

## **CHAPTER 20 - WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT**

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# *Chapter 20*

## *Women and Development*

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# 20

## WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

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### I. INTRODUCTION

20.01 Women constitute an important pool of resource that can be mobilized to achieve the national development agenda. Through the continuous efforts of the Government in providing an enabling environment during the Seventh Plan period, women continued to participate in and contribute towards the social and economic development of the country.

20.02 During the Eighth Plan period, efforts will continue to be undertaken to enhance the role, position and status of women to ensure their participation as equal partners in national development. Women will be provided with the skills and knowledge to cope with the challenges of globalization and fulfil the needs of the knowledge-based economy.

### II. PROGRESS, 1996-2000

20.03 During the Seventh Plan period, women continued to make significant contributions in various fields of national development through greater participation in the economy. This was made possible through the further operationalization of the National Policy for Women and its Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, which included the implementation of gender-sensitive and awareness training programmes. In addition, the removal of legal and institutional constraints that inhibited the participation of women in the development process further facilitated the involvement of women.

#### Population, Labour Force and Employment

20.04 Based on the 2000 Population Census, about 48.9 per cent or 11.4 million of the total population were women. The age-structure of the female

population was similar to that of the male, with 52.4 per cent of the female population in the age-group 24 years and below. The Census also revealed that due to the improved female life expectancy, the proportion of the female population in the 65 to 74 years age-group increased from 3.0 per cent in 1991 to 4.3 per cent in 2000.

20.05 Although 48 per cent of women were in the working age population of 15-64 years, they only accounted for a third of the labour force. Female labour force participation registered an increase, from 43.5 per cent in 1995 to 45.8 per cent in 1997, but declined to 44 per cent in 1998 due to the economic downturn. With the economic recovery, this rate subsequently increased to 44.5 per cent in 2000.

20.06 Female employment in the mining and quarrying sector experienced the largest decline of 4.9 per cent, between 1995 and 2000, followed by the agriculture, forestry, livestock and fishing sector, which recorded a decline of 1.8 per cent during the same period, as shown in *Table 20-1*. Various efforts were undertaken to assist these women to re-enter the job market, including the implementation of training programmes to encourage them to venture into small businesses as well as retraining, and the identification and placement of these women in alternative jobs.

20.07 Overall, the manufacturing sector absorbed the largest share of employed women accounting for 27.3 per cent in 2000, consistent with the expanding opportunities in the sector. Another sector that recorded high female employment is the wholesale and retail trade, hotel and restaurants, as shown in *Table 20-2*.

20.08 Improvements were recorded in the occupational structure, with more women moving into higher-paying occupations during the Plan period. The proportion of women in the professional and technical category increased from 12.7 per cent in 1995 to 13.5 per cent in 2000, while the proportion of women in the administrative and managerial category recorded an increase of 0.4 per cent during the same period, as shown in *Table 20-3*. The share of women employed as agriculture workers declined from 16.6 per cent in 1995 to 14.8 per cent in 2000, consistent with the overall decline in total employment in the sector. Women were mainly employed as production and related workers, which accounted for 22.6 per cent of total female employment in 2000.

TABLE 20-1

**EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER WITHIN  
SECTORS, 1995 AND 2000**  
(%)

<i>Sector</i>	1995		2000	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock & Fishing	71.4	28.6	73.2	26.8
Mining & Quarrying	82.1	17.9	87.0	13.0
Manufacturing	57.2	42.8	58.9	41.1
Construction	93.5	6.5	94.0	6.0
Electricity, Gas & Water	90.4	9.6	90.5	9.5
Transport, Storage & Communications	87.9	12.1	86.9	13.1
Wholesale & Retail Trade, Hotel & Restaurants	61.3	38.7	60.7	39.3
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Business Services	60.1	39.9	60.1	39.9
Other Services	60.0	40.0	54.7	45.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>66.1</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>34.5</b>

TABLE 20-2

**EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION BY SECTOR AND GENDER,  
1995 AND 2000**  
(%)

<i>Sector</i>	1995		2000	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock & Fishing	21.6	16.9	20.2	14.1
Mining & Quarrying	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.1
Manufacturing	20.2	29.4	20.6	27.3
Construction	11.3	1.5	12.1	1.5
Electricity, Gas & Water	0.9	0.2	0.7	0.1
Transport, Storage & Communications	6.2	1.7	6.1	1.7
Wholesale & Retail Trade, Hotel & Restaurants	16.6	20.5	18.1	22.3
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Business Services	4.3	5.6	4.5	5.7
Other Services	18.4	24.0	17.2	27.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

