WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZIL

Thais Corral
Director General Rede de Desenvolvimento Humano, REDEH, Brazil

Keywords: Women, Gender, Brazil, Sustainability, Local Agenda 21, Women's Action, Agenda 21, Indicators, Participation

Contents

1. Overview of Main Issues affecting Women and Environment in Brazil
2. The Emergence of a Women's Global Movement on Sustainable Development and its Consequences on Brazil
3. Current strategies for Mobilizing Brazilian Women’s Participation and Involvement
4. Concluding Remarks: Perspectives for the Brazilian Women’s Participation in Sustainable Development

Appendix
Acknowledgements
Glossary
Bibliography
Biographical Sketch

Summary

In Brazil, host country of the Earth Summit in 1992, the women and environment perspective started to be more clearly articulated during the Conference’s preparatory process. It represented an opportunity to shed light on the work of hundreds of groups that started their mobilization around struggles for a better quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities. It also represented an opportunity for the feminist health movement to develop a women's perspective in the hot debate of population and environment. Women strongly questioned the notion that poverty was a major cause of environmental degradation, recognizing that this understanding lays the groundwork for the justification of top-down, demographically-driven population policies and programs.

The movement of women and sustainability gained strength in the framework of Local Agenda 21. This was mainly due to the dimensions of Brazil and to the fact that in the last decade there was an increase in women’s leadership at the municipal level.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part presents an overview of the situation of women in Brazil through recent statistics and surveys; local environmental initiatives; and a description of change in governmental practices. The second explains how the Brazilian women's movement on sustainability developed, based on the framework provided by the Women’s Action Agenda 21. It describes examples of local sustainability initiatives, and identifies some challenges that still remain to be addressed. Finally the article addresses some strategies that could be undertaken,
including methods of gathering data to strengthen women’s situation and participation in Brazil.

1. Overview of Main Issues affecting Women and Environment in Brazil

1.1. Brazilian Women’s Representation in Numbers

Brazil is a large country, ranking fifth in the world in terms of both area and population. Although ranked ninth in Gross National Income (GNI), the question of poverty is one of the most substantial factors for the analysis of sustainability in Brazil. This is seen in the GNI per capita where Brazil ranks 81, in other words the high Brazilian GNI level is not distributed pr. capita. The Brazilian population is 169.9 million (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) Census 2000), of which 50 million people live below the poverty line, and women are more affected by poverty than men. The urban population in Brazil is 80% of the total population and women represent 51.5%. The rural population is 20%, of which 47.7% are women.

When presenting the following statistical material it has to be emphasized that the numbers only represent part of the attempt to understand the complex living situation in Brazil. Indicators of gender, race, level of education, unemployment and health together constitute an understanding of Brazilian women’s lives but they have to be seen as a part of a larger national, local and global context.

1.1.1. Education and Employment

While there are some overall general characteristics in Brazil as a country, each region in Brazil has unique conditions that affect development and women’s quality of life in that particular region. For example, on average in Brazil, men and women are equally illiterate (Table 1), but in the North and North-east women are less illiterate. In the North-eastern region the illiteracy rate is especially high both for men and women and in the Southern region, the illiteracy rate is lowest. Illiteracy is still a problem in Brazil, with 13.3% of the population lacking the basic tools from where a stable fundament can be built in terms of quality of life, health, employment and knowledge about themselves and their surroundings.

According to IBGE, 22.8% of all women over the age of 5 were illiterate in 1994, but the percentage of those who had completed 11 years of schooling rose from 35% in 1994 to 43% in 2000. Even though women are better educated than men, generally speaking, the higher the education, the higher the wage difference between men and women of the same occupation (Census 2000). According to a study carried out in six Brazilian cities in December 2000, women in metropolitan areas, although they have the same educational level as men, or higher, earn about 60% of what men earn for occupying the same positions. Also, women workers do not have the same working conditions as men. The proportion of women who work under vulnerable and precarious contracts, or without a contract, is significantly higher than that of men (DIEESE/SEADE 2000).
Brazilian women are becoming more active economically (see Table 2). Since 1970 their participation has risen to double but it is still not equal to that of men. Women are still perceived of as the domestic workers at home with no time or access to a paid job. And women’s unemployment rate in Brazil is notably higher than that of men (see Table 3). In all regions, Brazilian women are more unemployed than men. In the North and South-east, where the general unemployment rate is 11.7% and 11.2% respectively, women’s unemployment is 14-15%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AMB/Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras, Políticas Públicas para as Mulheres no Brasil – 5 anos após Beijing, Brasília, April 2000

Table 2: Women's participation in the Economically Active Population since 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brazil and Major Regions</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil (1)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North (2)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central West</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Excludes data for the rural area of the states of Rondônia, Acre, Amazonas, Roraima, Pará and Amapá.
(2) Excludes data from the rural area.

Table 3: Unemployment Rate by Sex (1999) Population aged 15-65
The relationship between gender and head of household is only slowly changing (see Table 4). In 1981 women were in charge of 16.9% of the households and in 1999 this percentage had changed to 26% of Brazilian households (Census 2000). But women need to be respected more in their home sphere. They may be working more outside the home and they may receive better education than the men, but they are still trapped in a traditional understanding of women’s role. If they are not able to determine their own destiny because they cannot get a job outside the home, or they cannot survive on the salary even if they are able to work, then they will continue to depend on men and never be able to gain equal rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brazil and Major Regions</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil (1)</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North (2)</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-east</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-east</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central West</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(1) Excludes data for the rural area of the states of Rondônia, Acre, Amazonas, Roraima, Pará and Amapá.

(2) Excludes data from the rural area.

Table 4: Head of household by Sex (1999)

1.1.2. Reproductive Health

Brazilian women’s reproductive health is threatened by the fact that abortion is illegal. Each year, an estimate of 1 400 000 clandestine abortions are carried out in Brazil, and, according to the Allan Guttmacher Institute (1994), 250,000 women are hospitalized annually due to complications from clandestine abortions (CNDM 1999).

