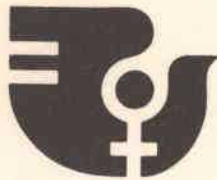




UNITED NATIONS



WORLD CONFERENCE  
OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR  
MEXICO CITY, 19 JUNE TO 2 JULY 1975

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CONF.66/BP/2  
28 February 1975

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REGIONAL CONSULTATION  
FOR ASIA AND THE FAR EAST ON INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN  
DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO POPULATION FACTORS

Plan of Action

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BANGKOK, THAILAND

13-17 May 1974

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

UNITED NATIONS

New York, 1974

We the representatives of the Governments members of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East assembled in Bangkok from 13 to 17 May 1974, for the Regional Consultation for Asia and the Far East on the Integration of Women in Development with Special Reference to Population Factors,

Gravely concerned over current demographic, economic, political and social conditions, and over the situation of women, particularly of those living in the rural areas, and their lack of educational and employment opportunities,

Appreciating the growing realization of the importance of the role of women in integrated development and the aspirations of Asian women to contribute to development,

Recognizing the close interrelationship of the status of women and the determinants of population growth and family size,

Reaffirming the recommendations on the draft World Population Plan of Action made by the International Forum on the Role of Women in Population and Development held at New York in February 1974, and the principles of the Regional Consultation Preparatory to the World Population Conference held in Bangkok from 7 - 10 May 1974,

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolutions 2626(XXV) on the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade and 2716(XXV) on programmes of concerted international action for the advancement of women,

Recalling also ECAFE resolution 135(XXIX) on the Integration of Women in the development process, and the Declaration of Population Strategy for Development adopted by the Second Asian Population Conference held in Tokyo from 1 - 13 November 1972,

Noting that the 31st session of the ECAFE will take place in International Women's Year,

Hereby submit our proposals for a Plan of Action for the consideration of the Executive Secretary of the Commission and submission to its 31st session with a view to obtaining its endorsement, and urge member and associate member countries of the Regional Commission to strengthen their national efforts and extend full support at sub-regional and regional levels for concerted action for the implementation of the Plan of Action.

## PLAN OF ACTION

### A. Introduction

The deliberations of the regional consultation covered a vast and insufficiently explored area. In order to stimulate follow-up action on the part of national governments and local bodies, and international and regional organizations it was felt desirable to elaborate proposals indicating areas in which action was required. The consultation endorsed the recommendations of the International Forum on the Role of Women in Population and Development on the draft world population plan of action and of the ECAFE pre-world population conference consultation.

While recognizing that the situation of women in urban areas required urgent attention, the Consultation was of the opinion that highest priority should be accorded by governments to integrated programmes for the advancement of women in rural areas. Programmes should be designed so that women as well as men were motivated and were given possibilities to improve their productivity and quality of life and devote a share of their increasing income to improve the economic, social and cultural infrastructure of the location in which they were living. Such integrated programmes should aim at rural modernization and should incorporate land reform, vocational guidance, education and training, creation of job opportunities for women, health and nutrition, family planning, as well as rural services and amenities for working mothers.

In formulating programmes aimed at the advancement of women, Governments, ECAFE and non-governmental organizations as an initial step might establish separate programmes exclusively for women where their status is particularly low and where discriminatory attitudes towards them are strong. The aim of programmes for the advancement of women, however, is ultimately to integrate their activities with those of men in all sectors so that women do not remain isolated in their activities. Separate programmes for women should therefore be appropriately phased out as women gain more confidence in themselves and as men accept more readily the role of women as equal partners in development.

It is important that progress towards the integration of women in development be monitored by national, regional and international agencies. Such monitoring should be carried out within the framework of the strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade.

In developing plans of action based on the proposals herein governments should aim at implementation within a specific time period, such as a decade, providing also for a review and appraisal of progress at the mid-point of the period.

### Funding

In order to implement a programme of the broad scope envisaged here, it is necessary to marshal all available resources for its support. The financial means should be provided by local communities, national governments, inter-governmental organizations, and through the channels of multilateral and bilateral assistance.

At the community level, resources may be provided voluntarily by citizens. Initiative at the national level may be taken by Ministries and/or commissions concerned, and provision for financing population programmes and programmes fully to integrate women in development should as a matter of priority, be included in the national economic and social development plans.

