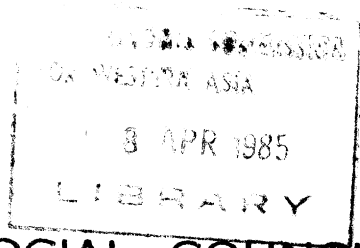




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

NGO Consultation
Pre-Regional Preparatory Meeting
United Nations Decade for Women
Baghdad, 2 December 1984

Final Report

85-0103



I. Introduction

1. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations held consultations: General Federation of Jordanian Women, Bahraini Family Planning Association, General Federation of Iraqi Women, Omani Women Association, General Union of Palestinian Women, Association for the Welfare of Child and Mother (Lebanon), Women National Commission (Egypt), Yemeni Women Association (YAR) and General Federation of Yemeni Women (PDRY). They met to exchange information about their activities for the attainment of the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women and to recommend future actions. The WIDF and UNIDO also participated in this consultation.

2. They discussed also the preparations for the NGO Forum 1985, which will take place in Nairobi prior to the World Conference for the United Nations Decade for Women, as well as NGO participation in this United Nations Conference.

II. Organization

3. The Meeting was convened upon the initiative of the Planning Committee for NGO Activities related to the World Conference. It was held by the NGO Planning Committee in cooperation with ECWA and the General Federation of Iraqi Women on 2 December 1984 at the headquarters of ECWA. Ms. Manal Younis Abdul Razzaq, President of the General Federation of Iraqi Women, presided over the Meeting.

III. Preparations for NGO Forum 1985 and NGO Participation in the United Nations World Conference

4. After a brief review of the agenda of the World Conference of the Decade for Women, the representative of the Planning Committee provided in-

formation about the plans for the NGO Forum 1985 which will take place in Nairobi from 8-17 July and will overlap by a few days with the World Conference in Nairobi, 15-26 July. Information was given also on NGO participation in the United Nations Conference (see annex to this report). The participants, expressing concern over the fact that they had received little or no information about the NGO Forum preparations asked that they be kept better informed in future.

5. The Participants recommended that:

(a) The participating organizations disseminate the information they receive to other organizations and individuals in the region and send additional names and addresses to the Planning Committee so that future information may be sent directly to them.

(b) A representative of Arab organizations be included in the Planning Committee's steering group.

(c) Participation in the United Nations Conference should be insured and women's organizations should request their governments to include in their delegations to the Conference the heads or representatives of national women's organizations.

(d) Efforts should be made by all concerned to ensure interpretation from and into Arabic in at least the Plenary sessions of the NGO Forum.

IV. NGO Survey

6. Copies of the NGO questionnaire in Arabic and English were distributed to the participants who undertook the responsibility of sending the completed forms to the NGO Planning Committee for inclusion in the NGO Survey.

V. Progress Achieved

7. The brief reports given by the participants indicated that the Decade had increased the awareness of women and men, and of governmental and non-governmental sectors, to the need for measures to advance the status of women and to promote equality between women and men. Legislation and other measures had been taken to guarantee equal rights. The Decade gave impetus to the establishment and the strengthening of women's organizations as well as national and regional federations.

VI. Obstacles and Regional Problems and Plans for the Future

8. While much progress has been made in promoting the goals of the Decade for Women, the participants identified many problems remaining to be resolved. These included:

(a) A need for legislation in some countries to guarantee women equal pension rights and social security in old age. Many more creches and child care centres and other facilities were needed to enable all women to work outside their homes. The participants called for a second Decade for Women or periodic conferences to review the implementation of the strategies planned to the year 2000.

(b) A need for government assistance to women's organizations which are equipped to carry out national and/or sectoral programmes for the improvement of the situation of rural, working women and of mothers, as well as for the participation of women in the political life of their countries, within the context of promoting the advancement of women.

(c) A need throughout the region to change attitudes of both men and women to make it easier for women to benefit from rights already achieved and to make further advances. To this end, T.V., radio, the press, the schools, etc., should be enlisted to a greater extent and media of developmental cultural programmes should be exchanged.

(d) A lack of women cadres and the need for more assistance in training women to train others in fields such as health care, nutrition and education. Although in some countries in the region, school enrolment is almost 100 per cent, the absolute number of illiterates was increasing, the majority being women. Thus special effort was required to reverse this trend. Women's organizations could be of assistance in planning and carrying out literacy programmes.

(e) A need for the women's organizations to meet and exchange information and experience for their mutual benefit. The participants recommended that ECWA periodically organize meetings such as the present one, which was considered very valuable.

(f) A need to give priority attention to the problems confronting the region regarding armed conflict and foreign occupation. However, attention should also be given to the future of the Arab people. By the year 2000, the Arab population will be considerably increased. The strides in scientific and technical development will affect the population. There is a need for women's organizations and scientific institutions to work together to ensure that new developments serve women. With the population growth, there will be greater demands for goods and dependency on food imports could be catastrophic. The full participation of rural women, in the formulation of policies and in deciding methods of production, is as necessary as their training in the use of new technology. Measures need to be taken to decrease the responsibility of housework on women and to consider housework as a productive activity having economic and social values in the society. Women's organizations should assist in this. There was a need also to create different jobs to provide employment for the growing population. Much research is needed in these fields to assist women's organizations in setting appropriate and relevant policies and strategies.

