

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/CEPAL/G.1173
E/CEPAL/MDM/9
30 March 1981

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

CEPAL
Economic Commission for Latin America
Nineteenth Session
Montevideo, Uruguay, 4-16 May 1981



REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS
OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN
INTO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
(Quito, Ecuador, 9-10 March 1981)

Handwritten text at the top of the page, possibly a header or title.

Handwritten text in the middle of the page, possibly a main body of text.

Handwritten text at the bottom of the page, possibly a footer or signature.

I. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date

1. Pursuant to the relevant recommendations contained in the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, adopted at the eleventh extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), and in keeping with its terms of reference, the Chairwoman of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean convened the Fourth Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Conference in Quito, Ecuador, on 9 and 10 March 1981.

Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by the following Presiding Officers of the Conference: Chairwoman: Mercedes Pulido de Briceño (Venezuela); Vice-Chairwomen: Ligia María Scherer (Brazil), Cecilia Salazar de Owen (Colombia), Leonor Rodríguez (Cuba), R.V. Evadne Coye (Jamaica), Martha I. Lara (Mexico), Graciela Besio Abal (Uruguay); Rapporteur: Marina Volio (Costa Rica). Mrs. R.V. Evadne Coye also acted as representative of the Voluntary Fund of the United Nations Decade of Women.

Aim of the Meeting and Agenda

3. The general aim of the meeting was to review the resolutions adopted by the Second Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, held at Macuto, Venezuela, in November 1979, and the resolutions and recommendations of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in July 1980, with a view to preparing a document containing proposals for the inclusion of the question of women in the regional programme of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

4. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda for their fourth meeting:

/1. Consideration

1. Consideration of the recommendations of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (Copenhagen, July 1980) and the mandates of the resolutions of United Nations organs convening it.
2. New International Development Strategy for the 1980s: Preparation of a proposal on priority action for the integration of women into development. Incorporation of the World Plan of Action into the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.
3. Activities carried out in fulfilment of the Regional Plan of Action.
4. Relations with the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women.
5. Other business (including the plans and activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, located in Santo Domingo).

Opening meetings

5. Before the Presiding Officers began work, Mr. Enrique Iglesias, Executive Secretary of CEPAL, addressed the participants and thanked the Presiding Officers for the support which they had given to the secretariat and to the United Nations in general in the work they were doing in connexion with the integration of women into economic and social development. He said that it was necessary to prepare a document on the regional strategy for the decade in its economic and social aspects, which would be submitted for consideration by governments at the next session of the Commission. This meeting of the Presiding Officers was therefore being held before that of the CEGAN experts who would be responsible for preparing the said document, so that they would have an opportunity of perusing the recommendations of the Presiding Officers on priority areas and activities in connexion with the participation of women in development, in order to consider their inclusion in the regional programme of strategy. Lastly, he observed that this was a good moment to reflect on the region's economic and social problems and that an important role devolved on women in this regard;
6. When the Presiding Officers started work, the Chairwoman observed that the World Conference in Copenhagen had issued a specific mandate to incorporate the problem of women into the regional

/strategies. One

strategies. One of the highest priority tasks, therefore, was to prepare a document which would register the topics and fields of activity which constituted the principal concern as regards women. This document would be submitted for consideration to the experts whose task it would be to prepare the new regional strategy, so that they could include in it the ideas and topics of greatest relevance and highest priority.

7. In the afternoon of Monday 9 March the First Lady of Ecuador, Mrs. Marta de Roldós, was specially invited to take part in the work of the Presiding Officers. After observing that the problems of women should be tackled pragmatically, Mrs. de Roldós referred to what had been done in her country as regards the integration of women into development. She stressed that this was the joint responsibility of men and women, and in referring to the importance of technology said that women must be incorporated into all technical education programmes. She also mentioned the importance of raising the level of awareness of the problem, which she considered of the greatest importance for the integration of women into development. Her country had made great progress in this regard, and in view of this, at the present time, Ecuadorian women not only demanded their rights but had also assumed obligations.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

8. In view of the above-mentioned links between the work of the Presiding Officers and of CEGAN as regards the preparation of the Regional Programme of Action for the International Development Strategy for the 1980s, it was decided to examine agenda items 1 and 2 together in order to draw up a proposal for presentation by the Chairwoman to CEGAN. The discussions resulted in a set of considerations and recommendations of the Fourth Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, the text of which appears in chapter III of this report.

