

COMMISSION ON LAW

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law irrespective, amongst others, of one's sex. This universally acclaimed right is enshrined in Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and reiterated in explicit terms in Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1956 which calls for prohibition against any discrimination "and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, **sex**, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, properly, birth or other status."

However, the architects of the Malaysian Constitution in providing for equality under the law in Article 8 under the Chapter for Fundamental Liberties excluded the word 'sex' among grounds against discrimination.

Hence the root cause for there still being some laws in the statute books which are discriminatory against women could be traced to the lack of constitutional protection against such discrimination.

It is therefore incumbent on our legislators to see that no such discriminatory laws are enacted and repeal or amend any such discriminatory laws currently in the statute books in accordance with justice and good conscience.

It is an undeniable fact that both men and women are indispensable factors in the task of nation building. Women's contributions, whether within or outside the home, are critical to the economic and social well-being of the nation. However, the equal status that women have worked hard to achieve, is not always reflected in the law. There are still several areas in the law where women are discriminated against such as the law relating to inheritance, property, employment, immigration, citizenship and guardianship. It is certainly not in the interests of the nation that such discriminations are perpetuated.

Women too have a rightful role to play in enforcing their rights and where they are discriminated to realise their lawful rights. However, this is marked by certain impediments. Firstly there are many who are ignorant of their rights particularly those in the rural villages and estates. Secondly even if they are aware the cumbersome enforcement machinery is a deterrent. Presently the only enforcement machinery are the courts. But the complexity of the rules and procedures and the costs of seeking redress discourages many.

It is for these reasons that the NCWO provides in the Plan of Action certain basic propositions.

PROBLEMS

1. There are still many women who are ignorant about their rights; the legal protection afforded by laws due to the absence or lack of knowledge of the laws.
2. There is an inability to comprehend the complexity of laws.
3. This is further compounded by the complexity of legal procedures and processes.

NATIONAL POLICY⁺ on

WOMEN



The National Council of Women's Organisation (NCWO) expresses its heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Canada for its financial assistance and support in the Formulation and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Policy on Women.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S
ORGANISATIONS MALAYSIA
ACTION PLAN

for

NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANISATIONS

in the

IMPLEMENTATION

of

NATIONAL POLICY
ON
WOMEN

COVER DESIGN BY: LOKE TUCK MAY



MAJLIS KEBANGSAAN PERTUBUHAN-PERTUBUHAN WANITA MALAYSIA

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS MALAYSIA (NCWO)

(AFFILIATE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN)

(MEMBER OF ASEAN CONFEDERATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS)

157, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Tel: 2989251.

Message

In Malaysia we are most fortunate to have women's NGOs which are progressive, dynamic active and committed. It is therefore with a deep and strong sense of responsibility that the NCWO does at this point in the history of our country, acknowledge the tremendous role played by the Council's Affiliates in the enhancement of the position of women in all areas of national life and development.

That NCWO has in all these years persevered to coalesce women's voluntary social, professional, religious, cultural, political and trade union groups and organisations into a progressive force for the promotion of women's more active and effective participation in all sectors of public and civic life of the nation is an indisputable fact. The NCWO has since the UN Decade for Women worked tirelessly for the raising of the status of women, sensitising of the nation to the urgent needs for women and family, establishing greater sense of justice for women through changes in laws which have been recognised as outmoded discriminatory and unjust, enabling women to understand their rights and responsibilities and in inculcating in women a deep sense of self esteem and self worth.

The recognition of Government in its endorsement of the National Policy On Women is a great milestone in our history. It is now therefore the essential and prerequisite duty of every woman's organisation to be forward looking and to commit itself to the tasks ahead. The Council's Implementation Programme of the National Policy On Women for Non Governmental Organisations is intended primarily to urge and encourage the NCWO Affiliates and all other organisations to engage in activities with the aim of achieving the targets set out.

As President of NCWO I have every confidence we will with determination, dedication, commitment and vision reach the goals we set before us. May NCWO also continue to work with inspiration towards the Vision 2020 forwarded by YAB Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad, Prime Minister, Malaysia.

YB Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail

President
NCWO

NATIONAL POLICY ON WOMEN

PLAN OF ACTION FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Thursday, 22.8.91

8.30 a.m.	Arrival of Guests
8.50 a.m.	Arrival of Y.B. Datuk Napsiah Omar, Minister for Ministry of National Unity and Community Development
9.00 a.m.	Welcome Address by Puan F R Bhupalan Chairman NCWO Co-ordinating Committee National Policy On Women
	Address: Y.B. Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail President NCWO
	Address and Official Opening by Y.B. Datuk Napsiah Omar, Minister for Ministry of National Unity and Community Development.
10.00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Coffee Break
10.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.	Commission On Education and Training Report
11.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Commission On Health Report
12.30 p.m. – 1.30 p.m.	Lunch
1.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.	Commission On Media
2.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.	Commission On Unity
4.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.	Commission On Politics and Leadership

Friday, 23.8.91

9.00 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.	Commission On Religion Report
10.00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Coffee
10.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.	Commission on Environment Report
11.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Commission On Economy and Employment Report
12.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.	Lunch
2.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.	Commission on Violence Report
4.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.	Commission On Law Report

Saturday, 24.8.91

Only members of Technical Committee to meet.

RUKUNEGARA

DECLARATION

OUR NATION, MALAYSIA, being dedicated

to achieving a greater unity of all her peoples;

to maintaining a democratic way of life;

**to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation
shall be equitably shared;**

to ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions;

**to building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and
technology;**

WE, her peoples, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends by these principles:

Belief In God

Loyalty to King and Country

Upholding the Constitution

Rule of Law

Good Behaviour and Morality

NATIONAL POLICY ON WOMEN

NCWO ACTION PLAN

The NCWO Action Plan for Women is a deliberate effort by non governmental organizations to translate the National Policy on Women into action-based activities which will complement governmental efforts aimed at integrating and mainstreaming the concerns of women in the overall development thrust. This effort is in line with the National policy on Women which calls for the strengthening of partnership between GOs and NGOs. The policy also calls on government agencies to increase the involvement of NGOs in their on-going projects at all levels, from project planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Women's organizations shall be utilized within the appropriate institutional framework in which the citizen can participate in decision making at all levels and in which the NGOs, on their part will continue to serve as catalysts and vehicles of change for the development of women.

The National policy on Women articulates the needs, interests and situations of women and ensures that these concerns are included in mainstream development policy and programmes with women participating as full and equal partners at the community and national levels. The overall objectives of the policy are:

- to ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources and information as well as access to opportunities and benefits of development, for both men and women; and
- to integrate women into all sectors of national development in line with their abilities and needs in order to improve the quality of life, eradicate poverty, abolish ignorance and illiteracy and ensure a peaceful and prosperous nation.

Embodied in the policy is the little recognized fact that women are also producers of development and a vital human resource in improving the standard and quality of life in the nation. Their contribution should be recognized and made central, not marginal, to the processes of development. Development plans and projects, whether specifically targeting women or not, affect women's lives and are, in turn, affected by the organization of gender relations in a given society or group. That is why successful development activities require a thorough understanding of the way women and men perceive and act their roles, and the way these roles are changing under modernization.

The strategies enunciated in the Policy will ensure more rational balanced planning; more balanced share of resources in the development process, better balanced power-sharing between women and men, and that the contribution of women will be ascribed a new value with new opportunities planned for both women and men. Only when women participate in the whole process of planning, decision-making and resource allocation, can they develop the capacity to determine their own lives and to some extent, the direction of the social world around them.

The NGO Action Plan for Women is formulated within the framework of the National Women's Policy and the National Development Policy (NDP). The Action Plan is in line with the objectives of the NDP which strives for balanced and sustainable development in which, are emphasised, growth with equity, balanced societal development for a more united and

just society with high morals and ethics, creation of a productive and disciplined workforce and prudent management of natural resources and the ecology.

The first phase of the Implementation of the Action Plan (1991–1995) is to be guided by the Sixth Malaysia Plan. The Women's Action Plan takes cognizance of the fact that the main thrust of the Sixth Plan is to sustain the growth momentum and manage it successfully so as to achieve a more balanced development of the economy in which progress in economic growth and distribution is facilitated while at the same time improving the quality of the growth process to make it more broad-based. The Women's Action Plan takes note of the encompassing policies to diversify the industrial base, enhance human resource development, promote technological upgrading and reduce structural imbalances among sectors and regions as a strategy for the integrated process of growth and balanced development.

The task of incorporating women's concerns demands a many-sided approach: national commitment, relevant policies, adequate resources and women's involvement. Even if all these factors were present, there would still be a need for permanent monitoring. Through this Action Plan, the NCWO will continue to be actively and systematically involved in complementary partnership, in the programmes and activities designed to bring women into mainstream development.

Objectives of the Action Plan

- To generate massive awareness and consciousness of women's concerns.
- To institutionalise mainstreaming of women's concerns in the bureaucracy through administrative and attitudinal commitments to policy implementation.
- To rationalise the allocation of resources among sectors involved in addressing women's concerns.
- To attain partnership and to complement efforts between governmental and non-governmental organizations in the process of mainstreaming women in development.

Action Plan Strategies

I. Institutional Strengthening and Linkages

In order to translate the policies into effective action-oriented programmes and projects, NCWO will strengthen or develop structures which will forge stronger partnership between Governmental Organisations (GOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and among NGOs themselves. Activities are aimed at strengthening the infrastructure facilities, human resources and methods for effective mobilisation and utilisation of these resources. This operational method will ensure a referral and feedback networking system for expedient promotion of women's concerns from governmental to the non-governmental sector and from national to grassroot level.

II. Awareness Raising, Sensitization and Information Dissemination

The activities contained in this strategy will orient administration, development planners, other specific groups and the public at large on gender issues and problems with the aim of integrating women's concerns in the on going and planned project/programmes of agencies. Gender sensitizing and comprehensive information dissemination will be major programmes which will be implemented through activities such as seminars, workshops, exhibitions, study tours, pamphlets, networking, dialogues, studies and data collection.

III. Advocacy

NCWO will play a major role in advocating for changes. Activities include establishing specific lobbies, lending support to other organisations on pertinent issues, reviewing laws, rules and regulations and making appropriate recommendations, articulating opinion on specific issues, networking, campaigning and boycotting.

IV. Affirmative Actions

Programmes will redress discrimination where it exists and remove disadvantages women face in access to opportunities as well as facilitate and promote activities which integrate women in development. Activities include sponsoring multi-level training aimed at imparting skills, knowledge and attitude, fund-raising, providing financial assistance, credit facilities and aid, establishing shelters, providing professional services, providing support services in the community to enable women to undertake productive and community activities, producing pamphlets, leaflets etc on specific issues, co-operating with specific agencies in providing certain services, giving awards and incentives to those who have served women's causes, carrying out studies and disseminating findings, establishing watch groups to monitor programmes, establishing think-tanks, resource directory and expert panels.