Childbirth represents the primary cause of hospitalization of women in the public health care system. Among women in the age of 15 to 19, the main reason for hospitalization is pregnancy, delivery and after-delivery problems. In all regions of the country 80.3% of female hospitalizations are due to these reasons (CFEMEA). Similarly, the infant mortality in Brazil is 70 deaths per 1000 children under 5 (Table 6). In the North-east the infant mortality rate is almost 3 times as high as in the south. The mortality rate for women in the North-east is also higher there than in other parts of the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brazil and major regions</th>
<th>Total per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-east</td>
<td>105.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-east</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are no national surveys on sexual and domestic violence. However, a general picture of the situation can with some caution be drawn from the number of reported occurrences of violence against women—the number of such cases at one of the 254 police departments (Delegacias Especializadas no Atendimento à Mulher) specialized in women’s issues. In 1999, 327 000 cases were reported. Of these cases, almost 40% of them involved bodily harm (Table 6). The categories used to describe the different cases are not explained and therefore it is not clear if some of the cases overlap in terms of type of assault. Neither is it indicated how many of the cases were due to domestic violence.

![Table 6: Types of reported crime against women in Brazil (1999)](image)

1.1.3 Politics

In 1995 a quota of a minimum of 30% of women participants in political positions was approved in Brazil. However, it is still difficult to rely on statistical data to analyze whether this system of quota has in fact improved women’s participation in politics or not, between the elections of 1996 and 2000. The problem is that the statistical data from the 1996 elections is not systematically divided by gender. According to the TSE (the Supreme Electoral Tribunal), in 2000 there were 70 321 women candidates to city councils and 296 902 men. The minimal quota of 30% was not achieved; women represented 19.14% of candidates and 11.61% were elected. For the Local mayor positions (Prefeituras Municipais), women represented 7.59% of the candidates and 5.70% were elected. For the Mayor position in Brazilian cities, six women were elected, representing 20.38% of cities. (Source: Jornal FEMEA 2001).

1.2 Women and the Environment: Specific Environmental Issues
Native tropical forests around the world covered approximately 19 million km$^2$ in the late 1980s, 26% of which were in Brazil. Out of this total, 396 000 km$^2$, or 8%, were protected areas, not including Indian lands which accounted for 11% of the total for the country. Planted forests, mostly of eucalyptus and pines, represented about 102 000 km$^2$.

In spite of government efforts, the deforestation of native forests has continued, frequently due to the demand for wood products in association with land clearing for agricultural purposes. The most endangered forest is the Atlantic rainforest which has dwindled to less than 5% of its initial area and is under continuous pressure from human activity along the coastline.

The availability of fresh water, estimated at over 5000 billion m$^3$ per year, is largely concentrated in the Amazon basin with 80% of that total. Signs of scarcity have already appeared in the North-east and South-east, where demand is highest in proportion to supply. Irrigation and other rural uses were estimated at 60% of demand in 1991, with industrial and residential consumption sharing the remaining 40%. Lack of water has a considerable impact on health issues and on the workload of women.

Land tenure also remains a critical issue, for various reasons. One is the abnormal concentration of large farming units in relatively few hands. Limits on the expansion of the agricultural frontier, both urban and rural unemployment caused by layoffs in industry, and increased mechanization in agriculture, all exacerbated land reform expectations in the last decade of the twentieth century. Action by the so-called Landless Farmers Movement has escalated since 1995 and prompted the federal government to set up a Ministry for Agrarian Reform with the responsibility for settling 160 000 families.

There is a growing trend in Brazil among women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local government and scientific representatives, to consider family farming and organic agriculture as essential elements for a complete restructuring of agricultural and cattle-raising activities in order to make them more sustainable. These are all important steps towards incorporating the gender perspective.

1.3 State Reforms: Change in Governmental Practices in Key Sectors

The Plano Real, launched on July 1994, was a major achievement in terms of public administration, with strong support from Brazilian society. After 30 years of persistently high rates of inflation, which exceeded 1000% in 1993, this was the fourth or fifth attempt carried out to achieve monetary stabilization. Results until 2000 showed a declining annual rate close to a one-digit figure.

Institutional reform following the Plano Real was inevitable, pointing to decentralization, privatization, better coordination and a clearer division of responsibility among the three levels of government, improved political, fiscal and public management practices, and a more stable social security system, as highlights of the process. However, much still has to be accomplished.
Gradual improvement in all these sectors is an essential feature to overcome gender disparities and improve the environmental area. The state reforms have facilitated the setting up of decentralized systems and practices in the pursuit of a broader participation of civil society in decision and policy making.

2. The Emergence of a Women's Global Movement on Sustainable Development and its Consequences for Brazil

2.1. Women’s Action Agenda 21: The Policies

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 was an important event for women, since it recognized their crucial role in promoting a different type of development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. All UNCED documents include specific recommendations for strengthening women’s participation in decision-making processes. This is especially true of Agenda 21, the UNCED blueprint for sustainable development, which fully acknowledges the need to integrate women at all levels. Specifically, the issue of integrating women is expressed in Chapter 24, entitled “Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development”. This chapter lists eight objectives for National Governments, including increase of women’s roles in decision-making, launching educational reforms, promoting family planning, and enacting anti-violence legislation.

The extent of the involvement of women was one of the most important aspects of UNCED. Women entered the UNCED process with a comprehensive and integrated vision that emerged from the First Women’s World Congress for a Healthy Planet, organized by the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) in November 1991. At the Congress, 1500 women from 83 countries formulated and adopted their own platform: Women’s Action Agenda 21.

Women’s Action Agenda 21 (WAA 21) is a document of principles divided into 14 topics. The first principle, "Democratic Rights, Diversity and Solidarity", presents a code of practice that has assisted in shaping women's movements, by affirming the inclusion of the vision and experiences of women in decision making processes all over the world. Further, the agenda was conceived as a living document, to which women in every corner of the world were invited to contribute, and in turn to use for their own advocacy purposes.

The WAA 21 also proposed a “Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability” based on principles of cooperation rather than competition, "which acknowledges the responsibility that accompanies power and is owed to future generations". The document agrees with feminist economists in challenging the current economic and political approach, including "the barren instruments (e.g., systems of national accounts) on which all major economic and environment decisions are made", and suggests that "governments agree to a timetable for implementation of full cost accounting that includes environmental and social costs—and assigns full value to
women's labor in national accounting systems and in calculation of subsidies and incentives in international trade”.

