was a positive response by respondents towards sustainable consumption practices (SCP). In terms of gender there appear to be hardly any dif-

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<sup>15</sup> This report acknowledges the use and integration of the CI ROAPs (1997) survey.

ferences between men and women's SCP. However, young people generally fared less positively on SCP compared with older respondents.

2. In India, respondents also fared positively with regard to SCP. In terms of gender there are no marked differences except that a higher percentage of men participate in environmental campaigns while more women avoid littering and buying unnecessary items.

3. In Indonesia, rural respondents in most cases indicated a more positive response towards SCP as compared to urban and high income respondents. There were no marked differences in SCP with regard to gender.

4. In Malaysia the urban, young and high income respondents showed the most positive responses to SCP. Overall they fared better than their rural counterparts. This indicates greater awareness of environmental issues and sustainability among these groups. However, the authors acknowledge that they need to examine the reasons, i.e., what factors contributed to urban respondents' awareness on the environment. Furthermore, there were no marked gender differences in terms of SCP, although more women avoid buying unnecessary items and repair broken things.

5. In Nepal, it appears that there are a number of positive indicators of SCP among the middle class. In terms of gender differences a higher percentage of women compared to men tend to recycle and repair broken things. On the other hand fewer women grow their own food and fewer participate in environmental campaigns.

6. In the Philippines, the survey indicates that older respondents compared with younger ones appear to be more conscious and generally adopt SCP. There appear to be no gender differences with regard to SCP.

7. In Thailand, the younger age group fared negatively with regard to SCP as compared to their older counterparts. In terms of gender differences a higher percentage of male respondents buy clothes only when necessary, buy second hand products and repair broken things rather than buy new ones. However, a higher percentage of females use public transportation even if they have their own transport.

8. In Vietnam, the middle class appears to have sustainable lifestyles although urban respondents indicated a lower rate of SCP. There appear to be only a few areas where there are gender differences. Among the male respondents there is a higher percentage of men who grow their own food, look for local food and repair broken things instead of buying new ones. The report points out that women play an important role in economic and social affairs of the country, thus the links between gender and sustainable consumption need to be further investigated.

The main conclusions of the study are that when it comes to sustainable consumption indicators, there are no clear trends amongst the countries surveyed. Thus, the report did not attempt to rank countries in accordance to 'level' or 'degree' of sustainable consumption. In terms of location indicators, in most countries surveyed rural people indicated a better practice of SCP compared with urban people. In terms of age, in several countries older people seemed to follow more sustainable practices. In terms of income there seem to be no overall patterns from country to country.

With regard to the gender indicator the report points out, (p75), *"In terms of gender the study presented a few differences. However, in many areas and countries quite often the men indicated a more positive practice. This of course seems counter-intuitive. There is much literature that implies that the practice and decisions of women are more environmentally friendly and more sustainable. The contrary evidence offered to us by our survey also suggests that the model sustainable consumer is an older male from a rural area who earned less than the average person. Obviously this conclusion will be challenged by many. This is perhaps an area that we need to look at seriously in stage 2 of the survey. In making a considered evaluation of this observation, there is a need for us to carefully distinguish the area of activities of women and men and formulate questions that are highly gender sensitive. It is perhaps necessary for us to do an in-depth case study of households"*.

The importance of the CI ROAP survey is that it has examined the extent and degree to which the middle class practices sustainable consumption by exploring the variables of location, gender, age and income. One of the most interesting aspects of this study is, that, the model sustainable consumer is an older man from a rural area who earns less than the average person. In terms of gender differences the survey shows that quite often the men indicate a more positive practice towards sustainable consumption. The CI ROAP survey, however, does not elaborate on why these gender differences could exist.

In conclusion, a comparative analysis of all three studies suggests certain common and varied findings. The Swedish study informs us that women use less energy than men in the same age group and within the same income category. It argues that gender differences with regard to transport are so large in Sweden, that they cannot be ignored in the on-going work for identifying and remedying unsustainable patterns of consumption. The Japanese study informs us that in Japan gender is an influencing factor. In Japan women are more responsible consumers and are more aware of environmental problems. In both these studies elderly people and especially women show the most sustainable lifestyles.

On the other hand, the CIROAP survey informs us that in many areas and countries of the Asia Pacific Region men indicate a more positive practise towards sustainable consumption. However, the sustainable consumption indicators used in the CIROAP survey do not integrate issues such as, income allocation priorities or consumption decisions in relation to resource use. Thus our observations in chapter one, i.e, women in developing countries are often more 'responsible consumers' as their income is prioritised on their family needs and that womens consumption decisions are key in determining the well-being of their families has to be understood and placed in a different context. Overall, these varied findings suggest the importance of cross-cultural research in determining which gender categories around the world follow un/sustainable consumption practices.

## Part II, Chapter 3 - Gender Inequity and Consumption

### 1. Consumption, Poverty and Gender; Rewards and Benefits

In the context of "Changing Production and Consumption Patterns", the ESA report (1998) touches upon factors that can influence consumption and production. These include; poverty, rural-urban migration, international migration change, trade and investment, advertising and the role of the media and tourism. The report (p10), acknowledges, "*the gendered nature of poverty and other aspects of gendered activities and authority are also important in determining consumption and production patterns and possibilities for changing them.*" The report (p11) points out, that while recognising the effects of a wide range of factors and indicators on production and consumption patterns, they will not cover the broad range of these issues.

However, an attempt to promote sustainable consumption calls for policy makers to recognise how gender inequity is manifest in consumption processes and patterns especially in relation to poverty. As Charkiewicz (1998p1) points out, '*the acknowledgement of gender differences can bring about positive policy outcomes while some of the policies encouraging sustainable consumption and production patterns can also serve to remedy gender inequalities*'.

Poor people's consumption needs present a different picture while the issue of poverty and consumption is incomplete without a gender perspective. The HDR (1998, p51) addresses the issue of consumption shortfalls and poverty. It points out that of the 4.4 billion people in the developing world, nearly three-fifths lack access to sanitation, a third have no access to clean water, a quarter do not have adequate housing and a fifth have no access to modern health services of any kind. Shortfalls of essentials are not just a problem for poor countries, in developed countries many individuals cannot meet their basic needs. The central point that the HDR (1998piii) makes is, that, the poorest have been left out of the consumption explosion. For more than one billion of the worlds poor increased consumption is a vital necessity and a basic right - "*a right to freedom from poverty and want.*"

Globally, 'poverty has a womens face', i.e, of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70% are women (HDR, 1995, Haq 1997). Women also constitute two-thirds of the world's illiterates (Ibid). There are global statistics that place them behind men in relation to health, education, nutrition levels, political participation, legal rights, equal pay for equal work among many other things (Bruce & Dwyer, 1988; Haq, 1997; HDR, 1995). Some research has also suggested that in some countries womens status in the structural adjustment era has gradually worsened making them even poorer since they earn less, own less and control less (Vickers, 1991, Dowd, 1996). The structural adjustment process implies cut-backs in health childcare services, elimination of food subsidies that can greatly affect women.