Priority Programmes

Involvement of women in development continues to be inhibited by a number of constraints as identified in the Sixth Malaysia Plan:

- the dual and often competing responsibilities of family and career restrict the mobility and increased participation of women in the labour market;
- gender differentiation in schools not only transforms into occupational differentiation later, it also limits the adaptability and participation of women in the labour market;
- social norms and prejudices regarding the role and status of women in society and in the labour market restrain their involvement in economic activities;
- women with children, who are financially dependent on their husbands are particularly vulnerable in cases of domestic violence. The lack of skills very often limits their options, preventing them from securing alternative sources of income;

- women are often perceived as secondary earners who only supplement family incomes rather than as co-earners whose economic activities are crucial to the family. Consequently, income-generating programmes targeted at women generally reinforce their home-maker roles, providing few opportunities for the acquisition of new and more marketable skills;
- the lack of appropriate management training and the consequent absence of professionalism, inadequate access to credit and a paucity of relevant market information also hinder the participation of women in the economy; and
- the working environment is generally not conducive to the sustained employment of working wives and mothers. This limits the training opportunities available and hampers career development. The separation of home from the workplace and the fixed hours of work constitute additional drawbacks which preclude prolonged female participation in the labour market.

In view of the constraining problems, NCWO will place greater emphasis on the following programmes:

Gender sensitizing and awareness raising

Skill enhancement training

Support services to enable women to undertake productive and community services

Research / Studies / Data base / Monitoring

Legislative and Administrative Advocacy

Institutional Strengthening and Linkage Building

Resource Allocation Rationalisation

NGO State co-ordinating committees

NCWO will establish co-ordinating committees at state level in states which do not already have an umbrella body for women's organisations. These committees will be registered as NCWO branches.

NCWO will strengthen links with existing co-ordinating bodies (e.g. Perwanidah, Pergawalis, MAWAR) and channel the programmes through existing machinery.

GO-NGO linkages

Existing linkages with various government machinery will be strengthened at the national level. NCWO will support the proposed establishment of the Consultative Committees at the State and District Levels. It will also make representation for representatives of women's organisations to be included in the State, District and Village Action Committees.

National Women's Policy Action Commission (NeWPAC)

To oversee the proper implementation of the policy, NCWO will establish a National Women's Policy Action Commission (NeWPAC). The members will consist of chairpersons of the various commissions to be established under NeWPAC. These commissions are:

Health
Education
Economy & Employment
Environment
Religion
Politics & Leadership
Law
Media
Unity
Violence Against Women

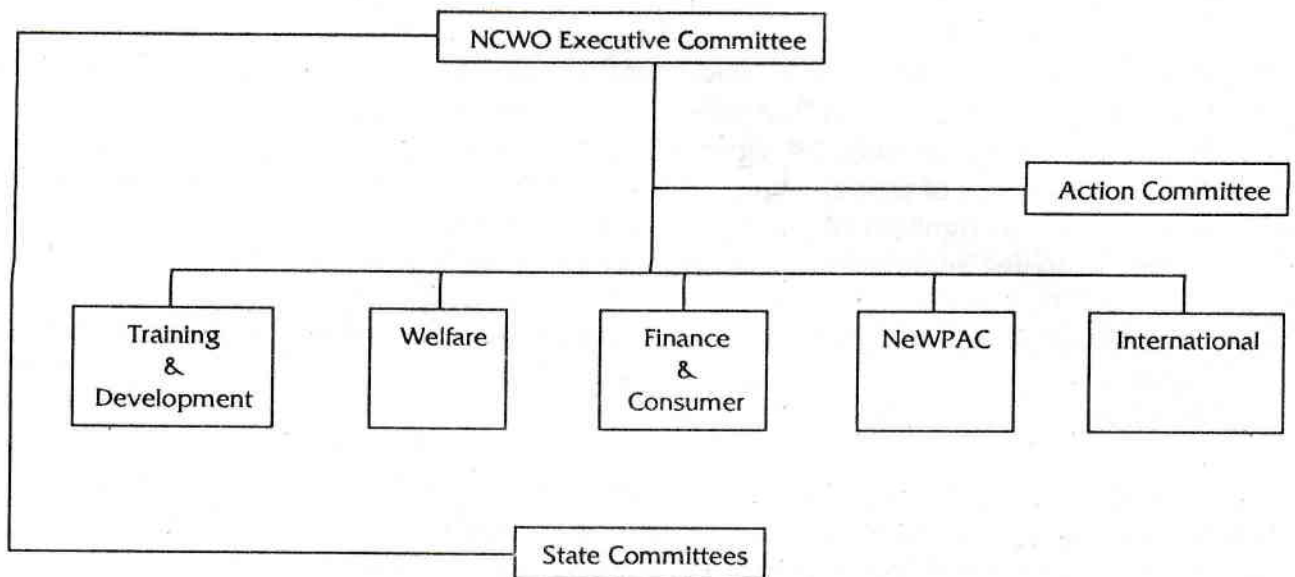
Each commission will be responsible for:

- identifying priority problems within the sector
- formulating appropriate programmes and projects according to strategies
- implementing the programmes within a time frame according to priority
- collecting appropriate data
- monitoring activities
- evaluating programmes and projects

The functions of NeWPAC are to:

- co-ordinate the activities of the various commissions
- plan a calendar of activities within a time frame
- prepare a budget

NeWPAC within the NCWO organisational framework



COMMISSION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All citizens have a basic right to education. In spite of the generally favourable situation of women in education, there still exist issues and problems that need to be confronted to enhance the effectiveness of education in bringing about gender equality and an improved status for women.

The ultimate aim of this sector is to enable every woman to develop her full potential for self-actualization and productivity. This will allow her to contribute to the welfare of the community and society at large as much as to her family. Central to this goal is the inculcation in both sexes of proper values, attitudes and perspectives that would engender mutual respect and recognition of individual rights and capabilities as total human beings free from the restrictive knots of sexual categorization and gender stereotypes.

Therefore, it is imperative to depart from the traditional socialization practice which ascribes status, characteristics and behavioral norms on the basis of sex rather than on inherent human potential and capability.

To achieve that, the efficiency of the formal educational system should be improved to foster the knowledge, skills and values that are required in attaining full equality between sexes and a more productive participation of women in the country's development efforts.

Planners and key officials need to acquire broader gender-perspectives and sufficient sex-differentiated data to ensure that education/training policies, programmes and projects are developed and implemented in harmony with the targets and objectives herein set for women. Resources invested in the betterment of women will enhance their ability to contribute to the achievement of VISION 2020 and other national goals.

PROBLEMS

1. There is a lack of information and data on the current status of women in education. This in turn hampers **program** planning, and **policy** programme making to uplift the status of women in education.
2. There is a pronounced gender disparity in literacy rates in Malaysian Society. While only 16 per cent of the male population is illiterate, 33 per cent of females are classified as being unable to read or write or perform simple calculations. In the Asean Community Malaysia ranks the second highest in respect of female illiteracy.
3. Generally, there is a lack of opportunity for school dropouts in Malaysia to pursue courses of study that are more suited to their attitudes and temperament. This problem affects young females more seriously than males. Private schools exist but fees are high.
4. Sexism and role stereotyping are prevalent in the curricula as well as in textbooks and instructional materials. Research carried out in several countries demonstrates the negative impact that such practices have on impressionable young girls. There appears

to be a tacit notion that the female accepts and should accept a subordinate position. This must be clearly recognised as out-moded and therefore rejected.

5. The syllabi of subjects taught at school do not sufficiently reflect the contributions of women in various fields of endeavour such as science, history, language and social studies. In the readers and language textbooks for example, there is insufficient inclusion of female achievements and of topics that are likely to be of interest to girls.
6. The female school drop-out is more likely to end up in a poorly-paid occupation than her male counterpart. Priority is given to males when a Malaysian family has to decide which child shall be sent for higher education. Relapse into illiteracy is more common among female drop-outs.
7. Although there has been a steady increase in the number of women attending institutions of higher education over the years, the reality is that females are concentrated in a few traditional disciplines such as arts and education. There is still a very wide disparity between numbers of males and females in engineering, science and technological fields. This is a result of 'traditional and conventional wisdom' but there is no reason why this situation should be perpetuated.
8. There is insufficient involvement of women in all phases of educational development from the planning stage to education at local, state and federal levels. There is a glaring absence of women professional officers in decision-making positions, not only in the Ministry of Education but also in institutions of higher education.

ACTION PLAN AND OBJECTIVES

We urge that serious consideration be given to the implementation of the following objectives:

1. To enhance public understanding of the importance and value of education for all citizens generally and for women in particular. Allied to this there must be a stress on the concept of shared responsibility in family development.
2. To increase education and training facilities for women in both formal and non-formal programmes.
3. To facilitate the re-entry of women workers and school drop-outs into the mainstream of the nation's vocational, professional and academic institutions.
4. To sensitize teachers, teacher-trainers, policy makers, textbook writers, educational media personnel and curriculum planners to the elements of gender awareness so as to eradicate role and sex stereotypes in all instructional materials.
5. To review and revise appropriate aspects of the school curriculum to foster greater respect for the role of women in all fields of human endeavour.
6. To encourage in-depth studies of women's aspirations and their problems with a view to finding reasonable solutions.

7. To promote women's studies as an academic discipline in its own right in every university in Malaysia.
8. To draft a syllabus for incorporating suitable aspects of women's studies into subjects taught at school.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Study Groups

Study groups can help to enhance the position of women by initiating activities in the following areas:-

- (a) Content analysis of textbooks and instructional materials used in schools.
- (b) Collection of data on the number of women in technical and vocational education and examination of reasons for the trends indicated.
- (c) Collection of data relating to employment, unemployment, underemployment and discriminatory practices experienced by female workers in the work place.
- (d) Identification of the social, economic and cultural barriers that limit women's participation in the various disciplines at the tertiary level.
- (e) The rewriting of ideas, concepts and general presentations in textbooks so as to give greater credit for the contributions made by women to national development and other vital sectors.
- (f) The drafting of a Code of Guidance for textbook writers and media personnel to ensure that sex-role stereotyping is not perpetuated.
- (g) The encouragement of writing of fiction portraying girls and women in more dynamic, non-traditional roles.

It will be necessary for all study groups to be established by the end of 1992. Resources can be drawn from the various women's non-governmental organisations, institutions of higher education and the Ministry of Education.

2. National Projects

To develop sensitization or conscientization programmes with appropriate assistance from agencies such as CIDA, UNDP, FAO and UNESCO.

- (a) The development of resource materials in the form of slides, audio-tapes, video-tapes, leaflets, and books for the dissemination of facts and figures relating to development and women.
- (b) The initiation of research into laws, regulations and conventions in force which relegate women to a subordinate status, with a view to advocating reforms.

- (c) The analysis of the use of women in advertising with a view to getting rid of sex symbolism and stereotyped images of females.

3. Modalities

It will be necessary to organize seminars, workshops and courses of both the formal and non-formal kind for girls and women. A group of resource persons must be identified to assume responsibility for all matters relating to education and training of women. The resource persons should be given appropriate training and exposure in communications methodology and provided with guidance on different aspects of women's ideas.

