



UNITED
NATIONS

UN LIBRARY

A



World Conference UN/SA COLLECTION
of the United Nations
Decade for Women:

Equality, Development and Peace

Copenhagen, Denmark
14-30 July 1980

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.94/NR/12*
29 May 1980

ENGLISH ONLY

NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED BY
INDIA **

* National reports are reproduced by photo-offset and issued in the languages of submission only. This document will receive full distribution at Headquarters. Only two copies per delegation will be available at the Conference site.

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

1. The Indian Constitution resolved in the year 1950 to usher in a society in which there would be Justice - social, economic and political, Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, Equality of status and opportunity and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. Guaranteeing Fundamental Rights and Freedoms the Constitution prohibits discrimination or denial of equal protection, benefiting women in the same manner as men. It also empowers the state, by Article 15(3), to make special provision for women and children. The Directive Principles of State Policy further seek to secure to all men and women equally the right to an adequate means of living, equal pay for equal work and securing of just and humane conditions of work and maternity leave.

2. India is committed to the improvement in the status of Indian women. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, was uncompromising about the rights of women. The leaders of independent India continued the commitment to women's equality and participation in all spheres of life through development planning, social legislation and other policies and administrative measures. The International Women's Year and the subsequent declaration of the decade 1976-85 as the U.N. Decade for Women gave further fillip to the efforts and programmes for integration of women in development. A National Plan of Action for Women was prepared and adopted which identified the areas of education, health, employment and legislation as priority areas for action to improve the social and economic conditions of women. It has also included the strategies and measures to be adopted in each of these areas.

3. Improvement in the situation of women is inextricably linked with the overall development of the country and is affected by all the constraints and problems faced by developing countries. All development policies and programmes affect women and their situation but a sharper realisation of the needs and contribution of women in the formulation and implementation of various programmes influence their impact.

4. An appraisal of situation of women in India shows that,

as a result of the efforts made, the expectation of life at birth of women has increased from 48.8 years in 1971-76 to 51.6 years in 1976-80. In education, the enrolment of girls in classes I to V has increased from 25.01 million in 1975-76 to 28.20 million in 1978-79, which represents increase from 66.1 per cent to 67.8 per cent of the relevant age group. In terms of the percentage of girls education to total enrolment at this level, it increased from 5.03 million in 1975-76 to 5.98 million in 1978-79, representing increase from 23.9 per cent to 26 per cent of the relevant age group. As a percentage of the total enrolment, it increased from 31.4 per cent in 1975-76 to 33 per cent in 1978-79. At the secondary level, class IX to XII, the enrolment of girls increased from 2.08 million in 1975-76 to 2.45 million in 1978-79. In the area of employment, women's participation rate has remained at about 28% in 1971 as it was in 1961. Their share in the organised sector, though still low, has increased from 11% in 1973 to 12.8% in 1978. Total female employment has also been going up though their proportion among the applicants on the live registers of the employment exchanges has also been increasing. It has, therefore, been felt that special measures are necessary to secure a matching expansion of employment opportunities for women in organised as well as unorganised sectors.

5. The progress in three important sectors of health, education and employment, besides other sectors, has been the outcome of various general and sectoral as well as special programmes and projects implemented in the country. Within the federal structure in India, a number of programmes are undertaken not only at the national level but also in individual States. Besides, there are programmes and projects undertaken by voluntary non-governmental organisations with or without financial and other support from Government. In this monograph, a few of the programmes and projects which have contributed to the improvement of the conditions of women and in promoting their participation have been described. It may be mentioned, however, that improvement in the conditions of women is the result of a complex process of inter-action of various programmes and other

developments and cannot always be ascribed to particular programmes or projects. Moreover, in some respects, qualitative changes are more important than quantitative results but these are at the same time more difficult to assess and take much longer to be seen. The current development debate has shifted the focus from growth-oriented to people-oriented approaches and the search for alternative strategies has led to interesting community centred development efforts with emphasis on decentralisation and grass root level participation. The programmes and projects selected here for discussion are those which attempt to break through old practices and which endeavour to adopt realistic community centered approaches to women's basic problems.

HEALTH

6. Women's health is influenced not only by the preventive and curative health services but also by the social norms, traditional practices and attitudes. In a developing country like India with more than 80% of the population living in rural areas, development planning has to take into account these special factors. The programme in the health sector selected here for discussion is one which has been designed specially to cater to the health needs of the rural population and which seems to be specially relevant for improving the health status of rural women.