Over the last thirty years, there has been an increase in the participation of women in the labour force in developing countries. This, however, has not been accompanied by reductions in occupational segregation in the labour market (Anker, 1998; Bruce & Dwyer, 1988). In both developed and developing countries women tend to be confined to a limited range of jobs (Ibid). In developed countries it is well established that occupational segregation exists by sex and ethnic status (Ibid). Even in Sweden (a country known to have a very high level of gender equality) a survey brought to light that out of 270 occupational categories, more than 40% of women were found in just five types of jobs these being; secretaries, nurse aids, sales workers, cleaners and children's nurses (Ibid). It is these sorts of jobs that are often the lowest paid.

Women also have less access to credit in developing countries. To give some examples (HDR, 1995), in Latin America and the Caribbean only 7-11% of women are beneficiaries of credit programmes. A study of 38 branches of major banks in India, found that only 11% of the borrowers were women. In Zaire women made up only 14% of borrowers from commercial banks. Most banks in developing countries require that borrowers be wage earners or property owners who can provide acceptable collateral (Ibid). In most countries such borrowers are men. Credit systems and banks are also less accessible to women. Access to credit is a problem for many women who have limited education and have to travel long distances from their villages to the nearest bank.

As women are poorer and less wealthy than men in most societies, they are the ones who suffer the lack of basic necessities (Mananzan, 1999)<sup>16</sup>. There are more women compared with men who have been left out of the 'consumption explosion'. Moreover, the lower incomes of women also denies them basic rights as consumers. The principal rights of the consumer - access to essential goods, choice, safety, information, representation, redress, consumer education and a healthy environment are least attainable by poor women (Wells & Sim, 1987). Poor women who are illiterate are especially vulnerable to unethical marketing practices such as higher prices and fraudulent services. For example, poorly made cooking stoves in India claim the lives of many women (Ibid). Many sales persons tour remote villages persuading low income women to spend their hard earned money on items that are harmful and of poor quality (Ibid).

Another inter-related consumption issue is the extent to which men and women share the rewards and benefits of human development. Data on time use studies from a sample of 31 countries indicates that women work longer hours than men in nearly every country (HDR, 1995). Of the total burden of work, women carry an average 53% in developing countries and 51% in Industrial countries (Ibid). According to the HDR (1995) if womens unpaid work was properly valued it is quite possible that they would emerge in most societies as the major breadwinners. In developing countries, poor women have the main responsibility for sustaining the livelihoods of their families given the nature of gender-based duties. As Bruce and Dwyer (1988p1) point out, "*womens earned income and their ability to stretch this and other resources is vital to the survival of many households*". Gender-based responsibilities are most visible in Africa although almost universally women are viewed as responsible for fulfilling their childrens food needs (Ibid). In Africa, women are responsible for 95% of the work related to securing food for their families and directly produce 80% of the food itself (Dowd, 1996). Women produce 60% of the food in Asia and 40% in Latin America (Ibid). Thus, women are also major producers providing for the consumption needs of their households.

However, the heavy work burdens that women shoulder and the vital role they play in sustaining their families, is not adequately rewarded. Women are left with hardly any leisure time and have limited options regarding the right to education, health care and other essential goods and services. As the HDR (1995p29) points out, "*in no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men. This unequal status leaves considerable disparities between how much women contribute to human development and how little they share in its benefits*". As, Wells & Sim, (1987) argue, as consumers of development women have cause for complaint.

At present, there are criticisms that have been levelled against the concept of sustainable consumption within the context of sustainable development<sup>17</sup>. Sustainable development continues to be planned by policy makers within the paradigm of macro economic growth and 'Northern' modernisation. The aim of sustainable development is to achieve sustained economic growth but with an emphasis on the more efficient management of natural resources. Moreover, the process of development itself has not sufficiently questioned by policy makers in their attempt to promote sustainable development. As CI ROAP report (1997p3) argues, "*sustainable consumption within the context of preserving the environment is being criticised for putting the environment before people. Such a focus neglects peoples needs especially the poor*". Indeed, the definition of sustainable production and consumption adopted at the Oslo Symposium focuses on "*minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations*." However, this definition does not advocate the need for an equitable distribution of resources amongst socio-economic groups and gender categories.

Another area of inequity that is central to the debate on sustainable consumption, is the issue of environmental degradation and the implications for the poorest people. The literature on Gender, Environment and Development (GED) has, however, shown that although over-consumption is caused by

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<sup>16</sup> Sr. Mary John Mananzan kindly sent us her speech "Women as Consumer Activists" which she presented at the General Assembly of the Consumers International in Chile.

<sup>17</sup> These criticisms have been understood and taken from CI ROAP, 1997.

processes at the international and national level it is poor women in developing countries who bear the heaviest burden of environmental degradation (Agarwal, 1992; Dankelman & Davidson 1988, Hombergh, 1993)

Women as compared with men are more intensively engaged in household subsistence activities. Environmental degradation therefore makes their work loads. As Agarwal puts it, (1992p138), because women are the main gatherers of fuel, fodder and water it is their working day that is lengthened with reduced access to essential items. Agarwal (1992) points out, that, the inability to obtain essential items due to environmental degradation has led to a number of suicides amongst young women in Uttar Pradesh, North India. Increased hardship in obtaining items for the household has caused tensions within the family.

Thus, women bear the brunt of consumer shortages and it is their time that is impacted in trying to obtain essential consumer items. For example, in the West women have to balance shopping requirements with work and family. In developing countries women often have to walk long distances to acquire essential items. Thus, as Charkiewicz (1998p2) argues, due to the unequal gender division of labour, moves that are likely to be developed to promote sustainability can increase the already heavy workloads of women. According to her, the promotion of sustainable activities such as; labour-intensive organic agriculture, reforestation, household recycling and segregation of waste, can put additional demands on the time of women. Similarly Elizabeth Eie (1995) argues that control measures such as Eco-labelling, place responsibilities on the individual consumers. This can increase women's workload in particular as they are the main shoppers.

## 2. Advertising

Advertising is aimed at consumers. It is linked to issues of sustainable consumption in many ways. Advertising is an important influencing factor with regard to consumer choices. Advertising that promotes excess consumption (the buy more and more mentality) and unsustainable lifestyles should be distinguished from that which aims to educate and usefully inform consumers

It has been pointed out that the growth of advertising is increasing world wide, faster than populations and incomes<sup>18</sup>. Total global advertising expenditures multiplied nearly seven fold from 1950 to 1990. Spending on advertising rose from \$39 billion in 1950 to \$256 billion in 1990. In 1950, advertisers spent \$15 for each person on the planet, in 1970 they spent \$27 and in 1990 they spend \$48. The growth of advertising has been particularly rapid in developing countries. In 1986 there were only three developing countries among the 20 biggest spenders in advertising but a decade later there are nine. The growth and impact of advertising should be a major concern for policy makers as today there are far more resources being invested in advertising.