Another group that should be introduced to the subject of 'Women and Development' or 'Women and their Role' are the planners, administrators and holders of decision-making positions.

These must be regarded as on-going and **not** a 'once-for-all' project. Due provision should be made for evaluation of the seminars and courses. Dialogue and participation by the students should be the dominant feature of these seminars. The traditional teaching on lecturing mode should be used sparingly or not at all.

Implementors: NCWO, Women's NGOs, Women's Wings of political organisations.

4. Advocacy

- a) The need for a strong lobbying of legislative and executive decision-makers must be recognised. The history of the women's rights campaign in other countries proves that sustained lobbying is the best way to achieve results. It cannot be any different in Malaysia.
- b) Strengthening the national machinery
- c) The Ministry of Education should reinforce structures for policy implementation and should integrate women's educational concerns in both existing policies and forthcoming programmes through gender analysis of policies, programmes, projects and services. Such analysis should result in (a) the reformulation of programmes/projects to better address women's educational concerns; (b) the development of new components which should be introduced into the programmes to address the neglected areas.
- d) Reorienting Institutional Processes for planning, implementation and monitoring of women's concerns in the policies and programs of educational agencies.
- e) The implications for women should be considered when policies, legislation and regulations, as well as educational programmes are formulated at whatever level so that problems and any negative impact on women can be avoided.
- f) A comprehensive system should be established to monitor the impact of educational programmes, and also to detect at an early stage, obstacles, whether under the law (de jure) or in practice (de facto) so that appropriate action could be taken to overcome

them. The present structures in the educational system should be reviewed and changed to allow full participation and development of women's potential.

- g) Women should be involved in all phases of educational development from the planning stage to evaluation and at both local and national levels. The participation of women in decision-making at all levels of the Ministry of Education including the universities and other institutions of higher learning should be accorded priority.
- h) Improving quality of education programmes
 - (i) A comprehensive programme of review and where necessary, revision of curriculum (at primary, secondary and tertiary levels) and other educational/training programmes, simultaneously with the revision and development of textbooks, instructional materials and other learning aids and teaching methodologies should be undertaken. The review should ensure the achievement of the following:
 - (ii) elimination of gender-biased approaches and information that do not and appreciate reflect and the contributions of women in all sectors of society.
 - (iii) promotion of women's capacity to improve their self-perception, self-respect and self-confidence, and thus to develop their full potential as development agents;
 - (iv) family life education which should include information on family law which reinforces the appreciation of the roles of men and women, bringing about healthy and positive attitudes towards women and girls to be included in the school curriculum in the primary and secondary levels respectively.
 - (v) development of gender-sensitive non-formal education programme where greater emphasis should be given to the unique educational needs of women, particularly as consumers and as school dropouts. Expansion of areas of women's participation in economic production by providing them with skills that should enhance their competitiveness in the job market.
 - (vi) education and training geared to developing a larger number of middle-level, and high-level skilled female workers who should be employed in work areas required for economic recovery and growth.
 - (vii) development of learning concepts, theories, and materials to upgrade general understanding of women's concerns.
 - 5(i) Awareness raising on women's educational concerns (conscientization)
 - (ii) To promote institutional commitment to policy implementation, multilevel training and gender sensitizing programmes on women's concerns in education should be implemented for Ministry of Education employees.
 - (iii) Teacher Education courses and in-service programmes should be reviewed in order to introduce teachers to strategies for increasing the participation of girls in technical education programmes.

- (iv) Career and vocational guidance services should be made available in schools and colleges and counsellors should be sensitized to gender awareness so that they can motivate girls to also choose technical fields. Sensitizing programmes for career counsellors should be developed and implemented.
- (v) Stereotyping of career options should be avoided through appropriate career guidance which should direct training and education toward non-traditional and better-paid areas of competence. Information through the mass media should be disseminated.
- (vi) Educational Institutions should be encouraged to lead in undertaking gender-consciousness or sensitizing activities both within and outside the school campus/premises.
- (vii) Incentives and other support services should be extended to schools conducting women's affirmative action studies, while scholarships should be made available to students wanting to specialize in this area.
- (viii) To address the differing standards of socialization, teachers should be trained on how to integrate gender issues into parent-teacher discussions. Along this line, appropriate guidelines and reference materials for teachers should be developed and utilized together with a mass media programme.

6. Involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations

- (i) The government should more actively involve Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in programmes and measures directed at advancing women's education and training in order to equip, strengthen and supplement the existing official machinery.
- (ii) Financial, technical, advisory and institutional support should be provided to women's organisations which provide educational programmes and training.

7. Redress of discrimination and provision of special measures

Education should be made compulsory up to Form III. Special measures should be introduced to redress discrimination against women where it exists, and to ensure that current disadvantages are eliminated by affirmative action. These include:

- (i) Provisions to increase women's opportunity to enrol in university and off campus courses at nominal cost.
- (ii) More funds for provision of hostels for children in rural areas, in particular in Sabah and Sarawak to enable more girls to attend schools.
- (iii) Acknowledgement of the multifaceted roles of women by accommodating their special child-bearing and child-rearing needs and allowing women a flexible duration of time to complete their studies or courses at tertiary level.

- (iv) Institution of life long adult education and training opportunities in skills development to enable women to achieve personal growth and to acquire marketable skills to enter the work force. In-house training should be provided to women regardless of age.
- (v) Encouragement of women and girls to participate in technical courses and the motivation of more girls to choose from a wider range of technical courses. Scholarships and training opportunities should be provided as incentives.
- (vi) Obtaining an assurance that single sex schools will be allowed to co-exist with co-educational schools and ensuring that co-educational schools have adequate facilities for the personal needs of male and female students.
- (vii) The review of admission policies, procedures, requirements, and practices to address the issues of explicit and implicit discrimination of such areas. Policies relative to the granting of student financial assistance should be made more sensitive to women's situations.

8. Facilitating and Coordinating Research on Women's Issues

- (i) Recognizing the lack of accurate and comprehensive data on the situation of women in Malaysia the government should promote and strengthen women's studies programmes or unit at institutions of higher learning.
- (ii) The Ministry of Education should ensure that data collection and analysis are classified according to gender in order that women's needs are clearly identified for more accurate policy programmes and project formulation. Gender-based indicator systems should be continuously developed and updated to aid the processes of monitoring, evaluating and developing or redirecting pertinent programmes, services and projects.
- (iii) Research should be undertaken to evaluate, and where necessary, develop alternatives to:
 - theories about human nature specifically those that deal with sex and gender;
 - the system of curriculum development and its transmission; and
 - the classroom climate and the culture of silence which it engenders among learners,
 - vocational education,
 - impact of formal and informal education on women.
- (iv) Curricular innovation conferences should be conducted to discuss problems, issues, and prospects for the development and use of gender-fair curricula.

Implementors: NCWO, NGOs, Educational Institutions, Professional Organisations, PTAs
Time frame: On going

COMMISSION ON HEALTH

The NCWO is conscious that the health service in the country is among one of the best in the developing world, and that the government has a deep commitment to the achievement of Health for all through the primary health-care approach.

Health programmes covering promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services form part of the efforts of the Government to raise the overall living standard in the country, with the ultimate aim of improving the well-being of the people, enabling them to participate actively in the social life of their community and raising their productivity.

From the Fourth Plan onwards, there has been continued emphasis on rural health services, more equitable health services and family development, taking into account the changing morbidity, the escalating cost of health, the lack of inter-sectoral approach, rising public expectations and constraints on available resources.

Health care is a basic need. Recognizing that the present system serves a vast majority of our people who cannot afford private clinics and hospitals, NCWO urges that the Government continue to accept its responsibility in this area. Privatized medical care creates a climate of inequality and injustice as the total lower income group as well as the poor will lose accessibility to the basic medical and health facilities at present provided by the Government.

Women, who constitute half the population must be physically and mentally healthy in order to contribute productively to national development. Health is a crucial indicator of the status of women. The health status of women is not only affected by disease and environmental problems, but as the bearer and rearers of children, women are caught in a cycle of pregnancies, childbirths, lactation, malnutrition, infections, fatigue and emotional stress. They suffer from the many conditions of ill-health connected with being a woman, with specific health needs and problems related to reproduction (child bearing, family development and fertility control with its associated problems of the wide spectrum of contraceptives (the pill, injectables, subdermal implants, abortions and IUD). Apart from that, cancer and other non-communicable diseases are fast becoming leading causes of mortality and morbidity against women. Cancer of the breast, uterus and lungs are leading causes of deaths due to cancer.

PROBLEMS

1. Access to Basic Health Services

Despite the tremendous progress in health care, there still exists, however, a wide disparity in the health status and health resources between the urban and very remote rural areas. Apart from the disadvantaged rural people, the disadvantaged groups also live in the new villages, plantations and urban slums and their health needs are often met by sub-standard care. Other groups that need attention are factory workers, the handicapped, elderly and terminally ill. The lack of access is due to inequitable distribution of services, inappropriate and shortage of manpower, particularly, personnel skilled in women's health problems

and poor management of existing services. The lack of access is compounded by the lower levels of income, illiteracy and ignorance among these groups.

2. Occupational Health and Safety Standards

Existing laws and regulations on health oftentimes are not strictly enforced and applied. Even when such laws exist, women do not always know their rights or may not be in the position to demand for them. There is also a general lack of awareness among women employed in transnational corporations, particularly in the semi-conductor and garment industries - where they form the bulk of the labour force - regarding environmental/occupational health and safety hazards and risks. If ever there are available safety devices, workers are not fully informed of their importance. Health risks include latent illnesses such as cancer, lung disease due to toxic chemicals emitted by machines, sterilization due to exposure to radiation and other disturbances to the reproductive function of women, as well as defects in vision among girls working in microchip factories, poisoning in insecticide sprayers in plantations etc. In the area of occupational health hazard, there is a need to create more protective rules and regulations and to monitor their implementation to ensure the safety of workers.

3. Information, Education and Communication (IEC)

IEC efforts on health, nutrition and family planning are still inadequate, especially in the prevention of illness and promotion of health. Many women do not have enough information about good proper diets and other basic health care practices. Poor functional health literacy still characterizes the majority of women. Also contributory to women's poor health are prevailing socio-cultural values and practices. Observation shows that girls and women do not get their needed share of the family food. Mothers, particularly, get a smaller share of the food, often sacrificing for the main breadwinners, usually the husbands. Other factors include non-utilization of technological advances for health education, shortage of manpower, particularly health educators, time not given for formal health education amongst workers, language problems and misinterpretation of government policies (e.g. 70 million population policy).

4. Traditional Medicine

The public has very little protection against malpractices of traditional medicine. The practitioners are not registered and their competence and safety standards are not held accountable. There is also very little information or validation on the safety. The need for more research on appropriate/indigenous and alternative health care is considered vital.

5. Impact of Technology on Health and Cost of Health Care

There is also a growing concern and need to evaluate the impact of advances in medical science and technology on women. In the age of modern technology, its overuse and abuse pose possible health risks to women. The lack of studies is aggravated by inadequate definition (e.g. maternal deaths), dissemination and utilization of available research on health, nutrition and family planning.