(1) Training of Traditional Birth Attendants (Dais)

7. Field surveys in India have shown that despite the establishment of extensive network of Primary Health Centres and sub-centres, the traditional birth attendants or dais, continue to deliver 50 to 60 per cent births in rural areas. Of the remaining 40 to 50 per cent, majority of births is conducted at the hands of relatives, neighbours and friends and only 10 to 15 per cent are conducted by para-medical or medical personnel. The importance of these dais was recognised in India as early as in the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) when a scheme for their training in the States with 100% funding by the Government of India was started with the objective of making conduct of deliveries more safe and hygienic and using them as links between rural MCH services and the community.

8. The dais had to come to the sub-centre and PHC for a period of 6 months. They were given a stipend during training and they were also given kit boxes. By the end of the 4th Five Year Plan, however, only 38000 'dais' received this training as against the expectation of 100,000. A sub-committee examined in 1973, the question of practising birth attendants, their training and regulation of their practice. The Committee found that the traditional dais lacked knowledge about the human reproductive anatomy and physiology and adopted some practices which were positively harmful. Thereafter, in the Fifth Five Year Plan, the duration of training was reduced to one month and the strategy was altered to only two days' attendance per week in the sub-centres and PHCs and the rest of the days in the field under active supervision of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and Lady Health Visitors in the PHCs. Along with the kit, she also became eligible to a small payment per delivery if the case was registered antenatally with the sub-centre of PHC. The organised MCH-cum-Family Planning Services have laid considerable emphasis on the training of dais. As a part of the national rural health policy, it is intended to complete during the current Five Year Plan the training of dais to provide one trained dai for 1000 population.

9. The dais, after training, are effective for (i) conducting hygienic and scientific deliveries (ii) referring women for antenatal check upto PHC or sub-centre and also for deliveries and (iii) motivating women for family planning. The programme of training and their subsequent use and linkages with the PHCs is done by the State Health Departments.

10. Reports of dais' work indicate that in some States they have done well in referral of antenatal cases. In some States, they have done very well in motivating cases for sterilisation. They have worked as excellent motivators for laparoscopic sterilisations for which they also receive the prescribed incentive amounts. They have succeeded in reducing incidence of neonatal tetanus and puerperal sepsis in women.

11. A recent study*, though conducted in a limited

*Dais as Partners in Maternal Health - Prof. H.S. Gandhi and Dr. (Mrs.) R. Sapru - National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi, India, 1980

area of the State of Uttar Pradesh has revealed that formally trained dais largely practiced taking of obstetric history to know the nature of previous confinements, course of current pregnancy, family planning needs and referrals. Formal training also exercised positive influence towards physical examination per abdomen of their cases on initial contact. Regarding the services before delivery, productive and preventive service in the form of home preparation for confinement, forecasting expected date and likelihood of normal delivery and some element of instruction regarding hygiene of pregnancy, was also found confined to dais who had received formal training. "The data clearly reflected that trained dais resort to better obstetric practices compared with untrained dais some of whom positively resort to harmful practices. Majority, therefore, perceive the need to be trained and want continuing training."

12. The study also showed a high level of community satisfaction in respect of the service of the dais as compared to ANMs. Moreover, the majority considered the dais to be the best person for rendering needed maternity help.

13. It is clear that a strategy of using the most acceptable local individual for the outreach of services to rural women and strengthening her skills by suitable training is more efficient and economical than ^{only} the formal network of preventive and curative services. Their training has to be designed to ensure continued practice of their vocation and also to ensure suitable remuneration. For maximising their utility, their linkage with the PHC and sub-centre and its staff for referral has to be further strengthened.

EDUCATION

- (1) Project for identification of values commensurate with the status of women to be incorporated in the school curriculum

14. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) of the Government of India, through its Women's Education Unit, has initiated the project for identification of values commensurate with the status of women by incorporating them in social text books spelling out the contents and the methodology of how the new values about quality of status between men and women will be reflected.

