

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Mission report to Douala,
Cameroon to run the Seminar on "Measures to improve
Women's Management Skills".

28th November - 2nd December 1988

A. Background

Purpose

The main purpose of the mission was to run a sub-regional seminar on "Measures to improve women's management skills", in Douala Cameroon from the 28th of November to 2nd December 1988, for Francophone African Countries.

The seminar was organized by African Training and Research Centre for Women as part of its planned activity for the implementation of project on "Increasing women's access to credit through Training in Management and credit Techniques", funded by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA).

The main objective of the seminar was to discuss, exchange ideas and experiences on measures to adopt for improving women's management skills. More specifically:-

- To strengthen women's management capabilities and promote small and medium scale enterprises and projects of women.

- To improve technical competences of women in order to ensure viability of their enterprises and projects.

- To encourage and hereby promote technical cooperation among developing countries in the field of management training and development.

- To formulate strategies and recommendations for future management training programme for women.

Staff Members to Mission:

Three Staff Members Françoise Wege, Social Affairs Officer, Dorothy Iwuji, Training Officer and Jennifer Kargbo, Entrepreneurial Training Officer of the ATRCW serviced the seminar in Douala Cameroon.

Two officers went to Yaounde from 22nd November 1988 in an advanced team to negotiate for facilities, make necessary contacts with appropriate ministries and individuals for the running of the seminar. Yaounde MULPOC Officers assisted ATRCW Staff in all contacts as well as financial matters.

Attendance

Participants were from Twenty Francophone African countries mostly officers in their Ministry of Social Welfare and women's

affairs and women's organizations. Other organizations in full attendance were the Association of women Entrepreneurs in Cameroon the Cameroon cooperative credit union League, Representatives of National Centre for Assistance to small and medium sized enterprises who all made presentations.

B. Account of proceedings

Opening of the seminar:

The subregional seminar was opened by Madame Aissatou Yaou Minister of Social affairs and women affairs of Cameroon at 5.00 p.m on the 28th of November 1988. Mr Koukou Louya Director MULPOC Yaounde made statement on behalf of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Election of Officers:

The seminar elected Cameroon as president and Senegal and Republic of Central Africa as Rapporteurs.

Adoption of Agenda:

The seminar adopted the following agenda:

- Administrative matters
- Opening ceremony
- Election of officers
- Adoption of agenda
- ATRCW presentations.

(a) Issues in management training and its relation to small-scale business

(b) The case studies of Zambia, Cameroon and Ghana.

- Presentation by Representative of the Association of women Entrepreneurs in Cameroon.
- Presentation of country reports on assessment of management training programmes in their countries.
- Presentation from Institutions providing support services for entrepreneurial development.
- Presentation from Institutions on training women in management.
- Group work on formulation of recommendations and strategies for future management training programmes for women.
- Visits to Cameroon women Businesses
- Adoption of report
- Closing.

(a) ATRCW presentation:

The ATRCW made a presentation on: "Issue in management training and its relation to small-scale business", after which there was discussions and question. Later the ATRCW presented the report of the study of women as small-scale entrepreneurs in Zambia, Cameroon and Ghana.

(b) Presentations by entrepreneurs of the Association of women Entrepreneurs in Cameroon.

It was pointed out that the Cameroon experience has been positive in which the economic role of women has improved. That there are a sizeable group of women entrepreneurs. This positive experience has been made possible through the solidarity and support of the Cameroon Business Women's Association which has a very dynamic leadership. This dynamism is also buttressed by government's policies and actions to develop the private sector. They also pointed out some of their difficulties which ranged from unhealthy competition, information gaps, and limited availability of financial resources.

Presentations by countries

The various country reports made special reference/ observations on:

- country's approach to promoting women's management skills.
- results achieved so far and difficulties encountered.

The salient points emerging out of these presentations are:

- countries use a general approach to promoting management skills, there are no special approach to promoting women's management skills.
- The results achieved so far have not been encouraging as few women are exposed to management training and development.
- One major difficulty is that existing management training institutions do not have the resource capabilities and capacities to carry out effective management training hence no priority is given to designing management programmes with bias on women's needs and issues.

- Another difficulty, is most women are not aware of the need for management skills development and so do not take advantage of even the ongoing general management training being offered.

Unique to a country is the problem of not having a management training Institute.

Presentations by Institutions:

Two institutions presented their reports on their activities as they relate to management and business development. The Centre for Assistance to Small and Medium sized Enterprises offers training, support services and financial assistance. Their services cover management training, advisory and outreach support services to the Cameroon Community. Nospecial emphasis is put on **women**. From their experience few women approach them for assistance either because they are not aware of the need for their services or they do not know how to go about soliciting their assistance.

The cooperative credit union league provides **credit** to its members who are mainly in the rural areas. Their services are geared to enhance the financial status of their cooperative members.

Field visit

The field visit was organized by the Group of Women entrepreneurs of Cameroon. The main objectives of this visit was for participants to see for themselves the effort women in Cameroon are making towards the economic development of their country. To experience mangement practices as they relate to entrepreneurship.

Throughout the visit participants heard much of the support given to these women entrepreneurs by the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Cameroon in areas such as credit guaranteing, moral support and exchange of information.

Seven women businesses were visited a restaurant, a tin re-cycling, a battery manufacturing, a lingerie manufacturing, a coffee and other agricultural produce processing outfit, a travelling agency and a polyclinic.

Strategies and recommendations :

Two groups were appointed to formulate the strategies and recommendations. These were presented to the seminar who modified and endorsed the strategies and recommendations.

Adoption of report :

The seminar unanimously adopted the draft report, after necessary corrections and amendments were made.

C. Closing

Closing :

The seminar was officially closed by the Delegate of the Province of Littoral, Douala, in a short closing ceremony organized by the Littoral Province, Douala, Cameroon. During the closing the draft report was read by the President of the seminar and the vote of thanks given by a representative of the participants.

D. Conclusions and recommendations

The Sub-regional seminar for Francophone African countries on "Measures to Improve Women's Management Skills", provided an opportunity for participants to express their growing consciousness of efforts made within their countries specifically and in Africa generally on management development of women, the problems encountered in providing management development to women and to pool their ideas on ways to seek the advancement of women within the context of economic integration.

It was agreed that management training and development as a means for increasing women participation in economic development through their involvement in Small-Scale Business needs to be reinforced and special attention given to women's issues in the designing and delivery of Management/Entrepreneurial Development and training programmes. Participants proposed strategies and recommended measures to improve the Management Skills of Women.

From the strategies and recommendations proposed by this seminar and that of Nairobi in 1987 on "Measures to Improve Women's Management Skills", ATRCW must develop a combined strategy for improving women's management skills in the region, disseminate the strategies, assist in the implementation and establish mechanisms for follow-up.

The Administration and hosting of the seminar was excellent.