The growth of high technology medicine has contributed to the soaring cost of medical care. This is alarming because it not only prohibits access to medical care for the poor but it also siphons financial allocation away from more crucial primary care services.

6. Multi-sectoral Coordination

Health involves many sectors besides the health ministry and that good health depends also on the provision of adequate nutrition, safe water supply, proper sanitation, clean air and other environmental conditions. Multi-sectoral coordination is essential for the delivery of comprehensive health care.

ACTION PLAN

Strategies for the health sector are aimed at promoting the development of a healthy and productive citizenry and maximizing the rakyat's contribution to socio-economic development.

Objectives

1. To provide voluntary support services to the disadvantaged groups and other special groups.
2. To create awareness related to health in general and to women in particular.
3. To advocate for changes in institutional processes for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of women's concerns in health programmes.
4. To establish linkages and cooperate with government agencies and the private sector for the promotion of health.

Programmes and Activities

1. Voluntary Support Services

- i. Support Groups
 - a. Establish new or support the formation of more mutually supportive groups of women with similar health problems, e.g. Cancerlink, *psychosocial problems*.
 - b. Form domestic assistant groups, visiting sick patients.
- ii. Voluntary Health Services

Establish or promote:

 - menopause clinics

- family planning including vaginal examination and Pap smear
- counselling
- meals-on-wheels
- mobile clinics
- day care centres for the handicapped, chronically ill
- community nursing homes and hospices
- village adoption for health promotion
- rehabilitation programmes such as hairdressing saloon, restaurant, tailoring and florist business for the physically handicapped

Implementators: NCWO and relevant affiliates

Time frame: Ongoing

2. Awareness Raising

- a. Highlight, explain and publicise the plight of disadvantaged groups in health, inadequate services, inadequate laws.
- b. Inform relevant bodies about possible causes for lack of information about health.
- c. Step up information on traditional medicine.
- d. Conduct workshops, exhibitions and talks on health.

Implementators: NCWO and relevant affiliates

Time frame: Ongoing

3. Advocacy

- a. Lobby for a **National Health Plan** and the establishment of a National Health Council which will include GO and NGOs, to coordinate policies and programmes in the health sector to ensure maximum utilization, efficient distribution and a more equitable allocation of resources based on priority health needs. Within the framework of the Health Plan:
 - the Ministry of health should be given jurisdiction over all health facilities such as estate hospitals, for the underprivileged section of the population.
 - health resources (human and material) should be equitably allocated to the further development and accessibility of affordable health services. Government hospital medical and health services should never be privatized.
 - special attention should be given to the development of community based health and social services for the infirm, handicapped, victims of rape and violence, mentally distressed, elderly, terminally ill patients and special groups such as plantation workers.

- a comprehensive monitoring system should be established to monitor the impact of health programmes on women and also to detect at an early stage, obstacles, whether under the law (de jure) or in practice (de facto) so that appropriate action can be taken to overcome them.
 - research on health be given priority and that areas of concern should be identified and sufficient money be allocated.
 - the government should involve NGOs and voluntary organizations more actively and effectively in programmes and measures directed at improving the health of women and in order to equip and strengthen the existing official machinery. Financial, technical, advisory and institutional support should be provided to women's organizations which have health programmes.
 - formulate special policies such as a National Drug Policy and a National Aids Policy as a component of the National Health Policy based on the concept of essential drugs and to take measures to provide full information on the side effects.
- b. Lobby for all health data collection and analysis to be disaggregated by gender in order to ensure that problems specific to women's health are identified for more accurate policy planning and project formulation.
 - c. Lobby for programmes to update medical and health personnel in knowledge and skills for management and develop consciousness on the special health needs and concerns of women.
 - d. Lobby for more women to be represented in all phases of health development projects from the planning stage to evaluation at both local and national levels, particularly at all levels of decision-making in the Health Ministry.
 - e. Lobby for a unit on traditional medicine to be established in the M.O.H. Traditional practitioners must be trained and registered. The practice of medicine, both western and traditional must be safe, appropriate for the country's needs and accessible to all at affordable costs.
 - f. Lobby for laws to be reviewed or new ones enacted and for stringent implementation of existing ones to protect health, in particular to reduce occupational health hazards in both the public and private sectors; in particular
 - (i) management's non-compliance with or neglect of health and safety standards;
 - (ii) women's limited participation in the design of mechanism to monitor health and safety conditions of workers;
 - (iii) inadequate regulation and supervision of the manufacturing, packaging, distribution, dispensing, pricing, advertisement and utilization of medicines, food, chemicals and pharmaceutical products;
 - (iv) lack of legal assistance for women victims of unethical medical practices;

- (v) lack of or inadequate maternity benefits for working and nursing women in the formal or other small-sized firms;
 - (vi) disparate medical benefits for women in the private and government sectors and among casual and permanent employees;
 - (vii) inadequate laws and policies that would promote women's health at all stages of their lives from infancy to old age.
- g. Lobby for HAWA, through its liaison officers in the M.H.O. to integrate women's concerns in both existing policies and forthcoming programmes of the Ministry through gender analysis of policies, programmes, projects and services. Such analysis should result in the formulation of appropriate action responses such as:
- (i) reformulation of programmes/projects to better address women's health concerns;
 - (ii) development of new components which should be introduced in the new programmes to address women's concerns and neglected areas.
- h. Lobby for a wider use of the media for health promotion. Establish a comprehensive health education programme for use in the media and community health facilities. The education programme should focus on nutrition, breastfeeding, weaning and safe motherhood, cleanliness, physical fitness, avoiding and coping with stress, detection of common signs of illness, awareness of self-responsibilities and understanding the relationship between nutrition, lifestyle and health.
- i. Lobby for multi-level training and gender sensitizing programmes on women's health and their special need for all health administrators, personnel and trainees. Health education is to be reintroduced and emphasized in the school curriculum. A review on the curriculum of health care workers is also necessary to ensure that community based primary health care is strengthened through appropriately trained primary health care workers.
- j. Give special attention to the health needs of the underprivileged section of the population and continue to subsidise and ensure adequate access to quality health care for women, children, the low income rural group, the poor in the new villages, plantations and urban slums, workers and special health and social services for the infirm, handicapped, victims of rape and violence, mentally distressed, elderly and terminally ill patients.

Special attention should be given to the development of community based health and social services for the infirm, handicapped, victims of rape and violence, mentally distressed, elderly, terminally ill patients and special groups such as plantation workers

- (i) establish mobile clinics, 24-hour clinics, hospitals, day care centres and rehabilitation centres for the infirmed, chronically ill and handicapped.
- (ii) support NGOs which are providing the above services.

- (iii) promote and upgrade maternal and child care services; establish preventive and treatment facilities for gynaecological problems (e.g. more centres and facilities for breast examination and Pap smears), hypertension and diabetes; obstetric services and fertility control clinics which should emphasize that children spacing is a joint responsibility of a wife and husband; through education and consultation should encourage spacing between children and avoidance of high risk pregnancy in order to maintain women's health. Regular provision of contraceptive services which encouraged informed choice along with a regular follow-up for all women who use contraceptive devices.
- (iv) Occupational health services and regular medical examination and health education should be provided for all those who are employed in sectors which are recognised to be hazardous to health.
- k. Lobby for priority to research in the area of the health needs of the poor, appropriate reproductive and family planning technology and rights of women, occupational health hazards, impact of advances in medical science and technology on women, benefits and dangers in methods used in traditional medicine and monitor claims of "miraculous cures". There should also be wide dissemination and utilization of research findings. Establish a hospital for women to provide quality tertiary care and to enable research into the health problems of women.

Implementors: NCWO and relevant affiliates
Time frame: Ongoing

COMMISSION ON MEDIA

The Mass media is well recognised as a most effective means of transmitting messages and information.

Today's new technology provides the media with capabilities and power, which, when aptly utilized, can result in the advancement of a nation. The agenda setting function of the media is an example of the media potential that can be harnessed to portray women's issues and to portray women as a dynamic force in the development efforts of a country.

It is well recognised that the media can be propelled by and manipulated for profit purposes. When this occurs, situations arise in which women are portrayed in a stereotyped or negative manner.

In the case of the local media, the problem is further compounded by the fact that it is a relatively young industry, controlled and staffed by males, young ones at that with less than 15% female participation at the policy and top management level. In addition, the nature of the profession, coupled with widespread misconceptions about women and work, restrict the distribution of important roles and functions to women.

The traditional roles of women as wife, mother, homemaker and as decorations or sex objects are continuously being projected by the local media. The overall image of women portrayed is that of a secondary creature in society, fit only to perform menial tasks for the home and children.

The time has arrived for this image to be overhauled and for the media to recognize the important role played by women in all aspects of life in the nation and to accept the significant contributions made by them in upholding societal norms, morals, aspirations and creativity.

This Action Plan notes that the mass media world comprises media practitioners, media subjects (models) and media consumers. It also recognizes that mass media include the electronic media (film, TV, radio, etc), print media (newspapers, magazines etc.), and interpersonal media (musical lyrics, plays, folk dramas).

Problems

1. There is a negative portrayal of women in all media. Women are seen in:
 - (a) merely traditional roles,
 - (b) as commercial/profit making inducements
 - (c) as sex objects or decorations to sensationalize advertised products.
2. There is minimal or no inclusion of women's viewpoints and opinions on national and world issues. If there are, these are relegated to secondary spaces in the media.
3. There are discriminatory practices in job distribution, salary and opportunity for advancement for women.

4. There is a lack of training to upgrade women media practitioners.
5. There is little or uncoordinated research on women and gender issues.
6. Provision is lacking to control and monitor the use of new technology in media eg. cable and satellite.
7. There is no policy to policy to stimulate the participation of women in media work.
- 8.. There is an absence of women at the policy making level with the resulting lack of appreciation of women's needs and concerns.
19. There is little or no co-ordination between government and media bodies concerned with women's issues.
10. There is inadequate dissemination of information on the part of the media on legal and health matters related to women.
11. There is a lack of perception in the media on the effective role it can play to upgrade the status of women and the contribution it can make to alleviate gender related problems in society.

ACTION PLAN

Objectives

1. To eliminate the negative portrayal of women in the Media.
2. To advocate on the increased participation of women at decision-making level in the Media.
3. To sensitize gender awareness in media programmes.
4. To identify problem areas and devise strategies for improvement.
5. To cultivate the media as a tool in the development of women programmes.
6. To monitor the commercial use of women in the media.
7. To create awareness among women themselves not to contribute to the negative portrayal in the media.
8. To ensure, at the official level, that active consideration and recognition be accorded to the concerns of women and to their participation in all fields.
9. To alert the media on its pivotal and vital role in influencing women in particular on their crucial commitment to national unity.
10. To ensure that the tenets of the Advertising Code are adhered to and clearly defined.

