



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2013

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

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

Statement submitted by Society for Human Advancement and Disadvantaged Empowerment, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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



Statement

In 2000, a number of heads of State and Government adopted the Millennium Declaration, which later was translated into the eight Millennium Development Goals.

Developing countries are at the forefront of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In the Declaration, the heads of State and Government resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. They also described as a fundamental value the equal rights and opportunities of women and men and resolved to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Developing nations face many barriers to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, some unique and country-specific, others broadly shared. Common problems faced by fragile nations can be grouped into four areas: poor starting conditions; weak governance and institutions; conflict and instability; and environmental degradation.

The challenges that developing countries face in implementing Goal 3, to promote gender equality and empower women, are manifold, including lack of institutional reforms, inadequate capacity development, lack of political will and commitment and local cultural norms and values.

As regards the lack of robust institutions, the process of institutional reform is very slow. Some institutions are unable to protect the civil and political rights of their citizens. Mostly, they are not accountable to the citizens of their respective countries.

As regards inadequate capacity development, although heads of developing countries sign different treaties and conventions at the United Nations, different institutions or departments within those countries lack proper information. For instance, in developing countries, it is uncertain that government institutions or departments from top to bottom know the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Governments in developing countries need to enhance the capacity of their institutions and departments for the purpose of better and positive results.

Developing countries mostly have weak and inefficient Governments that lack political will and commitment for the implementation of a law. Due to instability and strong local cultural systems, they are unable to implement for a positive change and hesitate to challenge the status quo.

As regards cultural norms and values, people simply inherit customs and traditions by which they live and rarely think to question them. The enactment of laws is not sufficient. For instance, in certain countries in South Asia, such as Pakistan, the emancipation of women and girls at the village level is tabooed and girls are not allowed to get an education with boys. Any law for girls here to seek an education with boys will challenge social values and traditions. Therefore, the Government needs to set out programmes to bring about behavioural changes to make a positive difference.

As we are moving closer to the deadline of 2015 for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it is imperative to examine how much we have contributed as a Government or a non-governmental organization in our journey towards meeting the Goals.

At Society for Human Advancement and Disadvantaged Empowerment, we strongly believe that Governments and non-governmental organizations can collectively bring positive changes by implementing the Millennium Development Goals in their respective countries. However, Governments need to take participatory decisions and non-governmental organizations have to mobilize communities in their respective countries in order to bring about positive attitudinal changes. In this way, we will be able to reduce the number of challenges we face in implementing the Goals for women and girls in our respective countries.
