



Training Guide on Women's Tribunals on Poverty and Climate Change

Feminist Task Force of the Global Call to Action
against Poverty (GCAP)

What is a Tribunal of opinion?

- Tribunals of opinion or popular (peoples') tribunals have been used to create a “public” space for people to draw attention to critical issues at local, national and global levels.
- Persons directly affected by different situations (e.g. poverty, climate change, gender inequality) can present testimony, bring awareness and advocate for fundamental human rights.
- Tribunal trials are genuine moral sanctions having no official judicial verdict in regard to the State.

Why organize a tribunal or a poverty hearing?

- as a means to voice concerns, share stories and experiences;
- to present testimony and documentation about a critical issue.;
- when formal justice does not offer answers, a tribunal is an opportunity for civil society to join forces to advocate for the respect of human rights and be validated.
- It raises awareness and highlights an issue.

**MEXICO:
POPULAR
TRIBUNAL ON
GENDER AND
CLIMATE JUSTICE**

NOVEMBER, 2011
MEXICO CITY



What can be achieved by a tribunal?

- Tribunals aim to put political pressure on governments at the national, regional and international level;
- Proposals and information from tribunals are collected, documented and presented to decision makers and used for public policy purposes;
- Tribunals promote the formulation of recommendations, coming to conclusions with the aim of generating change for the effective fulfilment of the human rights.

FEMINIST TASK FORCE – of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) GENDER & CLIMATE JUSTICE TRIBUNALS

15 Women's Tribunals were organized in Africa, Asia and Latin America to highlight the impact of climate change on women, particularly rural and grassroots women, and their communities.

Outcomes were presented at the UN climate change meeting, COP17, in Durban, South Africa in November, 2011.



Tribunals – some precedents

- Peoples hearing/tribunals emerged in 1960s
- Beginning with the Bertrand Russell Tribunal, widely regarded as initiating the tradition, convened in Sweden and Denmark in 1967 to raise public awareness of atrocities being committed in Vietnam by the US and its allies.
- Since the 1990s, however, use of tribunals/hearings by civil society, non-governmental organizations, coalitions and social movements has surged around the world, particularly by women's groups.

Women's use of a Tribunal

- Claiming “public” space to air “private” abuses
- Women began to use tribunals and hearings as a way to make visible gender-based abuses often hidden in the “private” contexts of home, family, personal relationships, religion and traditional practices.
- International Tribunal on Crimes against Women (Brussels, 1976)
- Vienna Tribunal on Women's Human Rights (1993)
- Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery (Tokyo, 2000)

Other tribunals and hearings

- 1998 Hearings - South African Human Rights Council and Commission for Gender Equality – premised on Truth and Reconciliation Commission with hearings after the end of apartheid documenting concerns of poor and marginalized black communities.
 - *Hearings revealed high poverty levels and challenges to access of social services, e.g when housing and health were denied.*
- 2002 International Peoples Tribunal on Debt (World Social Forum WSF, Porto Alegre) - organized by Jubilee South with a verdict issued on why debt is illegitimate and why institutions, such as IMF and World Bank should pay.

WOMEN'S TRIBUNALS BY THE FEMINIST TASK FORCE - GCAP

- Seeing a need to highlight the situation of the feminization of poverty and capture the plight of impoverished women, the FTF identified the use of women's tribunal as a means of:
 - Raising awareness
 - Providing a platform to rural and grassroots women
 - Leveraging the global platform of the GCAP coalition
 - Documenting stories and experiences of women
 - Having documentation for advocacy and policy changes.

Women's Tribunal:

Issues and Locations, 2007 - 2009

- Women's Tribunal against Poverty (New Dehli, India; 2007)
- National Tribunal for the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the Rural Women (Lima, Peru; 2007)
- Women's Tribunal against Poverty (Cairo, Egypt; 2008)
- Women's Tribunals on Poverty and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) w/in framework of UN (NY; 2008)
- Women's Tribunals on Gender & Climate Change, 2009 within UN Framework on Climate Change Conference:
 - Africa: Botswana, Uganda, Nigeria
 - Asia: Nepal, Pakistan,
 - Latin America: Brazil

Women's Tribunals on Gender & Climate Justice 2011

“Strengthening Voices, Search for Solutions”

- 15 Women's Tribunals on Gender & Climate Justice
Partners: **Greenpeace Int'l.** and **Inter Press Service**
- Africa: Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana*, Zambia*,
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*
- Asia: Bangladesh*, India*, Nepal, Pakistan
- Latin America: Argentina*, Brazil, El Salvador,
Mexico, Peru
- * organized by umbrella coalition, GCAP

Elements of a Tribunal - Preparing the tribunal



Elements of a tribunal

Information gathering and decision making as first steps:

1- What is the **OBJECTIVE** of the tribunal? Is it targeting a certain time, event or important occasion?