Recognizing that women have always been the majority in the pacifist movement, and lead most movements addressing such topics as disposal of toxics, transportation and resource use, the WAA 21 urged "an immediate 50% reduction in military spending, with the money saved reallocated to socially useful and environmentally friendly purposes". Pragmatically, the WAA 21 proposed that "armies be used as environmental protection corps to monitor and repair damage to natural systems, including clean-up of war zones, military bases and surrounding areas, and to be available to assist citizens in times of natural and man-made disasters".

In the WAA 21 the use of nuclear power, the dumping of waste and the use of food irradiation is condemned and a call is made for global implementation of energy efficiency, conservation and self-renewing sources such as sun, wind and water.

Women also took a clear stand on foreign debt and the rules of international trade, "rejecting the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) that shift the responsibilities of basic social services from governments to women's shoulders, as research has evidenced, without compensation or assistance".

In areas where women represent a majority of the labor force, their lives are particularly damaged by environmental destruction. The item "Women, Poverty, Land Rights, Food Security and Credit" of Women's Action Agenda 21 calls on "UN, governments and non-governmental organizations to cease discriminatory practices that limit women's access to land and other resources, to increase allocation of resources that enhance food security, and to provide appropriate technologies to reduce women's work".

The topic "Population and the Environment" was one of the most keenly debated topics by women during the UNCED. Women objected to insinuations that population pressure is the chief cause of environmental degradation and submitted that the true causes of the problem are "industrial and military pollutants, toxic wastes and economic systems that exploit and misuse nature and people".

Another strong point highlighted in the WAA 21 claims the power of women as consumers. "Aware that the power of the consumer is decisive in industrial planning and production...we will engage in campaigns supporting investment in environmentally sound productive activities and encourage initiatives to reduce fossil fuel energy use, over-consumption and waste".

The Agenda was established as a tool to encourage women to take and lead action, by recommending practical measures to the UN, other international agencies and institutions, governments, industry and NGOs in order to hold them accountable.

Beyond the UNCED, the incentive to include gender in development was also strengthened by other UN Conferences such as those on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Social Summit: Women, Development
and Peace (Beijing, 1995), Habitat II (Istanbul, 1996) and the Food Summit (Rome, 1996).

2.1.1 Women’s Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2015: Rio +10

The above issues remain critical in the attempt to achieve sustainable development from a gender perspective—even though the framework and approaches may have changed over the past 10 years. Recognizing this, WEDO and its Brazilian partner, Network for Human Development (REDEH) are partnering with other women’s organizations and NGOs in different parts of the world. Both organizations undertook a major review and revision of Women’s Action Agenda 21 in the lead-up to Earth Summit 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The revision, from which a few focal points will be mentioned in the following, is based on dialogue between different stakeholder organizations, representatives from states, networks and partners through local working groups, as well as through regional and international meetings. At a conference held in Brazil in 2001 with the participation of partnering Latin American NGOs and local communities, leaders recognized that women’s movements have been intensified over the past ten years, but women’s active citizenship and participation in political decision-making processes still has to be strengthened. One suggestion at the conference was to increase sectoral partnerships in order to create more common ground and a stronger network when addressing women’s issues. Partnerships between the different stakeholders can help establish and maintain shared values and critical awareness of the objectives of sustainable development.

It was also acknowledged at the conference that new strategies to fight violence against women have to be developed. Finally, in Latin America, as well as internationally, it is important that more gender specific research is developed in relation to the environment and sustainable development. Currently, there are few studies that attempt to show the impact of environmental degradation on women’s lives and how pollution affects poor indigenous women, especially women of African descent. The results can help facilitate local initiatives and education.

Gender issues should be included in all types of environmental studies such as the state of natural resources, the impact of globalization processes, resource allocation and socio-economic structures. The production of gender-disaggregated data through methodological and diagnostic tools can evaluate the situation of women and shed light on their specific concerns. The revised agenda proposes that all countries, institutions, NGOs and international organizations prioritize this, and that they publish reports and
establish policies and programs with proper information systems and education to provide a platform for participation and dialog among stakeholders.

Information technology is an important tool to disperse research results and experiences in general, and it should be used even more when designing development strategies. It can help provide information at all levels, from political decision-making at international levels to national, grassroots and individual levels. It can strengthen governance and democracy and provide women with a voice and a forum to address gender issues.

The updated version, Women’s Action Agenda for a Healthy Planet 2002 (WAA2002), was launched at the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, a UN initiative to assess the main results of implementation of UNCED ten years later. It included feedback from broad consultations organized throughout the preparatory process.

2.2. Gender Policies for Sustainable Development in Brazil

In Brazil, gender policies for sustainable development have to be understood in light of the spaces conquered by women in the 1980s, and the context of the democratization process after twenty years of a military dictatorship. As occurred with other social movements, the women's movement negotiated with the first transitional civil government key spaces geared to guarantee the presence of gender policies in the new democracy. Three areas of concern deserve to be mentioned: the creation of national, state and municipal councils to promote the rights of women in different government spheres; the creation of the Special Women's Police Stations, and the effort to promote gender-related specific legislation in the process of drafting the New Brazilian Constitution (which was concluded in 1988).

One national government council is the Women's Council for the Rights of Women, founded in 1985. It had and continues to have a critical role in integrating gender perspectives into policies. The council’s main focus is the prevention of violence against women. It works with capacity building for women, research on gender issues, publication of information materials and provision of shelters for women in groups at risk.

The Special Women's Police Stations. Along with campaigns, this is one of the initiatives that sustain the public policies against violence towards women. However, the functioning of those stations is now under scrutiny by several women activists. Among studies about the Special Police Stations little has been done concerning the impact on the treatment given to the denounced. Today, most cases of violence against women are forwarded to the judge for small cases. Thus it often becomes a matter of mediation between the aggressor and the victim. In view of this, the Women’s Council for the Rights of Women is calling for an immediate analysis of the efficiency and effect of those stations. Violence against women should not be concealed in practices of mediation. The challenge of public policies in this matter is to combine the notion of criminalization with notions of mediation, reparation and rehabilitation.
The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 consolidated important legislation. This was the case specifically in the area of labor force conceding the maternal and paternal license and in the area of land property, and in a very bold women's health program named PAISM. The PAISM, Integral Program for the Rights of Women, is considered a benchmark worldwide because it integrated reproductive health matters as part of women's health as a whole. The Brazilian constitution also forged a process of devolution and social control by creating a series of mechanisms that conditioned the reception of funds to the creation of specific councils formed by the civil society.

