

FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL

International Women's Human Rights Movement
and the International Women's Rights Action
Watch (IWRAP)

by Kasia Polanska



IWRAP

- IWRAP was founded at the United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya (1985) by Minnesotan Arvonne Fraser and her international colleagues
- IWRAP is a network of colleagues within the framework of the UN CEDAW Convention

CEDAW

- CEDAW is one of 7 international human rights treaties. It covers issues ranging from women's health & education, women in public life, family and marriage law, etc.
- Entered into force in 1981
- Ratified by 176 countries (as of May 2004)



Movement Motivation

- Founding of the UN in 1945 and the emerging discourse of equality
- "Women's rights are human rights"
- Development of international women's network and collective identity
- CEDAW as tool for women's activism



Movement Motivation continued

- NSMs: arise in institutional context; participation and solidarity is a payoff
- Emotions
- Relationship between collective and individual experience
- Global discourse “democracy in action”

Resources, Mobilization, and Recruitment

- Importance of resources: expensive international travel, etc.
- UN meetings as “social base” for mobilization and recruitment across borders
- Combination of salient identity/social support

Mobilizing Networks



IWRAW's Workshop on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva, Switzerland November 2003

Outcomes and Effects (General)

- SM's activities or inevitable progress of universalizing Global Culture?
- IWRAW as a “key NGO in the north”
- “Violence against Women”: Creating a successful concept since the 1990s

Outcomes and Effects (Measurable)

- IWRAW's profile at the UN
- Increase in women's regular presence at CEDAW and CESCR sessions; “shadow reports”
- Input of domestic women's groups into UN proceedings on a regular basis



Comparative & Global Social Movements

- Globalization and Women's HR Movement (Neoinstitutionalism)
- "Boomerang Effect"
- Mixed Role of Technology (e-mail, the internet)

Comparative & Global SMs *continued*

- Is a Transnational Advocacy Network a SM?
- The relationship between the global norm of equality between women and men and what happens on the ground

Tentative Conclusions

- The role of agency vs. political opportunity in the case of IWRAW and the women's Human Rights movement
- The future of IWRAW and the SM
- Are grassroots SMs grassroots?

