

UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development The Power of Culture

Agora Session 20 - "Women, Equality and Cultural Policies"
31 March 1998, 15h00 to 18h00

Conclusions and Recommendations

"Why are women always alone working for women's issues? In fact, this is a man's issue, not a women's issue. Equality can not be achieved without the friendship of men." (President Vigdis, Iceland)

While time did not permit the session to draw up a concrete list of action items, speakers as well as the audience made several recommendations which are listed below in no strict order. They should be considered in addition to the recommendations made in the background paper prepared by ERICarts for the conference.

Panellists concurred that cultural policies need to be concrete on several issues including: visibility for women artists, cultural workers or media professionals;

- that women in cultural policies must be a human rights issue;
- consciousness raising among women themselves must be a priority;
- training and education and;
- access to decision making positions.

Recommendations or messages for policy makers include:

1. Priority should be given to changing mentalities of people as it is just as important as legislative action.
2. Programmes should be designed to support and build on the inner strength of women.
3. Consciousness raising is required among women themselves.
4. When we talk about equality, we must ensure that men and women have the same degree of visibility which begins with the collection of gendered statistics which demonstrates the contribution of both sexes to society. Several international organisations have already called for the collection of gendered statistics.
5. The education system should promote equality between men and women by introducing an obligatory course for students and teachers (trainers) to sensitise them to the problems of sexism.
6. Experts should continue to dispense their knowledge about women and their achievements in specialised centres while at the same time, introducing such ideas into all disciplines at all levels of education.
7. An observatory responsible for making sure that women are put into school and university textbooks, that teachers and professors carry out the necessary research and that legislation is being carried out is required.
8. The employment of women should be seen as a primary necessity in many countries as women can contribute to many new forms of employment. Governments must be encouraged to view employment of women in the culture industries as an essential part of the national economy.

9. Lobbying for women's cultural rights and equal opportunity legislation should continue and receive public support.

10. Work should be initiated to ensure that women in arts, culture and media are given the same priority as women in science, in economics and politics.

11. There is a need to direct policies more towards individual artists instead of just supporting organisations and institutions.

12. There is also a need to translate information on how women can access public funds and to make this information available in rural areas.

13. Mechanisms that provide training and support on financial management and budgeting for small to medium enterprises are required.

14. Public transportation systems, particularly in rural areas, need to be improved in order to enable women to travel to markets to sell their works.

15. Work should continue to eliminate inequalities in language and its grammar as language reflects the development of society.