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MEASURES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
ECA'S PROGRAMME FOR THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (PIWD)  
AND NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

## Introduction

1. ECA's programme for the integration of women in development (PIWD) which began in 1972 with the financial and technical assistance of such governmental organizations as the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) and USAID, has also benefitted from the contribution of international organizations such as the FAO of the United Nations, UNICEF, ILO and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women (UNIFEM), to name only a few. Among the non-governmental organizations (NGO), the International Planned Parenthood Federation, ZONTA International and the overseas Education Fund have lent support to PIWD in the training of women dyers in Cote d'Ivoire. The Intra-African Committee on Traditional Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children has established working relations with the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW). Over the years, the modalities of co-operation between PIWD and its partners has changed from support in terms of personnel and activities to operational support and withdrawal for some of these partners. Whatever be the case, African and non-African NGOs are becoming more interested in the problems of African women and would like to establish relationship with PIWD. In view of the growing number of institutions interested in such co-operation, the socio-economic environment in which PIWD operations are conducted and the number and urgency of solutions that must be found to the priority issues confronting African women in their society, it would appear indispensable to begin laying the basis for some measure of systematic thinking to be brought to bear at the appropriate time so that the modalities for co-operation established with the NGOs might benefit from the support and co-operation of all the partners concerned, in particular national governments which stand to benefit from such assistance.

2. Over the 1960s and 1970s, international support to Africa could be considered to have been at its climax. Today, owing to the continual decline of international economic conditions which more particularly affects African society, in various forms, for example the problem of indebtedness, debt-servicing and the deteriorating terms of trade, the question of African development is becoming a most tragic issue in every sector. This is more acutely so with regard to women and while it may have been said before, will bear repeating even more forcefully because in Africa's under-privileged societies that are being patterned on outward-looking development models with specific sectors to be promoted within the context of international trade, certain issues including the promotion women's contribution to development are beginning to be neglected once again. In this way, programmes established by countries within the context of the implementation of Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) fail to show among their priorities the issue of human resources development. Even when this is done at certain stages of the country programming exercise, the issue of women is overlooked in the final analysis without any prospect of being taken up in the immediate future. This means that governments are losing interest in this matter to such a degree that it is becoming difficult for any other organization, even international, to bring back the issue of women in development to its place in the national development plan without raising grave political problems. This

also means that a gap is being created or maintained which allows NGOs to find a context within which to operate and to play an important role in village or family communities as the case may be.

3. It is even more true that during the United Nations Decade for Women, PIWD contributed substantially to the preparation of Africa's strategies, most importantly, the Arusha Forward-looking Strategies. Similarly, PIWD contributed to the setting up of subregional and regional structures that assisted national machineries to the extent feasible. In spite of the fact that subregional PIWD structures have been dismantled, their impact and philosophy still remains in the minds of people. Indeed, there is every indication that with regard to women and their concerns the national and international male community of decision makers and donors, have a degree of tolerance for the attempts made to carry out the trouble-shooting required to destabilize these structures and to disorganize the implementation of coherent strategies that were first of all African in concept and women-oriented in focus.

4. It can be considered that, in Africa today, the situation regarding women is less catastrophic in terms of finding solutions to development problems. This is what we are supposed to believe but the fact is that we have come to a pass where the overall situation is characterized by the existence of an institutional framework of structures having specific functions. In other words, an institutional framework of reference exists out of which major priorities are identified even if their characteristics or the form they take may vary from one community to another. In view of this, the difficulties that the NGOs have encountered in working with national machineries for the integration of women in development should be given further thought for beyond the issues of clashes of personalities and individuals which after all is said and done reflects conflicts of interests that cannot be divorced from the issue of institutional interests (governmental or local) as opposed to "foreign" interests whether governmental or non-governmental.

I. Types of NGOs

5. NGOs can be classified into national and international NGOs having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or not. Among the international NGOs, some are in category I and II or simply feature on the roster and have relations, in particular consultative status, with other organizations or specialized agencies of the United Nations.

6. Using another yardstick, NGOs can be classified into three categories:

1. North agencies which contribute to development by sending funds to third world development projects;
2. National, local and self-help organizations such as village groups, women's groups and co-operative groupings;

3. Organizations or institutions that come between the NGOs of the North and the South and which promote the organization of similar organizations locally and through which training and information expertise is channelled. 1/

