



Green women

**Human beings** are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Women have an essential role to play in development. Women have often played leadership roles or taken the lead in promoting an environmental ethic, reducing resource use, and reusing, and recycling resources to minimize waste and excessive consumption. (Platform for Action Beijing + 5)

**Green women** works to ensure opportunities for all women to participate in decisions about environmental at all levels. To make decisions about water management is still largely in the hands of men all over the world. Without taking gender and people's diversity into account, heavy investments in infrastructure are inefficient and don't reach their planned impact.

**Water is a prerequisite for life.** However, only 3% of the water on Earth is fresh water, the remaining 97% being seawater. About 70% of the human body is made up of water, and every child is born in a flood of water coming from the uterus (amniotic fluid).

**Seawater** in the oceans is essential for all human beings on Earth. Algae in the oceans absorb most of the carbon dioxide generated by our modern society. In the oceans, lots of food is produced, such as fish, shellfish and other edible organisms. The oceans, just like the forests, are the lungs of the Earth, and they must be kept clean.

**Fresh water** is unevenly distributed around the globe. Some countries have large resources of water that can be purified through simple and inexpensive methods. In other countries, water purification is a costly process that requires advanced technology. In such cases, clean drinking water becomes expensive and unaffordable for people with limited resources. In all countries, women generally have the lowest incomes.

**Women**, young and old, often have to carry water. Taking care of children, elderly and other vulnerable persons who frequently get ill from drinking unclean water is generally a task for women. To worry about children suffering from dehydration and diarrhea due to lack of water is also primarily a preoccupation for women.

**Resources of fresh drinking water are most controlled by men**, and controlling the water in turn makes it possible to rule over those who own nothing. Climate changes that bring more extreme weather conditions, increasing the difference between hot and cold periods, between wet and dry seasons, are already turning water into a scarce resource that is overused in some countries at the expense of others, resulting in conflicts and wars rather than cooperation. Abrupt climate change requires great competence on the part of decision-makers. We know that in unstable societies, women and children are the ones who suffer most, are poorest and are the most frequent victims of violence and abuse.

The distribution of the power to make decisions is of great importance. In the decision-making processes concerning future infrastructure, women's experiences and knowledge is still not taken into account. Women's ecological footprints are significantly smaller than men's. If men would act more like women, we would have a better world to live in and to pass on to our children and grandchildren.

**Developing the technological** means for purifying different types of water has for a long time been a concern for engineers, a group still dominated by men. In the enterprises (both public and private) that produce tap water and bottled water, men dominate the governing boards, and in most cases the experts that the companies hire are also men.

### **All this must change NOW!**

- The cheapest and most resource efficient way to keep water clean is to look upstream, that is, to find out who pours what into the water and try to make them stop. It would be sensible for the United Nations to establish, without delay, an intergovernmental panel on chemicals, something that the organization has not yet done.
- As regards the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing +15, which will take place in 2010, governments should raise issues concerning climate change and water, and link progress in this domain to the participation of women in decision-making processes.
- Green women advocates a 50/50 gender balance in all decision-making bodies. Furthermore, gender budgets should be used as an instrument for highlighting and redistributing resources in a gender-balanced way.

**Sweden** forms a part of Scandinavia and is located by the Baltic Sea in Northern Europe. The Baltic Sea is a shallow inland sea with a limited inflow of fresh salt water. Several rivers and tributaries flow into the Baltic, resulting in a low salinity in the sea as a whole. The Baltic is a very sensitive sea, surrounded by nine countries. During the industrial era, the sea was polluted by economic activities in the fields of forestry, paper production, mining, etc. After many years of hard work, Sweden has now enacted strict laws in order to regulate pollution from industries. However, because of agriculture and untreated sewage, pollution continues to such an extent that the Baltic is currently depleted of oxygen at an ever-increasing pace. In addition, a number of nuclear plants along the coasts are discharging warm wastewater, thereby changing the conditions for life. To save the Baltic Sea has now become a priority for the EU. Sweden is a country with a high standard of living. The cost of this way of life is that our seas and lakes are no longer as clean as they used to be. For example, the lake Mälaren, which provides clean drinking water for 2 million people, is currently at risk. Scientists have observed gene changes in bivalves and fish as a consequence of chemicals and drugs being discharged into the water. It is still unknown how the human body is affected by long-term use of such water. Green women exerts political pressure in order to limit the use of chemicals and drugs and to improve the quality of the water purification process.

## **Green women wants gender equality now!**

Green women sees a connection between the increasing violence against women and the violence used against Mother Earth. We are a unique, politically independent and non-religious women's organization focusing on issues concerning gender equality, environment, climate and economy. Green women is mindful about the totality - everything is interconnected.

- \* We bring the global feminization of poverty into focus and point out how environmental degradation, exploitation, pauperization and patriarchal structures are linked together.
- \* We strive to highlight, from a gender perspective, the issue of water as an essential nutrient and a natural resource.
- \* We uncover the patriarchal structures behind current energy supply systems and emphasize the linkage between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.
- \* We highlight and struggle against men's violence against women as a critically important issue of equality.
- \* We work to promote the use of gender budgets at the local, regional and national levels. It is time to overcome patriarchy structures we all are part of.