UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

LC/G.1322
5 September 1984

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

E C L A C

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN UP TO THE YEAR 2000

(Santiago, Chile, 3 to 5 December 1983)

84-8-1420

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/I. ATTENDANCE

I. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

1. The meeting of the Group of Experts on Operational Strategies for the Advancement of Women up to the year 2000 was organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and held in Santiago, Chile, from 3 to 5 December 1983. The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress made in the region in this connection during the decade and, in the light of the knowledge acquired on the subject and the changes which have occurred in the region, to propose measures for action by governments and other relevant bodies which would benefit Latin American women.

2. Attendance

2. The following experts participated in the meeting: Cecilia Braslavsky (Argentina), Pilar Campaña (Chile), Fabiola Campillo (Colombia), Patricia Cottle de Rivas(Bolivia), María Eloisa Galarregui (Uruguay), Magaly Pineda (Dominican Republic), Ana María Portugal (Peru), Susana Prates (Brazil), Marcia Rivera (Puerto Rico), Adriana Santa Cruz (Chile), Daizy Valmorbida (Brazil) and Moema Viezzer (Brazil).

3. The United Nations Secretariat was represented by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women and the Economic Commission for Latin America. As regards participation by United Nations specialized agencies, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was represented.

3. Agenda

4. The Agenda for the meeting was as follows:

a) foreseeable future scenarios in Latin America with respect to women: social, economic, political, cultural and legal aspects;

b) operational strategies for the advancement of women up to the year 2000.

4. Documentation for the meeting

5. The experts considered the agenda items in the context of the documents and mandates relating to the New International Economic Order and of the International Development Strategy; the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year (Mexico City, 1975); the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Copenhagen, 1980), the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development (1977) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

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6. The meeting also had before it the documents relating to the Regional Technical Seminar on Women and Families in the Urban Low-Income Strata in Latin America, Santiago, Chile, 28 November to 2 December 1983 (E/CEPAL/SEM.12/R.1-R.24).

7. The documentation prepared specially for the meeting was as follows:

- Provisional agenda (E/CEPAL/SEM.14/R.1), 22 November 1983.

- Labor preparatoria relativa a la documentación básica que habrá de presentarse a la Conferencia Mundial: Estrategias de ejecución para el adelanto de la mujer destinadas a alcanzar los objetivos del Decenio de las Naciones Unidas para la Mujer: Igualdad, Desarrollo y Paz, y promover el progreso en los campos del empleo, la salud y la educación, teniendo presentes la Estrategia Internacional del Desarrollo para el decenio de 1980 y el Nuevo Orden Económico Internacional (E/CEPAL/SEM.14/R.2, 30 November 1983).

- Discriminación contra la mujer. Resabios existentes en la legislación vigente en América Latina: Propuesta de medidas concretas para una integración de la mujer en el Decenio de las Naciones Unidas para la Mujer: Igualdad, Desarrollo y Paz (E/CEPAL/SEM.14/R.3, 30 November 1983).

- Notas respecto a las estrategias de ejecución para el adelanto de la mujer hasta el año 2000 (E/CEPAL/SEM.14/R.4, December 1983).

II. REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

A. ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL SITUATION, TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

1. General context and declaration of principles

8. The Group of Experts here convened, having recognized the investigations and discussions carried out in seminars held within the context of the United Nations system and having considered the progress made during the Women's Decade in Latin America and the Caribbean, hereby declare that:

a) Real progress has been made in the realm of theory and concept and in the acceptance of women's problems as a legitimate subject for study in the different societies of the region.

b) This has also led to a greater awareness in broad sectors of the female population of the need for more thorough studies, research and analysis to be carried out in order to determine their de facto and legal status, as well as a sense of urgency as regards mobilization. This has been reflected in the creation

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of women's organizations and feminist movements in the various countries of the region, although it must be recognized that inequality exists at the subregional, intra-regional and interregional levels and within the countries themselves.

c) It has been possible to ascertain that very little progress has been made with regard to the status of broad sectors of women in the region and that in some cases there has even been regression.