Development scope of NGOs

7. The development scope of the NGOs can be seen to vary from one situation to another. While some of them feel (because of the failure of government development policies) that NGOs are ideal structures for development, others see them as "Trojan Horses". 2/ According to this point of view, trade between the economies of the third world and the international economy takes the form of buying manufactured goods with indigenous prestige values on credit. In fact, for most economies of the third world, international trade helps to impose on the indigenous local production systems the export goods with which the country earns foreign exchange to enable it to buy prestige goods or in any case imports that replace its own values. Credit is therefore one of the means by which transactions in traditional trade are effected. Credit takes the form of an immediate and reciprocal distribution of prestige goods in a manner reflecting the current trend in a given society. In other words, such reciprocity in production is transformed into the production of export goods or into the procurement of a trade currency. In such a process, indebtedness becomes a sort of tribute to be paid for trade. Through international assistance programmes, such debt increases the dependence of the recipient countries. Since the NGOs operate out of resources that are not subject to the criteria of immediate profit, they seem to be taking over from the other institutions when they assume the position of benefactors or protectors. Be that as it may, it follows that the NGOs derive their prestige and influence from their autonomy. Whether they are benefactors or protectors, their technical assistance, in addition to the creditability they command in terms of aid and co-operation gives them political authority over the local communities that receive their gifts. This explains in part the difficulties they encounter with local, more particularly, governmental organizations. The situation becomes very clear when control of the NGOs is considered. Whether they are funding agencies or technical assistance agencies, no NGOs can be found to accept relations with local organizations whereby the local organizations can dictate the direction of and define the programmes for development or replace foreign experts with national experts that would manage, control and redistribute the assistance programme funds. Faced with such requirements, the NGOs establish relationships with national partners that have taken over from the technical assistance NGOs and which find their justification in national independence. Because the NGOs adapt to local structures, their strategy of micro-economic intervention can be understood.

- 1/ Idée/Action No. 174. "Reflexions sur les ONGs leur gestion et leur rôle en matière de Développement: Italie, Royaume Unie, Inde, Chili et France. Page 18.
- 2/ Dominique TEMPLE: "Les ONGs comme cheval de Troie" un IFDA dossier No. 60 Juillet/août 1987. P. 39 à 52.

8. Such a shift in NGO activities to structures of reciprocity and such adaptation enables them to assume authority in place of the ethnic or family structure and thereby make the technician or funding agency able to decide on investment projects in the stead and place of the village authority, the ethnic community or the family 1/. It is in this way that the elements of outward-looking development are introduced and the NGOs end up as the Greeks in the Trojan horse; the horse being the aid which is given to the Third World as a gift. Currently in Africa, national development policies have failed and in spite of the backdrop described above, eyes are being turned more and more towards the NGOs to see to the advancement of women. Everything is happening as though failing to initiate development through a macro-economic and government approach, the job will get done by hiding behind the initiatives of NGOs, whether national or international. This is especially so because in spite of the concern that NGOs may arouse, it is those who manage to organize work and activities in the poor rural areas and are being perceived increasingly across the continent as those who are acutely aware of the extent of Africa's poverty as was said earlier. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the NGOs are effective because of the simplicity of their operating machinery. In other words, they have no administrative inertia to contend with.

III. NGOs and Rural Development

9. The area of intervention in which NGOs excel is that of rural development. As was said before, current theories, strategies and planning call for serious questioning. 2/ This is because of the situation on our hands in which the objectives of national institutions have yet to be attained on the one hand, and the fact that the more we continue within this framework, the social fabric of our societies will be completely destroyed. The immunity systems which took our societies centuries to develop in order to ensure survival are becoming threatened. 3/

10. The models, representative systems, lifestyle and culture proposed by the industrialized countries to the Third World prove, in the final analysis, to be helpful for several reasons. However, they are also costly, as can be seen from the crisis the world is undergoing. People come to depend to such an extent on goods designed by service and even by brain specialists that they gradually lose their innate capacity for self-preservation. 4/ What Mr Rahnama calls development aids is something which appears after long exposure to development aid. In his view, this syndrome is preceded by a series of other "acquired" states of being and predispositions: acquired illusions and expectations, loss of self-esteem and confidence and adopted forms of education and schooling. All this leads to the two symptoms which have every chance of becoming the disease itself. One acquires a sense of alienation roots and to this is added the taste for the goods, services, lifestyle and ideology of