(g) A need to examine the many demands being made on the women in the region. They are asked to be good mothers and wives, hold a job outside

the home, take part in the political and social life, be well informed, care for culture, physical and mental health, face the pressures of discrimination, be flexible and bring harmony to the home. They are asked to cope with all these tasks in the struggle for development. There is also the struggle against outside enemies. The region suffered from war and foreign occupation, which bring death and destruction, separation of families, disruption of organized activities, as well as the slowing down and even the complete halt of development projects.

9. The attainment of full equality and development for all was seen as possible only in conditions of peace and security. The participants called on women's and other organizations to do everything in their power to ensure: the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories in accordance with United Nations resolutions, especially Resolution 3236, and to allow the Palestinian people the full right to exercise their inalienable and legitimate rights to self-determination, return to homeland and the establishment of their independent state on their own territories; the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 508 and 509; and the agreement of Iran to a ceasefire and to entering peace negotiations with Iraq, and its respect for the Geneva Conventions and Protocols.

VII. Closure of Meeting

10. Appreciation was expressed to Ms. Manal Yunis Abdul Razzaq for her very able Chairmanship, to ECWA for providing the meeting facilities and to Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Women's Programme Officer, for her valuable assistance with the organizational tasks. Participants also expressed their appreciation for Ms. Edith Ballantyne, representative of the NGO Planning Committee for organizing the consultations and for her participation in it.

ANNEX 1

Preparations for the NGO Forum and NGO Participation
in the United Nations Conference, Nairobi, July 1985

1. Planning Committee

The NGO Forum is organized by the Planning Committee, composed of some 60 NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It was established by the Conference of NGOs (CONGO), which had set up similar committees for planning the NGO Tribune in Mexico in 1975 and the NGO Forum in Copenhagen in 1980.

2. Steering Committee

At its first meeting in 1983, the Planning Committee decided to form sub-committees on equality, development, peace, employment, health, education, mass media, refugees and migrants, women in emergency situations, young women and girls, and on older women. Some of these sub-committees meet in New York, others in Geneva and still others in Vienna. The President and Co-ordinator of the Planning Committee, President of CONGO and a member of WIDF are members of the Steering Committee which is responsible for preparing the programme and content of the Forum.

3. Pre-Conference Consultation

In the first phase, the Sub-Committees prepared discussion papers for a pre-conference consultation which took place in Vienna in October 1984. The purpose was to review progress achieved in the eleven chosen areas and to identify obstacles preventing progress, in addition to suggesting strategies up to the year 2000. The results of the Vienna consultation have been submitted to the United Nations.

4. NGO Forum

Purpose: The Forum provides the facilities for an exchange of first-hand information on activities and experiences of women from all parts of the world, for making world-wide contacts and for building ongoing networks. Such a meeting of peoples is a step toward better understanding, strengthening solidarity among women and enhancing co-operation and peace.

5. Relationship Between the Forum and the United Nations Conference

Although the Forum is organized in relation to the United Nations Conference, there is no direct channel from it to the United Nations Conference. But proposals emerging from the Forum can be transmitted to the Conference through lobbying Government delegates and through international NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC which will have their representatives at the Conference.

6. Registration

The Forum is open to all organizations and individuals. The only limit to the number of representatives and individuals is availability of accommodation. Requests for registration forms should be addressed to the NGO Planning Committee, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA. The completed forms should be returned to the Planning Committee. The registration fee of US\$ 10 is to be paid in Nairobi on arrival.

7. Accommodation

Information was distributed to all delegates and NGO representatives at the ECWA regional meeting (also available upon request).

8. Programme

The Forum will allow some 50 workshops to run simultaneously every morning and afternoon during the duration of the Forum. Any interested individual, organization or group of organizations wishing to plan for a workshop may write to the Planning Committee for space and time. Forms for such requests may be obtained from the Planning Committee.

9. Workshops and Meetings

The Steering Committee will ensure that workshops will be held daily on the eleven subject areas considered deserving special attention. Daily briefing sessions will be held on different aspects of the Decade and preparatory work for the United Nations Conference. A special plenary session will be held to mark the 40th anniversary of the United Nations.

Other special plenaries may be organized. Facilities will be available to show films and to exhibit materials. A daily paper will be published featuring articles, reports on workshops and the programme of the day. For further information write to the NGO Planning Committee.

NGO Participation in the United Nations Conference

NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC may send observers to the Conference. They have the right to submit written statements, and to make oral interventions in the plenary sessions and committee meetings at the invitation of the presiding officer.

List of Participants

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National Women Committee

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General Federation of Iraqi Women

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President, General Federation of Iraqi Women
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Ms. Sharmin Jawdat Yacoubi
Member Executive Committee
Secretary, National Committee, for World Conference, Nairobi (1985)

Ms. Laila Hussein Ma'arouf
Member, Executive Committee
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General Federation of Jordanian Women

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Ms. Salwa Abu Khadra

Association of Yemeni Women

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WIDF

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