9. In connexion with agenda item 3, on the activities of the CEPAL secretariat in the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action, the Co-ordinators of the Unit were asked to present reports on the areas for which they are responsible.

10. First, the Co-ordinator of the Unit for the Integration of Women into Development at CEPAL Headquarters in Santiago introduced document E/CEPAL/MDM/8 concerning the activities carried out between August 1979 and December 1980. She drew attention to the aspects

/of the

of the report concerning the organization of the Unit and various activities such as conferences and meetings, missions, projects and substantive studies. With regard to the Unit's future tasks and orientations, she emphasized the importance of the meetings held at CEPAL Headquarters in November 1980 to co-ordinate activities and define action proposals under the existing mandates.

11. Finally, she referred to the meetings periodically held with non-governmental organizations to examine various social problems relating to the question of women in development.

12. A report was next presented by the Co-ordinator for the subregion of the Caribbean, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, who explained that pursuant to various mandates six priority work areas had been established in the subregion. These were: (a) creation of national machinery; (b) training; (c) integration of women into development planning; (d) technical assistance to countries in project formulation, monitoring and evaluation; (e) legislation; and (f) research. The activities of the programme were carried out in collaboration and co-ordination with other United Nations bodies and subregional bodies such as the Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) and the Women and Development Unit of the University of the West Indies (WAND). She stressed that the Voluntary Fund had virtually doubled the number of projects approved in the subregion and referred in particular to the training workshop on project formulation to be held in Barbados in June 1981 for the English-speaking Caribbean countries.

13. Finally, the subregional co-ordinator for Mexico, Central America, Cuba and Panama, who began activities at the CEPAL Mexico Office in June 1980, presented her report. She stressed that priority was attached to working in close co-ordination with other United Nations bodies in connexion with the integration of women into development. With financing from CEPAL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) a study had begun on the various forms of work adopted by the different bodies of the United Nations system in Mexico. Close contacts had been established with the subregional co-ordinator for the Caribbean area for carrying out joint activities. Technical assistance had been provided for the formulation, review and appraisal of national projects submitted to the Fund, especially those of Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

14. A meeting of experts on radio schools and women's programmes was under preparation, and was to be held in Mexico City in the course of the year.

/15. Finally,

15. Finally, she said that a project had been submitted to the Voluntary Fund for the holding of a workshop on training in project formulation, implementation and evaluation. The project would be executed in the second half of 1981 in Panama, with the participation of all the countries of the subregion as well as the Dominican Republic.

16. The discussion of agenda item 4, concerning relations with the Voluntary Fund of the United Nations Decade for Women, centred on the Fund's present procedures for the approval of projects and budgetary disbursements, and on the difficulties of administrative and financial co-ordination between the Fund and CEPAL, which has now been resolved. The representative of the Fund presented a brief summary of its three years of operation, answered questions from delegates concerning procedures and criteria, and finally referred to the Fund's future, an issue which would be thoroughly discussed at the forthcoming General Assembly. On this point, the representative asked for the support of countries in the sense that they should prepare their ideas and recommendations as to the future of the Fund so that they would be ready for the General Assembly. She offered to assist Governments by sending documentation on the Fund's future to the Presiding Officers within the near future.

17. With regard to agenda item 5, an exchange of information took place on the setting up in Santo Domingo of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and on the commencement of its activities. The post of Director had already been filled, although the appointee had not yet officially assumed the post. Nevertheless, some preparatory activities had been launched. The Presiding Officers recommended to CEPAL secretariat, and especially the Co-ordinators for the Caribbean and for Mexico and Central America, to provide their utmost co-operation to the Institute.

/III. CONSIDERATIONS

III. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF
THE PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE
INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT OF LATIN AMERICA

1. Development should be conceived of as an integral process characterized by the achievement of economic and social goals which will ensure the real participation of the population in the development process and its benefits, and to this end it is necessary to make deep-seated structural changes in this context as a requisite for the integral development process aspired to. Both aspects are indissoluble parts of a whole and condition each other mutually, and it is difficult to envisage an effective strategy which does not consider them simultaneously. This objective will not be achieved until the problems of women in this social and economic process have been considered at a level of social, economic, political and cultural equality and justice. In this regard it is significant that women constitute half of the region's population. The specific policies for this integral development will be freely determined and implemented by the countries in the context of their development plans and priorities and in keeping with their cultural identity, socio-economic structure and stage of development.

