

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Master Action Plan for the Women's Commission

INTRODUCTION

This paper invites Members' views on the overarching theme and the proposed Master Action Plan for the Women's Commission in the immediate term, and informs Members on the development of a "Capacity Building Mileage Programme".

BACKGROUND

2. On 1 June 2002, the Women's Commission held a Planning Workshop to review the work and experience of the Commission in the past one and a half years, and to explore the roles and long-term goals of the Commission. This was followed up by further discussion at the 10th Meeting of the Women's Commission held on 2 July 2002, at which Members identified the long term goals of the Commission as: (i) realisation of the CEDAW framework; (ii) achievement of economic and political power sharing between men and women; and (iii) formulation of a women policy. Members also agreed that the Commission should focus on the following three topics in the immediate term (i.e. in the next 18 months):-

- (a) economic well-being;
- (b) education and training; and
- (c) participation and decision-making.

3. The meeting agreed that a working group should be formed to work out an action plan and a framework for the above three topics, including the scope and strategy, with a view to facilitating better coordination within the Commission and its Task Forces, streamlining efforts and achieving greater impact on the community.

WORKING GROUP ON PLANNING

4. A Working Group on Planning convened by the Chairperson was set up on 16 July 2002. In order that views of all the WoC Task Forces and Working Group could be reflected, members from each Task Force and the Working Group were nominated to sit on this group. Currently it has 10 members.

5. The Group has held three meetings so far. In order to capitalise on the Commission's strategic position as a central mechanism, members of the Working Group agree that there should be a common theme to encompass the three topics so that actions will be more focused, and that synergy among Task Forces can be created. In this connection, the Working Group **recommends** that "human capacity building" should be the overarching theme for the immediate term (i.e. next 18 months), and that all WoC Task Forces and Working Group should plan and align their work with the theme and the three topics accordingly.

HUMAN CAPACITY BUILDING

6. Capacity building requires an enabling environment involving community as well as individual efforts. The Working Group observes that there are five dimensions in capacity building for women:-

- (a) acquisition of knowledge and skills, including provision and use of education/training opportunities, availability of choices, etc;
- (b) opportunity to enable transformation of knowledge/skills into internal strength (such as judgment, analytical power, communication and socialising skills and leadership, etc);
- (c) building on one's strength to realise one's potential in order to pursue interest and goals - including availability of choices and removal of barriers to women in these areas;
- (d) provision and use of channels for women to use their developed ability to contribute to self-development, family and the community (including government); and

- (e) society's recognition of women's ability so that they can participate in different activities, including decision-making, and gain access to and benefit from a wider range of opportunities available to all citizens.

7. Based on the above, the Working Group developed the following definition on “Capacity Building”:-

“Capacity building seeks to create awareness among individuals and society of the need and opportunities for continuous self-improvement. It promotes an enabling environment, and inspires one to think, talk and act. By strengthening cohesiveness, linking up resources, and creating opportunities for mutual help amongst women, capacity building will facilitate the actualisation of one’s potentials and abilities. It enables individuals to develop, contribute to the family and community, participate fully in society, gain recognition, and have access to and benefit from a wide range of opportunities.”

In this connection, “enabling environment” refers to one that is sensitive to women’s needs, one that creates opportunities for women and encourages their participation. For example, women-sensitive public administration, participation of women of various backgrounds in community life, etc are some aspects of “enabling environment”.

WOMEN’S COMMISSION’S ACTION PLAN: ALIGNMENT WITH OVERARCHING THEME

8. In pursuing capacity building of women, the Working Group **recommends** that the Women’s Commission should carry out the following capacity building activities, and reckons that it could play the following strategic functions:-

- (a) catalytic function – in inspiring new or ground-breaking efforts/initiatives in support of human capacity building. Relevant WoC Task Forces activities will comprise:-

- development and implementation of a framework of continuous learning and capacity building;
 - rolling out of gender mainstreaming initiatives in relevant areas; and
 - promoting women's participation in advisory and statutory bodies.
- (b) mobilising function – as matchmaker between service providers and women in need of education and development. Use of community resources would be optimised. Actions under this function comprise:-
- production of a directory on services for women; and
 - compilation of good empowerment practices.
- (c) championing function – in promoting and advocating capacity building in all sectors of the community and soliciting necessary support. Actions comprise:-
- promotion of the concept of continuous learning and capacity building among stakeholders;
 - promotion of the concept of Gender Mainstreaming within Government;
 - introduction of gender mainstreaming checklist in selected policy areas; and
 - steering publicity and public education efforts towards the theme of “capacity building”.

9. A Master Action Plan will be developed which sets out the above activities with broad timeline, in relation to the strategic functions and their relevance to the main topics for action by Women's Commission.

WAY FORWARD

10. The Working Group will meet on 6 September 2002 to deliberate on the development of the Master Action Plan for further discussion at the upcoming WoC meeting, which will be tabled at the upcoming meeting. The

Task Forces and Working Group would align their work, including refocusing, repackaging, and refining the various planned tasks to meet the strategic functions and the overall theme. Members will be briefed on further progress at the meeting.

ADVICE SOUGHT

11. Members are invited to:-
- (a) advise whether “Human Capacity Building” should be the overarching theme for the identified topics for action in the immediate term as indicated in paragraph 5, and whether the strategic functions outlined in paragraph 8 should be adopted; and
 - (b) note the “Capacity Building Mileage Programme” being considered.

Women’s Division
2 September 2002