d) The dynamics of the process has been partially responsible for the fact that research workers, feminists and women's movements have concluded that a real change in the socio-political, economic and cultural position of women calls for the formulation of a new concept of society based on active, and not merely rhetorical principles of justice, peace and equality and also on structural changes such as those expressed in the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development (chapter II, A, 1, para. 14).

e) The construction of this society requires the participation of women, not only as isolated individuals but also as groups organized in movements capable of making their demands socially visible and becoming a power base able to make the political sphere, the State and its political agents give priority and attention to those demands. This necessarily implies that women should participate as social actors in the formulation and establishment of this new concept of society.

f) The building of a new society in the terms expressed above calls for the eradication of unjust social inequalities and therefore makes it necessary to review not only the practices and ideologies of economic exploitation but also the practices and ideologies of patriarchy, as well as those of the social communication media, which cut through and articulate the mechanisms of those ideologies which perpetuate and justify the subordination and oppression of women.

2. Anticipated scenarios

9. The social and economic scenario in which the 1975 Mexico Conference took place seemed clearly favourable to demands for a change in the status of women in Latin America. The high growth indexes of the gross domestic product which the majority of the countries were experiencing in the first part of the past decade, the reduction or control of unemployment and the expansion of agriculture and industry were some indicators of economic growth which induced analysts to predict that the underdeveloped countries of the region were progressing towards development.

10. Now that the Women's Decade is nearing its end, the position and prospects are no longer the same. The critical levels of indebtedness which some Latin American countries have reached, the low growth and even decline of the traditional economic indicators, the realistic projections that poverty and unemployment will increase rapidly and the fact that no alternative short-term economic models appear to be available and that the crisis in the region has been aggravated by the crisis in world capitalism are all factors that make it more difficult to attain the goals set in 1975.

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11. Undoubtedly, investments in social infrastructure and services have been reduced and will be cut back even further. The supply of productive resources and of jobs for the poorest groups will be very restricted.

12. Both processes particularly affect women. In the first place, reduction of social expenditure on the part of the State reduces female employment in several categories of the tertiary sector, particularly socially organized reproductive activities, in which female employment is predominant. In addition, the reduction of social expenditure brings about a decline in the quantity and quality of reproductive social services provided. The family must then absorb more and more of the cost of the maintenance and the daily and generational reproduction of the labour force; in practice, this is reflected in a greater consumption of time and energy among women in the wage-earning and lower-income sectors.

13. In the second place, it can be expected that the reduction of the supply of productive resources and jobs will be most harmful to the lower-income strata, particularly the women in these groups. One may expect an increase in female unemployment. At the same time, there will be an increase in the number of lower-income women engaged in occasional work of the type that does not require much skill and is not covered by labour laws. Hence, there will be an increase in the number of women in the "informal" labour force, this being understood as that which does not enjoy effective legal protection.

14. By devising scenarios and evaluating the points and contracts mentioned above, it should be possible to begin to identify strategies for attaining the objectives of the decade which, if correctly stated, go beyond the scope of political formulations or programmes "for women" and have more in common with an alternative plan for the development of society.

3. Progress

15. The most significant progress found by the Group of Experts in the process of overcoming discrimination against women included:

a) Increasing awareness among women and other social groups in Latin American societies of the fact that the biological difference between the sexes need not give rise to social inequality -either in practice or in ideological construction- nor need it limit the access of women to resources.

b) Establishment of women's social movements and feminist groups seeking the abolition of deep-rooted and widespread discriminatory relations and treatment. In this process, conceptual progress has been made towards interpreting the problems of women as being the result not only of class differences but also of gender differences which are construed socially as sex differences.

c) A multitude of methodological experiments and innovations furthered by those movements and also by other social entities, such as academic centres, research centres, study centres and other institutions in fields of research, organization and communication. This kind of experience has been acquired in

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areas such as education, economic participation of women in urban and rural areas (in formal and informal sectors), health, the family and legislation, among others.

d) Progress in some countries in the enactment of laws granting women equal rights, although it is recognized that changes in the laws do not necessarily change in practice the social status of broad sectors of women.

e) Intensification and diversification of women's work in the realm of production.

f) Growing participation in the acquisition of goods and social services, particularly with regard to education.

g) Quantitative and qualitative increase in the participation of women in community movements, political organizations, the struggle for human rights and peace and in cultural outlets.