The inclusion of such programmes with high priority in national development plans will facilitate its consideration within UNDP's country programming procedures, and technical assistance and financing from the United Nations system should be requested by governments for the development of programmes aimed to enhance the status and opportunities for women. Private foundations and institutions also represent sources of financial support for various aspects of population programmes and programmes aimed to integrate women into the development process. The need for financial support to NGOs working towards these aims should be recognized.

The Consultation stressed the importance of widening awareness on the part of donor countries and the recipient countries requesting the technical co-operation which was offered, of the impact on development of the issues with which the Consultation dealt.

#### Regional Action

1. The Executive Secretary of ECAFE is invited to ensure that the development and implementation of a comprehensive regional programme for the integration of women in the development effort is undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity. For this purpose the Executive Secretary should, through existing channels for the co-ordination of regional programmes in the fields of population and social development, seek the co-operation of other interested organizations so as to ensure an integrated approach.
2. A dynamic long-term programme for this purpose should be drawn up by the units of ECAFE primarily concerned, namely the Population and the Social Development Divisions, giving consideration to the proposals of this Consultation. The already existing long-term programme for the advancement of women, in operation in the ECA for the period of 1972-76, could be used as a guideline for the establishment of a similar one in the ECAFE region.
3. The functions of the proposed programme might include:
  - a. assistance to national Governments and NGOs to develop policies, strategies and programmes for strengthening women's role in national development especially in rural areas;
  - b. promoting action-oriented research and collection of data as a basis for formulation of programmes and evaluation of progress towards the effective integration of women in development;
  - c. exchanging information between countries on relevant programmes and services;
  - d. strengthening existing training institutions to increase women's potential for local, national and regional leadership;

- e. helping to promote women's organizations at local, sub-regional and regional levels;
- f. assisting Governments in formulating requests for technical and financial assistance for its programmes in this area.

4. The Executive Secretary of ECAFE is requested to seek adequate financial and staff resources for such a work-programme, which, bearing in mind the context of cultural practices prevailing in the region, should include action and assistance to Governments in the fields hereinafter discussed.

#### B. Education and training

A definite correlation has been found to exist between women's educational level and smaller family size in developing countries, but the effect of education on fertility is often reduced when female education does not result in gainful employment. Education, training, and employment strategies should therefore be co-ordinated. In order to ensure equal opportunities for participation in economic activities modification of old patterns of sex-selective training programmes through changes in legislation and other measures including those aimed at changing the attitudes and social practices which limit women's participation is essential. Since women are lagging behind men special provisions in education and training programmes should be made for women and girls.

#### Proposals for action

1. Adopt dynamic programmes to eradicate illiteracy and to establish a specific target date for its elimination; to encourage functional literacy and post-literacy activities as a part of literacy campaigns; to include teaching on a number of subjects such as civic education, nutrition, hygiene, etc.
2. Provide and enforce as quickly as possible free and compulsory primary education, overcome low rates of school enrolment and high rates of drop-out especially among girls, and provide programmes for out-of-school youth.
3. Provide reform of school curricula and equal curricular choices ensuring that the content of educational and training programmes is relevant to national development and the prevailing eco-system and that educational material does not perpetuate sex role stereotypes.
4. Integrate into school curricula the study of agricultural and other vocational subjects and techniques including the use of new tools and equipment with a view to developing in the younger generation a sense of pride in, and attachment to, the land and environment.
5. Ensure that courses on population education and on family life education are integrated into school curricula at all levels and in programmes of non-formal education, to raise awareness of the relationship between demographic trends and social, economic and cultural conditions and to prepare young people and adults of both sexes for responsible marriage and parenthood.