It is important to discuss what adverts focus on as this is linked to issues of consumer pressures and lifestyles. Indeed, from a historical perspective Lubar (1998) argues that it is through advertising that we discover how both consumer revolutions (see Chapter 1) were mainly associated with women. Macdonald (1995) argues that historically the media has targeted women and has constructed identities for them from a self-interest point of view. According to Roland Marchand in the 1920s advertisers believed that women were their prime audience<sup>19</sup>. He points out, that advertisers became increasingly committed to a view of consumer citizens as a feminised mass. Macdonald (1995) argues that as evidence grew in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the developing arts of advertising were attracting a predominantly female clientele, advertisers became definers of 20<sup>th</sup> century women's desires and aspirations. Thus, advertising has played a major role in targeting and using women. As Lubar (1998, p13) argues, "*it is easier to know what advertisers claimed than what women actually thought.*"

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<sup>18</sup> Figures have been taken from the HDR (1998) and Consumer Unity and Trust Society India (1996).

<sup>19</sup> This paragraph that cites Marchand's work is taken from Steven Lubar (1998, p12). See Lubar (1998) and Macdonald (1995) for why the advertising industry has targeted and focused on women in particular.

There is a large body of literature that elaborates on how gender stereotyping and the sexual objectification of women are an integral part of contemporary advertising. (Baehr & Dyer, 1987; Courtney & Lockertz, 1980; Friedan 1963). A great deal of advertising glorifies and targets women's domestic attributes. To illustrate this point; a recent study that looked at Norwegian food advertising in the print found that only 7% of advertisements on meal preparation, health and child care, appeared in men's magazines while 63% appeared in magazines that are directed at women (Beckmann, 1997p626).

A huge amount of advertising is also directed at women for commercial purposes that lures them to become more attractive and feminine, for example, adverts that promote weight loss and non-ageing. However, many adverts that promote stereotypical images of women can also be found in women's magazines. The implications of targeting women as 'beauty objects' can have an adverse impact on their health and mental make-up. Social pressures to remain thin and attractive have led women to constantly experiment with diets which have led to eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia (Beckmann, 1997; Charkiewicz, p12). In the US approximately each year an estimated 15,000 women die of anorexia (Beckmann, 1997). Also weight-loss company revenues in the US approached \$ 2 billion in 1993 and 90% of their clients were women (Beckmann, 1997). As Mananzan (1999) argues, rather than helping women to feel better about themselves advertising is directed at convincing women that they are not feminine or attractive unless they own the product being advertised.

The neglect of women's diverse, real and creative lifestyles in advertising has met with a sustained critique by feminists. As MacDonald (1995p74) sums it up, "*Where consumerism saw increased purchasing potential, feminism saw the creation of a multi-faceted and artificial feminine mystique*". However, although women in particular continue to be targeted in advertising, recent research (Consumer Unity & Trust Society, 1996; Firat, 1994) is showing that men and children have become a growing market. As Firat (1994) points out, men today need to take as much part in the 'consuming ethic' as women who have been historically associated with it. According to Firat (1994) the objectification of the female body is being extended to images of the male body as well. Thus, it is not unusual today to find adverts in which men are equally degraded and objectified. Moreover, men in certain age groups are also facing pressures to buy products that are associated with their masculine attributes.

As for children, a large market caters to them. As Anne Thomas (1998p2), campaigner of Friends of the Earth (a UK based NGO) informs us, "*at Christmas, when TV adverts are in full swing, every parent faces a choice....Our kids are being indoctrinated with the throwaway mentality without being warned about the effects of pollution and waste on the environment and wildlife.*" With the growth of advertising in developing countries and those in transition, advertising companies are especially targeting children. According to the, Consumer Unity and Trust Society India - CUTS (1996) advertising agencies in India are using and targeting children in adverts like they have never done before. A study by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IRDC) attempted to examine the consumer aspirations of Indian children. The study revealed a disturbing statistic, i.e, that almost 75% of children in the 8-15 age group wanted to own the products being advertised on TV (CUTS, 1996).

### **3. Excess and Conspicuous Consumption**

Apart from the growth of advertising there has also been an increase in consumption levels world wide. World consumption expenditures, private and public have expanded at an unprecedented pace doubling in the last 25 years to reach \$24 trillion in 1998 (HDR, 1998). However, apart from an increase in goods and services used to meet people's needs, there are other factors that have motivated excess and conspicuous consumption. In many countries, spending is often motivated by pressures to match social status and standards set by society. In Brazil consumer debt concentrated among lower income households now exceeds \$6 billion (Ibid). Household debt, especially consumer credit and household savings are falling in many developed and developing countries (Ibid). As CI ROAP (1997) points out, the 'keeping up with the Joneses' syndrome is especially apparent in societies with significant gaps in income.

Conspicuous consumption can have an adverse affect on poor people and gender relations when consumer aspirations are motivated by social pressures. Increased spending, whereby households aim to emulate the lifestyles of wealthy people can crowd out essentials such as food, education, and health care (HDR, 1998). This can have a discriminatory effect on females since evidence shows that they receive less food, education and health care in developing countries vis-à-vis boys (DasGupta, 1993; Haq 1997; Dreze & Sen, 1995)<sup>20</sup>.

However, the adverse affects of conspicuous consumption on gender relations needs to be investigated more thoroughly in further research. Another example can be drawn from the case of dowry violence in India. The escalation of dowry violence and murders of women in post-1970s India has been attributed to greed and rampant consumerism (Ghadially & Kumar 1988; Towards Beijing, 1995)<sup>21</sup>. In India, at the time of marriage, it is customary for the brides' parents to give gifts, (i.e, dowry) through their daughter to the groom's family<sup>22</sup>. In contemporary times, however, dowry is no longer a symbolic or customary gift but rather a demand for cash and consumer goods made by the husbands family.

Sections of the womens movement that have been campaigning against dowry have attributed the accompanying violence to greed and excess consumerism. According to Ghadially and Kumar (1988) the most common item of dowry that is demanded at the time of marriage is hard cash. Money is demanded by the groom's family to expand business, cover marriage expenses and to buy expensive articles. After cash, the most common demand is for household items, i.e, colour televisions, sewing machines, sofas, beds and radios. A well known Indian document 'Towards Beijing' (1995p49&51) co-authored by many Indian feminists points out that, "*it is now widely accepted that violence against women is not an isolated phenomenon. Much of it is related to societal change accompanying processes of development and modernisation. ....Experience shows that the demand for dowry is today directly linked to a) increasingly more consumerist lifestyle b) attempts to start up resources for commercial enterprises*".

The issue of globalisation is also linked to excess consumption. The integration of the global consumer market has brought changes in consumption patterns that are particularly apparent in Asia and Latin America (Robinson & Goodman, 1996). Evidence indicates that with globalisation a host of consumption options have opened up for people in developing countries, although many have been left out through lack of income (HDR, 1998). Market research has identified 'global elites' and 'global middle classes' that follow the same consumption styles in the world, showing preferences for global brands (Ibid). The issue of globalisation's impact on consumer behaviour and the gendered implications need further investigation.