2.2.1 Brazilian Gender Policies and Practices in the 1990s

The principles of Agenda 21 grant a central position to women in policymaking, and this has opened possibilities for the introduction of gender policies in Brazil. An important step was the inception of the Brazilian National Council on Sustainable Development Policies and Agenda 21, in January 1997. The council is a supra-ministerial body that includes the participation of representatives from NGOs and the private sector. A series of consultations preceded the event where a multitude of stakeholders, including women's movement, were consulted as part of the process.

The Brazilian Agenda 21 includes six major topics: 1) Reduction of Social Inequalities 2) Sustainable Cities 3) Science and Technology 4) Infra-structure for Sustainable Development 5) Land Resources and Agriculture and 6) Natural Resources Management. Some topics were more easily connected to gender than others, such as Reduction of Social Inequalities, which concentrates gender recommendations. Consultations with experts and specialized organizations within each topic are based on the National Beijing Platform of Action in which women's groups were fully involved during the consultation process.

Apart from policy formulation through Agenda 21, other specific policies have received particular attention geared to reduce deforestation. The extractivist alternative, worldwide known as a way of exploiting the products of the rainforest in a non-destructive way, gathers among its defenders a significant number of women.

One of them, Marina Silva, companion of the legendary Chico Mendes in the peaceful demonstrations against deforestation of the Amazon rain forest, became a Senator in 1994. Using her power and influence she helped convince federal authorities to provide credit to cooperative groups engaged in sustainable agriculture in the region. One of these cooperatives is formed by the collectors and brokers of the babacu coconut, a movement of rural women which includes around 300,000 workers and provides an example of a struggle that embraces the four pillars: gender, economy, environment and social justice.

Another very relevant policy entitled the State-Sponsored Monthly Stipend is specifically targeted to encourage female leaders of households to send their children to school. Its main goal is to counter child exploitation in the sugar fields—a problem which is very common in the Northeast part of the country.
Generally speaking other areas also benefited. At the Ministry of Education, gender issues were integrated into the curriculum of basic education; at the Ministry of Health, a major campaign to prevent cervical and breast cancer and to decrease maternal mortality was launched; at the Ministry of Justice, a specific program that provided financial resources to construct shelters for battered women was created; and at the Ministry of Labor, the action was more at the level of policy, with an attempt to integrate gender guidelines into loan, micro-credit and training programs to combat poverty.

In spite of these policies, the local level remains the place where the women's movement has been more involved with sustainability efforts in Brazil.

2.3 Women's Action Agenda 21: the local initiatives

In Brazil, Women's Action Agenda 21 has become very popular at the local level. Sustainability is an issue for all communities and this is the level where women in both rural and urban settings can get involved and identify their unique outset in terms of sustainability. Priorities, for example, are different in small rural towns that are losing the natural environment upon which their jobs depend, from those in large metropolitan areas where crime and poverty challenge the quality of life.

Local initiatives from the beginning of the 1990s have been very successful, as they have become models that could be replicated. One of the most important initiatives has been by women who are protagonists of initiatives to reduce poverty by tackling environmental problems. In some cities these experiences have been integrated into municipal environmental policy. Porto Alegre, a city of 3 million, situated in the South of Brazil, offers a good example. Thirteen years ago, church groups helped start a cooperative of the garbage scavengers' movement. The recycling of paper, cans and glass became a major source of income for women and their children. The collection of garbage is based on a system of delivery points in schools, neighborhood associations, churches, companies and community entities. The municipality provides the trucks for garbage transportation. More than three hundred families live on income generated by recycling garbage. The project has improved the self-esteem of these women, the poorest of the poor. The public recognizes these women’s work as an important contribution to the sustainability of the city. They are invited to speak in schools and to help organize similar processes in other cities in Brazil.

Similarly, the project “Mãos Mineiras” was initiated in the early 1990s to promote income generation for women through the elaboration of handicrafts and manufactured food products from disposable materials. This is an example of women's empowerment and environmental education for the communities. The group has engaged many house workers in the project, which is now being replicated in several other places in Brazil, by different bodies including state governments.

2.3.1 Women’s Leadership and Local Governance

The Fourth International UN Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, increased the possibilities of working at the municipal level. Many countries started implementing
quota systems, which led to a significant increase of women elected as city council officers or mayors. In Brazil, it was translated on a major impulse in 1995 with the approval of legislation that set quotas for the electoral system. Following the 1996 municipal elections an increased number of women were elected for city councils and as mayors. In 2000, women represented 19.14% of the candidates, 7001 were elected as City Councilors, representing 11% of all elected Councilors. Three hundred and seventeen women were elected mayors of whom six were for cities that are state capitals. These women were critical in partnering with non-governmental organizations and community based organizations in the effort to implement Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

2.3.2 Capacity Building Model for Women’s Leadership on Sustainable Development

Taking advantage of this phenomenon, the Network for Human Development (REDEH), an NGO based in Rio de Janeiro, which works at the national level, has tested a capacity building model geared to increase women's effective leadership in Local Governance for Sustainable Development. The model includes three main components: the selection of the trainees through evaluation of individual skills; the training course; and the elaboration of a common agenda to maintain the process after the training.

Each group selected for training consists of between 30 and 40 participants. The selection of the trainees lasts about six months and is carefully done in terms of sectors (private, public and third sector). The ideal group reflects a perfect balance among the three sectors. The evaluation of individual motivation and previous skills is done through preliminary questionnaires and individual interviews.

The training course is built in accordance with the content and skill level of the group, promoting group dynamics that allow interaction and group learning. The common needed skills are basic knowledge about policy, planning and resource allocation, negotiations, computer skills, and the use of data resources. Each training session concludes with the elaboration of a common agenda allocating responsibilities and identifying needed resources.

In the cities where this training module was carried out the women’s participation in community matters has increased, which shows that capacity building is a critical issue to enhance women’s involvement with issues concerning sustainable development.

