

PROGRAMME 1. ELIMINATION OF LEGAL AND ATTITUDINAL FORMS
OF DISCRIMINATION

While in some countries and areas significant advances have been made in reducing the legal and attitudinal bases of discrimination against women, both de jure and de facto discrimination continues to be obstacles to women's full participation in development. New laws are being implemented and enforced slowly and are often overridden by custom. Many old laws have yet to be repealed. Unwarranted stereotypes of men's and women's roles in society, including their roles in the family, persist and are reinforced in most countries by the mass media.

The States Members of the United Nations or members of its specialized agencies have adopted a number of international instruments pertaining in whole or in part to women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, legislative changes are most effective when made within a supportive framework promoting simultaneous changes in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres. Although much progress has been made in legislation to eliminate discrimination against women, measures are necessary for its effective implementation and enforcement. Recourse to the law does not automatically benefit all women equally, owing to the socio-economic inequalities determining women's knowledge of the law and access to it. The organizations of the United Nations system have increased their information activities concerning the status of women, but this information has not been centralized. As a result, it is difficult to keep member States and national policy makers properly abreast of available information and research results.

This programme focuses on eliminating the legal and attitudinal bases of discrimination. It deals with what, for other parts of the plan, are pre-conditions: a legal environment that permits women to contribute to and benefit from development; an increased understanding of the causes and consequences of discrimination and the means to overcome it; and the fostering of attitudes that would favour the advancement of women. The programme builds on the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women in developing legal norms and bringing the issue of women and development to the forefront of public debate. It seeks to increase the impact of international instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to institutionalize programmes that have been successful in countering sex stereotypes.

Subprogramme 1.1 International standards

Intergovernmental objectives

(i) To achieve the full observance of the equal rights of women and the elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination;

(ii) To achieve significant progress in the ratification and implementation of international conventions and covenants and other instruments concerning the status of women and of all other international standards as they pertain to women.