

ACWW's Beijing+25 Banner

Marking the 25 years since the Beijing Declaration, and highlighting the challenges still facing rural women globally

As we reported in the last issue of The Countrywoman, ACWW attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and committed to helping achieve what became known as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Platform identified 12 Critical Areas of Concern which needed to be solved if women were to achieve true equality, and governments achieve completion of their commitments.

In March 2020, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was to focus on celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, and many governments congratulate themselves on a 'job well done'. ACWW, critically aware of how far the world is from addressing the 12 Critical Areas of Concern, decided that whilst attending CSW we should help illustrate the reality of life for rural women globally.

We wrote to member societies around the world, and invited them to participate in contributing a piece of craft work to a large banner that would be unveiled in front of UN headquarters on 8 March, International Women's Day. Sadly, because of the impact of Covid-19, CSW this year was cancelled and we were unable to display the banner... but the contributions received from all over the world were beautiful, emotionally charged, and powerful messages of hope in the face of incredible challenge.

Each of the 12 Critical Areas is addressed both as the original point recorded by the UN, and with an update on the current reality facing rural women. These craft pieces take many forms, from appliqué to painting, embroidery to patchwork, felting to barbed wire! They are unique, and the reflect the communities they come from. We are so very grateful to every society who agreed to contribute, and the wonderfully skilled individuals who brought their ideas to fruition. We are pleased to showcase each one on the following pages, and will raise as much awareness of them as possible over the year ahead.

A final note - each of these panels will be auctioned off at the next Triennial World Conference in 2022, in support of ACWW's advocacy work. If you would like to own a piece of history, this is your chance!



The first panel shows the Beijing Declaration logo, and highlights the road from Beijing, through the Millennium Development Goals, to the Sustainable Development Goals, but points out rural women are marking the continuing challenges. By Nick Newland, ACWW Central Office



Women and Poverty

Made by Donna Henderson, Canada
Title: Road to a Better Life,

'My view of this topic resulted in this square. Both city and rural women experience poverty. Foreground depicts bleakness and the women are on the road to better lives through education. ACWW provides opportunities for women to learn the skills that lift them to a better life. Actually, I believe ACWW provides us all with the opportunity to be better people through the caring and sharing of women.'



Women and Poverty: Continuing Challenges

Made by Thilaka Perera and the women of Lanka Mahila Samiti, Sri Lanka

This contribution illustrates the challenges relating to poverty which face the rural women of Sri Lanka in many forms. It also marks International Women's Day, and Lanka Mahila Samiti's 90th Anniversary year in 2020.



Education and Training of Women

Made by the women of the Women's Institute of Pahang, Malaysia

'Teach a Woman, you Teach a Nation; Skill a Woman, they Skill the Nation' says this contribution from Malaysia. Each nation on earth contributes to a pencil writing in a school book, broadening our understanding and strengthening our global education.





Education and Training of Women: Continuing Challenges

Made by Savannah Chauke of Mapula Embroideries
South Africa

Mapula (Mother of Rain) Embroideries are original, designed and hand made by about 150 women. Their work hangs in museums and private collections worldwide. Embroiderers work at home and from a base at the DWT Nthathe Adult Education Centre with the Sisters of Mercy in the Winterveld, 40 km northwest of Pretoria. Since 1991 the income has empowered the women, helped them feed and educate their children and improve their lives. Mapula Embroideries is now an independent trust.



Women and Health

Made by women of the Federation of Women's Institutes
of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago

This deeply quilted contribution illustrates the visible (the blue, black, and red heart in the middle) and invisible (the red outlined hearts on either side) challenges to women's health. The overall theme follows the traditional colours of the Women's Institutes of Trinidad and Tobago, red, white, and black.



Women and Health: Continuing Challenges

Made by Jenny Sellers, Projects Administrator,
ACWW Central Office

This square indicates the lack of disaggregated data in a health setting that influences medical funding and decision making.

Violence Against Women

Made by Szabo Maria of the Women of the Third Millennium, Brasov Branch, Romania

The idea and concept was by Georgeta Havrilet of the Women of the Third Millennium, Targu Mures Branch. The pattern's drawing for sewing was by Melinda Puskas, traditional motifs from Barseiland and its surrounding community.



