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UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE:
VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN

Senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 38/106 of 16 December 1983, the General Assembly expressed concern that the question of senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions was still unresolved and that lack of progress in that regard was seriously impeding work on the women's programmes in several regions. The Secretary-General was urged, in consultation with the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, to give priority to solving the question of senior women's programme officers and to take urgently appropriate measures to ensure that all temporary and permanent senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions should be continued within the regular budget resources available to them.

2. Pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 15 (a) of resolution 38/106, the current situation at the four regional commissions concerned is described in the following paragraphs.

A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

3. The women's programme activities at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) form part of the social development programme and constitute the focal point in that region for co-ordinating activities relating to women in development for Government agencies, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations. Under the women's programme activities, assistance is provided to Member States in the following areas:

(a) Strengthening national mechanisms for the integration of women in national development plans and programmes;

(b) Upgrading national capabilities in project formulation, implementation and follow-up;

(c) Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the programme of action of the United Nations Decade for Women;

(d) Conducting research on pressing issues relating to women.

4. At present one regular budget P-3 post is assigned to the women's programme activities in ESCAP while one senior women's programme officer post at the L-5 level and one Local-level post are temporarily funded from extrabudgetary sources until the end of 1984. Efforts to identify regular budget resources for redeployment have not been successful. The Secretary-General intends to keep the staffing situation under review and to explore the means by which it could be regularized.

B. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

5. The women's programme activities in this region function with a central unit at the headquarters in Santiago of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and with special activities at the two major subregional offices in Mexico City and Port of Spain. Three types of activities may be identified, with emphasis depending on the needs of each subregion:

(a) Action in response to mandates from Governments, regional conferences, meetings of governing boards and expert groups;

(b) Advisory services to national, regional and subregional projects and preparation and execution of projects, especially training seminars and workshops, at the request of Governments;

(c) Studies and evaluation of the situation of women in the region, placing emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable urban and rural groups, with a view to influencing the orientation and formulation of social policy for the benefit of these groups.

6. The women's programme activities are carried out by the following posts:

(a) In Santiago: one P-4 co-ordinator and one P-3 post on a permanent basis;

(b) In Mexico City: one senior Local-level research assistant for the biennium 1984-1985, and one P-3 post temporarily redeployed for a period of six weeks in 1984;

(c) In Port of Spain: one P-3 post temporarily assigned to the women's programme activities in response to resolution 38/106.

7. ECLAC has made strenuous efforts to continue the programmed activities for women in its three main offices despite the loss of two posts formerly funded by

the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. However, prolonged redeployment of regular budget resources for that purpose will have an adverse effect on the overall work programme, especially in the Caribbean subregion. Consequently, the Secretary-General intends to continue the same temporary arrangements in 1985 while exploring the means by which the staffing situation could be regularized.

C. Economic Commission for Africa

8. Activities directed towards the advancement of African women began in 1972 and led to the establishment of the African Training and Research Centre for Women in 1975. The Centre, now the focal point of the women's programme activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), symbolizes recognition of the crucial role women are playing in the economies of African countries.

9. The work of the Centre consists of providing advisory services to Member States in the formulation of policies and programmes designed to mobilize, develop and utilize the capabilities of women for achieving national and regional development objectives. In carrying out its task the Centre collaborates with regional and global bodies concerned with the advancement of women.

10. One P-5, one P-3 and two Local-level regular budget posts are permanently assigned to the women's programme activities. In addition, in an effort to comply with the General Assembly's request for urgent measures to continue the senior women's programme officer posts from within regular budget resources, a temporarily vacant D-2 post has been used to finance a social development planner at the L-5 level and general temporary assistance funds have been used to finance a staff member at the Local level during 1984. The Secretary-General intends to continue temporary arrangements in 1985 while exploring means of regularizing the staffing situation.

D. Economic Commission for Western Asia

11. Three major activities constitute the programme of work in the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) region with a view to promoting the role of women in development:

(a) Research: undertaking surveys and preparing studies on the progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the integration of women in development; applied research to identify the needs of women and to formulate appropriate project proposals;

(b) Advisory services: assistance to Governments and women's organizations in evaluating their planning capabilities and in formulating appropriate developmental policies and programmes;

(c) Technical co-operation projects: assistance to Member States through execution of projects financed by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade

for Women, through seminars and training workshops relating to integration of women in development, or through the publication of manuals.

12. The Women's Research and Training Unit is responsible for co-ordinating the ECWA secretariat activities using an interdisciplinary approach within the overall context of development. Two P-4 and one Local-level post are assigned to this Unit, of which one P-4 was permanently redeployed from the development issues and policies programme in response to General Assembly resolution 38/106. There was, however, no possibility of redeployment to make up for the loss of the Local-level post, which was financed by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women until 31 December 1983. To ensure that the level of activities is maintained, the staffing situation will continue to be kept under review.

E. Summary

13. It is clear that substantial efforts have been made to continue the senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions. However, it has not proven feasible to do this solely through permanent redeployment of regular budget resources without running the risk of jeopardizing the overall programme of work. The Secretary-General intends to continue to monitor all aspects of the situation throughout the balance of the biennium 1984-1985. In the mean time, taking into account the vacancy rates that exist in the regional commissions although this situation has seen improvements in the recent past, he considers that in 1985 it will be possible to continue ad hoc arrangements for the continued employment of staff involved in the women's programmes, and he intends, in the light of the discussions on the subject at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, to explore the means by which the staffing situation for these programme activities in the regional commissions can be regularized.
