

## Women experiencing discrimination: Oral presentation

*Text in italics will not be read out*

Madame Chair. My name is Beryl Anderson and I am presenting on behalf of the women's groups who contributed to the Aotearoa New Zealand NGO report, Women Experiencing Discrimination 2012.

The global recession has had an impact across the board in New Zealand, with Government cuts and other changes affecting people from all walks of life. Women have been negatively affected. I will be highlighting five issues.

### 1. Violence against women

Violence remains the overwhelming concern of New Zealand women. Each year on average 14 women, six men and 10 children are killed by a member of their family. This violence is perpetrated by men against women with 84% of those arrested for domestic violence being men. 90% of the women who seek refuge help report psychological abuse and 65% report physical abuse. Statistical collection by official sources such as police, health, and social services cannot be compared because of inconsistencies in definitions and data capture.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend the Government to statistically report violence, disaggregated by gender and the type of violence suffered by women in New Zealand.*

### 2. Gender pay gap

The closure of the Pay and Employment Equity Unit and the legislative changes with regard to employment and welfare have the potential to significantly discriminate against and disadvantage women, particularly those who are already the least advantaged. The 2010 analysis of pay differences in the public sector found gender pay differences as high as 38%. Tough economic circumstances do not justify gender discrimination.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that the government continue the work begun by the Pay and Employment Equity Unit to address gender pay inequalities.*

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that the government monitor, report and investigate gender pay differences.*

### 3. Labour force participation

Women's participation in the workforce remains high, but 57% of those earning the minimum wage are women, who are working in caring occupations, or the service, retail or hospitality sectors.

Labour market analysis has shown that women's employment has been seriously affected from the Canterbury earthquakes. While there are new jobs in the construction sector, the retail trade and accommodation sectors have suffered major job losses. Of the additional 4,500 new jobs created women were appointed to 8.9%. Increasing the employment of women in Christchurch is focused on getting young women into male-dominated trades. There must be a focus on re-training and supporting prime aged and mature women workers who have lost jobs due to the impacts from the earthquakes.

*We urge the CEDAW committee to recommend that educational facilities admit young women into previously male dominant trades eg, plumbing, electrical supply businesses, building and such positions.*

Policies and services that support women to participate and have more equitable opportunities in the labour market include paid parental leave, early childhood education and out-of-school services. New Zealand's paid parental leave provisions fall well short of international norms for eligibility criteria, payment level, and period of leave.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that the paid parental leave period be a minimum of twelve months and that it be extended to casual and seasonal workers and those who have held more than one job within the eligibility period.*

The government has reduced funding to the early childhood sector and there has been a reduction in quality. Out of school services need to be expanded and adequately funded. Women need access to affordable early childhood and out of school care.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that women's participation in the labour market is encouraged through the availability of affordable, quality early childhood and out of school services.*

#### **4. Participation in political and public life**

We applaud the very recent move where companies listed on the New Zealand stock exchange will be required to disclose the gender composition of their boards and senior management teams. As yet no measures have been introduced to positively discriminate in favour of women in the political or corporate arena, or to encourage the appointment of women.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to endorse the New Zealand Census of Women's Participation and encourage the government to introduce measures to increase the participation of women on public and private boards.*

#### **5. Sexual health**

New Zealand has a high teen pregnancy rate and young people currently have poor sexual health compared to other OECD countries. New Zealand lacks a coherent approach to addressing teen pregnancy and the 2001 Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy was never fully implemented and is now out of date.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that New Zealand initiates a sector wide strategy to improve young people's sexual health and relationships, including early pregnancies. We also urge the Committee to recommend urgent action on sexuality education including the review and implementation of the recommendations from the 2007 review of the teaching of sexuality education in years 7 to 13<sup>1</sup>.*

It is widely considered that the current legal framework for abortion hinders access to the highest attainable standard of health for women. First trimester abortion services are relatively difficult to access for over one-sixth of the women in New Zealand based on their geographical location and many women have to travel out of their region to access services.

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that abortion law be reviewed with a view to removing it from the provisions of the Crimes Act 1961 and that it be dealt with as an integrated component of a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health service. Regulations should require doctors' who conscientiously object to abortion to refer women seeking an abortion to another provider as a minimum standard of practice.*

*We urge the CEDAW Committee to recommend that oversight of abortion law, policy and services, should shift from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Health.*

Many of these issues were raised five years ago.

Overall, it is felt that the Government has lost its momentum in progressing the advancement of women in New Zealand, as well as introducing changes contrary to its obligations as outlined under CEDAW.

Thank you. I now hand over to my colleague Christie.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Review Office. 2007. The teaching of sexuality education in years 7-13. <http://ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/The-Teaching-of-Sexuality-Education-in-Years-7-13-June-2007>