TABLE 20-3

**EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION BY OCCUPATION AND GENDER,  
1995 AND 2000**  
(%)

<i>Occupation Category</i>	<i>1995</i>		<i>2000</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Professional, Technical & Related Workers	8.4	12.7	8.9	13.5
Administrative & Managerial Workers	3.9	1.8	4.7	2.2
Clerical & Related Workers	7.5	17.5	7.1	17.5
Sales & Related Workers	10.5	11.6	11.1	12.1
Service Workers	9.4	14.4	9.5	17.4
Agriculture Workers	21.9	16.6	20.4	14.8
Production & Related Workers	38.3	25.4	38.4	22.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

20.09 Various measures were undertaken to improve female participation in the labour market. The Employment Act 1955 was amended in 1998, which among others, provided for flexible working hours and empowered the Minister of Human Resources to make rules on statutory benefits to be paid to part-time workers proportionate to that of full-time employees. This amendment permitted women, especially housewives, to be gainfully employed in part-time employment, while allowing them the flexibility to meet their family obligations. In an effort to allow women in the public sector to care for their newborn and to encourage breast-feeding, as of May 1998, maternity leave up to 60 days was allowed for a maximum of up to five children. In addition, provisions for tax deductions were provided to employers for the establishment of child-care centres near or at the workplace. Employers were also encouraged to provide facilities such as proper housing, transport and healthcare for the benefit of rural migrants, the majority of whom were women.

### **Educational Attainment**

20.10 An important factor that contributed towards the social and economic advancement of women was the huge investments in educational facilities

accompanied by the provision of equal access to educational opportunities. Female primary and secondary school enrolment in local public institutions reflected the gender ratio in the country. At the primary and secondary levels, enrolment of female students was about half of the total enrolment, while at the upper secondary level, female students accounted for about 66 per cent of total enrolment in 2000. Intake of female students into public universities expanded significantly from 50 per cent in 1995 to 55 per cent in 2000.

20.11 With regard to preference for courses, female dominance in the arts streams continued to be prevalent accounting for 65 per cent of total enrolment in the arts and humanities courses in 2000. Females also made further inroads into science and technical courses. Female enrolment in the sciences in institutions of higher learning accounted for 60 per cent, while in the technical field it was 30 per cent in 2000.

### **Skills and Entrepreneur Development**

20.12 Specific skills and entrepreneur training programmes were implemented to enable women to improve themselves and take advantage of the opportunities in the job market. In this regard, courses in areas such as business, organizational and financial management were implemented. Skills training programmes provided by the Centre for Instructor and Advanced Skills Training were expanded, resulting in an increase of 19.4 per cent in the female enrolment between 1995 and 2000.

20.13 With improved literacy and the changing needs of the rural community, courses that contributed towards the involvement of women in income-generating activities were also undertaken. Towards this end, extension services in the form of the provision of equipment, initial capital grants, advisory services and training in areas such as product processing, as well as leadership and motivation courses were conducted.

20.14 Measures were undertaken to facilitate the involvement of women in business through the provision of easy access to capital. The Women Entrepreneurs Fund was established in 1998 with an allocation of RM10 million. A total of 12 projects amounting to RM9.5 million was approved under the Fund. Through the Small Entrepreneur Fund, a total of about 6,000 women entrepreneurs obtained loans amounting to RM65 million.

20.15 Various women entrepreneur and industry associations were formed, generally to serve as a platform for women entrepreneurs to establish networks and exchange information and experiences as well as to conduct training programmes, seminars, and workshops on motivation, leadership and entrepreneur development. The Women's Institute of Management (WIM) offered skills training courses, particularly in the area of entrepreneurship as well as operated an on-line network called WIMNET that provided database search facilities to businesswomen around the world. In addition, the Institute of Women's Advancement, the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Association and the Association for Bumiputera Women Entrepreneurs conducted courses and seminars in skills and entrepreneur development. A total of about 10,000 women benefited from these courses.

## Research and Development

20.16 Women were actively involved in research and development activities during the Plan period. According to the 1998 National Survey of Research and Development, which covered research undertaken by government research institutions, institutions of higher learning and the private sector, women accounted for about a third of the total number of researchers with masters and bachelor degree qualifications, as shown in *Table 20-4*. In terms of research fields in the public sector, females were predominantly found in the medical and health and information sectors.