2. The living conditions of women of the region constitute a problem which affects the whole of Latin American and Caribbean society. Accordingly, their improvement should be a basic and explicit objective of the global processes of economic and social development and change in the countries of the region. Men and women share the living conditions determined by the fact that they belong to a particular society and a socio-economic stratum of that society, but women also face the specific types of discrimination resulting from the social and sexual division of labour.

3. It may be affirmed that the situation of women in the region has generally improved, relatively speaking, but this progress has not been uniform. The conditions in which women are living vary enormously according to the socio-economic stratum to which they belong, and their modes of participation in economic, political, social and cultural life and the sources and forms of discrimination against them vary accordingly. This is due to the present structural maladjustments in the form of development existing in the region. The more striking features of this form of development may be seen in the inadequate socio-economic structure, characterized by a very high concentration of wealth and income in small segments of the population and a large section of the population remaining in

/conditions of

conditions of extreme poverty, although there has also often been rapid growth of the middle social sectors, with major economic, social and political consequences.

4. The present world economic crisis has contributed to worsening the situation of women in general. At the regional level the review and appraisal of the progress achieved during the last five years shows that:

(a) With regard to employment, it may be observed that a very low percentage of women is incorporated in the labour force, although this percentage is higher in the Caribbean subregion than in the rest of the region. Most of them carry out unskilled work, particularly in the services sector and above all domestic service, including unpaid family work. In many cases women are the object of discrimination and exploitation as regards pay, working conditions and hiring practices, which hinders their participation in the political, economic and social life of their countries.

(b) Although education is a vital factor for the economic and social development of peoples, in the region women represent a high percentage (between 60 and 80%) of the total illiterate population. Even in the countries considered to be of a higher cultural level, the percentage of women with secondary, technical and higher education is low. The difficulty of access to education by majority groups of the population, particularly women, has oriented the latter basically to domestic services, trade, artisanal activities and agricultural work. There is also the special problem of young people leaving school due to economic reasons, pregnancy, the need to go to work to contribute to the family income or other factors.

(c) According to existing information, the health problem in the region is alarming. Low life expectancy and high mortality and morbidity rates, and the region's critical public health situation highlights the differences which exist between the health and living conditions of the Latin American countries and those of the developed countries of the world. This is all the more critical if one bears in mind the great differences which exist in this field among the different countries of the region and among the different social groups and regions within each country. Because of the special care they need during pregnancy, childbirth and lactation, women, together with children, are worst affected by the situation. There is also the problem of the increasing cost of medicines and the monopolistic control exercised over them by transnational corporations as well as the shortage of available and suitable medical resources.

/(d) It

(d) It is therefore evident that legislation, in so far as it adversely affects women, impedes their integration into development, and while it is true that legislative measures are not in themselves sufficient to ensure women's equality, the elimination of all discriminatory provisions opens the way to equality. The de facto discrimination that exists in the region has been based on, and vitalized by, de jure discrimination and therefore appropriate measures of a legal nature must be taken as rapidly as possible to ensure the legal equality of the sexes. However, legislative measures do not always go hand-in-hand with appropriate measures and machinery for implementation, without which these provisions will only become dead letter or will encourage failure to respect the law.

5. The women most affected by this situation resulting from inadequate socio-economic structures are those belonging to poor groups, particularly in rural and marginal urban areas. Women in rural areas do not have the necessary means and possibilities of access to the agricultural production resources which will allow them to raise the nutritional level of their families.

6. For the implementation of the international development strategy at the regional and national levels, the regional and national development plans should include measures for improving the conditions in which women contribute to development and share in its benefits. In this connexion, it should be borne in mind that women do not form a homogenous sex-based group, but have differing needs and abilities according to their social class and place of residence. The plans, programmes and policies should be designed in such a way as to take into account the specific characteristics of many of the varied roles and functions of women, including biological and social reproduction, maintenance of the domestic unit and participation in economic production and social consumption. In order to attain these objectives, development plans should not merely devote a special chapter to women's problems, but rather organically include policy measures in all relevant sectors. The improvement of the status of women should be considered an essential component of all development spheres.

