

1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Mali is located in western Africa and has a surface area of 479,079 km². Mali is a landlocked country, bordered to the east by Niger, to the north by Algeria, to the west by Mauritania and Senegal, to the south by Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, and to the south-east by Guinea. Access to the sea is provided by rail to Dakar and by road via Bamako and Bouake to Abidjan.

Mali has a population of around 9.5 million, distributed very unevenly around the country (and 51,200 km² in the south, where 78 per cent of its population are women (78 per cent of whom live in the north). The north is a vast, arid region where the climate is relatively mild, the population density is very low, and the under-twenty age group making up 60 per cent of the country's population is young. The birth rate is high, while the natural growth rate is above 3.5 per cent. Over 80 per cent of the population are illiterate. Average life expectancy is 58 years.

Mali's economy is a classic developing country, in virtually every respect. Over 80 per cent of the population are employed in the primary sector, characterized primarily by the use of traditional agricultural techniques, a low level of technical training, and very low incomes. Food crops (millet and rice) continue to be grown in the eastern regions. And yet, these regions benefit increasingly from substantial agricultural training initiatives, thanks to the presence of several organizations: the Office de Développement Rural (Office of Rural Development), the Office de la Haute Vallée du Niger (Office of the Upper Niger Valley) and the Opération Riz (Operation Rice). Furthermore, machinery for plowing (plows and tractors) have been introduced in Mali for many years. Toward the country's central regions, the agricultural activities consist mostly of dry millet farming and the flood-farming of the rice growing industry.

No matter where in the country they live, Mali's rural communities must work extremely hard. The combination of the varied climate, soil degradation, a lack of technical training, and illiteracy makes Mali's rural environment a fragile one. And yet, along the great river of the Sahel, skilful irrigation techniques have successfully tamed the water for the rice farmer. A modern agricultural sector is taking shape in this region, although unfortunately it is a sector largely dependent on external subsidies.

l livestock farmers farther
are encouraging rural
ng their oxen to the plow

crop farming. But the constant drought and desertification have also
south (Sikasso, Southern Kayes), where the technical services
communities to combine crop farming with livestock-farming by
and incorporating animal dung and compost into their farming methods.

others. Although it once
here is currently in crisis.

The fishing industry is successful in some areas of the country, but
thrived in the lower and middle delta regions of the Niger, the industry
largely as a result of weak floodwaters. Catches are gradually being depleted,
having to take up rice growing as a secondary occupation. Partly because of
fisheries around the reservoirs of the Sélingué and Manantali dams.

orking population.
y's second-largest,
is earned largely

The rural sector of the economy employs no less than 80 per cent of the
Accounting for 40 per cent of the country's GDP, the sector ranks as the
after the service sector (44 per cent in 1994). Mali's export income

through sales of cotton, livestock (1994) and, in more recent years, export of

The situation in the health sector is disturbing. The infant mortality rate is still very high (102 per

exhausting for women, who spend much of their time fetching water, gathering wood, and converting local produce.

In Mali's Central and Northern regions, it is a tedious task simply to ensure a daily supply of water.

Connecting local producers to markets, such as butter and abundant is the exclusive province.

In short, the status of women in Mali continues to be dominated by economic poverty. The main

women's financial resources are very poor in comparison to their extremely high (between eighty and ninety per cent) of women's meager financial resources are spent on caring for their families (including food, clothing, healthcare, and education);

women's seasonal and daily workload (which includes household chores, agricultural labor, and carrying, and childcare) is too heavy;

women's work is extremely hard. Among other tasks, it includes grinding cereals into food at an astonishingly fast pace, fetching water, gathering wood, and working in the fields. In both a legislative and a sociocultural sense, women either do not participate at all, or participate marginally, in family decision-making. They must submit to "men's law," sometimes without a word of protest.