6. Provide vocational guidance and counselling to girls as well as boys in accordance with the requirements of national development.
7. Provide courses in home economics for boys and men as well as for girls and women.
8. Provide special incentives and facilities for women to encourage their participation in technological and scientific skills.
9. Make special arrangements for training for women at the village level for agricultural work, making use of modern farming principles and new intermediate technology.
10. Arrange, as part of rural development projects aimed at cutting down the rate of rural unemployment, training programmes for small-scale rural industries.
11. Organize training programmes in various activities related to entrepreneurship, commerce, and marketing, e.g. co-operatives and loan societies, access to credit, book-keeping methods, assessment of market fluctuations.
12. Provide, in view of the acute shortage and uneven distribution of doctors, nurses, paramedicals, lawyers and social workers, especially in rural areas adequate professional and vocational training for women at all levels.
13. Provide the necessary supporting measures to give effect to these proposals such as establishing training centres, organizing programmes for training of trainers and of volunteers, mobilizing national and international resources for obtaining funds and technical assistance.

#### C. Employment

While unemployment and underemployment are major problems in the region, the key to elevating the role of women in economic development will depend largely on their increasing participation in economic activities.

It is frequently argued that, where jobs are scarce, priority should be given to males, overlooking that the percentage of women household heads is large and that women are entitled to general access to the labour market on equal terms. Greater participation by women in all areas of employment (and not only those traditionally associated with the woman's role) is a prerequisite to attaining the objectives of development itself. The potential for creating more paid jobs for all workers should therefore be stressed. Given training at different levels, both formal and non-formal, women's chances of employment and their contribution to economic productivity would improve considerably, as would their position and prestige in the family and in society. Increased gainful employment outside the home and opportunities for self-employment can be expected to contribute to needed changes in fertility levels.

#### Proposals for action

1. Specifically incorporate provision of employment opportunities for women in employment policies and strategies which should recognize woman's dual role

and provide the services and facilities necessary to enable her to take advantage of these opportunities. In principle, services for working mothers, day care centres, creches, etc., should be provided in living areas.

2. Integrate manpower and education policies.
3. Establish in government departments and other appropriate bodies positive policies and targets for employing women in both the public and private sectors, with special emphasis on employment of women at the policy and planning levels. The principles of equal access to the whole range of economic activities, and equal pay should be applied.
4. Seek new ways of developing community and entrepreneurial skills especially among rural women, for small business ventures manufacturing, food processing, cottage and handicraft industries, community development and social welfare activities.
5. Ensure for women access to credit on equal terms with men and encourage the establishment of co-operatives.
6. Promote integrated rural development so as to increase employment opportunities for women as well as men, to increase food production and to help reduce the rate of migration to urban areas; income-earning self-employment (outside of agriculture) and expansion of village-based services in fields such as public health, literacy and social welfare.
7. Since increasing participation by women in employment is strongly related to their access to education and training, to attitudes toward family planning, to cultural attitudes towards the role of women, and to attitudes of employers, recognize these related factors as essential elements in the approach to employment.
8. Ensure that the services required to support the employment policy are developed.

D. Health, nutrition and other social services

Programmes relating to health, nutrition and other social services should be integrated into over-all developmental programmes. While social and economic development is their primary objective, they have a significant impact on fertility and population growth.

Proposals for action

1. Give high priority to programmes of nutrition, nutrition education and maternal and child health care among all sectors of the population; include family planning as a part of these programmes recognizing that the right to determine freely the number and spacing of children includes the right of the child and the mother to survive and to enjoy a healthy life.
2. Strengthen basic health services and in view of the scarcity of medical doctors in many areas of the region use trained paramedical workers to the



fullest extent inter alia for such services as the provision of contraceptives and adequate follow-up for protection of the health of the users.

3. Establish or expand programmes of old age and unemployment insurance and social welfare assistance in order to guarantee a minimum level of social and economic security to all persons.
4. Provide supporting services for the family, recognizing that it continues to be an essential social institution.
5. Promote the redistribution of industry and of health, education and other services and reorder routes of transportation so as to reduce the migration particularly of males thereby protecting mothers and children from the effective dissolution of the family and providing rural women and men with greater opportunities for employment.

#### E. Population

Social, economic and demographic factors are inextricably interrelated, and change in one or more invariably involves all. To alter the pattern whereby women are denied full participation in the development process involves, inter alia, a change in certain crucial demographic variables, i.e., age at marriage, age at birth of first child, total number of children and the interval between births, and age at termination of child-bearing. Enabling women to determine, in relation to work and family values whether, when and how often to undertake pregnancies is an essential factor in such change.