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<sup>20</sup> See for example DasGupta (1994), Haq (1997), Dreze & Sen (1995). In South Asia for example, disparities between males and females (with the later being disadvantaged) are well documented in relation to education, life expectancy, infant mortality and other indicators. A crucial indicator of the overall status of women is the sex-ratio. South Asia has a sex ratio of 94 to 100, the lowest in the world compared with the global sex ratio of 106 to 100. This reflects the social and economic neglect of women in the region despite their large contribution towards human development.

<sup>21</sup> This does not specifically apply to the globalisation era but post independence years - 1970s.

<sup>22</sup> Dowry or the transfer of wealth to the husbands family at the time of marriage is an age-old accepted practice particularly prevalent among the Hindu community. Legislation in post-independence India prohibits taking or giving of dowry. The Dowry issue and the spread of violence has also to be understood in relation to factors that are related to it. See Srinivas (1984), who argues that dowry in post-independent India is a manifestation of hypergamy (lower castes emulating lifestyles of upper castes). See Parliwala (1989), who argues that the spread of dowry is crucially linked to the devaluation of women in latter-day India.

## Chapter 4 - Grassroots Activism

### 1. The Emergence of Women-Specific Groups

Having elaborated on the nature of gender inequity in relation to consumption issues, it is important to draw upon public action that has aimed to counter inequity. Public action has been initiated by womens environment and consumer groups who have felt the need to bring about fairer consumer rights and more sustainable consumption practices. Indeed, at the policy level, the experience of these networks and groups should be utilised as they are important actors and effective agents of change.

Womens have formed consumer groups in different countries as a result of the special problems that they faced in the market place<sup>23</sup>. As mentioned in Chapter three, women are more exposed to dubious selling methods in the market place as compared to men. In many countries poor quality goods, rising prices, fraud, bad services and adulterated food, led women to unite for more effective consumer rights and their implementation. In Japan, as early as in the 1950s women organised to protest over unhygienic public baths. In India, in 1966, a group of women in Bombay came together to organise the Consumers Guidance Society of India. This Society evolved from the problems that housewives faced in terms of consumer shortages and adulteration of food after the war with Pakistan. In the US, housewives in many local areas have organised boycotts against rising food prices. Women came together on similar issues to form consumer groups in Canada, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Trinidad.

The emergence of many women-specific consumer groups is also related to the fact that many mainstream consumer movements and organisations have and continue to be gender blind. Indeed, in telephone interviews conducted by UNED-UK (Feb-March 1999) with several environment and consumer groups listed in the Green Guide for London 1998/99, the majority of these groups do not deal with gender related issues<sup>24</sup>. A similar trend has been visible in the emergence of women-specific environment groups. According to Angela Mawle (1996) when the environment movement was emerging women were concerned that it was predominantly men who were obtaining positions of influence as campaigners, leaving women with little voice. For example, the emergence of the Womens Environmental Network (UK) was stimulated by environmental issues that concern women.

Recognising the common links between environment and consumer issues many activists and researchers have suggested that there is a need for stronger linkages between the womens movement and the mainstream consumer/environmental movement. As Wells & Sim (1987p8) point out, *"There is thus much that unites women in the consumer movement and the womens movement. And as united action by women in the movement has shown, the work of both can be strengthened when they join hands."*

With regard to differences in North and South movements, Homberg (1993) points out that movements in the South tend to have an advantage as they link up several issues that effect peoples lives, such as, poverty, indigenous people, womens issues, environmental destruction and consumer issues. Northern movements on the other hand tend to be more single issue oriented. A interesting aspect with regard to Northern and Southern movements/NGO activity is the increasing networking that is taking place between different actors. However, Northern Policy interests regarding trade and employment are often opposed to the welfare of Southern people. On the other hand, Northern consumers must be made aware of their consumer behaviour and how it can impact on poor people. Given the international division of labour a great deal of production takes place in the South while its consumption takes place in the North. Many Northern NGOs and consumers have recognised that their consumer power and attitudes can bring about effective change for many people in the South.

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<sup>23</sup> This historical background and information has been understood and taken from Wells & Sim, (1987).

<sup>24</sup> The following groups listed in the Green Guide to London 1998/1999 do work on gender; Ethical Consumer, Fawcett Society, Red Pepper Magazine, Café Direct, International Society for Ecology and Culture.

## 2. Campaigns and Networking

### A. Campaign for Fair Clothes - An Appeal to Consumers to use their Purchasing Power to Influence Better Working Conditions

Several organisations in the UK and overseas have united together under the umbrella of "Labour behind the label" (LBL) to encourage consumers to buy clothes that are made under fairer working conditions<sup>25</sup>. These organisations are; Women Working World-wide (WWW-UK), Norfolk Education and Action for Development (NEAD-UK), Catholic Institute for International Relations, Central American Womens Network, Ethical Consumer, European Contact Group, Haiti Support Group, National Group on Home Making, Oxfam, Textile Environmental Network, Trade Craft Exchange, Womens Environmental Network and World Development Movement.

According to LBL, most consumers are unaware about the working conditions in which clothes are produced. Consumers are often ignorant about how clothes are manufactured from the very start, i.e, the production stage. Throughout the world it is mainly women who are responsible for producing clothes that are available in shops. There is a large body of literature that confirms how low income women in both developed and developing countries sew clothes in poor conditions, i.e, small cramped workshops or in the back rooms of their houses. They work long hours (often under very strict supervision), are badly paid and have no legal protection. In developed countries ethnic minorities and low income workers form a large proportion of the sweatshop economy and home based units. As Mitter (1986p22) points out, *"they form part of a growing hidden economy in the affluent west. Despite their invisibility in the official statistics, their presence is unmistakably reflected in the origins of the merchandise sold by high street retailers."*

However, women have been trying to politically organise themselves to improve their working conditions. LBL, argue that "we as consumers can support them by demanding clothes produced under decent conditions. As consumers we can use our purchasing power to influence retailers to take responsibility for the conditions under which clothes are produced". The aim of LBL, is to; 1. Draw attention to the plight of garment workers around the world, 90% of whom are women. 2. Campaign for the improvement of their working conditions in the garment industry by encouraging compliance with the standards laid down in the International Labour Conventions, i.e, - the right to a living wage, the right to representation and to organise, regulations of hours of work and overtime pay, provision of health and safety protection, progressive elimination of child labour and promotion of equality of opportunity. 3. Encourage retailers to extend their responsibility for working conditions in all stages of production and to facilitate independent monitoring of labour standards 4. Promote fair trade and encourage support for alternative trading networks.

Furthermore in their campaign efforts, LBL encourages consumers to 1. Ask for information when they go shopping about where clothes are made and under what conditions. The more questions consumers ask, the more retailers will pay attention to the issues. 2. Hand in the "Labour Behind the Label Card", which asks retailers to adopt a code of conduct based on the United Nations Recommendations.

### B. Environmental Action - Womens Perceptions and Concerns for the Environment

In 1995 a group of women began to discuss what they wanted to present at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing<sup>26</sup>. They decided that they wanted to present womens 'wants' (needs and aspirations) in an unusual way. They thus carried out a social survey of womens voices, perceptions and concerns. They received a tremendous response that ensured a sufficient representation from a massive cross-section of women in the UK. The book "What Women Want" (1996) is the result of individual quotations received by women from the social survey.