Thus, in order to alleviate poverty among women, their daily workload must be reduced and they must be given greater access to financial resources. Legislative review (revision of laws and regulations) is required. This is what the authorities in Mali have been trying to achieve for a number of years. In implementing a genuine policy for the advancement of women. In an effort to encourage the development of women's associations, the authorities began by creating a support and guidance center called the Commission for the Advancement of Women. It was this Commission which formulated Mali's Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (1996-2000), which was adopted by the National Assembly. Mali's National Public Policy Strategy for the Advancement of Women, and the Beijing Conference. The action plan was developed according to the following objectives:

- to enhance the image of women in our society and to foster an enabling environment for women to become more involved in the current democratic process;
- to find ways to ensure that Women's Rights are recognized and respected;
- to promote women's access to the factors of production and to economic resources;

to ensure that women can reconcile their family and professional responsibilities, to increase their productivity and incomes increase, to facilitate the access of mothers and children to social welfare services, to implement the new policy of radical reform of Mali's education system.

The action plan focuses on six priority areas of concern where inequalities between men and women were considered to be so great that they could be reduced only through dramatic short- and medium-term measures.

- education,
- health,
- women's rights and their participation in public life,
- economic advancement,
- the environment,
- institution-building.

The general objectives of the action plan are the following:

- to promote the education of the girl-child and of women,
- to promote improvements in women's health,
- to take concrete actions to protect women's rights and interests.

participate fully in economic development and social progress, to increase women's participation in public life, to ensure that women participate fully in economic development and social progress, to support institutions working toward the advancement of women

The types of action involved in the plan may be summarized as follows:

- dissemination of information/awareness-raising,
- training,
- conducting studies,

- construction and renovation of infrastructures,
- provision of institutional and financial support to the public bodies of women and to women's associations and groups,
- the translation and dissemination of documents on the status of women,
- the allocation of resources to the Commission for the Advancement of Women,
- follow-up and appraisal of actions,

It was intended that these actions should be fully implemented over a period of five years, and that an interim appraisal should be undertaken in 1998, in order to determine how much progress had been made toward implementing the actions and to determine what adjustments needed to be made.

1.2. Goals of the Appraisal

According to its terms of reference, the interim appraisal of the action plan for the advancement of women must determine whether the plan's initial goals have been achieved, review the status of the budget, and assess the pertinence of the overall strategy, the effectiveness of the actions implemented,

precise, this appraisal exercise has the following specific goals:

to assess the implementation of the Action Plan 1996-2000,

to assess the financial situation, as required under the approved funding plan,

to draw up a summary document, both reviewing the plan's goals and intended actions and providing

an assessment of the actions implemented, economic indicators, participants, and financial resources.

1.3. Expected Outcomes:

A final document, which evaluates the degree to which qualitative and quantitative goals have been

achieved and the impact of the actions implemented,

The document must serve as the cornerstone both for a set of new initiatives to be realized under a 1998-2000 operational strategic plan, both to be drawn up by the department,

preparations for

The document must include the initial economic indicators on which the new strategic based.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Methodological Approach

Our appraisal was based on a methodological approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. On the quantitative side, we presented questionnaires to the ministerial departments responsible for the action plan's six areas of concern: health, education, environment, economic activities, women's rights and their participation in public life, and institution-building. Our qualitative approach involved both on-site observation and interviews (both semi-directional and non-directional) conducted with those targeted by the plan, financial partners, senior officials of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, regional and local administrative and technical officials, directors of operations and projects for rural development, as well as officials from the department responsible for the advancement of women. The interviews were conducted on both an individual and group basis.

Quantitative data were broken down jointly by the consultancy team and officials working on two projects led by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children, and the Family - namely, the Program for the Advancement of Women (MLI 94006 UNDP/ILO) and the Project for the Advancement of Women and Institution-Building (MLI 009201).

Qualitative data were interpreted by the coordinator of the consultancy team, who then combined the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis and presented the results in the form of a provisional report.

The provisional report was discussed at a validation workshop attended by representatives from the eleven ministerial departments involved in the actions defined under the action plan, representatives

used in the preparation of this appraisal

Two main types of research

entirely;
and for a specific category of beneficiaries

questionnaires for ministerial
regions, interview guides, etc.