#### Proposals for action **Fundação Cuidar o Futuro**

1. Raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years, reducing the total number of years exposed to risk of child-bearing and increasing the number of years that may be devoted to education.
2. Make available to individuals and couples through an institutionalized system, such as a national family planning programme, such information, service and means as will enable them to determine freely the number of their children and the intervals at which they will have them.
3. Collect and analyze data needed to determine the level of aggregate fertility that is compatible with the national welfare, establish targets to meet that goal and to educate individual families to see that achieving it is in their interest.
4. Engage men as well as women in the effort to ensure responsible parenthood.
5. Because of the shortages of medical and para-medical personnel, promote wide community based distribution of non-clinical methods of contraception.
6. Promote awareness of and means for improvements in conditions of infant and early childhood mortality, so as to reduce the lag in time between the decline of mortality and the decrease in fertility.
7. Utilize all humanitarian means of discouraging large families, including social security for the aged.

8. Ensure balanced demographic, economic and social development by closely relating population policies and programmes with measures adopted to improve the status of women.
9. Establish effective machinery within governments with responsibility for ensuring that priority attention is accorded to the population and family planning fields and for planning evaluation and analysis of programmes in their areas.

F. Research, data collection and analysis

In spite of a mass of demographic as well as social economic data social indicators which would explain the status of women, and data which would give a more concrete and clearer picture of their situation are not available. Programmes of analytical research and evaluation should be promoted to enable realistic planning and assessment of the evolution of the situation of women, its causes and processes, and of the effects thereon of development efforts.

Proposals for action

1. Facilitate international comparisons and exchange of information by taking steps to harmonize statistics.
2. Obtain statistics in censuses and surveys on women's education, levels of skill, their participation in economic activities and on interrelated social-economic variables. These and all other statistics on social, economic and demographic characteristics should be broken down by sex, age and marital status to provide bases for comparative studies of males and females.
3. Improve the quality, coverage and definition of concepts in vital registration systems and other related systems of data collection in order to provide a sound basis for research on the role of population factors in the integration of women in development and their labour force participation.
4. Undertake and encourage in-depth studies and surveys on economic, social and demographic benefits as related to the integration of women in the development process.
5. Develop and review social indicators in order to assess periodically the status of women in development.
6. Encourage in-depth studies of the family and household situation.
7. Encourage universities and other academic institutions and governmental and non-governmental organizations to conduct research in these fields and to conceptualize the interrelationship between the status of women and fertility.
8. Ensure co-ordination between the information gathering services and the users of the data for all purposes including programme development, evaluation of progress and communications.

### G. Legislative and administrative measures

The integration of women into the development processes, both as contributors and beneficiaries depends on the attitudes and values of women as well as on the opportunities offered to them by the society. Although values and attitudes are the products of a long socialization process, governments by enacting legislative measures and taking administrative action can greatly influence people's behaviour and this will gradually affect changes in attitudes. Legislative and administrative measures are therefore important instruments for guiding and institutionalizing change. As a matter of urgency relevant measures should be included in national development plans and sufficient resources should be allocated for their implementation.

#### Proposals for action

1. Review and enact legislation and regulations that have or may have a bearing on the status of women, their role in development and population change, including laws related to age of marriage, legal capacity, rights and responsibility when entering into, during marriage and at its dissolution, laws on taxation, inheritance, migration, education, employment (including choice of work and profession) and choice of domicile; ensure that such legislation and regulations are in accordance with the relevant United Nations instruments, including the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the international labour standards.
2. Ensure that laws provide for a minimum age of marriage for women of not less than 18 years, the registration of all marriages, the contracting of marriage only with the full and free consent of intending spouses, equal rights and duties in matters relating to their children and for the protection of the children's interest in case of dissolution.
3. Accord to women equal right with men to acquire, administer, enjoy, dispose of and inherit property, including property acquired during marriage and to ensure for women the fullest possible protection against consecutive and other marriages; ensure that all men and women know their legal rights and when possible are given legal aid free of charge in their communities.
4. Remove all legal and other restrictions on the dissemination of information on contraceptives and on the sale and distribution of family planning devices.
5. Establish appropriate administrative structures and procedures for data collection, formulation and implementation of policies and programmes, and evaluation of their implications and impact.
6. Establish national commissions and sub-commissions, committees or working groups under the appropriate national machinery, which could undertake fact-finding and comprehensive studies, paying special attention to the needs and problems of women in both rural and urban areas.
7. Establish special units to study the present situation of women in the different Government departments, and to promote ameliorative action.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