11. To broaden the scope of the Advertising Code, to enhance the portrayal of women.
12. To urge the mass media to participate more actively and positively in the promotion of women's social, political economic and cultural awareness and participation as well as their leadership roles in all these sectors.

Programmes and Activities

1. Study Groups

Establish study groups to:

- a) Examine and research the role of women in decision making in all aspects of the media.
- b) Formulate a strategy to sensitize the media sector to:
 - (i) gender awareness
 - (ii) its role in promoting women's development
 - (iii) the need for the participation of women at decision making levels
 - (iv) the unlimited potential of the enhanced participation of women.
 - (v) the adverse effects of the present negative portrayal to women in the media.
 - (vi) the societal benefits accruing from an enhanced portrayal of women
 - (vii) its role in promoting national policy
- c) Identify problem areas and suggest corrective measures.
- d) Prepare the guide lines for a strategy to monitor the use of women in the commercial media.
- e) Set up NCWO Media Bureau to:
 - (i) monitor the implementation of National Policy on Women concerning the Media and this Action Plan.
 - (ii) monitor negative portrayal of women by the media
 - (iii) mobilize consumer action
 - (iv) formulate lobbying strategies to redress discrimination
 - (v) give feedback to media agencies, policy makers on promoting women's development
 - (vi) obtain information on the status of women as defined by Finas.

Implementors: NCWO and relevant NGOs
Time frame: On going

3. Seminars, Workshops, Courses

Conduct workshops to:

- a) inform on the negative aspects of the media portrayal of women
- b) review and highlight media material that belittles women
- c) demonstrate strategies to counter negativity and demonstrate alternative methods of portrayal.
- d) train participants in specific gender sensitive media issues
- e) produce training awareness material for public dissemination
- f) illustrate the use of the mass media as a tool for disseminating information on issues and events pertaining to women
- g) teach methods and strategies for lobbying.
- h) report on the findings and activities of the Media Council
- i) create awareness raising among women media practitioners of the need to be represented at the top-level decision making level positions.
- j) utilize the Media to advantage.

4. Advocacy

Lobby for the following:

- a) The advancement of women to positions of decision making in media bodies.
- b) An increase in the number of women involved in the Media, occupying a diversity of occupations free of sex stereotyping.
- c) The use of media as a tool for economic development of women.
- d) The use of the media for disseminating information on legal, health, education, etc. matters pertaining to the advancement of women.
- e) The standardization of the Advertising Code to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.
- f) Laws to govern and regulate of cable and satellite usage.
- g) The inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum of mass communication schools.
- h) The enforcement of laws that govern media content.
- i) **A National Media Council that is vocal, non partisan, and free of vested interests** to be set up by the Government. Its functions should be the following:
 - 1. to play a watch dog role
 - 2. to take an articulate stand on gender issues in the media
 - 3. to assist in the solutions of problems identified in the existing media
 - 4. to give feedback to NGOs, policy makers and enforcement agencies on findings, programme evaluation, reporting suggestions and addressing infringements on or lacks in media use guidelines.

Membership of the National Media Council may comprise of women and men from independent organizations and who are individually interested.

COMMISSION ON UNITY

It is acknowledged that the primary and ultimate goal of the National Development Policy should continue to be the total unity of the Malaysian Nation. The national philosophy, enshrined in the Rukunegara with its five basic principles, clearly enunciates the aspirations of the people of Malaysia for a united nation under a constitutional monarchy, committed to the highest principles of a democratically elected government. The Malaysian Government shall serve the nation, upholding at all times the very vital and essential Malaysian Constitution, the rule of law, ethics, morality and human rights.

The Rukunegara, our national philosophy, reinforces the imperative need for our nation to be united to create a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared; to move forward and progress rapidly in science and technology in order to modernize Malaysia. In all these, national unity is of paramount importance. The working aspiration of unity and the goal of economic advancement should be pursued in every sphere of our society to ensure the forging of a united Malaysian Nation.

Recognising that unity is basic and fundamental to all progress and development of the country and nation, the NCWO in its twenty-six years as a consultative and advisory council has worked faithfully and assiduously for this most single, primary and essential aim.

The Women together with the men of our nation hold the key to success in national unity. There must be a concerted and conscientious effort made by men and women to mould the future generations and youth of our country. The inculcation of the first lessons of the living concept of unity, is a prerequisite for unity to become a total commitment of the individual transcending ethnicity, religion, culture, social status and political belief or affiliation.

Problems

There must be elimination of any racial categorization which brings about adverse effects of greater consciousness of ethnicity and which has serious undermining effects on national connotations. For example, what may appear to be an innocuous word-non-independence Bumiputra has had strong division implications. A united nation of Malaysia must ensure that each citizen has reason to be proud to be Malaysian.

Malaysians have been living in a more communal than non-communal manner as reflected in the kampong, estates and new village system. By having communal political and social further emphasis is given to communalism. Hence, progress made in their political and social development tends to also be along communal lines. Because Malaysians tend to be more communal in their approach there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the customs, traditions and religious practices of the various communities, groups and amongst members of the different communities.

Categorization of the races tends to promote the evolution and development of distinct cultures of the major races rather than nurture the natural evolution of a Malaysian culture which all the different races could easily identify with.

Action Plan

Objectives

To identify issues, problems, obstacles, policies and administrative practices, etc., which have been detrimental to encouraging national unity.

To evaluate present practices, policies and systems implemented which have failed in promoting unity and tend to over-emphasize communalism.

To identify what the different races have in common and look for these common factors in everyday living, usage of language, social customs and practices, use of traditional medicines, leisure, recreational activities, handicrafts, etc. so as to establish common bonds amongst the different races.

To create a deeper awareness amongst the races and their common bonds and further strengthen these bonds in order that they can be used as unifying factors. Music, drama, dance and the arts as well as sports and recreational activities can be instruments used in promoting closer social interaction, inculcating national pride and loyalty as well as encourage the evolvement of a common identity amongst the races.

To encourage and promote better knowledge and understanding amongst the different races of each other's historical backgrounds, roots, religion, culture and social practices in order that ignorance of these will not lead to contempt and misunderstanding of each other's behaviour and actions.

To recommend positive steps which must be taken to create an ideal environment for the natural evolvement of a truly Malaysian culture and the establishment of a Malaysian identity.

SEMINARS WORKSHOPS COURSES

- To train in the use of materials developed by study groups
- To present problems and situations identified and to teach the problem solving methods developed
- To train participants in sensitivity to the cultures and historical background of the different races and how to apply their knowledge to promote unity
- To demonstrate the common bonds that link all races
- To involve the participation of media in highlighting common bonds and in spreading knowledge of each other's cultures, stressing as well what has evolved to be uniquely Malaysian.

STUDY GROUPS

- Establish study groups to examine the problems and situations related to unity that victimize or otherwise disadvantage women.
- Identify
 - (1) barriers that exist between the races and their causes
 - (2) areas of authority through which unity can be achieved
 - (3) situations that are divisive and analyse with a view to problem solving.
- Collate data for use in the promotion of programmes that can be implemented at both national and State level.
- Propose the required changes to existing conditions, providing the basis for new programmes.
- Develop sensitising programmes and strategies for wide spread application.
- Conduct research
 - (1) to promote better knowledge and understanding of the historical background, roots, religion, culture, social practices of all races
 - (2) highlight the contribution of **all** races
- Develop material for use in seminars and dialogues that promote the need for unity.

ADVOCACY

Lobby for:

- Establishment of State level Departments for Unity to link with the Ministry, the District and Non-Governmental Organizations.
- Increase non-racial social activities like sukanita, family and community programmes to promote civil and social consciousness.
- Monitoring of Government and Private Agencies in their fair implementation of policies concerning racial issues e.g. recruitment, promotions, training opportunities.
- Mass media to increase portrayal of national unity on local programmes.

COMMISSION ON POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP

Development is a political process which requires maximum participation of both women and men in influencing policy-making and legislation. Women's political participation particularly at decision-making levels is a prerequisite to a development process which develops alternative objectives and strategies and implements them according to women's interests and preferences.

The empowerment of women through their full participation in political processes and structures is the main political goal for women. In the context of political parties, women are isolated into women's divisions, far removed from policy making and public leadership. In this position, women, although forming a large proportion of the membership, are called upon to play supporting roles to male politicians. The exercise of their political rights, their participation in the determination of laws and policies must not be limited to traditional concerns of women. While these will necessarily take on some primacy, as equal human beings women should participate in all issues particularly those usually associated primarily with men. Special mention must be made of issues like peace, national defence, environment and international affairs which have a direct impact on the lives of the nation as a whole.

Full participation, however, is dependent upon literacy and the provision of popular education for both women and men. As such, attention must be devoted to ensuring that the backbone of popular education - literacy, education and information - is made available to all and hence, ensure that the division of labour and distribution of the benefits of national plans and policies are just and serve women as equally as they do men.

PROBLEMS

1. Women have always played an active supportive role in the political life of this country. However, their full leadership participation in the national political sphere is extremely low. Women constitute half the population and the women's wings of political parties have grown tremendously (eg. Wanita UMNO members form 55% of total party membership) and they play crucial roles as vote canvassers and voters, yet women's parliamentary representation is only 4.5%.
2. Women are not only seriously under-represented in the legislative bodies but also in the executive and judiciary, particularly at decision-making levels (the ratio of women in government to population is 1 : 130,000 while for men is 1 : 30,000). They are severely limited in the opportunity to compete for public office as political structures and processes actually inhibit the nomination of women as candidates.
3. Factors constraining women's political participation and hindering their political equality are very much related to socio-cultural attitudes which discourage their participation in public life. They are:
 - (i) lack of knowledge and literacy in politics
 - (ii) lack of consciousness and ignorance of their rights

- (iii) the continued subordination of women through laws and legal system that discriminate against women
- (iv) the double burden of workload that leaves most women little or no time to participate in politics
- (v) the perception of women's political role as merely supportive
- (vi) lack of affirmative action policies on the part of the Government to increase recruitment, nomination and promotion of women to positions of decision making
- (vii) reluctance to recognize women with leadership potential among members of political organisations
- (viii) lack of political will on the part of political organisations to provide adequate opportunities and the machinery for the training of women of ability.