1.4.4 Sampling

used in the case of ministerial departments, former ministry
for the Advancement of Women, Children, and the Family;

Systematic sampling methods
officials, regions, projects of t

associations, local development operations, local and

NGOs, NGO

administrative and technical officials, ministry officials responsible for the advancement of

financial partners, and regional coordinators. A purposive sampling approach was used in

of the communities and associations visited in the regions and in the District of Bamako.

departments involved in

identified in the action plan

Eleven ministerial departments were selected because they
implementing the actions included under the different areas of
Those ministerial departments were the following:

- Ministry of Health, Social Services, and the Elderly
- Ministry of Basic Education
- Ministry of Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research
- Ministry of Rural Development and Water
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of the Environment
- Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Crafts
- Ministry of Labor, the Civil Service, and Employment
- Ministry of Urban Planning
- Ministry of the Armed Forces

using

Veterans

with six officials responsible for the advancement of women, youth

At the various ministries, w
of whom are former minist

the presence of dynamic women's associations,
 the diversity of their activities,
 their accessibility.

Among the various communities, we visited a total of 105 women's associations (five of which are located in Bamako). The associations were selected according to the following criteria:

the energy and enthusiasm of the associations,

the diversity of the association's activities.

many as

We interviewed at least three members of each association, and very often interviewed

The following table shows the breakdown of the sample:

Table 1: Breakdown of Sample:

Component

Ministerial departments

Ministry officials responsible for the advancement of women

Staff members of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women

NGOs and NGO Groupings

Projects of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women

Financial Partners

Regions and District of Bamako

Regional and local technical and administrative officials

Regional coordinators

Operations and projects for rural development

Districts and Municipalities of the District of Bamako

associations

Of Women's associations

No. of

1.4.4 Structure of the Report

We have divided our report into six main sections. After providing a general introduction in Chapter One, we proceed, in Chapter Two, to discuss the pertinence of the action plan. Here, we consider how far the areas of concern and actions identified in the action plan were in tune both with general political trends in Mali at the time and with women's concerns and needs. This second chapter also looks at the goals of the action plan, as well as the resources allocated for the various actions

penetration. The chapter begins by

plan. It then goes on to describe

of concern and to highlight those

as the effects and impacts of the

the plan. Chapter Five provides a

identified in the design and

dissemination of the action plan.

general conclusions.

2.5 Constraints and Problems:

Ideally, it would have been possible to procure detailed and accurate information from all of