5. Promote at community level, understanding, acceptance and practice of family planning.
  6. In relation to all forms of discrimination, explain to women their rights and responsibilities, discuss their problems and give them legal and social assistance.
  7. Offer assistance as appropriate in the fields of education, training and re-training, literacy campaigns, civic education, leadership training and the forms of training discussed in Section I.
  8. Supplement public educational and training facilities by providing private schools, kindergartens, semi-boarding and boarding schools, as well as equipment, materials, finance and personnel for training programmes especially for rural women; offering scholarships to women for study within their country and abroad.
  9. Help working parents with family responsibilities by setting up day-care centres and other support services for general social welfare.
  10. Encourage women to achieve equal participation in decision-making at all levels and in all groups by education, legislation, changes in the attitudes of men and women and by the reshaping of public opinion.
  11. Encourage further research by governments, universities and private research organizations locally and regionally on social indicators and data collection systems as a prerequisite for more effective assessment of women's progress in development and factors influencing population growth.
  12. Create opportunities for part-time employment of women, assist them in establishing income earning projects, and encourage them to become entrepreneurs in commerce and industry.
  13. Promote international exchange of information on the status of women with the aim of increasing understanding and co-operation among women as well as among non-governmental organizations working for the same human goals.
- I. Exchange of information and experience

#### Support Communication

An essential prerequisite to the integration of women in development is the changing of certain deep-rooted traditional attitudes in men and women regarding the role of women in present day society. For this, the planned and sensitive use of communication media will be vital. By "communication media" should be understood, not only the "mass media" such as radio, press, television and cinema, but also the millions of government and non-governmental change agents and opinion leaders who are the key communicators in development at the group and interpersonal levels. The planned combination of the mass media with the change agents is necessary for effective support communication. All proposed operational programmes and projects for the integration of women in development should have properly researched and built-in communication components, including budgets. This requires not only the incorporation

of budgetary provisions for audio-visual services, but the infusion of cultural and attitudinal research and communication analysis into the formulation of such programmes and projects.

#### Proposals for action

1. Ensure that those responsible for the selection of news and other programme emphases in the mass media give adequate recognition to the roles and the special achievements in national life, history, and present-day development of all women including rural women with whom a far larger number of women will identify and whose roles a far larger number of men will have to acknowledge.
2. Exert vigilance on media programmers against degrading depiction of women in e.g. drama and other entertainment, make efforts to sensitize writers, producers, and editors to their daily responsibility for the perpetuation of traditional male-dominating attitudes through the reproduction and repetition of old stereo-types.

#### Information Exchange

Effective programming and project formulation for the integration of women in development will also require an adequate flow of factual information and of relevant experience in this field to and from the national policy-makers and planners in each country, and their international assistance collaborators.

Within each country, interested and collaborating organizations should establish an Information Reference Centre on the status and role in development of women, in their country and abroad and should publicize this central resource to the maximum. These national Information Reference Centres should become the key repositories and points of two-way communication at the international level, including the storage and re-dissemination of documented experience on the integration of women in development from the agencies of the United Nations system, especially the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

Each national centre should become an indispensable source of professionally sound, accurate and relevant information and data in this field for government authorities, academic institutions, international organizations, the media and all others for the integration of women in national development. Proper funding should be provided for this purpose.

#### J. Summary

Women in the ECAFE region have a crucial role to play both in the development of their countries and in the solution of problems arising from current and future demographic trends. In recognition of this, the recommendations of the Consultation aim at drawing greater attention to the needs and the possibilities for action related to promotion of greater integration of women in development. The guidelines include both short-run and long-term strategies for change, and they give special attention to basic improvements at the local level. Although specifics on the condition of women and on the current activities of governments vary throughout the region, broad

agreement has been possible on several general areas deserving priority attention. It is therefore hoped that improving women's conditions, and expanding their opportunities in such fields as education and training, employment, health, and public life, will be seen not only as a matter of social justice, but also as a significant means of achieving developmental and desired population goals.

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