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<sup>25</sup> Information about their work and campaign has been taken from their brochure "Wear fair, the labour behind the label".

<sup>26</sup> We acknowledge the use and integration of their work "What Women Want" (1996) Ed, Bernadetta Valley.

The majority of women expressed their desire for a cleaner environment. The education system and the environment evoke the highest response from women. Statistics show that 87% of women are very or quite concerned about the state our planet is in. Only one in five think that the government is doing enough to protect the environment. A large number of women themselves are taking steps to protect the environment. According to the Department of Environment up to 80% of women in the UK are regularly initiating positive action with regard to the environment. However, a large number of women feel that their positive actions are undermined by poor funding and inadequate infrastructure to support activities such as recycling and waste reduction. Furthermore, another common vision amongst women is a transport system that meets their needs, i.e, a safe and efficient transport system. More women as compared to men use public transportation and most rely on it as the only means of transport.

### **C. Action for Cancer Prevention Campaign - Links with Sustainable Development**

The Womens Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) has initiated campaigns for cancer prevention by drawing links between cancer and environmental pollutants<sup>27</sup>. WEDOs campaign focuses on ways to implement the 'precautionary principle' adopted by Governments at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. It mandates that measures should be taken to protect women from cancer even before scientific studies provide definite proof of harm. Breast cancer is one of the most common women specific diseases, i.e, 19% of all female cancers. World-wide breast cancer rates have increased by 26% since 1980. Historically breast cancer has been the highest amongst women in industrialised countries although in recent years there has been an increase in developing countries.

According to WEDO, the scientific debate about the environmental links to cancer has not gone unnoticed and interest among women has been growing world-wide particularly in this decade. According to WEDO, disturbing questions need to be answered about the influence of the Western development model and environmental factors that may be affecting changes in womens health and cancer in particular. Moreover, according to WEDO, "women are challenging what appears to be malignant development by vigorously advocating and creating alternatives that emphasis people-centred sustainable development. A new movement merging the energy of environmental activism and health advocacy with the power of the feminist movement has risen in many countries in response to the global epidemic. Links drawn between environmental pollutants and cancer have created a basis for advocacy". Womens Action Agenda 21 drafted by 1,500 women from 83 countries at the Worlds Womens Congress for a Healthy Planet (Miami, 1991) calls for, "recognition of the existence of a global, environmentally induced cancer epidemic". It demands "removal from the environment of carcinogenic substances which have particular adverse affects on women and children."

The campaign by WEDO to promote cancer prevention has been supported by numerous initiatives. To implement the Womens Action Agenda, WEDO organised the first-ever public hearing on breast cancer and the environment in New York City in March 1993, in conjunction with the city's Commission on the Status of Women. Since then WEDO has organised more than a dozen such hearings at which scientists, community health groups and breast cancer activists have presented testimony of environmental links with womens cancer in cities across the US and overseas.

### **D. The Nestle Boycott - Women Unite for Children's Health and Nutritional Concerns**

Women have united together to counter consumer discrimination through networking at the local and global level. Women collected together from all parts of the world to lead a boycott against Nestle. The global network to which these women belong is called the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) which has over 150 partners in more than 90 countries, three quarters in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Nestle boycott is co-ordinated in the UK, by Baby Milk Action Coalition, which is a member of IBFAN.

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<sup>27</sup> We acknowledge the use and integration of WEDOs work taken from, <http://www.wedo.org/cancer/cancer.htm>.

The Nestle Boycott started in 1977 in Minneapolis (US) following public concern of the companies role in promoting artificial infant feeding around the world<sup>28</sup>. Millions of babies fall ill every year because they are not adequately breastfed. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that more than 1.5 million infant deaths could be avoided every year if all babies were breastfed. In 1977 the boycott demanded that the company halt all promotion of breastmilk substitutes to parents and health workers, direct advertising to consumers and distribution of free samples. The first phase of the boycott ended in 1984 when Nestle agreed to abide by International Codes in developing countries. However, the second stage of campaigning started again in 1988, following research in Asia that showed that Nestle had reneged on its 1984 promises. In the Philippines, for example, Nestle employs nurses as 'health educators' and sends them into the community to promote Nestogen infant formula to new mothers. In the emerging markets of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Nestle infant formula was being advertised on the vans of distributors in Armenia until exposed.

The Nestle boycott has played a key role in the history of baby food issues. The boycott in the UK is acknowledged to be the most popular in the country. The campaign has raised awareness and has been instrumental in the formation of important international codes. In 1984 the Nestle campaign was described by Esther Peterson, advisor to Jimmy Carter, as, "the most important victory in the history of the international consumer movement."

### **E. Awareness Raising on the use of Sanitary Napkins and Disposable Nappies - Links with Sustainable Consumption Practices**

The first major campaign initiated by the Womens Environmental Network (UK) centred around sanitary products and disposable nappies<sup>29</sup>. According to WEN the produce of sanitary napkins and disposable nappies has a detrimental impact on the environment. In 1985, Britain was importing 1.67 billion tonnes of wood pulp 87% of which was bleached using chlorine gas. The wood pulp was taken from the Canadian forests and during the bleaching process dioxins and other organochlorines were produced which were discharged into rivers and waterways.

The WEN campaign concentrated on making the connection between the product on the supermarket shelf, the deforestation of Canadian forests and the poisoning of the rivers. WEN set out to raise awareness about the environmental impacts of disposable nappies. Within six weeks of their campaign on disposable nappies, Procter and Gamble that accounts for 90% of the disposable nappy market switched away from chlorine bleaching to oxygen bleaching. WEN also encouraged women to use reusable nappies made out of textiles as an alternative. Thus, WEN not only exposed the dangers of chlorine bleaching but also promoted reusable alternatives. There are now at least 20 kinds of reusable nappy brands available in the market and the number of nappy washing services in the UK has increased from 1 to 50.

Furthermore, WENs campaign efforts also focussed on the way in which sanitary napkins were initially being disposed. Millions of women menstruating in the UK used to flush sanitary napkins. WEN initiated a 'bag and bin it' campaign to raise awareness about environmental damage caused by the disposal of napkins and tampons that often ended up floating in rivers and coasts. The awareness raised by WEN resulted in 10 water companies of England and Wales taking over the 'bag it and bin it campaign'.

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<sup>28</sup> We acknowledge the use and integration of information sent to us by Baby Milk Action Coalition .

<sup>29</sup> We acknowledge the use and integration of Angela Mawles work (1996), "Why chorine in tampons matter".

