



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2013
English
Original: French

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by RESO-Femmes, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Culture: a key to the development of women's leadership and empowerment

RESO-Femmes is an international NGO seeking to promote the exercise of leadership by women and to introduce innovative models of participation. Since its inception in 2006, the organization has specialized in providing political training for women and mobilizing partners to support women's socio-economic activities.

The overall goal consists in ensuring that women enjoy a certain autonomy and highlighting the value of their contributions to structural, economic and behavioural balance in their society. To that end, our organization endeavoured to circumscribe various themes of United Nations meetings related to the MDGs and human rights and adapt those themes to local needs as closely as possible.

Such was the objective of the "Gender, empowerment and equality at Mopti" programme, launched in Mali in 2006. It combined women's rights (through political training) with the development of social projects (in the areas of health, food processing, dressmaking, infrastructure for decent work for women engaged in scaling and creation of better conditions for women taking up fishing on the basis of local customs). Such programmes contribute actively to the reforms expected in relation to the MDGs and provide international institutions with new models through bottom-up procedures.

More recently, in Ouagadougou, our NGO focused on structuring its programmes and conceptualizing its models. Six groups of leaders received intensive training, which contributes actively to implementing State reform programmes and improving their relations with women, particularly by highlighting women's initiatives and innovations for the most vulnerable population groups and by intervening in areas deprived of drinking water, sanitation or hygiene or affected by malnutrition.

Through the "Water, sanitation, food" project, these programmes aim at the dynamic realization of human rights and the access of women trainers to formal employment. Women are trained by our head office to become social dialogue ambassadors and conflict resolution promoters, an occupation whose recognition we seek.

In order to achieve such a linkage between culture, politics and local sustainable development, we thought of bringing leaders of different generations together and structuring our programmes to preserve pre-existing cultural and symbolic values. The objective is to launch active cooperation between female formal elites (grass-roots and top-level leadership) and to stimulate the employment and empowerment of the poorest women.

The first programme, based on political and legal experience at Mopti, resulted in training 40 leaders over five years; while the "Water, sanitation, food" project consists rather in an institutional experiment and a reform strategy aimed at changing attitudes at the level of States.

Clearly, an initiative focused on support for processing contributes to the visibility of the communities involved. It may not replace education programmes or

respond strategically to public-private operational partnerships in the manner in which only research can respond.

The States, as we saw in December 2012 in Burkina Faso, may not privilege security-based strategies and electoral campaigns to the detriment of women's access to resources or without considering long-run risks.

We regret that our programmes, designed on a simplified and elementary basis in order to be accessible, are not perceived as the outcome of a long process of thinking, participatory research and commitments requiring full immersion in isolated environments and cultures that are sometimes violent in their relations to comprehensive survival, as a contemporary anthropologist of qualitative and quantitative globalization will attest.

We therefore seize this opportunity, at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to disseminate our point of view and provide some indications regarding our methods and means of action.

Our expertise ties in fully with the strategies of international institutions. Specifically, we endeavour to define minority, religious, national or United Nations groups better with a view to improving the overall outcome of services provided by international organizations. That approach has already been integrated into a research programme whose methods and new concepts can be systematized and compared.

As a conclusion, if the culture implicit in the post-2015 programme of the United Nations aims at enhancing cooperation among actors in the areas of culture and sustainable development, our programmes offer a significant prospect in terms of women's empowerment by ensuring women's access to more respected jobs and guaranteeing decent employment for women trainers.

A think tank is currently being studied that will make it possible to discuss and introduce new ideas regarding women's involvement in security strategies, provide tools aimed at more effective representation of emerging regional leaders in elections and change States' behaviour and stereotypes that reduce and keep female leaders to an elementary level and divide and discourage them.

We give priority to the recruitment of young researchers, embassy professionals and State officials for a part of operational resources, which are to be complemented with subsidies from public-private partners.