2.3.3 Radio as a Source of Mobilization, Organization and Empowerment

Many women’s organizations have launched local initiatives that allow women at all levels to express their concerns on an ample variety of issues. Primers, case studies and reports have been written and distributed for educational and advocacy purposes. Women’s use of media is also strengthened as a fundamental tool for empowerment and changing cultural values of societies. In some cases women have created their own media networks, using low technology media that allows interaction, participation and expression.
A good example of the above is women’s choice of radio as a source of mobilization and organizing at the local level. As of today there are about 10,000 community radio stations around the country besides other socially concerned programs integrated within commercial, educational, and religious radio stations. Ten years ago, aware of the importance of promoting a channel through which women could have a voice and share their visions, CEMINA (Communication, Education and Information on Gender), an NGO based in the city of Rio de Janeiro, started a local radio program. This daily space has enabled the group of women that initiated the project to build a methodology that soon became very popular among women’s groups and radio communicators all over the country. Over the years, CEMINA expanded the radio project by helping other women’s groups to start similar projects. Today this network is very active and well articulated. It includes about 350 women’s radio programs. The women’s radio network has played a substantial role in mobilizing women by fostering their participation in local sustainable development initiatives.

Many of the radio programs that women lead are the only ones to reach some of the most remote regions of the country, such as the Amazon Region. An example is the radio program “Natureza Mulher” (Nature Woman) that through short waves reaches villages which otherwise are only connected by rivers. Letters written by the listeners of the programs can take weeks to reach Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, where the program is located, traveling by several means of transportation.

2.4 Challenges that remain to be addressed

As a tool to help women organize, identify and set priorities for advocacy, Network for Human Development (REDEH) launched the "Women’s Community Report Card" (created by WEDO) aimed at helping women identify key sustainability issues. The report cards offer a localized way to evaluate community well-being in four areas of everyday life: the natural environment, political systems, social priorities and human development.

Over the years, these evaluations have given REDEH valuable insight, and have proven to be an effective way of appointing specific barriers that have to be overcome so that women are more integrated in sustainability efforts. The barriers recognized are:

- There is a general lack of awareness, by both women and men, as to how gender issues affect environmental issues and vice versa. Although, Agenda 21 overall expresses connections between environmental issues and gender, it is important to generate gender specific research about the environmental effect on women’s lives. This is a first step in a concrete effort to change the general mentality.
- Often, tradition is considered one of the main barriers for women who engage in public processes. The household is still seen as the main sphere of women, and it is very difficult for women to overcome the strong influence that religion and other cultural and sociological factors hold on their own. Alone, women cannot overcome community prejudice, nor legitimize their public participation and voice.
• Even when the participation of women and gender concerns are theoretically accepted in multi-stakeholder forums, it takes substantial effort to change the balance in current power relations. Gender bias plays an important role, for example, in influencing resource allocation in less developed countries.

• The most common thread that unifies women in local participatory processes are the multiple responsibilities each holds as primary caretakers of house and family, while also working in paid jobs outside the home. Because of this dual role, it is generally older women who have the time to volunteer and do community work. There remains lack of institutional support for further integrating younger women into governing processes. Primary among these barriers to participation are the lack of adequate transportation, the lack of flexibility in meeting hours, and a shortage of childcare facilities.

• Women’s lack of understanding of how local governments work, and the failure to grasp the importance of public participation have also emerged as strong barriers. In this realm poverty and illiteracy are interconnected problems that prevent civic participation.

These five points underline, that there is a continuous lack of awareness on gender issues among both men and women, due to illiteracy or a low level of general education about Brazilian society. Apart from this, traditions and prejudices are presenting mental as well as practical obstacles. Gender biases continue to be present, keeping women from both participation and leadership. Female participation in government practices is important, if means and resources are to be allocated for gender issues. As mentioned above, research is a way to initiate the change of mentality and practices that are needed to fulfill the policies formulated in Agenda 21.

3. Current Strategies for Mobilizing Brazilian Women’s Participation and Involvement

In order to outline strategies for mobilizing women, research and documentation is needed. This includes research on women's situations and adequate gender-disaggregated data. This type of data is still, in 2002, rare in Brazil.

3.1. A Twofold Strategy to Generate Gender Sensitive Data

In designing such data gathering approaches it is important to recognize that women must be considered producers as well as consumers of information. Therefore the strategy should be twofold. On one hand, it should establish the appropriate mechanisms for gathering information that expresses the complexity of women’s experiences and concerns. These must simultaneously identify problems, constraints and opportunities for enhancing gender equality in access to resources and decision-making. On the other hand, such information should be made directly available to women at local levels to use to effectively influence policy making.

3.1.1 Gender Sensitive Indicators as Tools
As part of Agenda 21 and the Beijing platform of action in 1995, bodies within the UN, governments and NGOs have been developing and conducting studies on the development of indicators of sustainable development (for Latin America see, for example, Gálvez Pérez, 1999, and Corral and Ransom 2001). Although women have been included in the Local Agenda 21, there are few specific strategies for the inclusion of the gender perspective and gender sensitive strategies.

Indicators can serve as tools to monitor the gender perspective and lead to more effective advocacy, policy making and monitoring processes. Gender indicators can also facilitate the measurement of the complexity of women’s roles. To be effective, the indicators should measure quality of life in the community including social, environmental and economic factors, and the indicators should be easy to understand, based on accessible data and relevant to the community. There should also be a consistent method of gathering information, follow-up and adjusting the indicators if necessary.

The indicators of sustainable development are to be used by decision makers at local, regional and national levels. The indicators consist of a number of generally formulated focal points that should be monitored to observe women’s access and participation. REDEH has, in collaboration with WEDO, proposed indicators that can measure the relationship between gender and sustainable development in the following areas:

- participation in environmental decision making
- water
- forests
- land and credit
- human settlements

These areas are important especially in terms of measuring the level of women’s access to, and control of, resources. If brought to the attention of women, those indicators can be very useful in provoking a better understanding of gender differences in the realm of sustainability because they can present hard facts about the gender equality situation. These generally formulated indicators can serve as examples and models that inspire communities to craft their own. The formulation of indicators relevant to the communities should be developed in interactive processes with participation of community members representing different views, skills and experiences, also including committees trained to link and think across areas that traditionally not are linked.

The following sections explore the five areas from a gender perspective in Brazil. The suggested indicators, developed under each focal point, are listed in Appendix 1.