	<i>Phd</i>		<i>Masters</i>		<i>Bachelor</i>		<i>Non-Degree</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
GRI <sup>1</sup>	29.2	8.0	38.0	16.4	14.6	8.5	11.8	9.2
IHL <sup>2</sup>	39.8	15.0	15.0	14.0	9.7	9.0	14.0	19.6
Private Sector	7.0	1.0	13.0	3.6	43.2	15.0	36.8	8.6
<b>Total</b>	76.0	24.0	66.0	34.0	67.5	32.5	62.6	37.4

*Notes:*  
<sup>1</sup> Refers to Government Research Institutions  
<sup>2</sup> Refers to Institutions of Higher Learning

## Health Status

20.17 Women were equal recipients of the benefits of developments in the health sector. As such, the health status of women continued to register improvements during the Plan period. The average female life expectancy continued to improve from 74 years in 1995 to 74.7 years in 2000 compared with 69.3 years and 69.9 years, respectively, for males. The maternal mortality rate, which is an indicator of the health status of women, remained low at 0.2 per 1,000 live births during the Plan period.

20.18 With the introduction of the Family Health Programme in 1996, women's health was given emphasis from two perspectives, namely, the health of the family comprising maternal and child health, immunization, family planning, early detection of cancers and nutrition, as well as diseases affecting women with specific attention to human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). The maternal and child health programme, aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, improving prenatal and antenatal healthcare and providing health and nutrition education continued to be implemented. In addition, increased accessibility to safe delivery services contributed towards the achievement of a satisfactory maternal mortality rate. As a result, deliveries in the public sector health facilities increased from 85.1 per cent in 1985 to 95.3 per cent in 1999. Concerted efforts were also undertaken to widen the coverage of antenatal health care services resulting in 72 per cent of pregnant women having access to such services. The Government introduced the Nutrition Rehabilitation Programme for Pregnant Mothers in 1997 to further improve the health status of women through the provision of adequate nutrition, particularly women in the low-income group.

20.19 With longer life expectancy and to ensure that women are healthy and remain healthy in their old age, health education programmes, seminars and workshops on healthy lifestyles, nutrition and the importance of regular medical examinations were introduced by the public and private sectors. In view of the fact that women, especially young women, are in the high-risk category in terms of vulnerability to AIDS, greater emphasis was given towards providing information on AIDS awareness and education. Despite these efforts, the percentage of women with HIV infection increased from 4.3 per cent in 1995 to 5.1 per cent in 1999. A programme, specifically for pregnant mothers infected with HIV, was also introduced at all antenatal clinics.

## **Poverty among Female-headed Households**

20.20 Recognizing that increasing poverty among women is a world-wide phenomenon, various efforts were undertaken by the Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reduce the incidence of poverty among women. These included the provision of micro-credit facilities to about 22,850 women through *Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia* to facilitate their involvement in small businesses and training programmes to assist single mothers to obtain employment. Despite these efforts, the incidence of poverty among female-headed households increased from 15.1 per cent or 585,688 households in 1997 to 16.1 per cent or 588,554 households in 1999.

## **Supportive Legislation**

20.21 During the period, efforts to further enhance the status of women continued to be undertaken. Existing regulations were reviewed and new ones enacted to protect the rights and dignity of women in both public and private life. In recognition of the importance of women's contribution to the labour force, the amendment of the Employment Act 1955 encouraged more women to join the labour force. With the increased participation of women in the labour force, the existence of a healthy working environment is crucial. Towards this end, in 1999 the Government introduced a code of ethics for the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace. This code, although applicable to both men and women, contains specific provisions to protect women in the workplace. In addition, women taxpayers, whose husbands had no taxable income, were provided taxable relief similar to that available to a male taxpayer whose wife had no taxable income.

20.22 To enhance the capability and capacity of syariah courts, including in the handling of issues pertaining to Muslim women, the Government initiated a review of the organization of syariah courts in the country. Consequently, the Department of Syariah Judiciary was established in 1997, among others, aimed at ensuring uniformity among states in the judgement of cases pertaining to Islamic Family Law. During the period, five states, namely, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Perlis, Pulau Pinang and Selangor as well as the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur implemented the Islamic Family Law. With this implementation, Muslim women were provided with better protection.

20.23 Various efforts were undertaken to further protect the rights and dignity of women. The Women and Girls Protection Act 1973 and the Child Protection Act 1991 were reviewed and streamlined into the Child Act 2000. In addition, recognizing the role of women in caring for their families, the Guardianship of Infants Act 1961 was amended in 1999 to allow joint guardianship of children in matters relating to immigration and registration. In implementing this amendment, the Government, in 2000, also allowed mothers to sign all documents involving their underage children.

