

UNITED NATIONS

ASIAN AND PACIFIC CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Expert Group Meeting on the Identification of the
Basic Needs of Women of Asia and the Pacific and
On The Formulation of A Programme of Work

Tehran, Iran
4 December - 10 December

BACKGROUND PAPER: ASIAN AND PACIFIC CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

ASIAN AND PACIFIC CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

The Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development is the most recent of ESCAP's regional research and training institutions. The proposal to establish it came in May 1975 when the Commission was adopting a Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development.

It was stated in this meeting that "the success of the plan would depend upon, the interest and political will that it stimulates at regional and national levels, the resources that it can command in funds, personnel and voluntary involvement, and the organisational structure by which it is managed and monitored. The Centre was inaugurated on February 27, 1977 in Tehran, Iran.

APCWD is part of a network of United Nations Regional Centres for Women. Of these, the African Centre for Training and Research on Women (ECA) and the Women's Programme of ECWA have been established; and a centre for ECLA has been proposed. An International Research and Training Centre for Advancement of Women which will co-operate with the work of the regional Centres will be established in Iran in 1978.

Participating Governments

On the 30 September, 1977, fifteen governments had signed the Project Document. These are:

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| 1. Iran | 8. Australia |
| 2. Pakistan | 9. New Zealand |
| 3. India | 10. Indonesia |
| 4. U.S.A. | 11. Philippines |
| 5. Netherlands | 12. Japan |
| 6. Nepal | 13. Korea |
| 7. Bangladesh | 14. Thailand |
| | 15. Malaysia |

Financing

To date the Centre is financed by donations of the member governments of ESCAP. Thirteen of the fifteen governments mentioned earlier have pledged cash contributions; Iran, Bangladesh, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the U.S. have actually paid. Iran has contributed half a million US Dollars in cash and one and a half million in-kind contribution provides for the facilities, support services and some of the personnel of the Centre. ESCAP takes an overhead of 14% which is for back stopping and support services.

Although much effort has been made by the Centre to increase the number of participating governments and the level of contribution, it is not yet possible to expect that sufficient institutional support can come from this source. At the 30th September 1977, after only seven months in operation, the Centre had raised US \$795,500 from these governments, of this ESCAP takes 14% in overhead (US \$111,090), which leaves us with a working budget for the three years of phase I of US \$682,410. This is insufficient to provide an institutional basis adequate to effectively absorb programme support.

The 1974 Review Mission of ESCAP regional research and training institutions recommended that:

"For the institutions to function effectively within the framework of regional and international support and especially to absorb programme support from a variety of sources (including UNDP), there should be a minimum of institutional expenses (the "hard core") borne by UNDP. This "core" would include, for each institution, the Director, his administrative and/or finance officer and not more than three professional staff".

At the third meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee of the institutions held in Bangkok September 1977, two more professionals were added to this core: a Deputy-Director for which position there are now precedents for appointing a host country national and a Documentalist.

Thus the minimum level of staffing for a viable institution, that is, a level which would enable it to absorb programme support whether it be from UNDP or from extra budgetary sources, is seven professionals. The Project Document of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development requires these seven professionals plus the equivalent of two full time staff members in consultants to carry out its mandate. The Centre at present has a core staff of only a Director, a Deputy Director and an Administrative Officer and is extremely understaffed.

Conservative budgetary implications of this minimal establishment level are that the required funding for a three year project such as the Centre is \$2.25 million plus 14% overhead to the Executing Agency, ESCAP. The Centre is thus under financed even at this minimal core level by over \$1.5 million for its Phase I.

As a result of UNDP's refusal to give institutional support to APCWD and of the level of participation by member governments, the Centre is suffering from financial constraints that will inevitably limit its activities and the extent of its effectiveness.

Financial Expectations

The World Conference of the International Women's Year held in Mexico City in 1975, subsequent General Assembly resolutions and resolutions of the regional commissions have all called for the establishment of regional research and training institutions for the integration of women into development. It has been proposed that a global network of such centres be established to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the Second Development Decade and the Decade for Women 1975-1985.

Such resolutions and sentiments require a financial underpinning from the UN system itself, if this commitment is to be to anything other than to words. Few if any donors outside the United Nations system are prepared to give institutional support; they see their role in the provision of programme support.

There are a number of possible sources of institutional support for the Centre from within the UN System:

(a) from member governments. This would require a significant increase in the present level of pledges and of the number of participating governments.

(b) from UNDP. UNDP could provide institutional support to the Centre along the lines of its support to the four other regional institutions. However, UNDP has adopted a policy of not entering into new commitments for the financing of regional institutions and has stated that it will not extend institutional support to the Centre.

Alternatively, in light of the UN's commitment UNDP could adopt a funding policy towards the network of regional research and training centres for women. Such a policy could be the provision of minimal institutional support to the necessarily finite number of regional research and training centres for women some of which are already in existence - ECA, ECWA and ESCAP - and some of which are in the process of being established - ECLA.

(c) from the Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women. There is to be a pledging conference during the present General Assembly for this fund. The decision has been taken by the Consultative Committee of the Fund that the resources of the fund should not be used for institutional support. This decision should however be reconsidered in light of the United Nations commitment to the regional Centres for women and their financial predicament. Even if this were so, however, this would be a very limited source of institutional support.

(d) from other U.N. agencies and organisations. Either short term or a long term assistance towards a solution would be found by making a consortium of core staff from the existing staff of the specialized agencies. Relevant organisations such as FAO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, ILO, WHO and UNFPA could provide one professional staff and one general service staff to form a consortium. Such an approach whilst it has some obvious drawbacks, could be of particular assistance during the establishment phase of a Centre.