15. A national seminar on identification of values commensurate with the status of women was held in 1975 and identified the following objectives:

- a) Development of the child as co-sharer of all responsibilities in the home and home management.
- b) Reflection of the dignity of labour while taking care of the roles performed by both sexes inside and outside the home.
- c) Rejection of dependence of girls and women as a traditional value and exploding the myth of subordination of Indian women.
- d) Stressing the equality of opportunity in all walks of life and awareness of the women's rights and abilities for equal participation in the development of the nation.
- e) Emphasis on the sharing of the decision-making process at all levels.
- f) Systematic understanding in campaigns against all practices degrading sexes in matrimony.
- g) Rejection of the concept of consumerism leading to women becoming an instrument for the display of family wealth.
- h) Promotion of dignity of individual by rejection of women projecting as sex symbols.
- i) Women to be viewed not in isolation but as part of the total situation.
- j) Redefining the concept of work as one which consumes energy and time, thus domestic work is not occasional or scientifically different from other work but is equally productive and necessary for society's survival.

16. Experts from concerned disciplines and teachers' groups worked to project status of women values through the curriculum stagewise. They designed methods for the projection through languages, social sciences, life sciences and mathematics. Considering the limitations of text books and supplementary reading materials and the importance of the intervention of teachers, it was considered necessary to develop a teachers' handbook taking note of the identified

values on the one hand and the discipline's objectives on the other. In each area, the projection of the values for cultivating cogent attitudes in both sexes has to be class-based and explicable through various teaching methods. The entire gamut of social sciences, natural, physical and biological sciences and mathematics as well as all languages have been subjected to such an exercise. The material produced has been circulated for trying out in the institutions.

17. Women teachers of the subject were involved in the development of projection models. Since the project is directed towards development of attitudes over an undifferentiated curricula, it is difficult to evaluate it at this stage but it is a step in the direction of bringing about equality of status between men and women. Such a change, which is always a slow process, is essential.

(ii) Condensed Courses of Education for Adult Women

18. The programme of condensed courses of education for adult women was initiated by the Central Social Welfare Board, an autonomous institution created by the Government of India and also fully funded by it, in 1958. The programme provides educational services to adult women who have been school drop-outs and, therefore, do not find it possible to go back to the normal formal institutions. It has two basic objectives, viz (a) to open new vistas of employment to a large number of deserving and needy women and, (b) to create a band of competent trained workers required to staff various development projects particularly in the rural areas.

19. The Board gives grant on a 100% basis to non-governmental voluntary organisations for running courses (residential, non-residential and mixed) through which women between the ages 18 to 30 years who have some schooling are prepared for the middle school and matriculation examination within a period of two years. Assistance for one-year course for SSLC failed students has also been started from 1975. The scope of the programme has further been enlarged from the same year to include vocational training courses for preparation as teachers, lady health visitors, day care centre attendants and housekeepers, etc. The Board has also taken initiatives in identifying new trades and to persuade voluntary agencies to diversify the training programmes.

20. The courses are conducted by registered voluntary organisations who are given grant for each course for

maintenance charges, pocket money/stipend to candidates, teachers' salaries, educational equipment, contingencies and rent. The flexibility of the programme ensures initiating courses in those areas and places where needy and deserving women need these facilities. The programme also provides a partnership between the Government-created autonomous institution of the Board and the local voluntary organisations so that while funding and other guidance is made available by the Board the courses are initiated and conducted at the local level.

21. The programme has helped a large number of women, specially those who would not have been able to go to formal educational institutions to complete their education and to take up employment as Gramsevikas (village level functionaries), nurses, teachers, family planning workers, etc. Since the inception of the scheme, 3890 courses have been given to enable 84000 adult women to take advantage of this programme. It has been estimated that 74% of the institutions are located in urban areas but 40% of the women participating in the courses come from rural areas. In the initial stages, the placements of women from these courses have not been a problem but with the current employment situation the trainees now need assistance for going for further training or find suitable jobs.

22. The Central Social Welfare Board as well as the State Boards comprise of voluntary women social workers. Besides, the voluntary organisations organising courses at the local level also substantially consist of women workers and, therefore in the selection of the programme as well as in its implementation there is substantial participation of women. There has been a general agreement that the programme gives needed educational facilities to those adult women specially from the poorer sections who would not otherwise be able to complete their education and take up employment.

EMPLOYMENT

Andhra Pradesh Women's Cooperative Finance Corporation

23. The State Cooperative Finance Corporation is a pioneer institution set up exclusively for the benefit of women entrepreneurs from the weaker sections of the society. The idea of such an institution was initiated in the first meeting of the State level committee on International Women's Year. It was felt that the institutional framework for providing appropriate credit facilities exclusively for women would substantially promote entrepreneurship among them. The primary objective of the new institution was the

economic uplift of women. The policy guidelines subsequently issued restricted the scope of eligibility for assistance to women from families with very low monthly income in urban as well as rural areas.