Violence Against Women: Continuing Challenges

Made by Ruth Shanks AM, past World President of ACWW New South Wales, Australia

This piece highlights the impact violence against women has in all communities around the world, irrelevant of age, religion, employment, race, or any other characteristics. Many of you will be familiar with quilts made by past World President (2013-2019) Ruth Shanks, and this is one of two featured on the banner as she kindly agreed to contribute a second when someone was unable to take part.



Women and Armed Conflict

Made by Ann Eccleston of Northern Ireland Women's Institutes, Northern Ireland

Ann was kind enough to send a detailed description of her creative process, a little of which is shown there: 'When I had the first meeting about the making of the collage with Sophia Maybin and Edwina Marr... I was astonished with the amount of children caught up in conflict as they clung to their mother's breasts, the mothers arms laden with small children and babies as they ran in fear, and there was a look of trauma on all their faces. So, Trauma was a word featured. I used two pictures of little boys just standing one against a brick wall and another clinging onto barbed wire. The two boys looked like they were in despair. So, Despair was a word featured...' This is a stunning piece which needs to be seen up close to really appreciate how detailed it is.





Women and Armed Conflict: Continuing Challenges

Made by Irene Chinje, ACWW Area President for East, West and Central Africa, Cameroon

'The rural woman as a mother, wife and sister still has her role to perform as a nurturer and custodian of culture despite any conflict. The family at this time looks up solely to her for their feeding, health and economic stability. With all the insecurities, she still has to till the land to grow the crops for the family's survival and its economic needs. The image is a tired woman carrying a baby whose daily existence is wrecked by conflicts. There is a hoe in her hand, an AK47 by her side to protect herself and the child and a basket of her weathered produce. The environment and climate are unfriendly, the soil depleting due to the harsh climate. She has all of these challenges to handle coupled with the insecurities and long-term effects of the conflicts, making access to basic amenities difficult as there is naught in social or economic gains. Her basket is half-filled, an indication of bad yield. She can barely take, hence she is tattered and dishevelled.'



Women and the Economy

Made by Christine Andreassen of the Norwegian Women and Family Association, Norway

'We see restricted access to education as a continuing challenge to women's economy.'



Women and the Economy: Continuing Challenges

Made by Tish Collins, Chief Executive Officer, ACWW Central Office

'This panel represents women multi-tasking to complete the many demands on her. Symbolism includes feeding and nurturing children and domestic animals, being under time-pressure to complete unpaid tasks for home and paid work outside the home. The statistics, taken from an Indian survey, represent the continuing imbalance of paid and unpaid work between men and women.'

Women in Power and Decision Making

Made by Kay Denise Smith, United States of America

'My interpretation of this brief is to show this young woman, in her colourful headwear raising her hand to: Vote at a meeting; To be recognised at a meeting; To signal that she is the leader and that others are to follow her. I feel her motion could be any of the above and demonstrates power and decision making.'



Women in Power and Decision Making: Continuing Challenges

Made by Dr Marina Muller, ACWW Area President for Southern Africa, Namibia

Area President Dr Marina Muller highlights the need for Education, Vocational Training, and Community Development programmes and projects to achieve gender equality and better representation by women; she gives the figure of approximately 30%, but states: 'We Will Get There Though'.