7. The countries shall make the greatest possible efforts to support the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, which sets forth the action priorities of the region. The policies should give priority to women belonging to poor groups and in particular to poor rural women, as it is in these sectors that the most alarming situations are to be found.

8. On the basis of the foregoing diagnosis, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America recommend:

To Governments:

(a) To do their utmost to furnish maximum support for the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action, which, together with the decisions of the Second Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, constitutes the essential instrument of the action priorities for the region. In this connexion, they should take measures to ensure that regional, national and sectoral plans actively pursue specific actions to benefit women, provide adequate resources for this purpose and monitor and evaluate their application and impact on the situation of women. In the implementation of the objectives and targets of the new International Development Strategy, all aspects relating to the problems of women should receive full attention.

(b) To adopt as rapidly as possible the necessary measures to establish and improve national machinery for the integration of women into development, ensuring that they have a political decision-making capacity as well as statistical data on the situation of women, appraisal machinery and suitable financing for the execution of programmes and projects.

(c) To foster the active economic, social and political participation of the entire population in the economic and social development process in all levels of decision-making, ensure the participation of young people and the integration of women in economic and social development and the welfare of children. With regard to employment, policies should be applied to correct the deformations existing in the labour markets, reduce unemployment and underemployment, generate new productive employment and improve the distribution of income. In this connexion, policies should be aimed at ensuring women's access to work, suitable education and permanent training so that they may better perform their work.

(d) To set up machinery for ensuring compliance with existing legislation regarding equal pay for equal work. Planning in the employment sector should take account of the need to provide women with access to credit, to set up production, consumption and service co-operatives, to disseminate intermediate technology, to provide

/educational and

educational and vocational training courses and to apply any other measure designed to raise productivity. The employment policies should be included in the national development programmes.

(e) To give priority in the short-term to broad adult literacy education programmes, with emphasis on women in rural areas since they show the highest percentages of educational backwardness; it is also suggested that use should be made of the means offered by modern techniques both in the formal and the non-formal systems. In countries which still have not done so, to abolish in the short term the discrimination implicit in education where there is a separation of the sexes; to foster co-education which fundamentally strengthens coexistence, breaks with sexual patterns and stereotypes, and also to foster sexual education; to adjust programmes and adopt flexible curricula so as to make it possible for women to be reincorporated or recycled in secondary or university education, when their responsibilities as mothers so permit or, once their desire to devote themselves full-time to the care, education and upbringing of their children has been satisfied, they consider that the time has come to resume their education or careers.

(f) To procure free access to public health services, extend medical and paramedical coverage, especially in rural areas, develop special plans particularly aimed at mother and child health, give women access to the means and information concerning responsibility for their own fertility and encourage breast-feeding in the first few months of a child's life as a natural form of basic feeding. This requires the full and equitable participation of men and women in implementing the policy decision relating to health services.

(g) As regards the agricultural sphere, to provide support for the training and organization of rural women so as to increase their job opportunities in rural areas and effect a structural change which will avoid their migration to urban areas and facilitate their access to financing through credit or any other means which will ensure this participation. A central role will devolve on agriculture in solving the nutritional problems which affect large percentages of the Latin American population. Women play a vital role in the food systems in connexion with the production, processing, handling, distribution, preparation and consumption of food. This means that women should take part in all the levels of the decision-making process concerning food and nutrition.

/(h) To

(h) To foster policies to reduce urban marginality, whose adverse effects are redoubled for women. These policies should be oriented towards their education and training in order to incorporate them effectively into the economic and social development process on equal conditions.

(i) To facilitate services of support to the family including nurseries, infant day care centres and others so as to permit the full participation of women in the activities of economic and social development. In this regard, the criteria relating to the financing and costs of these services must be reformulated so that cost is borne equally by the contributions of governments, entrepreneurs and men and women who are parents, thus putting an end to the idea that such services are provided for mothers alone. It is of vital importance that in the planning of the services, specific account should be taken in the development plans and programmes of the needs of all women, particularly working women.

