

UN World Women's Conferences

It began with a year

It turned into a decade

It gave birth to a movement

It became a revolution

Where We Came From . . . 1975-1995

1975

International Women's Year (IWY)

World Conference on Women and IWY Tribune

Place: Mexico City, Mexico

Policy: World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of International Women's Year

1980

World Conference of the UN

Decade for Women and NGO Forum

Place: Copenhagen, Denmark

Policy: Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000

1985

World Conference to Review and Appraise the

Achievement of the UN Decade for Women and NGO Forum

Place: Nairobi, Kenya

Policy: Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000

1995

UN Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO Forum

Place: Beijing, China

Policy: Platform for Action

As we traveled the world conference road . . . we ourselves were transformed.

Where did the UN World Conferences take us?

Between 1975 and 1995, the UN convened four world conferences on women. Each of the UN world conferences focused on negotiating a global policy document: a Plan for Action (1975), a Programme of Action (1980), the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (1985), and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

Women of the world also came together in parallel non-governmental conferences to discuss issues of common concern, to debate directions and to forge new alliances. Each of these gatherings had its distinguishing characteristics. 1975 was described as the "largest consciousness-raising session ever held"; the 1980 Forum was identified with networking; the 1985 forum was known for the challenges to mainstream development thinking articulated by activists and academics from the Global South; while the 1995 Forum was characterized by the heightened political activism of women.

The Nairobi conferences marked the culmination of the UN Decade for Women, but for women it was just a beginning. For many organizations and networks, the women's conferences served as the birthing years. As we moved beyond the 1980s, it became clear that what we had created was a global women's movement and what we had set in motion was nothing less than a revolution.

The 5-year review of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies led to a decision to convene a Fourth World Conference on Women

In its 1990 five-year review of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (FLS), the Commission on the Status of Women noted that the momentum of implementation had drastically slowed since the Nairobi FLS were adopted in 1985 and suggest that-- unless urgent action was taken--the FLS would be at risk. To improve the pace of implementation, the CSW and ECOSOC recommended that a second review be carried out in 1995. In other words, the outcome of the five-year review of the Nairobi FLS was the decision to convene the 1995 world conference in order to accelerate action and to renew government's commitment to address women's concerns.