### **National Machinery for the Advancement of Women**

20.24 The national machinery for the advancement of women in Malaysia comprises the Government, the private sector and NGOs, working in tandem towards the common objective of improving the status of women. Recognizing the need to further enhance the effectiveness of the national machinery, the Women's Affairs Department at the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development was transferred to the Prime Minister's Department in 1999. To enable more effective implementation of the National Policy for Women, the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women was introduced to all public and private sector agencies to be used as a guide in the planning and implementation of development programmes. In addition, gender sensitization training programmes continued to be implemented in the public sector and similar programmes were initiated in the private sector.

20.25 During the period, the National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID) continued to function as the coordinating, consultative and advisory body on women's affairs by highlighting to the Government issues and concerns pertaining to women. Measures were also undertaken to institute links with the grassroots through the establishment of women service centres at the state level and women's affairs consultative committees at the state and district levels. During the Plan period, centres were established in the States of Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Sabah and Selangor, which provided various services such as counselling, legal assistance and temporary shelter for women in need. The consultative committees monitored the implementation and impact of programmes and projects for women and provided the necessary feedback for improved project formulation and implementation.

20.26 NGOs played an important role in complementing the efforts of the Government in advancing the status of women. In addition to organizing courses in family health, legal literacy, entrepreneurial development and parenting skills,

NGOs also implemented various activities to increase the knowledge and skills of women in the vocational and technical fields. Specific programmes were also introduced to assist single mothers in obtaining employment and caring for their families. NGOs also played the catalytic role in highlighting issues to further improve the status and rights of women.

### **III. PROSPECTS, 2001-2005**

20.27 During the Eighth Plan period, efforts will continue to be undertaken to further enhance the role, position and responsibilities of women so as to increase their participation and involvement in the social and economic life of the country. In implementing the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, the Government will continue to ensure that strategies and programmes implemented are consistent with Malaysian values, religious beliefs and cultural norms.

20.28 Taking cognizance of the changes in the global environment and the need to adjust to these changes, efforts will be undertaken to provide women with the skills and knowledge to cope with the twin responsibilities of family and career. Towards this end, the strategic thrusts for the future advancement of women will be:

- increasing female participation in the labour market;*
- providing more education and training opportunities for women to meet the demands of the knowledge-based economy and improve their upward mobility in the labour market;*
- enhancing women's involvement in business;*
- reviewing laws and regulations that inhibit the advancement of women;*
- improving further the health status of women;*
- reducing the incidence of poverty among female-headed households;*
- strengthening research activities to increase participation of women in development and enhance their well-being; and*
- strengthening the national machinery and the institutional capacity for the advancement of women.*

## **Increasing Female Participation in the Labour Force**

20.29 Although women account for nearly half of the working age population, their participation in the labour force is relatively low. Various efforts will be undertaken to mobilize this available pool of resource, thus increasing the supply of labour and contributing towards enhancing the nation's output. The private sector, being the largest employer, will be further encouraged to introduce the necessary support facilities such as establishing child-care centres as well as providing transportation and housing facilities for their women employees. In addition, the Employment Act 1955 will be amended to include new and flexible working arrangements such as teleworking, part-time work and job sharing, to enable women to integrate career with household duties.

## **Providing More Education and Training Opportunities**

20.30 Women will be provided with more education and training opportunities to meet the demands of the knowledge-based economy as well as to facilitate their upward mobility into higher-paying occupations. To encourage more women to pursue non-traditional fields of study such as science, engineering and vocational and technical education, career counselling programmes will be implemented to provide information and instill greater awareness among female students and parents regarding career opportunities in the professional and technical fields.

20.31 With the need to increase knowledge and skills as well as move towards higher capital intensity, there will be a greater demand for highly and multi-skilled workers. Women will thus be provided with more training opportunities to acquire new and advanced skills relevant to the needs of the industry. In addition, in response to the rapid changes in technology that requires constant upgrading of skills, women will be provided with increased opportunities for retraining. The private sector will also be encouraged to complement the efforts of the Government in providing more skills training opportunities for women, including in new technologies.

20.32 Efforts will be undertaken to improve women's access to information and communications technology (ICT). Formal and non-formal training in areas such as computer literacy and applications of ICT will be conducted jointly by the Government and NGOs, with special emphasis given to rural women. In addition, to enhance the effectiveness of the training programmes, efforts will be taken to ensure that software development is gender sensitive.