- 1/ Idées et Action No.173 1987/2 FAO CMcf/action pour le développement
- 2/ " " " " " " " "
- 3/ M.Majid Rahnama: les sociétés de subsistance et leur système imunitaire en Idée et action No. 179. P.20-21 Majid Rahnama ap. cit. page 20.
- 4/ " " " " " " " "

the "doctor". Most of these syndromes which pave the way for the disease to be contracted arise from the disintegration of subsistence society, of human relations and the relationships, which constitute the culture of society. In no way should this be construed as an invitation to autarchy or a rejection of the other, of the stranger, of the one who is different. This is only to draw sufficient attention to the dangerous form in which one society or one culture perpetrates aggression against another even though throughout human history, human societies and cultures have always been mutually enriched. When the issue of rural development is considered, the national NGOs seem to be best placed to address themselves to the problem of socio-cultural interaction. Indeed, in the Third World, particularly in India, the contribution of national NGOs seems to be substantial and their notion of class relationships quite important. These local NGOs are for the most part led by members of the ruling class who probably guide the development of national society through that of the rural poor to whom they are rendering assistance. The problem in Africa is that the middle class has never been rich enough to undertake such activities. Also, the difficulty encountered by international NGOs with the government services needs to be seen as differences in relationship between the same class of privileged people located at various levels but both of whom are facing the same entity, the rural class or urban poor which gives high marks to whichever of the two is more effective, quicker and more practical in providing solutions to local problems.

11. Obviously, the assisted group is poor and therefore deprived of the means of solving its priority problems. In terms, therefore, of assistance, the experience, success stories or even failures of other national or international development institutions show that whatever may be said of the specific and limited nature of NGO activities, they seem to be the life-line. This is because the NGOs approach the problem to be solved using a simple machinery and securing resources which they can use with great independence.

#### IV. Scope of NGO activities in favour of women

12. While the government institutions waited for the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women before initiating action in this field, the same cannot be said of the NGOs. Indeed, it can be said that NGO activities for the advancement of women has cut governments to the quick and galvanized both them and international institutions into unleashing the broad spectrum of activities that were conducted during the Decade. The NGOs participated actively in the activities of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace from Mexico in 1975 to Nairobi in 1985 via Copenhagen in 1980. In Mexico, those NGOs having consultative status with ECOSOC organized concurrently with the international conference a Forum attended by 4,000 people coming from local, national or international organizations around the world. In Copenhagen, 110 NGOs having consultative status with ECOSOC participated in the mid-Decade conference and submitted documents in conformity with the rules of procedure of the United Nations Secretariat both to the plenary and committee meetings.

13. Both in Copenhagen and Nairobi, the NGOs organized a forum which allowed women, other than those from government institutions, to benefit from and to contribute to the conferences. The activities conducted by the NGOs over the

period of the decade related to: the dissemination of information concerning the Decade, assistance to programmes for the advancement of women at the national, regional and international levels and the setting of priorities. It was through such activities that the NGOs established their own networks for the implementation of their own programme within the context of the Copenhagen programme of action for the second half of the Decade.

14. In addition to the major parallel activities mentioned above, the NGOs helped the United Nations to implement the recommendations of meetings held in connection with the Decade, in particular the World Plan of Action adopted at Mexico, the Action Programme for the second half of the Decade which was published and widely circulated by the NGOs. Furthermore, at the national level, the NGOs worked with the governments to launch their own projects and activities at the same time as they gave support to government programmes. They collaborated with national machineries for the integration of women in development.

15. All throughout the Decade, the NGOs printed publications, brochures, notices, made films to disseminate information on the various meetings and on the objectives and conclusions arrived at. They also participated in research activities conducted during the Decade. Some of them, for example, reproduced the questionnaires of the United Nations secretariats and transmitted to the Organization their analyses of the responses received.

16. During the Decade, the NGOs co-operated with religious institutions and participated in the preparation for the celebration of the end of the Decade. This was to take the form of the preparatory conference in Vienna during October 1984, the regional conference held in March 1984 at Tokyo and the Arusha meeting held in October 1984, not to mention the Harare meeting of November 1984 and the Baghdad meeting of December in that same year.

17. This goes to show how much of a frame of reference ECA's African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) has for envisaging more systematic co-operation with those NGOs which would express the wish.

V. Areas of co-operation between PIWD and the NGOs

18. Owing to the diversity of activities in which NGOs are engaged, it would appear difficult to define priority areas of action. Nevertheless, the Arusha and Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, APPER, UN-PAAFRD and finally the Abuja Declaration, could serve as frames of reference for effective co-operation between ECA's PIWD and the NGOs. To be even more specific, such co-operation could be built around issues and sectors such as: drought and desertification control; agriculture and food production; industrial development; human resources development; assistance to women living under apartheid and in Namibia; refugees and displaced women.