4. Persistent limitations

16. In spite of the progress made, it became clear within the Group of Experts that there was concern about the persistent lag as regards the division of work between the sexes, the continuation of the practice of assigning subsidiary roles to women and the fact that there are still limitations based on class and sex, especially with respect to the socialization of daily reproduction. In this regard, the following phenomena were examined:

a) The lack of awareness on the part of large groups of the population, spheres of government and institutions that difference in sex does not imply domination and subordination.

b) The failure to systematize methodological experience and innovations, which, because they occur in isolation, have not been sufficiently publicized or incorporated in development programmes.

c) The persistence in many countries of laws in which provision is made for discriminatory treatment of women and the emergence of paternalistic legislation which militates against economic and social participation by women.

d) The growing practice of associating women with work in job categories which are more backward, poorly paid and lacking in social security, all of which further increases the burden of women's work. This situation is even worse in the context of economic crisis in which the countries of the region now find themselves, where the contributions in money and in unpaid work of women are a fundamental part of the survival strategies of family units.

e) Arrangements whereby women have increasingly participated in the acquisition of goods and social services which often do not guarantee equality between the sexes, as well as the intensification of female work in production

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for the market do not in and of themselves provide the bases for consciousness-raising and liberation. During the past decade, in fact, many women have entered the labour market out of need and not out of choice, because of the increasing deterioration of family incomes. Other women, especially younger ones, have entered the manufacturing sector in low-skill, unstable jobs in export zones.

f) The persistence of sexist cultural patterns in educational systems, communications media and socialization activities.

g) The fact that most legislation and institutions which provide social services have not taken into account the emergence of new family structures so that women not living in a traditional family relationship are discriminated against.

h) The limited participation of women in governmental organizations, political parties, trade unions and community organizations in which far-reaching decisions are taken.

i) The limited progress achieved with respect to policy design and resource allocation for programmes which guarantee an improvement in women's working and living conditions and in their access to production resources.

j) The lag in communications, aggravated first by the strong role played by the transnational model and second by the absence of alternative channels of communication for, by and with women on a transnational basis throughout Latin America.

5. Intra-regional differences

17. In the assessment of the status of women during the decade, significant intra-regional differences have been noted which are due to the diversity of political-economic models and to cultural and ethnic heterogeneity, among other factors.

18. It has been noted that there is a close relationship between a lack of progress in the status of women and the following phenomena:

a) Restrictions in democratic living and the exercise of basic freedoms within authoritarian political models which set up barriers against participation.

b) Application of recessive economic models.

c) Political and economic exile of many contingents of the population, including women living as refugees with their children or away from them.

/6. Conclusion

6. Conclusion

19. The analysis of the situation shows that the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women have not been respected or have been respected only in part. Since this convention was signed and later ratified by many governments of the region, they have special responsibility in this regard.

20. Similarly, there might be need to reaffirm the responsibility of governments with regard to the fulfilment of what has been agreed upon in other forums and with regard to instruments such as those relating to the New International Economic Order, the Regional Plan of Action, the World Plan of Action and the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade (Copenhagen).

B. STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN, EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE IN THE REGION

21. Within the context of their general considerations, the experts made the following observations:

a) Strategies for overcoming inequalities that create discrimination against women are some of the strategies to resolve the crisis now experienced by Latin American societies. This means that the former should be used in bringing into being a fairer model of social sharing.

b) Women are the agents for overcoming this inequality, but society as a whole must also play its part since the elimination of inequalities that create discrimination against women leads to the elimination of one of the most formidable barriers to social and economic development.

c) Strategies should provide a legal framework for and intensify the participation of women in their own development and in the defence of great human causes such as equality, development and peace.