**Participation in Environmental Decision Making**

The participation of women in decision making organs is crucial for the application of gender mainstreaming in all areas of sustainable development. This includes both women’s participation in management of environmental agencies non-governmental as well as governmental, and their participation at community levels, such as outreach, training and use of participatory tools. Capacity building processes are needed for the
women to obtain participation in decision making at all levels. The extent and use of gender analysis studies are important to point out gender sensitive perspectives in decision making.

Indicators in the decision making area relate to numbers of participating women, to the use of and training to use gender analysis, to the awareness of gender perspectives and to projects initiated by women.

**Water**

Even though the Amazon area holds 8% of the water of the world, Brazil suffers from problems with sufficient drinking water of good quality. This is due to a combination of an inadequate distribution of the water resources, lack of political initiatives, and of pollution of surface and subterranean water. The pollution is caused by inadequate sewage systems, industrial waste water that flows directly into the rivers, and deficient waste disposal.

There is often bad access to water in rural areas, where women have to travel far and spend a long time just collecting water, which might not even be of good quality. In the cities the water in the taps is often not suitable for drinking due to contamination, which makes access to good quality water dependent on the economy of each family.

Contaminated water creates very serious health problems and affects the quality of life. Many diseases are related to directly or indirectly to contaminated water, e.g. diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, different kind of fevers, and parasitic infections, as well as cancer and heart diseases. Water-related diseases are affecting the overall health of women, including problems related to pregnancies, and can be seen as one cause of the high rate of child deaths in Brazil. According to a UN estimate, half of the population suffers from water-related diseases, and 70% of the Brazilian hospitalizations are directly or indirectly due to diseases transmitted through water.

Indicators related to gender and water include a series of measures related to both access and ease of access to water. Most of the other indicators attempt to identify the extent of women’s involvement in planning and management of water projects, both within agencies and at the community level.

**Forests**

Brazil endures a constant threat of deforestation. As an example the Atlantic Rainforest, in the eastern part of Brazil, is reduced to only 5% of its original size, as mentioned earlier. Deforestation has devastating consequences; endemic plants and animal species disappear, trees are burnt to clear land for agriculture which mostly results in soil erosion and pollution, and biodiversity in general suffers from unsustainability. Forestry projects are performed to enhance regeneration and re-growth of the forests, to safeguard biodiversity, to conserve natural resources, maintain environmental quality and to support sustainable development.

Forestry and development projects will have a better chance of being sustainable if they involve the local people and create economic opportunities for them—women as well as men. Economic activities should be harmonized with the environmental integrity of the
forests and vice versa. Gender mainstreaming should be applied, so that both men and women gain capacities for planning, implementation and management of forestry and replanting programs. Women carry out key stages in the production of crops and are the main producers of vegetables and livestock for the household. Their knowledge of soil conditions and growing cycles makes them central in the conservation of the forests as well as land areas. Thus, there is a need for education and information on how to make use of the richness of the forests and to grow crops in a sustainable manner. Women’s NGOs are involved in this process, and indicators have been developed in the area.

**Land and Credit**

Women’s access to land is a critical issue in many developing countries. In order to gain equal rights and stop migration to the cities, it is crucial that women have equal access to the land. Traditionally, Brazilian women have been excluded from rural development and rural credit and they have therefore been forced to migrate. They do not have access to sufficient education and they do not inherit the farm or land property. If a woman is separated from her husband and the certificate to the land is in her husband’s name, she has no rights to claim it.

There is an ongoing attempt in Brazil to strengthen family farming. The basic premise of family farming is sustainability. If all the members of the family are equally invested in the farm they avoid unemployment and if they grow a variety of foods they can more successfully avoid fluctuations in the mono-crop market. However, the continuous subordination of rural women in the domestic sphere perpetuates their traditionally inferior position. This means that even though they may participate in the family farming, men are still titleholders and making the decisions.

Article 189 in the Brazilian constitution states that ‘the title of ownership and the concession of use of rights was to be conferred on the man and the woman or on both independently of their civil state, according to the terms of and the provisions of the law’. However, the Article does not guarantee that women actually become titleholders or have a joint title to the land that the family receives. Women still do not have adequate access to credit through formal institutions.

**Human Settlements / Environmental Health / Urban Environment**

Along with many other Latin American and Caribbean countries, Brazil is highly urbanized. As mentioned earlier, about 80% of the Brazilian population lives in the cities, and there is an ongoing migration to the cities from rural areas. It is important to find solutions to urban problems caused by population pressure on the urban environment. Therefore, there is a need to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of cities, so the environment can be protected from the negative impact of human activities and sustainable development can be upheld and provide better living conditions.

Decision makers’ access to information on the dynamics of cities can improve the integration between different stakeholders in environmental management including the gender-sensitive perspective. The main issues to be approached in the planning and policy-making of cities include environmental health, access to proper housing, ownership of houses, access to water and electricity, information about waste disposal.
and recycling of garbage, equity, education, and security (in connection with crime). In terms of settlement programs, equity of access is the main measurement used, while environmental health is an area in which a variety of indicators have been developed.

3.2 Other instruments for Ensuring Women's Participation

Besides indicators, other instruments have been created in Brazil in connection with Agenda 21 to help establish an analysis of the frequency of the distribution of public spending towards gender-related expenses. An example of this is the Participatory Budget, where women and other groups participate in decisions concerning the local budgets in the Brazilian state municipalities. Some municipalities have applied this concept and it became very popular in the last decade of the twentieth century. The Participatory Budget has great potential to be applied at the local level and can be a very useful tool for gender advocacy in the realm of sustainable development. In cities such as Porto Alegre, the majority of people involved in participatory budgeting meetings are women.

Often, information needs to be better articulated if it is to serve gender purposes. Public hearings where different stakeholders are asked to share information on women-related concerns have successfully been used in many cities to integrate women into planning and raising awareness activities concerning environmental improvement. The primary goal of the hearings is to bring together experts from environmental and health organizations, women's communities with concerned citizens and activists, to combine both effort and expertise. Such hearings help establish an analysis of the interrelationship between critical public health concerns facing women and those policy initiatives that address those concerns, mounted by government and non-governmental organizations alike. Planning processes for these hearings have successfully been used to strengthen alliances, allowing future cooperation and participation in activity to preserve health and environment. The hearings have been critical in raising public awareness about health hazards to women and in informing policy makers how to become involved in advocacy for women's health.

