



UNITED
NATIONS

A



**World Conference
of the United Nations
Decade for Women:
Equality, Development and Peace**

**Copenhagen, Denmark
14-30 July 1980**

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.94/NR/41*
16 July 1980

ENGLISH ONLY

UN LIBRARY
JUL 8 1980
UN/SA COLLECTION

NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED BY MALAYSIA**

* National reports are reproduced by photo-offset and issued in the languages of submission only.

** The designations employed, the presentation of material and the views expressed in this paper are those of the Government of Malaysia and do not necessarily reflect the practices and views of the Secretariat of the United Nations in any of these respects.

NATIONAL PAPER - MALAYSIA

ITEM 8(A)

WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UN
DECADE FOR WOMEN, COPENHAGEN
14 - 30 JULY 1980

Review and Evaluation of Progress Made and
Obstacles Encountered at the National Level in
Attaining the Minimum Objectives set Forth in
Paragraph 46 of the World Plan of Action

Since the Conference of the International Women's Year and the proclamation of the UN Decade for Women (1976 - 1985) by the General Assembly in December 1975, Malaysia joins the other member states in ensuring that the World Plan of Action, which represents a global consensus of what should be done to improve the condition of women, be carried out without delay and in conformity with the needs and priorities of each nation.

2. Malaysia is fortunate to possess the necessary ingredients for developmental progress - the material and human resources, strong economic and socio-economic infrastructures, the awareness of the masses for their effective participation in the development process, and of significance to our women, the government's commitment to integrate women in all aspects of the nation's development.

3. The integration of women in development, reflecting the maximum participation of women in partnership with men in nation-building is now an on-going process. However there are still some unfinished tasks in realising the development goals of the Decade. We are still in the process of removing some of the constraints to the free participation of women, brought about by the longstanding historical, traditional and cultural heritage which are contributory elements in shaping the socio-economic patterns and norms of the society. To this end several achievements have been made, and we now see the realisation of the necessary and basic qualitative changes in society, especially changes in values and attitudes that would pave the way for the integration of women in all stages of the process of development.

I. NATIONAL MACHINERY ON WOMEN

Measures to integrate women in development in Malaysia were taken as early as the 1950's with the establishment of several nationwide women's organisations that had particular economic and socio-economic objectives. However, the setting up of the national machinery called National Advisory Council on Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID) in June 1976 provided additional impetus in particular, towards translating the World Plan into national action. This advisory body is directly responsible to the Prime Minister and is serviced by the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department. The establishment of NACIWID which is a multisectoral body comprising of representatives from the government and the non-government sectors provide the platform for greater intensification of efforts towards the integration of women in development.

2. Amongst the functions of the Council are to provide advisory services and guidances to women's organisations on their participation in national development and to advise on the formulation of legislation and programs affecting women. It serves as a nucleus to which issues pertaining to women are referred and in addition it initiates research, studies and the disseminating of information. It liaises with appropriate authorities and related international organisations to promote friendly international relations and peace.

3. While Malaysia is striving towards the promotion of economic advancement, a fair distribution of income and better quality of life for its people, the maximum utilisation of human resources is an essential requirement in the pursuance of development. To this end, Malaysian women, who constitute almost half of the population and 36% of the labour force, have an important role to assume in contributing towards the national development. As a result greater attention has been given to ensure that their intelligence, skills, abilities and potentials are tapped to the fullest. Malaysian women today are provided with better technological know-how and devices thereby making their work less burdensome and enabling them to perform more effectively as healthy citizens, enlightened wives and mothers and thus be valuable assets to the nation.

II. WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT

The past 5 years have shown a significant increase in the number of women entering the employment market due to the process of modernisation brought about by greater industrialisation and urbanisation. In the urban areas female participation increased from 41.9% in 1975 to 43.3% in 1978, while in the rural areas, it increased from 50.2% in 1975 to 51.8% in 1978. In the agricultural sector, the largest employment generating sector in Malaysia, the percentage of female employment declined from 50.3% in 1975 to 46.8% in 1978 and the employment of women in manufacturing increased from 17% in 1975 to 18.8% in 1978.