22. The following concrete strategies have been proposed for implementing the recommendations contained in the World Plan of Action and the Programme for the Second Half of the Decade and for making up for the lags already experienced:

a) Impetus must continue to be given to research using a variety of methodologies which make it possible to obtain more detailed knowledge concerning the contexts and dimensions of discrimination and the social groups in which it persists. This research should, on the one hand, lay particular stress on the incorporation of new approaches to work (action research, participative research, etc.) while on the other hand maintaining and strengthening global diagnosis, refining the instruments used for obtaining information in order to find out the real situation in which women move. This research should be articulated within a theoretical framework in which the identity of women is restored.

/b) Where

b) Where governments and the various levels of State are concerned, there will be need: i) to legitimatize and promote in every way possible the participation of women in the design and implementation and subsequently in the evaluation of public policies; ii) to prepare studies on the legal status of women in the different countries and to advocate a fair, equitable and modern approach to the treatment of women in legislation; iii) to see that women have equitable access to, use of and control over production resources; iv) to see that women have equitable access to, use of and control over social services in the areas of housing, education, leisure-time activities, etc.; v) to give impetus to the functioning or creation of national mechanisms empowered to take decisions and endowed with resources, which are designed to handle situations relating to the improvement of the status of women.

c) As regards the communications media, it will be necessary to eliminate the transmittal of sexist cultural standards; they must be replaced by others in which natural differences between the sexes are recognized. Similarly, it will be necessary to promote the publication of the findings of research on women and on action carried out on their behalf and also to promote additional activities. What is sought is a change in the ideological mechanisms and the fundamental pre-requisite for doing this is the availability of alternative channels of communication at all levels, as well as permanent spaces within the social communication media.

d) Social movements and institutions and women's and feminist organizations must strengthen their activities aimed at raising the status of women. Thought should be given to articulating this action with the great human causes embodied in the struggles for peace, human rights, equality and development.

e) Peasant organizations, trade unions and professional and community groups must continue to back struggles being waged for their specific rights. Initiative should be taken to see that each such organization takes into account the women's issue and the feminist commitment.

f) In order that women may be increasingly involved in taking initiative and making decisions, steps should be taken to ensure that more and more women take part in the social struggle related to the design and development of a new model of society.

g) The United Nations system should promote and articulate action taken by States, social movements, women's and feminist organizations and other institutions and should disseminate the results of their work. It should also promote the participation of women at the international level.

h) The experts agreed that when old and new declarations on this subject or official instruments, such as the Regional Plan of Action, are reviewed, the new emphasis given to certain aspects should be made clear, as should the emergence of new approaches. By way of example attention was drawn to: i) the importance of new family roles; ii) the modification of legal aspects of family law, such as the need for the mother and father both to exercise the same duties and rights with respect to paternal responsibility (the modern concept replacing

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the former patria potestad) with respect to all their children; iii) the granting of official status and recognition to de facto family organizations such as concubinage, which traditionally have not been accepted and have resulted in discrimination against women and against children born out of wedlock; iv) the notion of legislation and communication as interrelated phenomena which need to be considered and dealt with together for greater effectiveness, and v) the growing participation of women in transnational arrangements in order to open up new channels of communication and co-operation among the women of Latin America, and thus unify and further promote their efforts.

i) Attention was also called to the more active role assumed in recent years by non-governmental bodies and to the need to make the programmes of these bodies compatible with those of the governments and those of the United Nations system. It was also felt that there should be a greater linkage between the declarations and actions of feminist women's movements and integrationist women's movements, as this would benefit all the efforts taken in this connection.

C. FINAL RECOMMENDATION

DECADE FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION

23. The Meeting of Experts,

Considering the current situation and prospects of the economic crisis experienced by the region, in which women are and will continue to be one of the most severely affected groups,

Also considering that during the Women's Decade significant progress was made in learning and thinking about, investigating and disseminating information on the problems of women in Latin America, but not enough was done in connection with the implementation of practical solutions and specific ways of overcoming discrmination,

Further considering the lag which still remains, as considered in its deliberations,

Recommends the extension of the Decade in order to guarantee the transition from the stage of consciousness-raising to the stage of action; in other words, that a new Decade -the Reflective Decade- be proclaimed as one of the main strategies for ensuring that the recommendations for the adoption of plans and programmes between 1975 and 1985 will be put into effect.