Chapter Three addresses the question of the action plan,

reviewing the methods used to disseminate and monitor the

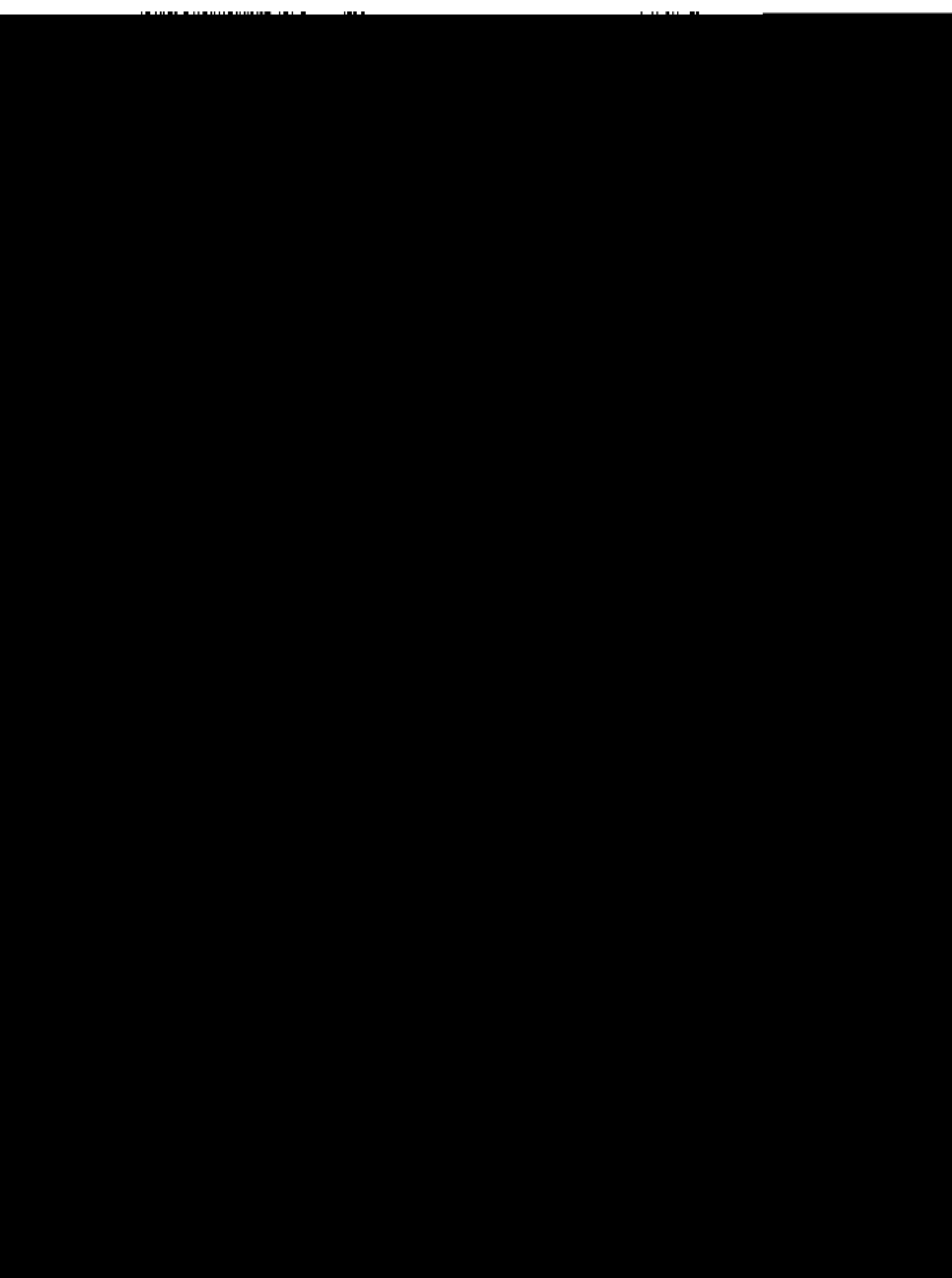
the actions implemented "on the ground" in the different

actions still requiring implementation. In Chapter Four

actions implemented, in terms of the lives of those target

summary of the main strengths and weaknesses that

Chapter Six offers a number of recommendations



ning rate, with

thirteen and forty-nine years of age, while STI and AIDS were spreading at

and the World Bank (Profile of Poverty in Mali), and

report on the Situation of Women in Rural Areas,

was extremely precarious and that poverty had a

total areas!!!

public life and in decision-making processes, very few women were

ties, whether at a national, regional, or local level.

customary laws ensured that women's status remained inferior to

so. Furthermore, women were very often unaware of their rights.

ons were badly organized and also weak, from an institutional

as of concern selected for the

continent. In order for women to

ls and actions were determined

in the following chapters, we will ask whether or not those goals and actions were measurable, ..

attainable, realistic and limited in time.

2.2. Specific Goals and Actions Identified in the Action Plan:

The specific goals and actions identified for each area of concern are as follows:

2.2.1. Education:

2.2.1.1. Specific Goals:

to increase the enrolment rate among girls by 20 per cent;

to increase the literacy rate among women by 20 per cent;

to improve access to professional training, scientific and technical teaching, and permanent education.

3% per cent of women suffering from

The various studies carried out by the

the UNDP, as well as the conclusion

showed that the economic situation

particularly severe impact on women

With regard to participation

members of decision-making

As regards legislation, not

that of men, and continue

The existing women's

standpoint.