## **Enhancing Women's Involvement in Business**

20.33 Efforts to enhance women's involvement in business will continue to be undertaken. Training in business-related areas such as marketing, accounting, budgeting and planning will be implemented by the Government and NGOs. Programmes will be implemented to enable women entrepreneurs to be more competitive in terms of production, product quality and design as well as packaging and labelling. In addition, the utilization of ICT in business will be emphasized. The Government will also continue to provide funds under the Women Entrepreneurs Fund to enable more women to participate in business. Through the implementation of gender sensitive strategies, more opportunities will be provided to women to increase their participation and involvement in business ventures.

## **Reviewing Laws and Regulations**

20.34 Existing laws and regulations will be reviewed to eliminate provisions that discriminate or have adverse effects on women. Legislation that will be reviewed includes those pertaining to family law and the distribution of property for non-Muslims. The Government will study the feasibility of establishing family courts with a view towards ensuring that issues pertaining to the family are discussed and decisions made in a more conducive environment. Efforts will also be undertaken to ensure the effective enforcement and speedy implementation of court decisions, including decisions of syariah courts, so as to provide for the protection and welfare of women. In addition, steps will continue to be taken to ensure the implementation of Islamic Family Law in the remaining states.

## **Improving the Health Status**

20.35 Emphasis will continue to be given to promoting women's health and that of their families. Through the family health programme, special attention will be given to HIV and sexually-transmitted infection prevention, family planning, as well as the identification of factors causing non-communicable diseases such as cancers, mental illnesses and cardiovascular diseases. In view of the fact that women have longer life expectancy and to ensure that women remain healthy in their old age, specific health education programmes including the promotion of healthy lifestyles and nutrition will continue to be implemented.

20.36 Recognizing the peculiarities of illnesses confronting women, such as osteoporosis and those related to reproductive health, and in an effort to provide higher quality healthcare for women, the Government will establish a special hospital for women. This hospital will be the national referral centre for women's health and well-being. In addition, research on various aspects of women's health will be undertaken, with emphasis on biomedical, socio-behavioural and clinical research.

### **Reducing the Incidence of Poverty among Female-headed Households**

20.37 In view of the increasing number of female-headed households and the rising incidence of poverty among them, efforts will be undertaken to ensure that these women have the capacity and capability to care for their families. Towards this end, research on the difficulties faced by women as head of households as well as the differing impacts of poverty on women and men will be undertaken to assist in the development of relevant programmes and projects. A special programme aimed at reducing the incidence of poverty among female-headed households will also be formulated to improve their quality of life as well as that of their families.

### **Strengthening Research Activities**

20.38 During the Plan period, emphasis will be given to strengthening research in specific areas that will contribute towards increasing the participation of women in national development and enhancing their well-being. Research will be undertaken in areas such as the involvement of women in science and technology and ICT, the welfare of women in the informal sector, the role and status of women in the workplace, mobility of women in the labour force and remunerations received, women and mental health, and difficulties faced by women as head of households. Findings from these activities will assist in the formulation of policies and programmes that will further promote the advancement of women.

### **Strengthening the National Machinery and the Institutional Capacity**

20.39 The establishment of the Ministry for Women and Family Development will provide greater focus on issues relating to women as well as ensure the effective implementation and coordination of programmes for women and families.

Consistent with the goals of the National Policy for Women, efforts will be undertaken to improve and strengthen the national machinery for the advancement of women. Towards this end, measures will be instituted to ensure greater coordination and collaboration in the implementation of activities for women. In addition, links with the grassroots will continue to be strengthened with the establishment of women service centres in the remaining 10 states.

20.40 During the Plan period, various mechanisms will be instituted to enable women to participate in decision-making processes at all levels. This is to ensure the incorporation of the needs of women in the formulation of policies and the development of strategies and programmes for the further advancement of women. Gender analysis training and sensitization for policy-makers and planners and programme implementors will continue to be implemented in the public and private sectors. Greater efforts will also be undertaken to ensure the systematic collection and compilation of gender disaggregated data to facilitate analysis, create awareness and formulate appropriate and effective follow-up action on gender issues.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

20.41 With the provision of equal access to healthcare as well as educational and training programmes and improved employment opportunities, women made advancements in various fields of development. During the Eighth Plan period, efforts will continue to further enhance the status of women as equal partners in development. Towards this end, the Government will provide the enabling environment and supportive mechanisms, including the implementation of gender sensitive programmes, to enable women to reach their full potential in the social and economic fields of development.