2. In Malaysia as a whole, the number of employed persons increased from 4.019 million in 1975 to 4.493 million in 1978, an increase of new jobs of about 474,100. The manufacturing sector has been the major generator of new occupational opportunities which created 139,000 or 29.4% of new jobs in 1978. The agricultural sector, although accounting for the largest proportion of employment, generated only 57,500 or 12.1% of the new jobs created. This reflects the continued policy of the Malaysian Government to diversify the structure of the economy and increase the share of the manufacturing and services sectors in total output. With the widening of these sectors, there would be increased participation of women in employment.

3. Given the existing framework, new approaches and policies are required to be formulated to encourage and assist in the greater and effective participation of women in development. In some instances whereby inadequate application of technology affects adversely the health conditions of women workers or in cases where social problems appear as a result of urban migration, new approaches in the form of setting up of service and training centres, effective counselling on family life education will become relevant and essential.

III. HEALTH AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Health and family development programs assume an important role in accelerating social and economic development, and in improving the quality of life of the nation. As long as a woman's health is poor she is unable to participate effectively in development nor enjoy the benefits of development, besides being able to perform her functions

as wife, mother and home maker. Thus the need to ensure the development process incorporates strategies aimed at improving health and promoting family development.

2. The maternal health status of women and children has improved tremendously during the last 5 years as a result of the government's effort in accelerating the rural health programs and improving the accessibility to these areas. During the 1976 - 1978 period, considerable progress was made. 34 new hospitals, 5 main health centres, 37 health sub-centres, 24 village clinics and 126 midwives clinic cum quarters were constructed mainly in the rural areas. In addition, the Applied Food and Nutrition Project has been carried out in 46 districts in Peninsular Malaysia aimed at improving the practices and attitude of the people to ensure a balanced food intake and nutritious diet particularly in the rural areas where malnutrition still exists. The integrated activities in the Applied Food and Nutrition project also provide maternal and child health care, health education, and specific nutrition activities such as nutrition surveillance, nutrition education and supplementary feeding for pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as under-nourished infants and toddlers.

3. Where family development is concerned the government has set up a Community Development division in the Ministry of Agriculture aimed at implementing programs designed to nurture and develop rural families through the full utilisation of the house-hold's potential and to promote self reliance in the community. Towards this end the government for the 1978 - 1982 period acquired the assistance of the World Bank to construct two additional Family Development Training Centres which provide basic, advanced and refresher training for village family development workers. In addition assistance was obtained to construct and equip 12 more community service centres that will provide the avenue for short training courses for village women, maternal, child-health and family planning services, and the undertaking of handicraft production, collection and sales. The National Family Planning Board has also expanded its emphasis from being basically health oriented and clinic based to more welfare oriented and community based. Family planning services have also expanded through the establishment of new clinics and provision of new vehicles to serve the poor residing in estates, mining, industrial sectors, rural areas and new villages. The number of family planning acceptors have also increased significantly from 55,981 in 1970 to 80,162 in 1978. All these programs are directed at improvement of the maternal health status of the women and providing them with the prerequisites to their effective participation in society.

IV. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION & TRAINING

In Malaysia the literacy rate was 60.8% and that for women was 49.6% in 1970. The National Education Policy is geared to allow all Malaysians of both sexes to participate fully in the national development process through an education system that aims at productive investment in the human capital. High priority has been given to programs such as providing free primary and secondary education for boys and girls, text books aid, scholarships for needy students, and the construction of more residential schools in the rural areas.