## Part III

### Recommendations and Research Gaps

1. Policy makers and stakeholders addressing "Changing Consumption and Production Patterns" should integrate a strong focus on consumer behaviour in their on-going work. A focus on consumer behaviour is important with regard to understanding micro-level impacts and forging policy links at the macro-level.
2. Policy-makers should adopt a revised version of the definition of sustainable consumption which was agreed upon at the Oslo Symposium (1994), ie, they should integrate; *the need for an equitable distribution of resources amongst gender categories and socio-economic groups for present and future generation* in its current definition.
3. Policy makers and stakeholders should recognise that changing the existing power relations between men and women is crucial for attaining sustainable consumption. Evidence of gender inequity in relation to consumption issues requires that gender is given a major focus in the on-going work on "Changing Consumption and Production Patterns".
4. Policy makers and stakeholders should aim to integrate structural issues in indicators that are being formulated for "Changing consumption and production patterns", that best reflect regional, national and global realities. The general aim should be to provide- via- indicators more information on consumption behaviour of different social groups. It is crucial to disaggregate the 17 indicators constructed by UN DSD (1998) on the basis of gender and other variables.
5. Policy makers and stakeholders should address factors that influence consumption patterns, such as, poverty, gendered nature of poverty, rural-urban migration, international migration change, trade and investment, advertising, globalisation and tourism. Household decision-making and the gendered division of labour are also factors that need to be taken into account when formulating strategies towards sustainable consumption.
6. Policies, new technologies and measures that aim to promote sustainability must be cautioned about the already heavy work burdens that women shoulder. As women are still responsible for the majority of housework and shopping world-wide, activities such as recycling, handling of garbage and buying sustainable products can impact on their time. New technologies and measures should aim to promote equity and the emancipation of women. Services and facilities that help consumers to integrate re-cycling, re-use and other practices into their daily routine, should be put into place at local community level.
7. Governments need to define and review guidelines on advertising and marketing of consumer goods and services. They should ban adverts that use children to promote products that are not connected with their needs (as in Sweden, for example). They should review adverts that promote unsustainable lifestyles and review adverts that accentuate violence and gender and income inequalities (CUTS, 1996). National Advertising and Marketing Boards should carry out such reviews in close collaboration with consumer organisations and women's groups.
8. Policy makers should draw upon the knowledge and experience of commercial advertising companies on how to effectively target consumers to strengthen their efforts in promoting sustainable consumption (for example, sensitise consumers in order to promote sustainability).
9. Policy makers and stakeholders should utilise the experience and strategies of consumer and environmental groups working on gender issues as they are important actors in the network and effective agents of change.

**10. Policy makers should support and fund North and South dialogue between NGOs and grass-roots activists concerning the dilemmas and common grounds for actions with regard to achieving sustainable consumption.**

### **Research Gaps**

It is important to initiate and intensify research on the following areas;

- 1. Female headed households; There has been an expansion of this category world-wide. Research can focus on whether the consumption decisions of female headed households are leading to more sustainable and equitable lifestyles compared to nuclear and other kinds of family forms. Further research should address the possible reasons that account for behavioural differences to further inform the development of measures influencing consumer behaviour.**
- 2. Assess the impact of gender inequality on sustainable consumption (CI ROAP, 1997).**
- 3. Assess the impact of womens emancipation on sustainable consumption (CI ROAP, 1997).**
- 4. Assess the impact of globalisation on consumer behaviour and its gender-specific implications.**
- 5. Investigate to what extent conspicuous and excess consumption can adversely affect gender relations.**
- 6. Identify 'social categories' (based on a disaggregation of gender, age, income, ethnicity and location) within countries and globally, whose lifestyles are less or more sustainable and identify the reasons for differences between social categories.**
- 7. Conduct surveys that examine what factors and motivations contribute to consumer awareness, behaviour and positive actions with regard to the sustainable practices (CI ROAP, 1997) to complement the on-going work on consumption patterns.**
- 8. Document and analyse success factors of gender-specific campaigns that have aimed to promote fairer consumer rights and sustainable consumption practices.**

### **Practical Steps at the National Level**

The complexity of issues surrounding sustainable consumption requires an integrated response involving the collaboration and co-operation of many stakeholders and Governments, including those responsible for environment, transport, trade and industry, education and women's affairs as well as local Government and Non-Governmental stakeholders.

### **Practical Steps at the International Level**

The UN Division for Sustainable Development, together with other relevant intergovernmental bodies (ex, OECD), should facilitate an international multi-stakeholder working group on gender and consumption to address the following tasks;

- 1. Together with UN/Human Development Report Division and the UN Statistics Division; develop a Gender Consumption Index to measure differences in lifestyles and key resources. This would enable policy-makers to understand the consumption behaviour of women and men more thoroughly and help to formulate more appropriate measures to promote sustainable consump-**

**tion. It would also help to develop gender-sensitive indicators on other areas crucial to sustainable development.**

**2. Together with UNESCO and UNEP Industry Office; review existing tools to influence consumer behaviour, review their effectiveness and develop recommendations for an effective mix of tools to promote sustainable consumption patterns which should be widely disseminated.**

**3. Collect, analyse, publish and disseminate good practices of communication and advertising strategies that promote sustainable consumption patterns.**

**4. Collect, analyse, publish and disseminate good practices of local community services and facilities supporting sustainable consumption.**

**5. Address research gaps.**

**6. Strategize on future areas of work.**

**7. Report back to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2000 and 2001, and feed into the on-going work in preparation for the 10 year review in 2002.**

**The Database provided by this report can be used as a starting point of setting up these working groups.**

## Part IV

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## **Reports**

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A Discerning Middle Class? A preliminary Enquiry of Sustainable Consumption Trends in Selected Countries in the Asia Pacific Region (1997) Consumers International, Regional Office for Asia and Pacific.

Measuring Changes in Consumption and Production Patterns a Set of Indicators (1998) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN, New York.

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# Data Base

## 1. Academics, Researchers and Individual Experts

### ***Dr. Bina Agarwal***

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Dr. Agarwal has written extensively on gender and the environment. She is the Author of, "A Field of Ones Own; Gender and Land Rights in South Asia" (1994), Cambridge University Press, Delhi.

### ***Dr. Suzanne Gruert-Beckmann***

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Dr. Beckmann has researched consumer behaviour in relation to environmental impacts . She has also written an article on "Women as Consumers" (1997) in Brobeck et al (Eds), The Encyclopaedia of the Consumer Movement, pp 625-627, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC - CL10.

### ***Dr. Janeen Arnold Costa***

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Dr. Costa is the Editor of, "Gender Issues and Consumer Behaviour" (1994), Sage Publications, London. She has also organised and chaired two conferences on Gender and Consumer Behaviour in Salt Lake City, Utah, June 1991 and 1993. Her book contains a list of academics who have contributed to the edition.

### ***Dr. Victoria De Grazia***

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Dr. Grazia and Dr. Ellen Furlough are Editors of "The Sex of Things, Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective" (1996), University of California Press, Berkeley. Their book contains a list of academics who have contributed to the edition. Ellen Furlough, has organised a selected biography in the book that contains several readings on gender and consumption.

### ***Tally Katz Gerro***

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Tally Katz-Gerro is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Sociology at the University of California. Tally's research is examining cross-national comparisons of gender differences in cultural consumption, i.e., leisure activities and tastes in reading and music. Tally is also writing on class, gender and consumption in Sweden.

***Dr. Roger Horowitz and Dr. Arwen Palmer Mohun***

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Dr. Horowitz and Dr. Mohun are Editors of "Gender, Consumption and Technology, His and Hers" (1998) The University Press of Virginia, USA. Their book contains a list of academics who have contributed to the edition.

