

DECADE FOR WOMEN (1975 - 1985): A WORLD PLAN OF ACTION

Since 1945, the United Nations Organization has claimed the abolition of all discrimination between individuals based on race or sex. In 1975, Women's Year, the delegates of one hundred states assembled in Mexico, decided the adoption of a "World plan of action" which would be executed in the span of ten years, 1975-1985, and containing guidelines concerning the measures to be adopted by each state toward realising complete equality between the sexes.

WORLD PLAN OF ACTION

The following paragraphs summarize the main points included in the World Plan of Action, adopted in Mexico Conference 1975.

1 - Participation of all states in implementing world peace.

For this purpose, women should be encouraged to work for peace, as individuals or as groups; women volunteers who work to promote peace should be acknowledged. Other methods to be applied: intercommunication between continents and states, leading to intercultural exchange and further knowledge about women of the world; implanting in children principles of respect for the freedom of others and belief in racial and sexual equality.

2 - Political participation

Very few women hold leading government positions in their countries. Hence the women's problems have been neglected because men have monopolized the leadership of the world.

During the coming ten years, an orientation campaign should be organized to prepare women for active political participation.

3 - Education and training

In all countries, the percentage of illiteracy is higher among women than among men. Equal opportunities for education should be given to both sexes with equal programs of study. Campaigns must be organized for the abolition of female illiteracy in a given period of time, with adequate pamphlets and publications prepared for the purpose.

4 - Work and employment

According to statistics, the number of working women between 15 and 64, forms a third of the world's working population. This number does not include housekeepers who work in their own homes and who are neither remunerated for their work nor beneficiaries of social security. The World Plan of Action stipulates that women be encouraged to take further training preparing them to occupy more lucrative and responsible positions. To this effect, we should encourage "the development of co-operatives and small-scale industries to extend women's range of economic roles and to let them play an active part in these cooperatives, particularly in food production, marketing, housing, nutrition, health and child-care."

5 - Health and nutrition

Women have special health care needs during pregnancy, delivery and lactation which, if neglected, affect their children as well. "Improved access to health, nutrition and other social services is essential to the full participation of women in development activities and to the strengthening of family life."

6 - The Family in modern society
Marriage and family laws should conform to international standards.

The principle of equal rights and responsibilities means that during marriage, both partners should perform an active role in the home, taking into account the importance of combining home and work responsibilities and sharing jointly decision-making on matters affecting the family and children.

7 - Population

Women's status, their educational level, the nature of their employment and their position within the family, decisively influence family size. The right of women to decide on the number and spacing of their children, their access to the information and means needed to exercise that right, affect their ability to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities.

Individuals and couples should have access, through an institutionalized system, to the information and means that would enable them to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to overcome sterility.

8 - Housing and related facilities

The majority of women spend more time than men in and around the house. The improvement of the house, its related facilities and its neighborhood will, therefore, bring about a direct improvement in the daily lives of women.

Other social questions

Among other social questions that need consideration, the following are worth mentioning:

Provision for the need of migrant women, of elderly women who frequently receive less protection and assistance than men; taking special legislative and other measures to combat prostitution, female criminality and illicit traffic in women.

Women should no more be excluded from the economically active population in national statistics because they are home-makers only. Home-making should be considered an economic activity, especially when a woman takes care, unaided, of all the household activities which require more time and effort than an ordinary paid job. In this respect, women who devote their time to home-making should claim the right to social security and some other forms of remuneration.

**Women and National Development:
The Complexities of Change
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"Development as if Women Mattered:

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Prepared by May Rihani, formerly staff member of IWSAW, presently assistant director, Secretariat for Women in Development, New Trans-Century Foundation; with the help of Jody Joy, research assistant to the above-mentioned Secretariat.

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