Strategies for engendering local governance for sustainable development need to sensitize those inside local government to help with accessing resources and opening up opportunities. This may include methodologies that involve those in local governments in encouraging gender sensitive approaches in development planning. “Top down” and “bottom up” approaches require different strategies, with the first emphasizing the involvement of government officials. Politicians, both past and present, and non-political administrative personnel can provide valuable guidance and support.

There is a need to engender local multi-stakeholder action in order to develop supportive networks to encourage women's involvement and break cultural resistance that many men, but also some women, carry against gender issues. Several strategies have been tried to overcome those cultural barriers. Both “women only” and mixed male and female dialogue and interaction opportunities should be held to focus on the issue. The “women only” mode focuses more on including women of varied ages, professions and class backgrounds, facilitating contact and the possibility of establishing a common ground for action when the group becomes mixed.
4. Concluding Remarks: Perspectives for the Brazilian Women’s Participation in Sustainable Development

Participation by women in local sustainable development processes, particularly in developing countries like Brazil, requires a better understanding of women's present status on the part of the development community, both governmental and non-governmental. Further it must be understood what barriers this status creates. A very important reality to be faced lies in the fact that illiteracy rates among women are still high. High rates of illiteracy clearly affect women’s economic stability and their civic engagement, diminishing their ability to understand and transmit important sanitary, environment and health information to the family and community. Beyond that, women often lack basic understanding of governmental processes. Capacity building and creative policy literacy programs are among the urgent measures that need to be undertaken by governmental and non-governmental bodies to better integrate women in policy planning and implementation of both the national, the local and the Women’s Action Agenda 21.

Appendix

Participation in Environmental Decision Making

- Proportion of women in management in the highest body dealing with environment
- Proportion of women in management of NGOs dealing with environment
- Number of agencies using participatory and gender analysis tools/studies in problem analysis
- Number of men and women staff trained on gender analysis and planning
- Number of projects and activities initiated by women and men in communities
- Number of awareness creation programs undertaken
- Number of men and women trained
- Existence of gender training team

Water

- Percent of population with access to drinking water
- Percent of female population with access to drinking water
- Time spent gathering water by women
- Number of women and men participating in planning and implementing water projects
- Number of gender disaggregated analyses carried out to delineate roles of men and women in water management
- Number of irrigation and water projects addressing differential needs, constraints and opportunities of women and men
- Percent of men and women involved in planning and implementation of irrigation and water supply projects
- Percent increase in the number with gender expertise in developing water master plans
- Number of master plans for water that address gender issues and needs of women
- Percent of women involved in maintenance of community water projects and incentives
- Percent of women with the role of decision making and control of rural and small scale urban
### Water Projects
- Percent of men and women whose awareness is raised in protecting water sources and maintaining water quality and hygiene
- Percent of households adopting simple water harvesting techniques to reduce women's workload and increase efficiency of water use
- Number of women's groups and organizations that contributed to strengthening the participation and capacity of women in development projects
- Number of women in management of water agencies and authorities.
- Are women’s perspectives, needs and visions regarding water being investigated and used as an input.

### Forests
- Number of forestry projects designed to address specific needs of men and women
- Number of women's NGO’s involved in tree planting/forestry activities
- Number of women in management in forestry agencies
- Percent increase in the number of men and women with capacity for planning, implementation and management of forestry programs
- Number of men and women trained in participatory appraisal methods in this sector
- Number of sector departments and NGO's adapting gender awareness programs
- Percent of women with reduced burden in fuel collection following dissemination of fuel saving techniques
- Percent increase in income of women through sale of tree seedlings
- Percent of women engaged in the production of tree and fruit seedlings.

### Land and Credit
- Percent of property owned or accessible by women across income groups
- Percent rural households where female/male is main income earner
- Percent of female headed households without access to land
- Percent average wage rates for agriculturists (including land laborers) by gender
- Percent men/women receiving land titles under land reform schemes
- Percent of women with access to credit versus men
- Percent of all farms in individual ownership that are owned by women
- Total sum of all credit granted to female owners of small enterprise as a percent of all credit granted to owners of small enterprises of both sexes
- Average amount of credit granted to female owners of small enterprises divided by the average amount of credit granted to male owners of small enterprises
- Percent of bank and other saving institution loans made to women

### Human Settlements/Environmental Health/Urban Environment
- Equality of access to social housing programs
- Gender gap among owner occupiers of poor households
- Number or organizations using gender integrated guidelines for program and project planning and implementation
- Number of gender expertise involved in the development of environmental impact assessment plans and guidelines
• Number of research, planning and environmental impact assessment staff provided with gender awareness training
• Number of environmental impact statements (EISs) with gender component
• Number of organizations using participatory research and training on technologies for waste disposal and management
• Percent of women playing an active role in decision making and awareness on environmental health
• Percent increase in the number of women professionals taking vocational and professional training on settlements and human health
• Number and percent of women who attended awareness raising seminars on public health and dangers of industrial waste
• Number and percent of women involved in development of guidelines for management and control of pollution
• Number and percent of women pesticide users (protected/informed or not?).

Source: Corral and Ransom: “Women and Information for Participation and Decision Making in Sustainable Development in Developing Countries, WEDO/REDEH, Brazil, (2001).

Appendix 1. Specific indicators for the five focal areas

Acknowledgments

The author wants to express special thanks to Christine Bagge and Stine Gustafsen, who have contributed to the elaboration of this article, helping with research and checking specific data.

Glossary

CEMINA: Communication, Education and Information on Gender
Census 2000: The IBGE’s newest investigation. The results are mainly from 1999.
CFEMEA: Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria
CNDM: Conselho National dos Direitos de Mulher
DEAM: Delegacias Especializadas no Atendimento à Mulher (Special Women’s Police Stations)
Gender mainstreaming: involves the attention to the gender aspect in all parts of development projects, including analysis, policy, research, advice, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
Gender sensitive data: Gender analyses helps to frame questions about the roles of women and men. The aim of the analyses is to formulate development strategies that meet both women’s and men’s needs and constraints.
Gender sensitive indicators: are indicators that disclose and point out changes in gender relations in a given society over a period of time. They are used to measure and evaluate and to provide factual information in a simple and easy understandable way.
Gender: refers to the social roles and relations of men and women, including different responsibilities. Unlike sex, which is biologically determined, gender roles are socially constructed and as such can
change over time and vary according to location and social context.