(j) To ensure that women participate directly and actively in all decisions relating to the organization and distribution of services relating to the supply of water, the elimination of waste, the use of new and renewable energy resources and community sanitation, since it is they who are most affected by the lack of these services.

(k) To pay special attention to improving national information and statistical services, so as to make it possible to appraise the participation of women in all levels and sectors of the planning system. To provide timely, up-to-date information on the situation of women when so requested by United Nations specialized agencies. The institutions responsible for data collection should furnish them broken down by age and sex, where appropriate, in connexion with any information compiled.

(l) To adopt as soon as possible, in countries which have not yet done so, the measures needed for the integral revision of national legislation, so as to ensure in all areas the legal equity equality of men and women with particular stress on civil, criminal, family, labour, agricultural and commercial law; to establish where appropriate, a family inheritance system which will ensure that the goods acquired during the marriage or co-habitation of the couple will benefit both; and in those countries where no family code exists, to include the relevant norms in the civil legislation; lastly, to apply the necessary machinery for adequate information for women in all the legal and legislative aspects which concern them, thus guaranteeing the best implementation

/of the

of the measures. With regard to penal legislation, the protection of women prisoners should be taken into account as set forth in the Regional Plan of Action.

(m) To use the mass communication media to disseminate the Regional Plan of Action and the International Development Strategy so that the population is informed and can participate actively and consciously in the country's development process. Likewise, to take measures to erradicate the present image of women as sexual and commercial objects, and to present them as socially and politically productive human beings.

(n) To take into account the foregoing recommendations, in the context of the Committee of High-Level Government Experts (CEGAN), and at the nineteenth session of CEPAL, when drawing up the regional programme of action for the implementation of the new IDS for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

To CEPAL:

(a) To continue efforts for the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action in carrying out its regular programmes as part of the instruments required for the New International Development Strategy, and to consider, in its periodic appraisals, specific aspects of the way in which the situation of women has been affected in each area.

(b) To complement the request in the preceding paragraph by setting up machinery to provide close links between the Unit for the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America with the rest of the CEPAL system and with the bodies of the United Nations system, with a view to analysing jointly the quantitative and qualitative impact of the new Strategy on the situation of women.

(c) To co-operate with the governments of the region, in conjunction with the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System (SELA), in the identification and generation of economic co-operation projects which concern the situation of women in the region in growth and economic and social development.

(d) To continue taking steps, with all due urgency, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Presiding Officers and of the Regional Conferences, for obtaining the human and financial resources needed by the secretariat in order better to respond to requests from governments; and also to strengthen the Women's Unit and the advisory services provided by the secretariat for the

/implementation of

implementation of the Regional Plan of Action. In this connexion, financing should be obtained for continuing the activities of the subregional co-ordinators.

(e) To provide the necessary human, technical and financial resources for co-ordinating projects for the region through the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. In this connexion, governments, the United Nations and world and regional financial institutions should provide financial contributions and inputs in kind so that the Institute may carry out its activities.

(f) To include in the agenda for the Third Regional Conference on Women, to be held in 1982, the appraisal of the application and implementation of the Regional Plan of Action in the light of the postulates of the new International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

To the Voluntary Fund of the United Nations Decade for Women:

(a) To request the General Assembly for funds for CEPAL projects, without thereby reducing the resources to be allocated by the Consultative Committee of the Voluntary Fund for Women.

(b) To continue providing support to Latin America and the Caribbean, and ensure greater flexibility in the criteria for the allocation of resources, in accordance with the specific needs of the region and of each country; to reduce to a minimum the time between the allocation of funds for projects and the execution of those projects depending upon the receipt of the funds; to ensure that the amounts approved are more in keeping with the amounts requested for projects; to ensure financial backing for projects until they are included in national programmes; and to attach all possible priority to integrated programmes which will have a real impact on the situation of women.

(c) To urge governments to step up their financial contributions in order to broaden the Fund's activities, specifically in the approval and execution of projects.

To governments and to the bodies of the United Nations system, in connexion with financing:

(a) To ensure the effective allocation and utilization of financial resources for the generation and execution of projects aimed at the incorporation of women into development.

/(b) To

(b) To request in particular the organizations of the United Nations system to evaluate what has been done to improve the status of women, to increase their financial contributions and to adopt the necessary measures to implement the Regional Plan of Action.