



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2008
English
Original: Spanish

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-third session

2-13 March 2009

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by the National Women’s Council of Catalonia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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

* E/CN.6/2009/1.



Statement*

Statement by the National Women's Council of Cataloniaⁱ in relation to the priority theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of democracy and the basis on which the modern State is built. Following their integration into the labour market, women have played an active role in the changes that are taking place. Their integration into the labour market has not, however, been accompanied by a balanced distribution of care work. It is mostly women who do this work, since they feel obliged to continue playing their traditional role in society, i.e. that of unpaid work.

Traditionally, tasks were assigned according to gender. This limits women's possibilities, since it forces them to shoulder the burden of domestic and family responsibilities. Gender stereotypes continue to accord women a secondary role in society and to condition men, who are offered the illusion of power in exchange for emotional mutilation. We must abandon the idea that some values are feminine and others masculine. We must redefine feminine values as universal values and work towards creating a system of fully human values that excludes no one. Care work is a key component of social development; without it so-called productive work could not exist. According to data for the year 2006, women in Catalonia dedicated 21.3 hours per week on average to domestic and family work, while men dedicated 7.9 hours per week. The value of domestic and family work in market terms is €54,242.99 million, or 40 per cent of Catalonia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001.ⁱⁱ

Longevity indicators point to a steady increase in life expectancy. What should be uppermost in people's minds, however, is not the length but the quality of life, in other words, the way in which drugs and treatment can not only improve a person's health but also preserve the quality of life of people who are unwell, their family members and the people around them. We know that most of the care required by people unable to look after themselves is provided through a model of family care based on affection. This model is, however, in crisis. The complex strategies that women have devised in order to juggle the many demands on their time can go only so far. To achieve a more just, egalitarian and caring society, we need strategies for change that take account of the emancipation of women, give priority to gender parity and foster a much-needed sharing of responsibility between men and women.

Most of the cases of HIV initially registered in Spain were related to intravenous drug use; today, the virus tends to be transmitted sexually. Consequently, women account for a large percentage of new infections.ⁱⁱⁱ Accordingly, the interaction between the spread of HIV, on the one hand, and violence against women, marginalization of women and poverty among women, on

* Issued without formal editing.

ⁱ The National Women's Council of Catalonia (CNDC) is the participative and consultative body of the Catalan Institute for Women. It brings together over 300 women's entities.

ⁱⁱ Plan on women's policies of the Government of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia 2008-2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Multisectoral plan to tackle HIV and AIDS, Spain 2008-2015.

the other, is growing. AIDS is a true pandemic that increasingly affects women owing to its link with gender violence.^{iv}

Little consideration has been given to this increase in infections among women, however, when identifying the most appropriate courses of treatment. Significant gender differences exist. For example, HIV-positive women are much more likely than HIV-positive men to suffer depression. Moreover, they are more likely to develop adipose tissue alterations as a result of antiretroviral therapy, but less likely to suffer from Hepatitis C, cardiovascular problems and hyperlipaemia.^v When deciding how to care for HIV-positive women, it is important to take account of these differences and prescribe whichever drugs are most suited to women's needs. Thanks to the large armoury of drugs available today, it is possible to find an antiretroviral regimen that improves the quality of life of HIV-positive women while at the same time allowing them to make long-term plans, including that of having children, if they so desire.

The National Women's Council of Catalonia considers it necessary, inter alia, to:

- Strengthen public policies aimed at providing personalized and comprehensive care and services for people who are unable to look after themselves.
- Foster strategies for change that take account of the emancipation of women, give priority to gender parity and foster a much-needed sharing of responsibility between men and women.
- Establish mechanisms for correcting preconceived ideas and ending the myths, taboos and prejudices surrounding HIV.

^{iv} Amnesty International report entitled "Women, HIV/AIDS and human rights".

^v "La dona principal víctima, i a més discriminada, en el VIH/SIDA" (Catalan Hepatitis Association (ASSCAT)).