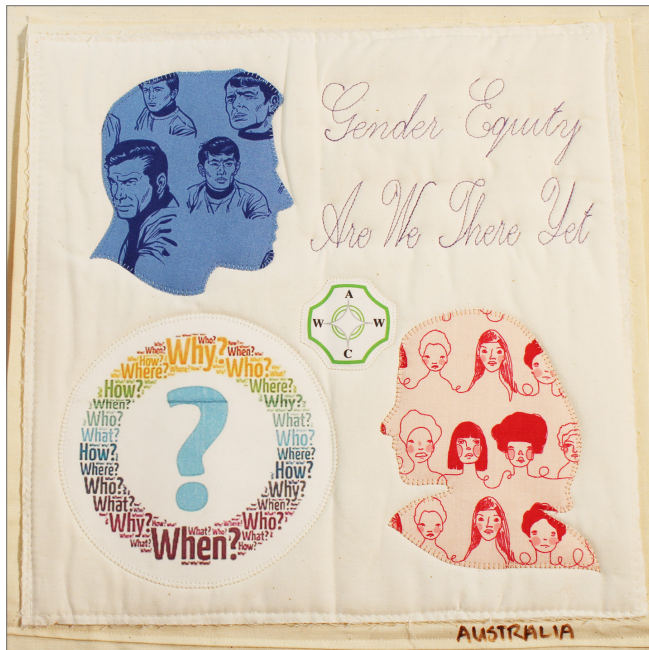


Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

Made by Magdie de Kock, ACWW World President South Africa

'This fabric painting highlights the importance of health care for mothers and babies. Access to medical care, hospitals and clinics in non-negotiable and should be made more accessible to women and children. It is especially important in the stages of post-natal and ante-natal care.'





Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women: Continuing challenges

Made by Ruth Shanks AM, past World President of ACWW New South Wales, Australia

The second of Ruth's two contributions, this poses the question: Gender Equity: Are we there yet?



Human Rights of Women

Made by Snoekie Erasmus and Dorah Matshe, South Africa

This colourful contribution was a collaborative effort and shows a traditional graduation cap, Africa, and the uphill struggle for young women's education.



Human Rights of Women: Continuing Challenges

Made by Tish Collins, Chief Executive Officer, ACWW Central Office

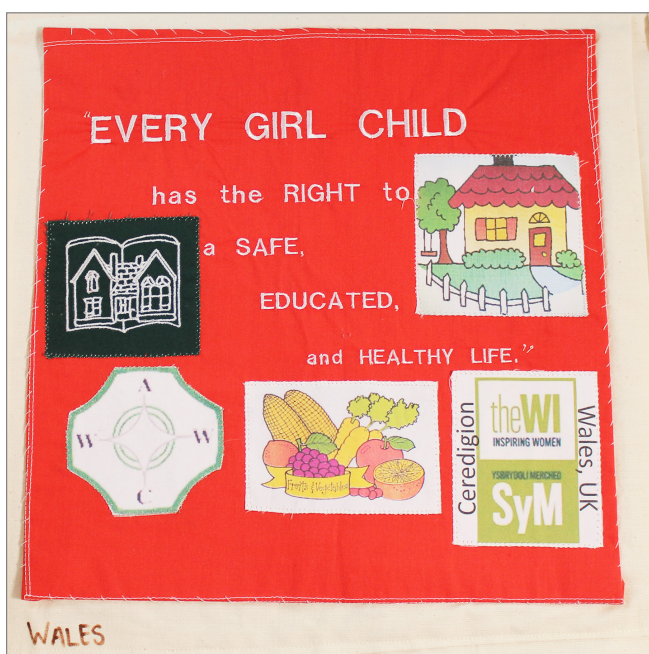
'Women's Rights are Human Rights. The eight embroidered words represent the major headings recognised as universal human rights. The three dolls are to represent women of the world joining hands in unison to work for these rights – inspired by my attendance at such international gatherings as ACWW Triennial World Conferences and the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations.'



Women and the Environment: Continuing Challenges

Made by Amanda Bowles and Ann Dodson of Hampshire Federation of Women's Institutes, England

This beautiful contributions features several forms of artwork, including embroidery, fabric painting, and quilting.



The Girl Child

Made by Eluned Davies, Beti Wyn Davies and Margaret Fogg of Ceredigion Federation of Women's Institutes, Wales

'Every girl child has the right to a safe, educated, and healthy life' states this colourful contribution from Wales. It also features the logos of ACWW and the Women's Institute.



The Girl Child: Continuing Challenges

Made by Selina Makwaha of Mapula Embroideries, South Africa

A second contribution from Mapula Embroideries, this illustrates the need for young women to work, and contribute to their communities, often to the detriment of their education and personal development.