E.g. Is it organized to feed into a UN meeting?

2- What is the **FOCUS / THEMATIC** area for the tribunal?

Will there be a subtheme determined by the location?

E.g. In Peru, the tribunal focused on rural women.

3- Form an **ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**. Who will be involved? What groups are key? Who will take the organizing role?



4- BUILDING CASES

Select 2-3 cases based on the area of focus or subthemes of the tribunal.

5- DOCUMENTATION.

This would include note-taking, recording, video, photos.

6- OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Document outcomes and rec's, in particular.

1- Objectives of tribunal

- What is the main purpose for holding a tribunal?
- Is there a specific or crucial message to raise at a critical time?
- Is there an important event, e.g. global meeting or conference, where the tribunal can happen as a parallel event?
- Target audience – is there a target audience for the tribunal?

2- Area of focus

- Decide on an area of focus for tribunal, or on subthemes related to the main area of focus.

Examples:

- Women, poverty and climate change;
- Women and access to water, subtheme: rural women
- Women and human security

3- Organizing committee

- Bring together partners or a group of dedicated and committed individuals / organizations around the central theme of the tribunal.
- Ensure a commitment for the duration of the planning process (could be 3-4 months).
- Decide how often the OC will meet.
- Select supporters but also workers!
- Begin recruiting interns/volunteers.

4- Build cases

- It is ideal to organize the focus area and subthemes into mock cases.
- Based on the focus area(s) and the length of the tribunal, select 2 – 4 cases to present at the tribunal.
- Normally, dedicate 1 hour to presenting one case.
- A case can be developed and presented by an expert who is a member of the OC.
- She/he will serve as the lead organizer for the case.
- Lead organizer will find witnesses to present on the case.

Women, Poverty and the MDGs

New York (2008) - cases

- **Case 1: MDG 1- Poverty and Economic Security**
- **Case 2: MDGs 5 and 6: Women's Health**
 - *Improve maternal health & Combat HIV/AIDS*
- **Case 3: MDG 3 – Women's Empowerment, Human Security**
- *Each case was 1 hour with Tribunal being 3 hours.*
- *Jurists provided feedback after every case.*
- *Transitional pieces (local performers/video) were done between each case.*

Witnesses

- Select primary witnesses as well as secondary, or expert witnesses.
- **Primary witnesses** will present their experiences, personal stories, first source information relating to the specific focus area of a case.
- An **Expert witnesses** provides analysis, studies/reports, documentation, and most importantly, could provide the context and initial introduction of a specific case.

Panel of Jurists

- Selection of jurists is crucial to the tribunal.
- Panel of Jurists will consist of top experts in the field, academics, analysts, prominent members of the community or celebrities.
- Another purpose is for jurists to attract media, if media is wanted at the tribunal.
- Jurists will provide feedback in the form of proposals and recommendations, as well as speak to the media.
- Select jurists who will provide insight serving to “connect the dots” presented by the witnesses.

Peruvian Jury (2007)



*New York City Tribunal – Jurists
included both local and global perspectives.*



5- Documentation

- Documentation is critical to the process of gathering information and highlighting the situation of women.
- Documentation could include, but is not limited to:
 - Audio recording of witnesses spoken work
 - Verbatim recording/account of testimony
 - Reports , films and any other supplemental information presented at tribunal
 - Photography
 - Filming, videography of tribunal
 - Media on tribunal

6-Outcomes and Recommendations

- Throughout tribunal, the jurists and experts will have recommendations and other advice to offer.
- These recommendations are critical for any follow-up processes of tribunal, such as submitting reports to UN or other authorities.
- Record recommendations and demands of the jurists and witnesses.
- Prepare report(s), video, ... to send to targeted authorities.

Egypt Tribunal (2007)

Jurists from
Egypt and
Lebanon.



India (2007) - example

- The Women's Tribunal Against Poverty was collectively organized by 21 organizations and networks to enable women from the most marginal communities of India to present their experiences, and articulate their expectations from the government in relation to the Right to Livelihood, Security of Tenure, Access to Basic Services and Participation in Governance.
- A 'Women's Charter Against Poverty' -based on the recommendations -was released across India to commemorate the occasion of the IWD and reinforce the demands for women's access to power, assets and resources.

Recommendations were presented to the Indian president (2007)





“Elements of a Tribunal” prepared by the GCAP Feminist Task Force. For more information, write to the Rosa Lizarde, Global Coordinator

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