24. The membership of the society is open to women cooperatives, cooperative banks, commercial banks and the State Government all of which have equal voting rights with one-institution one-vote. Individual borrowers are admitted as members without voting rights. The management is with the Board consisting of 13 nominated officials and six elected non-official directors. The officials of the State Women and Child Welfare Department at various levels work for the corporation, on a part time basis at no extra cost to the corporation. This is made possible by making the Director of Women and Child Welfare simultaneously the Managing Director of the Corporation giving a unified command. There is of course the assistance of some full time functionaries of the corporation. At the district, block and village level the officer concerned with women's programmes functions for the corporation except where substantial quantum of assistance has been approved. In these places specified number of officials are provided to assist the Distt. Women's Officer. A committee at the district level with the District Collector, Heads of Development departments and selected public individuals sanctions schemes, monitors their implementation and ensures recovery of funds advanced.

25. The corporation arranges 100% financial assistance to the schemes approved by it. It arranges for 80% as loan from the commercial or cooperative banks and itself gives the remaining 20% as margin money, on low rate of interest. The concerned women can also avail of the capital subsidy ranging from 20% to 50% available to specified weaker sections under special government schemes. Promoters of larger projects only are asked to bring their own contribution from 5% to 10% of the cost of project.

26. The corporation has also, through constitution of expert committee and after field study developed project profiles for 100 small industries/trades for the guidance of the prospective entrepreneurs. These are fairly detailed and include market potential, requirements of inputs, investment, working capital and manpower and are found extremely useful by prospective entrepreneurs in selecting projects according to their skills and resources.

27. The identification of beneficiaries and their schemes in the rural areas is initiated at the village level. The Block Development Officer processes it with the assistance

of the village development officer and extension officer and forwards it to the local commercial bank. After their scrutiny and approval, it is received back by the Block Development Officer who then forwards it to the district women welfare officer who puts up for sanction to the district level committee. Applications from the urban area are directly processed by the district officer with the assistance of the extension officer. Only cases of more than a specified cost are sent to the headquarters. The loans are disbursed and recovered locally.

28. In a period of three years (1975-78) the corporation has extended promotional and financial assistance to 25618 women of which 39% belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It has advanced Rupees 5.6 million which has enabled the beneficiaries to receive Rupees 21.7 million from commercial banks. The average investment works out to be little over Rupees 1000 per scheme which shows also the profile of beneficiaries.

29. A study* of this corporation completed recently has observed:

"The schemes provided full employment to the beneficiaries and also supplementary and/or part time employment to the other members of the family. The labour costs of production mostly flowed back as income to the family. This went a long way in increasing the per capita income of the poor families...The schemes have helped in increasing substantially the monthly income of the women (from Rupees 131 to Rupees 408)...It has been our observation that these self-employment schemes for women, involving meagre investments of only the order of Rupees 100 to Rupees 1000 generated an average employment of 2.5 per scheme." The study also found that in many cases the problem for the department and the corporation was to spot the prospective entrepreneurs and induce them to borrow. Therefore, special campaigns were organised to promote the admission for assistance in each district. But what has been achieved so far is quite impressive in terms of quality as well as quantity.

30. This corporation presents a model of an agency the need for which has been increasingly felt in the Indian

* A case study on the functioning of Andhra Pradesh Women's Cooperative Finance Corporation Ltd., and impact of assistance extended by it - Institute of Public Enterprise, Univ. Campus, Hyderabad, January 1979.

context. It has been felt that the problem of women's employment is characterised by their inability, like the weaker and isolated sections of society to reach for services and assistance programmes offered by government and semi-government institutions and that it springs from their basic weaknesses vis-a-vis most powerful sections of society. Therefore, the need of a specialised agency to identify, promote and assist individual women and women's groups to develop necessary information and skills to undertake income generating activities and to actively promote their support by the major supporting agencies. Such an agency can reduce the gap that separates the agencies giving inputs for self-employment and the potential beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION

31. The programmes and projects briefly discussed here represent only a few of the many strategies and approaches to give substance to the de jure concept of equality of opportunity for the mass of Indian women and to increase their participation and integration in development. Policies and programmes for the future will continue the efforts in this direction especially by strengthening the capacities of local women and their organisations to participate in development, by increasing the outreach of development programmes to women in rural areas and to those from the socio-economically disadvantaged sections and by encouraging changes in perceptions of the society and of women themselves about their abilities, opportunities and responsibilities.

....