ACTION PLAN

Objectives

1. To promote through a multi-pronged and a multi-level active training programme the primary purpose of:
 - (i) instilling in women a keen sense of self-esteem and self-worth
 - (ii) developing and equipping women with the determination to overcome attitudes which relegate them to a subservient and inferior position
 - (iii) achieving their rightful position of equal participation and equal beneficial contribution to national development and national life
2. To remove the disparity that exists between women's political involvement at the grassroot level and their meaningful exercise of political power
3. To create a real and acute awareness among women of their political rights.
4. To identify women's issues, problems and concerns on politics and leadership.
5. To promote institutional commitment to gender sensitive politics.
6. To ensure that consideration be given to women's concerns in the formulation and implementation of policies.
7. To sensitize women who are political or social leaders to the concerns of women
8. To conduct research and collate data in order to:
 - (i) provide relevant statistics

- (ii) survey needs, problems and aspirations of grass root constituents
 - (iii) study the socio-cultural-religious values and attitudes that determine the limited political involvement and leadership aspirations of women
 - (iv) highlight successful women leaders to present as possible role models
9. To demonstrate the role that ordinary women can play in exercising their political rights.
 10. To organize education activities and devise training strategies for use in leadership workshops.
 11. To sensitise Government and all government agencies on the imperative need to organise and implement development programmes and projects targetted for women's full and equal participation at all levels in the political life of the nation.
 12. To urge the Mass Media to participate more actively and positively in the promotion of women's political awareness and participation and leadership role in politics and government.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Study Groups

Establish study groups to:

- a. Contact all decision-making bodies at National, State and District levels to determine the number of women representatives, the issues and concerns relating to their position and authority.
- b. Conduct research to identify areas of concern and determine the changes to be implemented.
- c. Canvass the private sector to establish:
 - (i) the ratio of women in leadership positions
 - (ii) the attitude of management to the advancement of women as revealed in their training and promotion policies and realities and
 - (iii) the concerns of women employees themselves.
- d. Examine the socio-cultural values and attitudes of women from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Implementors: Women's NGOs, Women's Wings of Political Parties and NCWO
Time Frame: On going

2. Training

Conduct Workshops:

- a. On (i) leadership, (ii) awareness raising, (iii) methods of lobbying.
- b. To disseminate material on knowledge and literacy in politics for grass root participants
- c. To demonstrate roles that women can play at all levels, from kampung to city to state to nation.
- d. To teach problem identification and solving skills.

Implementors: Women's NGOs, Women's Wings of Political Parties and NCWO
Time Frame: On going

3. Advocacy

- a. Hold dialogue sessions with representatives of political parties and decision-making bodies to sensitize them to:
 - (i) women's concerns
 - (ii) the reality of the numbers of capable women who merit consideration for elevation to decision making positions
 - (iii) the serious consequences of decision making that omits catering to women's needs
 - (iv) the need for training for women to enable them the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications and capabilities
 - (v) the problems of women employers
- b. Lobby for:
 - (i) greater representation of women in legislative, judicial and executive levels
 - (ii) awareness in the private sector of the need for women development policies
 - (iii) for the removal of restrictions that inhibit the participation of women in political process, aiming this advocacy directly to the decision makers of Women's Wings of political parties, with the aim of persuading them to influence at two levels
 - a) among their membership and
 - b) with their parties as a whole

- (iv) affirmative action policies to increase the number of women in decision making positions
- (v) Increased commitment to gender sensitive policies
- (vi) infrastructures that would facilitate women's personal development so as to enable and enhance women's autonomy and ability to enter the mainstream of the development process on an equal basis with men.

Implementors: Women NGOs, Women's Wing of Political Parties, HAWA and NCWO
Time frame: On going

COMMISSION ON RELIGION

For the greater part, national and international efforts at promoting the development of women have not been concerned with the issue of religion and its impact on the position of women in society.

In Malaysia, there is a diversity of religion and traditions which has contributed to the richness of its cultural and social life. While respecting this diversity, it is also essential to ensure that fundamental human rights of women as enshrined in the essence of all religions are not compromised by religious interpretations and practices.

Religion is a powerful source of socialization; its values are often reflected in systems of personal, customary and religious laws which operate at the level of the family. While the rest of the legal, political and social system is subject to the forces of social change and amendment, the customary cultural and religious injunctions are exempt from such amendment and change.

There is a great need to examine values and practices derived from the interpretation of religions which oppress women and deny their independence and to reformulate interpretations in the true spirit of justice, equality and human dignity.

Problems

1. The fundamental human rights of women as enshrined in the essence of all religions is being compromised by religious interpretations and practices in all religions. This leads to a negative and inhibiting effect on the development of women.
2. Since leaders, interpreters, keepers and presenters of all religions are male, they together served to perpetuate a patriarchal system of values and traditions which erroneously places women in a subordinate position.
3. There is insufficient representation of women participating in policy formulation, decision making and implementation and interpretation of texts in the field of religion.
4. There is a lack of understanding and respect for each other's religious beliefs and philosophy leading to the harmful effect of social polarisation on the basis of religion.
5. There is an unhealthy trend in the misuse and manipulation of religions by self-interest groups for the pursuit of overtly political purposes.
6. Religious values which safeguard morality are not reflected in some societal institutions thus leading to the proliferation of activities prohibited by all religions, instead of encouraging alternative constructive activities for the development of the younger generation.

Action Plan

Objectives

1. To examine and research the position of women as defined in the religious texts.
2. To explain the status of women as enshrined in the essence of all religions.
3. To ensure sufficient representation of women in policy formulation, decision making and implementation.
4. To establish linkages with religious bureaucracy and between religious groups.
5. To provide support services.
6. To monitor the practices imposed on women in the name of religion and to evaluate its impact on women.

Programmes and Activities

1. Study Groups

- a. Establish study groups to examine the position of women as defined in religious texts. Some study groups such as Sisters In Islam, Women's Society of Christian Service are already established. NCWO will encourage and support the establishment of similar groups for all religions.

Implementors: All religious NGOs.

Time frame: Groups should be established by the end of 1992.

- b. Establish linkages between the study groups to improve religious understanding and to enable solution to common problems.

Time frame: completed by 1993.

- c. Produce pamphlets for wide distribution to explain the status of women.
- d. Usage of mass media by various study groups to disseminate findings and opinions on events and issues pertaining to women.

Time frame: on going

2. Seminars, Workshops and Courses

- a. To explain the status of women in religion.
- b. To sensitize religious leaders to women's views.

- c. To train men, women and youth in specific gender sensitive religious matters such as pre-marital courses, counselling and child development.

3. Advocacy

Hold dialogue sessions with relevant government bodies, religious leaders and wings of political parties on the need to protect the fundamental human rights of women as enshrined in the essence of all religions. It is also to ensure that these rights are not being compromised by religious misinterpretations and practices. Special emphasis is given to the following areas:

- a. To urge the Government to portray the true status of women in the media.
- b. To introduce gender-sensitizing course for religious leaders and teachers.
- c. To review and reformulate existing courses eg. pre-marital courses.
- d. To review and reformulate school and teacher training curriculum.
- e. To have representation of women in policy formulation, decision making and implementation, in particular to sit on bodies such as the Inter-Faith Religious Consultative Council and the Religious Council in the Prime Minister's Department.
- f. To make available more funds and scholarships for women for religious studies.
- g. To introduce courses on comparative religions in local universities.

Implementors: NCWO with appropriate study groups
Time frame: on going

4. Support Services

Provide voluntary support services

- a. counselling
- b. legal aid
- c. hot-line

Implementors: Religious Bodies, Welfare Department, NGOs
Time frame: On going

COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT

The vision of a healthy future for all Malaysians revolves dynamically around a policy and its implementation that effectively seeks to harmonize development and environment. There is, therefore a great need to call for:

- (a) the responsible use of our natural resources,
- (b) the development of alternative sources of energy, and
- (c) the need to educate the public on the harmful effects of environmental abuse.

One of the objectives that the World Commission on Environment and Development has identified towards achieving this goal is to "raise the level of understanding and commitment to action of individuals, voluntary organizations, businesses, institutes and governments". Malaysian Women's Organizations have a large share to contribute in the achievement of this goal. Considering that nearly half of the people of Malaysia are women, official decision making on the environmental impact of development must not only reflect women's values and concerns but include women in the process that has such a vital impact on our lives now and in the future.

There is public apathy regarding the necessity to maintain our environment because of the widely held beliefs,

- 1) that there is an abundance of natural resources, and
- 2) that problems only exist in developed industrial countries.

It is incumbent upon the government to implement policies that maintain and renew our natural resources, that avoid the damage that Industrialization has inflicted elsewhere and that educate the public in the ways and means of preserving a healthy environment.

Problems

- 1. Environmental concerns have been sublimated in the pursuit of growth and development as economic goals have priority in national planning.
- 2. * Renewal and maintenance of natural resources have been negligible because of the short sighted belief that they are limitless.
- 3. There is a lack of policy regarding reforestation; a shortcoming that is compounded by the belief that agricultural substitutes maintain the balance of the ecology.
- 4. There is widespread public ignorance about the impact of ecological damage and the hazards presented by an unsound environment because the effects of abuse have not been generally so disastrous as to elicit national concern.

Action Plan

Objectives

1. To identify women's issues, problems and concerns on the environment
2. To create ecological awareness tied to scientific and technological development with the aim of preserving the environment.
3. To establish linkages with Governmental and development bodies.
4. To monitor the effects of industrial development on the environment.
5. To support local and regional lobby efforts on environmental issues (eg. Penang)
6. To advocate for legal and administrative reforms.
7. To advocate for the inclusion of environmental impact in feasibility studies undertaken for development and technological projects.
8. To advocate for public access to these studies.
9. To advocate for universal access to waste disposal and waste recycling.

Programmes and Activities

1. Study Groups

- a) Establish study groups consisting of environmental activists, consumer advocates, NGOs implicated in the estate and industrial sector, to identify environmental issues related to women's concerns,
- b) Conduct research to obtain relevant statistics of:
 - (i) women working in environment, science and technology fields, at both decision-making and non-decision making levels, and
 - (ii) women suffering ill-health as a result of unsound work environments and underlying causes of ill-health.
- c) Conduct research for information on methods of environment conservation that can be applied at individual, community, state and national levels, eg. use of clean energy, paper recycling, avoidance of use of styrofoam, burning of garbage, composting
- d) Establish linkages with state, district and national bodies to disseminate information on affected areas and cause and origin of problems (eg. among unions, estate workers, factory workers).
- e) To compile, publish and disseminate relevant information to encourage women to take a more active role in environmental issues.

- f) To disseminate findings and educate the public on environmental issues through the mass media as follows:

Electronic TV Radio, News, Public Service Announcements, Documentaries, Drama, Talk Shows

Print: Posters, Magazines, Newspapers, Brochures

Folk Media: Wayang Kulit, Poetry, Song (Dikir Barat, Boria), Plays, Skits

- g) Mobilize participants for environment related activities through linkage with the Ministries of Information, Education and Environment, Science and Technology in events such as Earth Day (22/4/91), World Environment Day (5/6/91), Malaysian Environment Day (21/10/91) etc.

- h) To correspond with international organizations for exchange of information.

Implementors: NCWO, Women NGOs, Environmentalists, Consumer Groups

Time Frame: Mid 1992

2. Seminars, Workshops and Courses

- a) To create awareness among women of the impact of ecological damage and the hazards presented by an unsound environment
- b) To raise the level of understanding and commitment to promote action on the part of individuals, organizations, businesses, institutions and government
- c) To change attitudes by illustrating individual's responsibility to environment preservation and demonstrating methods of implementing health environment life styles
- d) To disseminate information to women's organizations, affected areas and other organizations (eg. unions, workers' bodies)
- e) To plan campaigns ^{for} women participation in environment related public activities
- f) To produce "Women & Environment" paraphernalia eg. buttons, badges, greeting cards, T-shirts, stickers
- g) To teach advocacy and lobbying skills.