**IBGE:** Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

**LA21:** Local Agenda 21

**REDEH:** Rede de Desenvolvimento Humano (Human Development Network)

**Stakeholders:** governments, NGOs and citizens locally, nationally and internationally, who share stakes in the process of sustainable development.

**UN:** The United Nations

**UNCED:** The United Nations’ Conference for Environment and Development 1992

**UNIFEM:** The United Nations’ Development Fund for Women

**WAA21:** Women’s Action Agenda 21

**WEDO:** Women’s Environment and Development Organization

**Women’s Capacity Building Mode:** a tool to develop women’s effective leadership.

**Women’s Community Report Card:** to help women identify sustainable issues.

**Bibliography**

Official Report World Women’s Congress for a Healthy Planet, including Women’s Action Agenda 21 and Findings of the Tribunal, 1991 [This report has been like a guideline for women's participation at the UNCED. It contains the Congress Report as well as the Women’s Action Agenda 21 that was the main outcome of the conference.]


UNIFEM: 1993, Agenda 21, an Easy Reference to the Specific Recommendations on Women. New York. [This publication is an extract of Agenda 21 and is designed to serve as an easy reference for those seeking to identify recommendations in Agenda 21 that specifically mention women.]

WEDO for a Healthy Planet – Community Report Card, 1992 [This was a tool developed by WEDO to help grassroots organizations to set their own indicators to assess the implementation of Chapter 24, which refers to women, in Agenda 21.]

Weaving a Better Future – final report of Daughter of the Earth: the Environment and Development Collaborative WEB – NGO Forum on Women, Huairou, China, 1995. [Final report of the event that women's networks from all over the world, including Brazil, presented at the the NGO event of the IV UN Conference on Women which took place in China. Several groups from Brazil also participated.]

Brasil Século XXI: Os Caminhos da Sustentabilidade Cinco Anos depois da Rio-92 – Forum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento Sustentável, FASE, Rio de Janeiro, 1997. [An assessment of five years of sustainable development programs and policies in Brazil carried by social movement. Through broad consultation different exponents of each social movement provide an analysis of how they see the trends of sustainable development evolving.]

Experiências Brasileiras de Desenvolvimento Sustentável – Ministério do Meio Ambiente, MMA, Brasilia, 1997. [As a result of a national consultation, the Brazilian Ministry of Environment features 183 best practices that express concepts of sustainable development. These experiences where chosen...
according to three criteria: (1) express sustainability; (2) being done in partnership and have more then three years of existence.]

Women Transform the Mainstream – Commission on Sustainable Development Sixth Session. Background Paper 30, 1998 [This report carries a series of case studies of women and sustainable development. Two came from Brazil and reflect experiences of integrating gender in local sustainable development policies. These cases were presented at a dialogue between NGO and community organizations and governments at the UN.]

Subsídios à Elaboração da Agenda 21 Brasileira: Redução das Desigualdades – Ministério do Meio Ambiente, Parceria 21, Brasilia, 1999. [The book presents the results of a consultation that was carried to grasp the main proposals from the Brazilian Society concerning the Reduction of Social Inequalities in Brazil from the point of view of Sustainability].

Risks, Rights and Reforms – A 50-Country Survey Assessing Government Actions Five Years after the International Conference on Population and Environment, 1999. [This country assessment carries a case on Brazil which translates several dimensions of environmental links to women's health issues. The reports were collected from environmental leaders all over the country.]

Progress of the World's Women 2000. Published by UNIFEM, New York, 2000. [This report of UNIFEM examines women's progress worldwide from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s. It reviews key indicators of progress, highlights issues and countries in which impressive strides have been made, and identifies opportunities for strengthening accountability.]


REDEH (2001), Relatório da Reunião de Consulta – Estratégias das mulheres para a Rio + 10, Agenda 21 de ação das mulheres pela paz e por um planeta Saudável. 4-11. REDEH/WEDO, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. [Summarises the results of a conference for women’s organisations in Latin America held in Brazil in October as a preparatory meeting for the Earth Summit 2002. At the conference women shared their experiences with the WAA21 and held workshops to prepare the Women’s Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy planet 2015.]

REDEH and WEDO, 2002. Women’s Action Agenda for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet 2015: a Decade of Women’s Advocacy for Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro. [This plan of action resulted from the recommendations proposed by women in 6 regional meeting and electronic consultations throughout the process that led to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.]

Feldmann, Fabio; Crespo, Samyra; Drummond, Jose Augusto. Rio +10 Brazil – A Decade of Change, Rio de Janeiro, 2002. [The book was designed to show, under different perspectives and approaches, how Brazil, during the ten years since Rio-92, has been dealing with the topic of the environment and how it is building its agenda of actions and policies.]

Biographical Sketch

Thais Corral is a journalist with a master in public policy by the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Her field of work for the last fourteen years has been in the non profit “third sector”. She is the founder of three non-profit organizations, two in Brazil—REDEH (Network for Human Development) and CEMINA (Communication, Education, Information on Gender)—and one in the USA,
called WEDO (Women Environment and Development Organization) which is one of the biggest international women's organizations working in the area of political advocacy. All these organizations are concerned with women’s political and social empowerment, through the use of leadership training, communication tools and advocacy strategies.

Thais was one of the few women that represented civil society and gender concerned issues at the UN Global Conferences that took place in the 1990s. Her main interests are concerned with the challenges posed by women's contributions to improve global and local governance.

Among her accomplishments are the mobilization of women during the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) through the Women's Action Agenda 21 and Planeta FEMEA, a major event organized by women worldwide at the Global NGO Forum. She also was very involved in the design of stakeholders’ participation in the Brazilian Agenda 21.

She has received several awards that express acknowledgement of her leadership: the “100 Heroines Award”, and the “Award Abril Mulher” for her contribution to the improvement of the status of women in Brazil. She was also recognized as “the Woman of the Year in 2001” by Brazilian National Council of Women.

She is a LEAD (Leadership for Environment and Development) fellow of the third cohort. She is also fluent in Portuguese, English, Spanish, Italian and French.