(e) from the UN Secretariat. Core staff position of these institutions could come from the regular manning tables of the UN Secretariat.

The Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development is not alone in this predicament. The longest standing of the regional research and training institutions for women, ECS's African Centre for Training and Research for Women, has had a serious imbalance between programme support and institutional support. The Women's Programme in ECWA has until now minimal financial resources and the resources available to it at present are almost exclusively for programme support. It has recently been decided to establish such a regional centre for ECLA.

Although these regional Centres have differing institutional structures, they have been established to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the Decade for Women as well as of other major development initiatives. There is now almost a complete network of them across the developing regions.

It is thus an appropriate time to consider their future within the United Nations system. The mandate for their existence comes from the above mentioned resolutions and documents of the United Nations. They have an important role to play in transforming into worthwhile activities, the sentiments about women which have been widely supported with the U.N. System in recent times. Each of them would be able to work more effectively within the framework of regional and international support if there were a guaranteed minimum of institutional support available to them. There is a small, finite number of them: either the four existing and planned centres or with the inclusion of the ECE a possible five.

It would seem appropriate then that UNDP consider adopting a funding policy towards this network as a separate policy. Such a policy could be the provision of minimal institutional support to the regional research and training centres for women which would enable them to effectively absorb the available programme support.

The financial implications (in US \$) of this recommendation are as follows: assuming \$100,000 for support staff, \$50,000 for equipment, travel and other expenses and \$150,000 for activities and budgeting \$50,000 per expert. Then, for the maximum number of centres (5) with a core of 5 professional staff, the annual cost would be \$3.25m. and with a core of 7 professional staff, the annual cost would be \$3.75m. These figures exclude the 14% overhead requirement.

This is a reasonable, not an excessive, amount for the UN System to invest in this network of centres and it would enable them to perform effectively their very demanding commissions.

Work Programme

The long term objective of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development is to ensure that women also are the beneficiaries of development and are participants in the process of planning for it. There are few models or precedents upon which the work programme of the Centre could be based: the Centre for Training and Research for Women in ECA (ECA/CTRW) is one.

Thus the initial task of the Centre and its Advisory Committee is to determine the basic needs and desires of the women of the region, and the priorities in the field of development planning for women as viewed by the countries of the region, and from these to develop approaches and strategies which will best accommodate them. From this task will evolve an understanding of those activities appropriate to the functions of the Centre which could be the basis of its work programme within the framework of the regional Plan of Action for Women in Asia and the Pacific.

To facilitate this, the Centre is holding this expert group meeting to identify the basic needs of the women of the region, the cultural and economic constraints on their satisfaction and the mechanisms and instruments best suited to achieve them. From this will emerge feasible and innovative policies, projects and approaches.

The Advisory Committee of the Centre will meet in late January/February 1978 to discuss the outcome of the expert group meeting and to advise on the proposed work programme for 1978. The resultant work programme will then be circulated to all members of the Intergovernmental Governing Council of the ESCAP regional institutions.

Meanwhile, there are a number of activities that are prerequisites for any further activities or are set out in the objectives of the Centre which the Centre has already initiated. These activities have a three-fold framework:

- (i) to monitor and evaluate the changes that are occurring in the lives of women;
- (ii) to alleviate the basic needs of the women;
- (iii) to plan for the integration of women's needs and desires into national development plans and for the utilization of their skill and abilities within each community.

Planning and Monitoring System

This system will have a dual role:

- (a) To monitor and evaluate the changing conditions of women; and
- (b) To provide a basis for medium and long term planning to ensure that women are the beneficiaries of and participants in development.

The system is being designed in close collaboration with UNRISD and ECA/CTRW. Two models are being devised: the first by UNRISD, which has already carried out one pilot country study (Ivory Coast) and is about to undertake two more in collaboration with ECA/CTRW; the second model is being designed by APCWD and it is planned to carry out four pilot country projects in the region.

A joint committee will be monitoring and evaluating the design of the model.

Case Studies Project

Case studies will be undertaken in developing countries in the region with emphasis on the study of situations experiencing the impact of change.

Such situations are usually the result of planned interventions on the part of Governments, organisations or individuals which affect directly or indirectly the social and economic condition of women.

Case studies of such situations provide sufficient understanding of the effects of different kinds of interventions to provide a guide to planners and policy and project formulators.

A number of such case studies have already been commissioned in 1977.

Advisory Services

In 1977, the Centre provided advisory services to the Government of Iran to assist in ensuring that the formulation of their Sixth Development Plan, 1978-82, adequately took into account the needs and desires of the women; on the establishment of machinery and policies for the implementation of such plans; on the use of the national media to change community attitudes to women; on the formulation of UNDP country programmes to take women's needs into account; and on the implementation of UNDP, UNFPA and FAO guidelines for the integration of women. It has

participated in joint inter agency planning meetings and in a joint inter agency project formulation mission.

Training Courses

During the eight months since its inauguration the Centre has carried out two country level training courses - one a leadership training course for trainers, the other an awareness training course for provincial secretaries of women's organisations. It has designed two further training courses - one for the training of rural aides and one for the training of literacy corp.

Collection and Dissemination of Information

The Centre has begun a connected programme of information collection and dissemination and will continue and expand this activity in 1978. Further it has initiated the preparation of country profiles on women.