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08714



United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Distr.
LIMITED

ID/WG.283/18
18 October 1978

ENGLISH

Preparatory Meeting on the Role of Women
in Industrialization in Developing
Countries

Vienna, Austria, 6 - 10 November 1978

ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRIALIZATION
- THE TURKISH CASE - *

prepared by

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id.78-7286

Potential Role of Turkish Women in National and
International Policies on Industrialization:

In focusing on the potential role of women in policies on industrialization two rather separate groups of women need to be considered: those currently employed in industry and those "opinion leaders" outside it indulged either in their individual capacity and / or as members of various women's associations.

The former group of women have little direct role in effecting policies on industrialization in planning, restructuring, management, technology development or rural industrialization. Rather, it is the latter group of women who act on behalf of the former to influence the public opinion as an input to the formulation of such policies. It needs to be pointed out, however, that even the elite women manifest little solidary action and / or effectiveness in influencing policies -directly or indirectly. Whatever has been achieved for the working women is a product of legislation designed by men for the working populations as a whole.

Specifically, either type of women's role in policy, planning, management and technology development in industry is, to say the least, negligible. Women do not occupy positions either within the industry or in the relevant bureaucratic/political areas to be able to have any impact on the policy and planning for industrial development in the country. This holds true for the policy issues concerning the working conditions of women in industry.

However, a slightly more optimistic statement may be made concerning the restructuring question. Recently, the Turkish academics and some segments of the political apparatus have been showing great interest in implementing a participatory ^omode of management. Naturally, the state enterprises constitute the first area of trial. An informal ministerial announcement has already been made to start participatory management in a state enterprise employing women exclusively. The radical union seem no longer to be categorically against the application of such a model. Should such a step be taken, the very choice of an industry employing women might enable them to be the first implementors of a new form of industrial democracy in the country. Should they, or the supporting institutions give a chance to some women to acquire management and training skills during this process, such skills, in return could give these women an opportunity to act as trainers and advisors to labor in other industries set apart for restructuring.

Another optimistic statement relates to rural industries provided that more than a locational reference is made with the term. Still negligible steps are taken in "industrializing" certain types of rural production (e.g. poultry) or of handicrafts (e.g. rug-weaving); women's labor concentrates on these small scale industries. One observes a rapid growth of demand for more such job opportunities. However, the labor productivity in these "industries" is very low and the prospects such enterprises offer in contributing in any meaningful way to the overall development process is doubtful.

The great majority of women in the work force are employed in agricultural activities (88%) and only 4% of women are in industry. Those in industry work primarily in textiles, tobacco and food processing and packing industries, mainly in unskilled capacity with low wages and little security. Those employed outside the industry are also heavily concentrated in selected types of jobs: low level clerical jobs in the banks and government, and in education. Indeed, presently employment in banking and in teaching account for 70% of women's employment outside the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Although there are some women at the higher levels of the bureaucracy and of the political parties, in comparative figures the result is dramatic: over the past 40 years not even 2 out of each 100 deputies or senators have been women. Moreover, granted

that it is more difficult for women to get elected, it is hard to explain why, at the same time, only 2.6 % of the parliamentary candidates were women. This representation problem is also apparent in the bureaucracy, in the universities, schools and other institutions employing women. For instance, there are many women academicians; but rarely a woman occupies the position of a dean or a president.

Presently, there are only a number of voluntary women's associations dealing with the problem. These associations have little "pressure group" power and their membership is restricted primarily to upper and upper middle class women of or near the retirement age. One exception to this is an association related to one of the unions; but their activities have also had little impact.

At the legislative level there is hardly any measure which needs to be taken in securing an equal place for women in society and in industry. The major constraints against women's active participation in industry are, on the one hand, the lack of organization and of educational and vocational training opportunities for women, and on the other hand, the societal values hindering women's active use of the existing opportunities. Perhaps government's greater emphasis on families' adherence to obligatory attendance of girls at primary school might be a measure to be taken. Another, and even more important, measure is the reorganization of the educational system so as to match jobs with skills.

A series of specific programs can be developed at the national level, with the assistance of UNIDO and in collaboration with other developing countries. In Turkey the first step should be a "fact-finding" stage concerning the current status and problems of women in industry and the potential new vacancy areas towards which women can be trained. Possibly, basic research data are also unavailable in other developing countries; in that case there is great advantage in conducting such research under UNIDO's coordination. Secondly, immediate policies need to be designed towards a projected demand for female labor. The educational system needs then to be redesigned to supply women with appropriate skills to enter the market competitively. An open system of vocational training which would permit women with literacy skills to acquire training might be a promising idea for UNIDO research. Measures need also be devised to motivate and train women for more effective union participation.



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