

United Nations
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
Consultative Meeting on
“Migration and Mobility and how
this movement affects Women”
Malmö, Sweden
2 to 4 December 2003

World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2004
Expert Consultation

AIDE MEMOIRE

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I. Introduction

The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) is organizing an Expert Consultation on “Migration and Mobility and How This Movement Affects Women,” which will take place in Malmö, Sweden from 2 to 4 December, 2003. The Expert Consultation will form part of the Division’s preparation of the 2004 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, which will focus on migration and mobility and how this movement affects women.

The General Assembly Resolution A/Res/54/210 on Women in Development adopted by the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly in 1999 *“Requests the Secretary-General to update the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session; as in the past, this survey should focus on selective emerging development issues that have an impact on the role of women in the economy at the national, regional and international levels.”*¹

In accordance with the General Assembly resolution, the World Survey should be a comprehensive multisectoral and interdisciplinary survey recognizing that development encompasses economic, social, political and environmental aspects of human and societal change as reflected in the Millennium Declaration adopted by Member States in the year 2000. The World Survey has highlighted the role of women as active partners in development and most importantly the fact that women and men are often affected differently by societal change.

While the 1999 World Survey focused on globalization, gender and work, the current World Survey will address a key aspect of globalization analyzed from a gender perspective, namely the increased movement of people, particularly women, within and across national borders. In his report *The Strengthening of the United Nations Organization*² the Secretary-General states that the time has come to take a more comprehensive look at various dimensions of the migration issue, with a need to understand better the causes of international flows of people and their complex interrelationship with development.

The Beijing Platform for Action stresses the fact that migration and mobility, and consequent changes in family structures, have placed additional burdens on women,

¹ A/Res/54/210

² Report of the Secretary-General A/57/387

especially those who provide for several dependants. Women as workers in the informal and rural sectors as well as migrant female workers are highlighted as remaining the least protected by labour and immigration laws. The Beijing Platform for Action furthermore emphasizes that women and children are particularly vulnerable as refugees or displaced persons within their country requiring particular protection and assistance.

The outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly acknowledges that patterns of migration flows of labour are changing, with women and girls increasingly involved in internal, regional and international labour migration. It is emphasized that while this situation increases women's earning potential and self-reliance, it also exposes them, particularly poor, uneducated, unskilled and/or undocumented migrants, to inadequate working conditions, increased health risk, risk of trafficking, economic and sexual exploitation, racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, and other forms of abuse, which constitute violations of women's human rights. Mainstreaming of gender perspectives into national immigration and asylum policies, regulations and practices are highlighted as requirements for the promotion and protection of the rights of all women.

II. Background

Movement constitutes a fundamental aspect of human behaviour and was explicitly recognized as a right with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³ in 1948. According to the United Nation's International Migration Report 2002, approximately 175 million persons or 3 percent of the world's population currently reside in a country other than where they were born; 159 million were deemed international migrants; approximately 16 million were recognized refugees and 900,000 were asylum seekers⁴. The number of migrants has more than doubled since 1970, with close to 50 percent of all migrants believed to be women. These numbers do not reflect the vast movement of people from rural to urban areas as well as internally displaced persons due to armed conflict, national disasters or discrimination.

In the report of the Secretary-General, "International Migration and Development, Including the Question of the Convening of a United Nations Conference on International Migration and Development to Address Migration Issues"⁵, it is stated that refugee flows and migratory movements cannot always be strictly separated. On the one hand, migration is often considered as a central livelihood strategy and in that context migrants are generally viewed as persons in search of better economic and social opportunities. Refugees and internally displaced persons, on the other hand, are frequently the result of political, religious or ethnic persecution. In both instances, movements may be fundamentally rooted in the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and competition for scarce resources among social groups.

³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13

⁴ Statement by the Secretary-General at the Launch of the Declaration on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy, The Hauge, 22/11/02

⁵ Report of the Secretary-General A/56/167 par. 34

Women are impacted in very specific ways relative to men depending on the nature and cause of the movement. They may move or migrate themselves or remain in their households while family members migrate in search of higher income and employment. Movement is not necessarily detrimental to women's livelihoods. The ability to move and seek both economic and personal growth and freedom remains a right of all and a main source of opportunity for women seeking advancement. While movement can at times improve the economic and personal status of women, they are nevertheless more exposed to the risks associated with movement. Women and children in many societies are vulnerable to discrimination, violence and abuse, which can be exacerbated in the event of movement. These issues become even more pertinent when taking into consideration that the majority of refugees are women and children⁶.

III. Objectives of the Expert Consultation

The overall objective of the Expert Consultation is to examine how women are affected by migration and mobility. The Consultation will focus on the thematic areas to be included in the upcoming World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2004, including the development-migration nexus; international labour migration; trafficking in women; refugees and displaced women.

Specifically, the Expert Consultation will:

1. Analyse new and emerging trends in the thematic areas with a view to identifying key issues, persistent obstacles and drivers;
2. Identify data and information sources which can support the verification of new and emerging trends in the thematic areas;
3. Identify approaches, strategies and good practices that have successfully addressed persistent obstacles and drivers relating to gender equality and women's rights within the thematic area;
4. Analyse critical aspects, which demand further policy development by relevant actors and stakeholders.

IV. Expected Outcome

The outcome of the Expert Consultation will be a report containing a summary of the discussions and key findings and recommendations agreed at the Consultation. Based on the results of the Expert Consultation, it is envisioned that an Advisory Group will be established to guide the further preparation of the World Survey in 2003-2004.

V. Methods of Work

The Expert Consultation will work in plenary session. The working language of the Consultation will be English. Documentation for the Consultation will be made available in English only.

⁶ A/Res/56/136

VI. Profile of Participants

Participation in the Expert Consultation is by invitation only. It is anticipated that 10 -12 experts will be appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Selected representatives from governments, organizations of the United Nations System and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations will be invited to participate based on their field of expertise. Participants will be drawn from a variety of fields in order to address all thematic focus areas in the World Survey. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to the experts appointed by the Secretary-General. In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical and gender balance will be respected. Experts will include academia and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above.

VII. Documentation

Documentation for the Consultation will include: a consultant's paper commissioned by the Division for the Advancement of Women outlining the major issues to be discussed; and papers prepared by the experts on issues or case studies in line with their specific expertise.

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