Implementors: NCWO, NGOs

Time Frame: Mid 1992

3. Advocacy

Hold dialogue sessions with:

Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
Consumer Associations
Labour Unions

Environmental Activists
Ministers
Members of Parliament

Lobby for the following:

1. A Green Bill which:
 - a) Ensures that all development whether public or private is evaluated for environmental impact
 - b) Requires that environmental impact assessments of development projects be undertaken by independent bodies along UN guidelines.
 - c) Consolidates the existing relevant Acts on environmental protection to minimize contradictions and/or duplications
 - d) Sets out penalties for non-compliance with the proposed bill and ensures accountability.
2. The formation of a Research and Development Body to research, develop and identify sustainable methods, processes and technologies to ensure that natural resources are renewed, maintained or recycled (eg. waste management, plastic recycling, etc.)
3. To extend the provision of incentives for renewing and maintaining natural resources and for promoting sustainable development while pursuing economic activities: currently tax incentives are available only for toxic wastes.
4. To promote environment friendly resource technologies.
5. Widespread access to waste disposal and recycling systems.
6. To support Environmental Education in primary and secondary school curricula.

Implementors: NCWO, Women NGOs, Environmentalists, Consumer Groups,
Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment

Time frame: End-1992

COMMISSION ON ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Attitudes still prevail that women's involvement in the economic sphere is supplementary and peripheral. The assumptions made from these attitudes relegate women to subordinate roles where policy exists. Where policy is not implemented it denies them equity and justice.

In devising an Action Plan to monitor the implementation of the National Policy on Women, the two sectors, private and public have to be addressed separately. On the one hand, in the Public Sector, the National policy, in all its intent, could be reduced to a meaningless strategy if the gender awareness necessary for its successful application is lacking. On the other hand, legislation must be introduced to oblige the private sector to adhere to the principles of equality and justice for women eg. that equal work demands equal pay, that opportunities for training and advancement are equally available to women as they are to men.

The child bearing function of women is a responsibility that must be shared and catered for by the whole society, so that there is no penalty incurred for pregnancy, nor should it be regarded as a function that is distinct from women's economic and employment aspirations and capability. The contribution of the home maker must be counted as well, being recognized as an important factor in the calculation of the nation's productivity.

Historically women in Malaysia have played a prominent role in agriculture, which constituted the main base of the economy. Industrialization has since replaced agriculture as our main economic activity, with an ensuing displacement of women. Agriculture, however is not merely an economic activity; it is a way of life that involves the endeavour of the family as an entity, as well as the community in which it is practised. Industry, on the other hand, creates no such familiar or community bonds, nor does it perpetrate a sense of continuity, or the affinity with nature that agriculture does. The production of food and the nurture of its agricultural base enables a nation to be self sufficient. The shift from agriculture has increased a situation in which the women who are still involved have been surpassed by their sisters in industry in economic gain. Women in the agriculture sector have to receive the training and support that can provide them with a living standard that is on par with urban women and their industrial counterparts.

PROBLEMS

1. Women's involvement in the economic sphere predominates in "feminine related fields", perceived to be suitable for women. For example most professional women are teachers and nurses, whilst in the manufacturing sector they are operators or semi-skilled workers in the garment and electronic industries due to the perception that women possess more "nimble fingers."
2. Most employed women are unaware of their rights and the social security/welfare benefits due to them.
3. Housework is not given due recognition as gainful work in the computation of the GNP and in the making and computation of accident claims. The same applies to contract, temporary and family enterprises in which a majority of women are involved.

4. There is no general minimum wage standard for national application.
5. Men are generally the beneficiaries of training in modern agricultural methods even though agricultural activities are undertaken equally by men and women.
6. There is too little consideration given to women heads of household in relation to housing, credit etc.
7. There is no universal freedom of association for workers.
8. There is no non-formal skills development that give women entry into non-traditional areas of involvement, nor does the attitudinal climate exist to permit this entry.

Private Sector

1. Prevailing attitudes that women's involvement in the economic sphere is supplementary and peripheral, providing an army of reserve labour, easily expendable at the first hint of recession.
2. Women therefore predominate in labour markets which portray low skills, low remuneration, with few opportunities for advancement and minimum labour flexibility, operating under poor working conditions and terms of employment.
3. There is a disparity in income paid to female workers. In 1980, the average monthly wages paid to female workers were between \$90 and \$209 less than those paid to male workers and in the case of daily rates, women received between 74% and 79% only of the rates paid to their male counterparts.
4. Women are poorly represented in trade unions; the leadership and decision making rest for the most part in the hands of their male fellow workers.
5. Women are frequent victims of sexual harrassment in their workplace, especially in factories where male supervisors often demand sexual favours from women in return for hiring them, keeping them on, promotion or raises, or simply because they are in positions of authority over women with the power to intimidate them.
6. There is a general lack of awareness among women regarding environmental/ occupational health and safety hazards.

Public Sector

1. There is a lack of advancement opportunities for women.
2. Upward mobility is hindered by policies of transfer and promotion that do not cater for the geographical mobility of career civil servants who are wives and mothers.
3. There is no system of flexi-hours to enable working mothers to supervise children attending two session schools.

4. There is a lack of policy granting extended leave for family reasons eg. childbirth, without loss of seniority.
5. Women have no recourse to appeal when faced with sex discrimination in relation to promotion and training.
6. There is a lack of on the job day care services in all departments.
7. There is insufficient sex segregated data in the Civil Service in relation to numbers, grades, training and categories of training, so that this void makes it difficult for government to address the special needs of its female workers.

2. ACTION PLAN

Objectives

1. To identify women's issues, problems and concerns on matters relating to their employment in all sectors - public and private.
2. To research the levels and diversity of training available to women.
3. To use the findings of this research to support the lobby for increased education and training for women, in order to increase their mobility and productivity.
4. To provide information for widespread distribution to women on their rights as employees.
5. To formulate a strategy to sensitize the industrial sector (a) to gender awareness and (b) to develop the capabilities of their employees to prepare them for advanced and diversified technology.
6. To illustrate the desirability of women's participation in unions both at membership and leadership levels.
7. To influence the attitudes of women who mistakenly accept the peripheral role allocated to them.
8. To persuade employers to provide child care services as a condition of work.
9. To instruct in methods of coping with sexual harassment in the work place and to lobby for the implementation of the laws that regulate such behaviour.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Study Groups

- a. Establish study groups to:
 - (i) conduct research on identified problems and devise methods for solutions.

- (ii) devise awareness kits that would inform women of their rights as employees and the benefits to which they are entitled.
- (iii) determine the ratio of women to men who receive on the job training for advancement and mobility
- (iv) verify the disparity of rates of pay between women and men in the same level of work in the private sector and disseminate findings to women affected.
- (v) examine the socio-cultural attitudes that cause women to settle for lesser consideration from their employers.
- (vi) highlight the contribution of women to the economy.
- (vii) Identify working conditions that are detrimental to women's health and methods of solution.
- (viii) devise strategies of affirmative action to promote the advancement of women in the Civil service.
- (ix) develop non-formal skills development courses for women in small scale businesses.

b. Collect data on:

- (i) women in trade unions, their relative number, participation, position
- (ii) status of female headed households
- (iii) impact of development schemes on women

Implementors: NCWO and relevant affiliates

Time frame: On going

2. Seminars, Workshops and Training

- a. Several multi-level awareness raising programmes will be carried out to achieve the following objectives:
 - (i) raise awareness among women's groups on the need to reformulate their programmes to address the special needs of women and to network for solidarity and effectiveness
 - (ii) Inform on the findings of the research carried out by study groups
 - (iii) train in problem identification and solving for application in the work place
 - (iv) teach:
 - family development skills
 - confidence and self esteem
 - negotiation and lobbying
 - small business skills
 - management and leadership skills

Implementors: NCWO and relevant Affiliates
Time frame: On going

3. Advocacy

- a. Lobby to redress of discrimination undertaking special measures in the following:
- (i) to improve the pay and conditions of women's work and in particular should adopt the principle of equal pay for equal value of work in the private sector,
 - (ii) to ensure equal employment opportunities/benefits,
 - (iii) to ensure equal access of opportunities for promotion, training, courses and scholarships
 - (iv) to promote the diversification of women's employment opportunities
 - (v) to eliminate sex discrimination in the access to credit
 - (vi) to prohibit employers from advertising jobs on the basis of gender and hiring on the basis of gender
 - (vii) to provide housing facilities for single women (unmarried, separated, divorced, widowed) working in plantations/factories etc.

Advocate the following:

b. Service Conditions

- (i) The standardization of maternity leave, recommending 90 days paid leave (after birth) and two weeks before birth with the option to extend it as no pay leave without loss of seniority or position.
- (ii) Flexi hours that allow women's work hours to coincide with family needs.
- (iii) The review of policies on transfer and promotion to introduce upward mobility in the job without the geographical mobility that often condemns a woman to pursue her career at the expense of proximity to her family.

c. Increased Participation of Women in Decision Making

- (i) Affirmative action policies in both the Public and Private Sector of the economy, to increase the number of women employed at managerial and senior executive levels, provide equal opportunity for representation at the levels of decision making by the Government.
- (ii) Appeal Boards to investigate cases of discrimination against women in relation to promotion and training opportunities.

d. Training and Access to Technology

- (i) The Government should initiate and encourage the setting up of training programmes in both the Public and Private sectors to provide women with management skills and expertise, to upgrade women in existing skills and to promote new opportunities in technological advancement. In addition there should also be training programmes specifically to aid women to re-enter the work force due to their prior commitment to family responsibilities.
- (ii) Development of national training policies in the Public Sector aimed at strengthening women as managers, administrators and decision makers at all supervisory levels.
- (iii) Education and training to rural women particularly in areas of agriculture, marketing skills and technological innovation.
- (iv) The Government should also increase the number of female extension agents and provide them with the relevant skills in management leadership formation and new technological skills.

e. Expanding Income Opportunities

Lobby the government to:

- (i) encourage the development of viable/small scale industrial alternatives for both rural and urban women to promote economic independence and introduce appropriate technology for small scale industry such as food processing.
- (ii) establish special credit and advisory schemes for women with low incomes who are desirous of self employment and developing small scale industries.
- (iii) strengthen existing women's co-operatives and encourage their expansion.

f. Support Facilities and Measures

- (i) The Government should provide supportive infrastructure and incentives as encouragement to ensure that employers in the public and private sectors either jointly or by themselves, quality and affordable child care services and breast feeding facilities at their places of work.
- (ii) The Government should develop measures to upgrade, expand and strengthen other social and community support services and legal provisions such as providing unrecorded leave for personal development, professional networking, flexible working hours, job sharing and opportunity re-entry the employment market after a break due to family responsibilities without loss of seniority.

g. Occupational Health

- (i) The government should ensure a mechanism for regular medical examination and health education for all those exposed to such occupational risks. Laws should be enacted and existing ones stringently implemented to safeguard the health and safety of all employees in both the public and private sectors. There should be legislation to ensure that pregnant women in their third trimester do not work night shifts or carry out work which is detrimental to their health.