The various constraints described above demonstrate why

advancement of women were indeed of primary importance

catch up with men in these different areas of concern, appropriate

2.2.1.2. Actions:

- to make the population (especially those living in rural areas) aware of the need for girls to attend school;
- to introduce a system under which rewards are given to girls who distinguish themselves at different grades of education;
- to encourage debate on how daughters of poor parents can be looked after;
- to teach literacy to women in existing literacy centers and in those to be constructed;
- to organize a national forum for the formulation of a national policy on the teaching of literacy to women;
- to support the production and publication of post-literacy documentation;
- to monitor and assess the actions of the DNAFLA's unit for girls' enrolment and its division for the advancement of women;
- to support the training and retraining of literacy teaching staff;
- to build and equip centers for functional literacy (ten centers per region per year, or 360 in total);
- to restore 174 centers for functional literacy;
- to provide training and refresher courses to staff members teaching in professional training centers;

to build professional training centers (two in each region) and restore one center in each region;

to renovate the CFARs at Ouélessébougou and Dougouolo;

2.2.2. Health:

2.2.2.1. Specific Goals:

- to improve women's health;
- to foster the creation of a sociocultural environment that encourages women to visit and use reproductive health services;

2.2.2.2. Actions:

As far as possible, the following actions are planned:

steps will be taken to inform young people about HIV/AIDS/STD, and

the population will be made aware of the dangers of customary practices that are harmful to women's health (circumcision, infibulation, early marriage, home births, restrictions on the use of certain

medical and paramedical personnel will be made aware of the need to encourage health institutions;

a framework for discussing women's health problems will be established, embracing the Ministry of Health, the Commission for the Advancement of Women, the NGOs, and other associations;

research will be conducted on how women visit and use health services; the performance of health services will be monitored and assessed.

2.2.2. Women's Rights and Patriarchy

2.2.3.1. Specific Goals:

- to eliminate legislative measures and practices that discriminate against women and the girl-child; to guarantee non-discrimination and equality, both in law and in practice;
- to help ensure equality between men and women;

to take concerted action to prevent and eliminate violence toward women;

to protect women living in situations of armed conflict and the victims of such situations.

2.2.3.2. Actions:

In order to achieve these goals, the following actions will be implemented:

- legislation that includes measures discriminating against women will be rewritten; help will be given toward the setting up of legal aid and counseling centers in each region;
- legislation relating to the status of women will be widely disseminated;
- a campaign will be organized to increase people's awareness of women's rights;
- leaders of women's associations will be given elementary training in women's rights;
- laws concerning the legal status of women will be translated into Mali's national language.

help will be given toward ensuring that social welfare services are provided for women working in the informal sector;

and made aware of the problem of violence toward women and its effects; a study will be conducted on how specific actions designed to protect War widows and orphans may be implemented;

and special actions designed to protect the participation of women in national and international affairs;

a system will be introduced that will encourage women's support will be given to women seeking to stand in national

the whole range of women's skills will be both highlighted and exploited;

Ministers and parliamentarians will be established and made operational;

public events will be held to recognize the life and work of women who excel in various fields.

2.2.4. Economic Advancement

2.2.4.1. Specific Goals:

to alleviate poverty among the population in general and to strengthen the economic role played by women in agriculture and the informal sector;

to facilitate the access of women (especially those living in rural and semi-rural areas) to the factors of production (land, economic inputs, public infrastructure and loans).

technical and financial assistance will be given toward the creation of micro-enterprises and income-generating activities;

community-development and economic advancement programs for women will be designed;

forums for the exchange of ideas among women will be instituted;

the fund for the support of women's activities will be strengthened;

Women will be given courses in agricultural technology.

vocational training schools will be established;

the situation of women will be made redundant by

retirement;

will be restored and given new impetus;

financial sector;

will be set up;

and the workings of credit mechanisms and institutions;

cooperative management and cooperative principles;

necessary resources;

trained on how to set up a company;

groups working for the advancement of women;

sector will be trained in management, accounting, and

local produce will be taught more widely;

will make domestic work easier (windmills, improved

machines, fish-drying racks

gardens and kindergartens will be set up (one in

town and municipality)

in decision-making;

to support the struggle against environmental degradation

assistance will be provided in the setting up of a legis

people will be made more aware about the management

operations will be organized;

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