***Heleen Van De Homberg***

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Amsterdam

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Ms. Homberg is author of "Gender, Environment and Development" (1993) published by INDRA, Amsterdam. The book is a guide to literature and debates on Gender, Environment and Development (GED). The book contains a bibliography of the literature on GED, resources persons and location of magazines on the topic.

***Ms. Anna-Lisa Linden***

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Ms. Linden's research projects focus on urban development and social aspects of environmental sustainability, i.e., attitudes, values, lifestyles in relation to patterns of consumption.

***Sr. Mary John Mananzan***

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E-mail; [maryjohn@portalinc.com](mailto:maryjohn@portalinc.com)

Sr. Mananzan is an activist and writer. She delivered a paper on "Women as Consumer Activists" during the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Consumers International in Santiago, Chile.

***Dr. M. Nadarajah***

Sociologist  
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Dr. Nadarajah was part of the research team that produced the report (1997) "A Discerning Middle Class, Preliminary Enquiry of Sustainable Consumption Trends in Selected Countries in the Asia Pacific Region". The report was produced by the Consumers International, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Malaysia.

***Jennifer Patico***

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Ms. Patico is working on a project in Russia on daily consumer practices among teachers in St. Petersburg. She has chosen this group because she is particularly interested in working with women. She plans to analyse her research with an aim towards a better understanding of class identity and gender roles in a changing society and how both these elements intersect with consumerism.

***Hazel Reeves***

Senior Lecturer in Marketing School of Business, Computing and Technology

Roehampton Institute London

Currently on secondment to BRIDGE (Briefings on Development and Gender) at the Institute of Development Studies

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Ms. Reeves lectures undergraduates and postgraduates on; consumer behaviour, gender and advertising, marketing management, gender and development and development studies.

***Ms. Catherine Rubbens***

Associate Expert, Division for Sustainable Development

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United Nations, 2 UN Plaza

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Ms. Rubbens has been involved in the work and activities related to Chapter 4 of Agenda 21 and the implementation of the CSD International Work Programme on Changing Consumption and Production Patterns. She has been responsible for the process resulting in the selection of a core set of 17 indicators for changing consumption and production patterns.

***Rupal Oza***

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USA

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Rupal Oza is a Doctoral Student at the Department of Geography at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA. Rupal's doctorate is on globalisation and popular visual culture in India. In particular Rupal is examining contentious debates surrounding the representation of women in popular series and advertising.

**1. Research Institutes**

***ISOE - Institut Fur Social-Oekologische Forschung*** (Institute for Social Ecology Research)

Hamburger Allee 45

D - 60486, Frankfurt Am Main

Germany

E-mail: [isoegmbh@t-online.de](mailto:isoegmbh@t-online.de)

Telephone; ++49.69.70.00.12 Fax, ++49.69.77.73.41

Contact Persons; Dr. Irmgard Schultz and Claudia Empacher

The institute is involved in interdisciplinary environmental research combining both social and natural sciences. Among other things, they research issues on sustainable consumption, gender and environment.

***National Institute For Consumer Research***

P.O Box 173, N-1324 Lysaker

Norway

Contact person; Margaret wandel

E-mail: [mwandel@sn.no](mailto:mwandel@sn.no)

***Sumitomo-Life Research Institute***

2-1, 2-Chome, Yaesu

Chou-Ku, Tokyo - 104-0028

Japan

Telephone; +81-3-3272-5888, Fax; +81-3-3272-5911

Contact Person; Ms. Takako Kasuragawa

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The Institute has been working on research projects that focus on Japanese consumer behaviour. They have done a Part 1 survey on "Consumers Awareness and Behaviour Concerning Global Environmental Problems and their Impact on Corporate Business Strategy in Japan", (March 1996). In their recent research they have undertaken a cross-cultural analysis comparing Japanese and German consumer behaviour.

### ***Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy***

Doppersberg 19, D-42103 Wuppertal

Germany

Fax; +49-202-2492-138

Contact Person; Ms. Ulrike Otto (Researcher)

Sustainable Societies Program, Department for Material Flows and Structural Change, Wuppertal.

E-mail; [otto@erzicip.erzwiss.uni-amburg.de](mailto:otto@erzicip.erzwiss.uni-amburg.de).

Ms. Otto is working on a project on "Work and Ecology" and is researching "gender in a new developing social-ecological economy". The research is looking at how the role of gender is changing in the new developing fields of work. The Wuppertal Institute has several other projects that deal with gender issues.

### ***Tools for Transition***

Atjehstraat 20

NL - 2585 VK Den Haag

E-Mail; [echsub@euronet.nl](mailto:echsub@euronet.nl)

Telephone and Fax; +31703520289

Contact Person; Ms. Eva Charkiewicz

Ms. Charkiewicz has been involved in work on production and consumption since the Earth Summit Conference. She has written a paper "Why gender analysis is important in developing effective policies for sustainable consumption and production".

## **2. Consumer Organisations**

### ***AKB, Alternative Consumers Association***

Ineke Van Dijk

P.O Box 61236

1005 HE, Amsterdam

E-mail; [akb@xs4all.nl](mailto:akb@xs4all.nl)

Homepage; <http://www.pz.nl/akb>

The Alternative Consumer Association campaigns for sustainable consumption giving consideration to human rights, gender and fair prices. It also provides critical information on consumer products.

### ***Consumers International, Malaysia***

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

250 Jalan Air Itam,

10450 Penang,

Malaysia

E-mail; [CIROAP@PC.JARING.MY](mailto:CIROAP@PC.JARING.MY)

Telephone; (604) 229 1396, Fax; (604) 228 6506

Contact Person; Josie F., Regional Director.

Consumers International focus on the special concerns of consumers in developing countries. Its other regional offices are based in Santiago, Chile, the Caribbean, Harare while its head office is in London.

### ***Consumer Unity and Trust Society India (CUTS)***

D-218, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park

Jaipur - 302016

India

E-mail; [cutsjpr@jpl.vsnl.net.in](mailto:cutsjpr@jpl.vsnl.net.in)

Website; [www.cuts.org](http://www.cuts.org)

Telephone; 91141202940/205802

CUTS is working on many consumer issues in India. One of its main areas of concern is advertising that promotes unsustainable lifestyles and especially advertising that uses and targets children.

### ***Voice***

No. D-203, Saket, New Delhi - 110007,  
India.

Internet; <http://www.cyber-club.com/voice>

Telephone; 009111 6866032, Fax; 009111 4626189 & 6964262

Contact Person; Dr. Roopa Vajpeyi

E-mail; [Vajpeyi@giasdlo1.vsnl.net.in](mailto:Vajpeyi@giasdlo1.vsnl.net.in)

Voice is a New Delhi based consumer organisation. It aims to create consumer awareness about products which are dangerous to humans, health and the environment and it questions the copying of western consumer habits in India. Dr. Roopa Vajpeyi, is co-founder of VOICE and editor of the newsletter.