2. During the past five years training programs have also been devised to enable women to be trained in fields and areas that were once the sole domain of men such as engineering, electronics, and hotel-catering management. When the adult education programs were found to be filled with 80% women students the government consequently became more involved and more prepared to expand them into integrated family development programs. Special training schemes were structured to cover a wider scope from vocational skills, better farming techniques, to home economics and consumer education.

3. The education system in Malaysia is in the process of being restructured to be more oriented towards meeting national manpower needs especially in science and technology. While equal opportunity is a basic objective, women's enrolment at all levels have constantly been lower. The disparity between female and male enrolment ratio is not wide in the primary and secondary education levels but widens at the higher level of education. Out of a total of student enrolment of 13,000 in the 6 universities only 30% were females in 1975. However this has increased to 38.4% in 1979. Women are fairly well represented in the arts, humanities, dentistry and law courses, though still grossly under-represented in some of the science subjects.

V. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

It is in the field of politics that women in Malaysia have been able to hold the most influence and achieve significant successes that contribute to their development. As early as 1946 there were already plans to form a Women's Section in the United Malayan National Organisation (UMNO), a leading component party of the ruling

National Front. Those plans became a reality when in 1949 a Women's Section emerged within the UMNO and has since been an effective political force in the country. Notable in this political participation is that more than 75% of these 375,000 women members come from the rural sectors and that they contribute to 55% of the party membership. The Malaysian women had been given the franchise as early as 1955 during which the first democratic elections were held, 2 years preceding the Independence of the country from colonial rule.

2. Since then, their participation has been the prime mover in bringing about the necessary changes that have enabled women to contribute to and benefit from the development process. Today there are 16 State Assembly Women, 7 women out of the total 154 members of the Lower House and 7 women out of the total 58 members of the Senate. In addition there is one woman Minister of Social Welfare and Services and a woman Deputy Minister of Finance - a break-through from the traditional portfolios usually assigned to women.

VI. WOMEN IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Due to the great impetus given to national development, voluntary women's organisations have assumed an important role in mobilising changes at grass root level. These non-governmental organisations have been very effective in representing the interest of the women and have proven an effective and successful force in influencing the government, as well as in problem identification offering special services to women. The apex of these organisations is the National Council of Women's Organisation (NCWO) comprising of 23 affiliated organisations such as the UMNO Women and the National Women's Institute which is affiliated to the Associated Country Women of the World. The NCWO is in fact provided financial assistance by the government in recognition of its important role. For example, in 1979 the NCWO receives a sum of \$14,800, while the National Women's Institute receives an annual grant of \$70,000. Activities of these voluntary women's organisations include the conducting of regular leadership courses and seminars, operating pre-school and child-care centres and organising economic projects which are income-generating.

VII. MEETING FUTURE CHALLENGES

The efforts toward the integration of women in development have accelerated significantly in the country, especially since the Mexico Conference and the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975. Malaysia takes pride in the fact that as a young and

developing nation there have been significant achievements toward accelerating the socio-economic development and elevating the quality of life of the people. The objectives to be achieved by the mid-term period of 1980 have been satisfactorily met, and the Malaysian women, while recognising that constraints still exist to impede the implementation of the World Plan at the national level, look forward with optimism to meet the future challenges in achieving the goals of the remaining part of the Decade.

2. In particular, concerted efforts are being made to ensure that there occurs, corresponding to economic development, the necessary qualitative improvements in the social and socio-economic life. Attention will be given to the measures that women can take to eradicate the social evils, such as drug abuse, and to assist in contributing to the national resilience, so necessary in the uncertain world of the 1980's and beyond.

Sources

Third Malaysia Plan 1976 - 1980, Kuala Lumpur, 1976.

Mid Term Review of the Third Malaysia Plan 1976 - 1980, Kuala Lumpur, 1979.

Plan of Action, National Advisory Council on Integration of Women in Development, Kuala Lumpur, 1978.

Income Generating Skills for Women, National Advisory Council on Integration of Women in Development, Kuala Lumpur, December 1978.