19. The activities to be undertaken in these areas could focus on:

(a) The collection and dissemination of information on women in communities or in community groupings. In this respect, ECA's PADIS project provides great possibilities for the exchange of information and for the collection and processing of relevant data. Applied research in the countries affected by drought, for example, the training of women community leaders in appropriate areas; the training of women leaders in resource mobilization and management techniques for development activities; the promotion of interagency co-operation which is of particular importance if the overlapping roles that various agencies have played and which have seriously compromised otherwise promising results in Africa throughout the period of the Decade are considered;

(b) Activities relating to information could effectively deal with the recommendations made by NGOs at the Nairobi Conference in such a way that the existing media can be influenced;

(c) To develop women's media that would enable women specifically:

(i) To encourage their governments to submit projects to UNESCO's international programmes for the development of communication;

(ii) To further impress upon new agencies the need for better coverage of issues relating to women;

(iii) To bring about a better understanding of women's problems through individual journalists and also to establish relationships between women journalists and women's organizations;

(iv) To ensure that more women work in the communication media;

(v) To provide a more positive coverage of women's issues in the popular media;

(vi) To provide support to the women's programme series on United Nations Radio.

Whatever action is taken in this area, account should certainly be taken of the Africa image project being implemented in the region. The programme is a research activity planned by NGOs from seven countries: The French Freedom from Hunger Committee, the Danchurchaid of Denmark, the Dutch Wehungerhilfe of the German Democratic Republic, Oxfam of the United Kingdom, SOS Hunger in Belgium, Trocaire in Ireland and Italy, and a triad of NGOs, CRIC, Crocevia and Tera Nouva, which has been joined by CMCF/AD. The project is financed by EEC and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In all the countries mentioned, the NGOs have conducted a media survey and are analyzing NGO information facilities. They intend, after this, to assess the impact of such information by identifying the sources of the knowledge and perception acquired by their average citizens on African development. The project has two components. One is research in Europe and the other a research project to be conducted in a group of African countries suffering from food deficit: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, the Niger, Senegal and Zimbabwe. 1/

1/ Rapport du Secrétaire général à la Conférence mondiale chargée de la Revue et de l'évaluation de la Décennie des Nations Unies pour la femme: Egalite, Développement, Paix A/Cont 116/14/mai 1985.



V. Machinery for co-operation between ECA's PIWD and the NGOs

21. Once the areas of co-operation have been defined, the machinery can be envisaged:

- at the structural or institutional level a post of ECA/NGO co-ordinator in matters of PIWD should be created. That post could be jointly financed by interested NGOs and the United Nations Secretariat; through co-operation arrangements established in accordance with United Nations regulations on the subject, individual NGOs or groups of NGOs can be brought to work together as they have been doing when emergencies arise in Africa;
- an annual meeting of ECA and the NGOs could be instituted to carry out PIWD programmes and evaluate the results either before the meetings of ARCC (if that Committee is maintained) or as an alternative to the ARCC meeting. If experience shows such regional meetings to be too unwieldy, they can be replaced with subregional meetings which can be worked out with the NGOs concerned;
- information sharing can be institutionalized among women's organizations and the results of their activities can be shared also using the PADIS network.

Conclusions

22. Measures concerning co-operation between ECA women's programmes and the NGOs should take into account two major difficulties. However, with genuine political will and support, these difficulties can be worked out. The difficulties in question are:

- (a) The Trojan horse dimension of the NGOs;
- (b) the nature and quality of the image that African women want (to) project.

23. Indeed, all through the history of the struggle for women's advancement, the perception of women as figureheads is being changed for that of women as maid servants. The attitude and behaviour of men towards women is difficult to change. All too often men, in particular decision-makers, are heard to maintain that women are already integrated into development. Of course this is only to maintain the status quo. Furthermore, the issue of women's advancement continues to be a serious problem for men as well. You can always find someone somewhere ready to affirm that he has promoted the interests of women who have been able to assert themselves because of their competence. When this happens, the idea is to be able to treat such women as mindless or ungrateful if there is a sociological break. One need not comment on this. Indeed, it is both a mistake and an error to try to transform or reform one culture by basing oneself on the model or pattern of one's own. To try to make others similar to oneself is even worse because it amounts

to aggression and this is often counterproductive and always immoral.<sup>1/</sup>

24. Finally, it is necessary to emphasize also that whatever the form of co-operation envisaged with African women, it should be borne in mind that they have learnt a lot and a good number of them can show that in the coming years. This is why much care should be taken in evolving any type of co-operation with them, particularly through the NGOs.

25. This paper has no other intention but to seek solutions for the problems raised. It is clear, however, that the final decision can be taken only after some consultation and certain arrangements have been made. To do this, it is recommended that:

(a) A field survey of national and international NGOs should be conducted together with representatives of national technical departments in order to work out strategies for co-operation with the NGOs;

(b) A meeting of the various partners (NGOs and representatives of the national institutions concerned) should be organized to consider the possible strategies with ECA;

(c) Joint assistance programmes or projects should be prepared for the benefit of:

- (i) national NGOs;
- (ii) women's groups;
- (iii) national machineries.

<sup>1/</sup> In Majhid Rahnema cf.op. cit page 22