h. Temporary, Contract, Family Enterprise Workers, Housewives and Unemployed

- (i) Accident compensation: The government should introduce legislation to make it mandatory for all persons (including housewives, homemakers/unemployed) to be eligible for legal compensation in insurance claims and benefits. The Employment Act should be amended to include the domestic worker in the definition of 'worker'. It should also include minimum wage, EPF benefits, etc. for women working in family enterprises and households.
- (ii) Contract, temporary and family enterprise workers should enjoy the same benefits as those on permanent employment. A fair minimum wage to be regularly revised should be fixed in accordance with GNP, GDP and CPI.
- (iii) Housework should be given due recognition as gainful work in the computation of the GNP and in the making and computation of accident claims. It should be legislated that home makers should be given an allowance in recognition of their essential services to the nation as it is recognized that the family unit is an integral and essential part of any progressive society.

i. Trade Unions

- (i) The Government should ensure that there should be freedom of association in a manner determined by the workers themselves. All obstacles should be removed to enable women workers to unionise effectively and to enable them to take up leadership roles in the unions.

j. Access to Credits

- (i) Women should have equal access to loans/business credit at fair interest rates. Loans should be granted on personal merit and soft loans should be given with no collateral required. There should be no prerequisite conditions that the husband/father/male relative be guarantors for women.

k. Sexual Harrassment

- (i) The Government should provide legal avenues for redress to be taken to address the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.

l. Land Ownership

- (i) In the process of change in land tenure, the government should implement a policy of joint-ownership of family lands. Women, regardless of their marital status should be allowed to participate in all land schemes and be entitled to land-ownership in all land schemes.

m. Involvement of NGOs

- (ii) The Government should more actively and effectively involve NGOs and voluntary organizations in programmes and measures directed at women in order to equip and strengthen the existing machinery.
- (ii) Financial, technical, advisory and institutional support should be provided to women's organisations to enhance their development. Women's cooperatives should be encouraged to operate on a larger scale by providing assistance to improve agricultural output, primary processing, whole scale marketing and essential facilities.

n. Facilitating and Co-ordinating Research on Women's Issues and Gender Relations

- (i) The Government should promote studies on women and gender relations. Research should concentrate on the impact of economic and development policies on women, the process and conditions of work particularly in the informal sector, impact of technology and agricultural development on women, status of female headed households, participation of women in trade unions, sexual harassment at work, equal pay for equal value of work and provision of credit facilities.
- (ii) Data collection and analysis by the various Ministries should be classified according to gender in order that women's needs are identified for more accurate policy programmes and project formulation. The data on female participation in the labour force and structure of participation should be made available to all interested groups and organisations.

Implementors: NCWO and Women's NGOs.

COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Women are the main victims of violence and this is the manifestation of an unequal man-woman relationship. Contrary to common notion, violence against women is not necessarily physically or overtly inflicted. In fact, societal norms often warrant that violence, especially in the domestic front, be subtly but effectively screened from public scrutiny. The crime is inflicted in the form of mental, physical and/or sexual injury. While physical confrontation or assault may not always be present, violence against women has two main characteristics: it has a coercive element, and there is a lack of reciprocation from its victims.

Violence against women has taken on various forms and definitions. Some of the most common are:

Rape is the most degrading, humiliating, odious and criminal act of sexual aggression and is categorically a crime of violence.

Domestic violence includes spouse assault or wife-battering, sibling abuse and trafficking of babies; domestic help abuse, and child-parent abuse; conjugal violence is perceived as legitimate and private, a prerogative of the husband.

Sexual harassment consists of unwarranted and inappropriate personal attention of a male towards a female subordinate which affect, directly or indirectly, her job performance, promotion or evaluation.

Incest is probably the least discussed or acknowledged sexual aberration in the domestic front which manifest itself in every stratum of society.

Prostitution reduces the body to a mere commodity that can be perversely exploited or abused for a fee. This flesh trade has also not spared male and female children.

The stance taken is **No Woman Deserves To be Assaulted** and that the protection of women is the necessary responsibility of Government and society. Every woman who has been assaulted needs support, safety, assistance and the knowledge that she is not alone. Towards this, the Action Plan is being drawn.

PROBLEMS

Rape

There is a prevailing attitude that women invite rape through provocative behaviour and that men are normally easily aroused and therefore unable to control their biological urges. There is a failure to see rape as a crime of violence.

There is a prevalence of belief that husbands have sexual access to wives even if they are unwilling.

Domestic Violence

There is a prevalence of belief that conjugal violence is legitimate and private and that men have legal authority over their wives. There is lack of social commitment to protect women against violence. There are inadequate laws to protect women victims of domestic violence. There is a lack of enforcement of existing laws to act on behalf of victims of all forms of violence.

Child Abuse

There is a lack of social commitment to protect children against violence. There is an increase in the incidence of child abuse. There is a need to amend the law to allow hearsay evidence from abused children. Such amendment necessarily means the government must also train forensic linguisticians to evaluate such child testimony.

Sexual Harassment

There has been a failure to establish sexual harassment as a criminal offence.

General

There is a perception that violence is defined as physical only, with no regard for emotional and psychological damage to women and children.

There is an absence of mechanisms to impose mandatory rehabilitation of offenders.

There is inadequate legal aid for victims of violence.

There is a lack of social welfare support services for victims and their families.

Protection networks are inadequate and lacking in rural areas.

There is insufficient data on forms of violence, incidence and effects.

Sex stereotyping in the school curriculum reinforces passive acceptance of victimization by women.

Objectives

1. To enhance public understanding and awareness of the prevalence of violence against women and children
2. To inform on the need to change the attitudes that promote violence.
3. To sensitize to the need for support for victims of violence.
4. To create values of mutual respect between men and women.
5. To eradicate sex stereotyping.
6. To reorientate women's concept of sexual harassment i.e., that is unacceptable and unnecessary to tolerate.
7. To sensitize employers to sexual harassment.
8. To define what constitutes sexual harassment.
9. To work towards sensitizing the police to the role that they can play in supporting victims of violence.
10. To plug loopholes in existing legislation and recent amendments to Laws.

11. To collect and collate data to be used for the submission of memoranda for amendments to existing laws.
12. To train more relevant professionals such as forensic linguists and psychiatrists and volunteers to deal with problems of violence and evidence.
13. To eradicate pornography and to lobby for more enforcement and heavier punishment for offenders.
14. To provide more access to free legal aid or affordable legal services for victims.
15. To provide education information for girls and women needing protection eg. factory women, domestic maids, rape survivors etc.
16. To provide support services for victims and mobilise government agencies and NGOs to achieve this.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Commission

Establish a commission:

- a. To identify problems related to violence against women and devise methods for solutions.
- b. To conduct research to obtain relevant statistics on the incidence of violence against children, women, the level of sexual harassment on the job.
- c. To gather information on areas of need for support services and types of support services.
- d. To gather information on inaccessibility to legal process.
- e. To determine the role of the police in support to victims of violence.
- f. To find out the areas in which laws need to be amended and expose loopholes in existing laws.
- g. To research methods of support to victims and their families.
- h. To provide the material to be used for instruction in the workshops such as for the setting up of crisis centres hotlines, counselling centres, half-way houses, etc.
- i. To identify methods and resources necessary to enable victims of violence to be self-supportive.
- j. To prepare materials for use in seminars and workshops.

Seminars, Workshops, Training

- a. Inform on all aspects of violence, of the unequal man-woman relationship.
- b. Dispel myths regarding the status of women with regard to their victimization
- c. Raise awareness about the incidence and cause of violence against women and children
- d. Train in skills of mobilizing support for amendments to laws.
- e. Teach methods of setting up services such as halfway houses, crisis centres, hotlines.
- f. Teach rehabilitation skills to offenders.
- g. Train to provide basic legal advice to victims of violence.
- h. Train in networking skills to tap all existing sources of social support for victims of violence.

Advocacy

Lobby for:

- a. A speedier process of enacting the proposed Domestic Violence Act and the Child Protection Act.
- b. Admission of hearsay evidence of abused children.
- c. The Police and Medical Services all over the country to provide more humane and sensitive services to victims of violence.
- d. The expansion of legal aid bureau at district and state levels especially in rural areas, estate and urban slums.
- e. Necessary reforms to streamline legal aid services and legal processes.
- f. Administrative decisions to allocate low cost housing to women victims of domestic violence.
- g. The requirement for the perpetrators of violence to undergo counselling and the setting up of such counselling centres.
- h. Recruitment of more women police officers.
- i. The establishment of more support services such as shelters for women victims of violence.
- j. Training of forensic linguisticians to vet child testimony for admission as evidence in courts of law.

Implementors: NCWO Affiliates and NGOs

Time Frame: Commencement in 1992. On going

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Study Groups

Establish study groups to:

- a. Examine the problems and situations in the law which victimize or otherwise disadvantage women.
- b. Identify and highlight areas of vacuum through consultation with both national and international bodies.
- c. Review and highlight laws and cases that discriminate against women and are clearly gender biased.
- d. Use mass media to disseminate findings and opinions on events and issues pertaining to women.
- e. Propose the required changes to existing laws and provide the basis for the formulation of new laws.
- f. Produce a manual in simple terms on laws pertaining to and impinging upon women (divorce, family, property etc) for easy comprehension for the layperson.
- g. Assist in the development of a legal literacy kit for para-legals.

Implementors: NCWO, all affiliates involved in women's rights
Time frame: Groups established by the end of 1992

2. Seminars, Workshops, Courses

- a. To organize legal literacy instruction
- b. To assist in the training of para-legals
- c. Review and highlight laws and cases that discriminate
- d. To present papers on gender sensitive issues
- e. To train participants in specific gender sensitive legal matters
- f. To produce pamphlets and kits for public dissemination.
- g. To involve the participation of the Media, encouraging the creation of TV programmes such as "Know your Rights".

Implementors: NCWO, ALL NGO's and organizations working for Women's Rights
Time Frame: As soon as study groups are ready

3. Advocacy

a. Hold dialogue sessions with:

The Bar Council	A.G's Chambers
Judges	MPs
Syariah Court Officials	Educational Institutions on Law
JALSOA	Ministers

b. To lobby for the following:

- (i) laws that need to be reviewed, repealed, amended or formulated.
- (ii) legal and administrative reforms
- (iii) the appointment of women in top level judicial and legal positions including Syariah legal system.
- (iv) the setting up of family courts.
- (v) making legal aid services available in all towns and rural areas.
- (vi) the creation of Citizen's Advisory bureaux in all towns and villages.
- (vii) the simplification of laws, making them more readily understood by the public.
- (viii) the introduction of gender sensitivity in all government, judicial and private sector procedures.
- (ix) the inclusion of Legal rights in school curricula as a component of Living Skills instruction.
- (x) recognition be given to the status of para-legals.
- (xi) the appointment of qualified Welfare Officers to Syariah Courts

Implementors:	NCWO's Affiliates
Time frame:	On going