### **3. Networks and NGOS**

#### ***Aedenat (Ecologist's association for the defence of nature)***

Campomanes, 13

E-28013 Madrid

Spain

Telephone; +34-1-5568415, Fax; +34-1-5717108

Contact Person; Laura Marquis

AEDENAT is an outcome of more than 15 years of ecological campaigning in the defence of nature and working to establish a symbiosis between humans and their surroundings. Their activities are based on a study of environmental problems and the search for alternatives accompanied by awareness-raising campaigns.

#### ***ANPED - Alliance of Northern People on Environment and Development/Working Group on Changing Consumption and Production Patterns***

P.O. Box 18185

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The Netherlands

Telephone; +31-20-6392716, Fax; +31-20-6392716

ANPED is a network of environment, development, women's organisations and civic groups which got together in 1990, at the preparatory process for the UNCED. After the UNCED, the implementation of sustainable consumption and production patterns became their main focus.

#### ***Baby Milk Action Coalition***

23 St. Andrews Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Cambridge - CB2 3AX

UK

E-mail; [babymilkacti@gn.apc.org](mailto:babymilkacti@gn.apc.org)

Telephone; 01223 464420

Contact Person; Ms. Tessa Martin

Baby Milk Action Coalition is a non-profit organisation which aims to save infant lives by working within a global network. It works to secure for transparent and effective controls on the marketing of the baby feeding industry (i.e., instant baby food).

#### ***Development Alternatives***

B-32 Tara Crescent, Qutab

Institutional Area

New Delhi - 110016, India

Telephone; +91-11-6856123, Fax; +91-11-6866031

Contact Person; Geeta Vaidyanathan

Development Alternatives is an organisation that practices sustainable production and consumption and develops and promotes appropriate technologies for doing so in the Indian context.

#### ***The Integrative Strategies Forum***

1612 K Street, NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20006

USA

Web site; [www.coopaamerica.org/isf](http://www.coopaamerica.org/isf)

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Contact Person; Jeffery Barber, Northern Co-ordinator, CSD Caucus on Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPAC Watch).

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SPAC Watch is an NGO initiative to monitor national progress towards sustainable production and consumption.

***International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC)***

Apple Barn, Week, Dartington,  
Devon - TQ9 6JP,  
UK.

E-mail: [isecuk@gn.apc.org](mailto:isecuk@gn.apc.org)

Telephone; 01803 868 650

ISEC supports policies and local strategies for ecological restoration while examining the adverse impact of conventional development models and globalisation. It is also a resource centre for books, videos and materials that have been translated into nearly 30 languages.

***MAMA-86***

Michailovskaja 22a, Keiv 25001  
Ukraine

Telephone; +7-044-2295031

Contact Person; Anna Syomina

MAMA-86 aims at providing practical assistance, information and education in order to raise awareness of the linkages between ecological issues and health. The main target groups are women and children.

***Movement For The Abolition Of Prostitution and Pornography (MAPP)***

MAPP-BP 215-75226

Paris Cedax 05

France

Telephone; 33 1 47 11 09 38 Fax; 33 1 47 71 90 13

Contact Person; Malka Marcovich

E-mail: [malkam@club-internet.fr](mailto:malkam@club-internet.fr)

This group does research on media and gender issues. It also looks at modern contemporary art and advertising and their gender aspects.

***Netherlands Association of Country Women (NAC)***

P.O Box 90652

NL-2509 LR Den Haag

The Netherlands

Telephone; +31-70-3244429, Fax; +31-70-3264227

Contact Person; Betty de Zwaan

NAC has some 71,000 active members. NAC-women are very concerned about the worsening conditions in rural areas. This resulted in their current campaign 'critical consumption and sustainable production'.

***Womens Environmental Network (WEN)***

87 Worship Street

London - EC2A 2BE

E-mail: [wenuk@gn.pc.org](mailto:wenuk@gn.pc.org)

Telephone; 0171 247 3327, Fax; 0171 247 4740

WEN is a pioneering charity committed to issues on women and the environment through empowerment and sensitisation. WEN has been involved for many years on campaigns related to health and a sustainable environment. WEN examines the specific influence that women exert over environmental matters specifically in connection with the impacts of consumerism.

***Women Working World-wide (WWW)***

Centre for Employment Research

Room 126, MMU Humanities Building

Rosamond Street West

Manchester - M15 6LL

UK

Telephone; 0161 247 1760 Fax; 0161 247 6333

WWW is a group supporting the struggles of women workers through international networking and public education. Their work is currently focussed on ways of organising in the context of trade liberalisation. WWW is also part of a network called "Labour behind the label" (LBL) which supports garments workers efforts to defend their rights and improve their conditions

***World Population Foundation (WPF)***

Yvonne Bogaarts

Amperestraat 10,  
1221 GJ Hilversum

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WPF works on sexual and reproductive health, promoting the understanding of the linkages between population, health, consumption and sustainable development. In order to meet its objectives WPF has been involved in awareness raising, media, lobbying activities and supports local organisations in developing countries.

***Womens Environmental and Development Organisation (WEDO)***

315 Lexington Avenue

New York, NY, USA

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Homepage; <http://www.wedo.org>

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Contact Person; Dianne Dillion-Rigley

WEDO is an international advocacy network that works to achieve a healthy and peaceful planet. It aims to secure social, political and economic justice for all, through the empowerment of women. It works to encourage equal participation of women with men in decision-making at all levels.

***Women in Europe for a Common Future (WiE)***

Donkerstraat 17, 3511 KB Utrecht

The Netherlands

Telephone; +31 30 331328, Fax; +31 30 304894

Contact Person; Hermien Boschman

WiE is an initiative of European women involved in, environment, development and health movements. It was established right after UNCED and is based in the Netherlands. One of the main aims of WIE is to link and strengthen womens organisations and networks in Europe that promote sustainability.

***TIYE***

Borneolaan 374, NL-1019 KL Amsterdam

Netherlands

Telephone and Fax; +31-20-6651407

Contact Person; Thaninga Fulani

TIYE is a platform of national black, migrant, refugee womens organisation in the Netherlands. TIYE aims to elevate and enlarge black, migrant and refugee womens full and equal participation in all spheres of public life, including economic and political decision-making. They foster women, irrespective of other class, race or religion to participate in all areas of sustainable development.

## **Resource Persons and Organisations**

*Dr. Bina Agarwal*

*Baby Milk Action Coalition*

*Jeffery Barber*

*Dr. Suzanne Gruert-Beckmann*

*Ms. Eva Charkiewicz*

*Ms. F. Josie - Consumers International - Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*

*Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), India.*

*Dr. Janeen Arnold Costa*

*Ethical Consumer Magazine*

*Sascha Gabizon*

*Tally Katz Gerro*

*International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC)*

*Ms. Anna-Lisa Linden*

*Sr. Mary John Mananzan*

*Dr. M. Nadarajah*

*Red Pepper Magazine*

*Catherine Rubbens*

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*Sumitomo-Life Research Institute*

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*Womens Environmental Network (WEN)*

*Women Working Worldwide*

*Rupal Oza*

## **Provisional Expert Committee**

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