

## **FMC INFORMATION ABOUT CUBAN WOMEN**

Federation of Cuban Women, 2003

Cuban women start the XXI century showing undoubted achievements in equality of rights and opportunities in the public and private fields.

Women have played important roles in the main changes, which have occurred, in the economical, political and social life in the country. They have been active social subjects in the most decisive changes in the last four decades, both in their lives and in thoughts and ideas.

At the same time, they have been the main agents in the process of modifying the traditional roles assigned and assumed by men and women. Women have also been working in the process of building relationships based on equity, respect for differences and the full realization of women's potential.

Cuban Women were very active in the fight for real sovereignty of the country and were incorporated in the process of changing, and created the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) that started organizing in the first months of 1959, but was officially created on August 23, 1960.

The FMC is an NGO that was born by the will of women in order to make the Revolution together with the people. They support the Revolution that guarantees social justice and the full dignity for all citizens in the country. Women can implement their wish of having their own space to channel their initiatives and concerns as well as their willingness to participate.

This mass organization gathers more than 3,971,449 women voluntarily from all social sectors, and they constitute 85.2 % of all women aged 14 years and older.

The Cuban government has recognized the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) as the National Mechanism for the Advancement of women in Cuba due to:

- Wide work at grassroots level.
- Recognition and authority gained in its work as an active interlocutor with the government on issues related to women.
- Its role in the introduction of the gender approach in the institutional agenda and in public policies, together with the individual growth of its members as well as the organization as such.

### **FMC OBJECTIVES**

- To defend the Cuban Revolution that has made and makes possible our achievements.
- To fight for the full incorporation, participation and promotion of women to the economic, political, social and cultural life in the country in conditions of equal rights and opportunities.
- To achieve the necessary transformations and strengthening of the family that will foster a conscious exercise of all members responsibilities in the family promoting democratic relations in it.
- To strengthen the ideological and political work and the formation of ethic and moral values in our children, family, school and society.
- To intensify the development of a non-sexist education in the family, school and in society, supporting plans for developing a responsible sexual education.
- To spread the gender perspective in all spheres of Cuban society as an instrument for the analysis,

planning and economic and social projects.

- To carry out a strategy for the promotion of women to management levels, including decision-making positions.
- To direct the National Commission for preventing violence against women.
- To encourage the participation of women in the programs that are given priority in our economy.
- To carry out social research work as well as diagnosis on the situation of women aimed at finding solutions to their problems in co-ordination with the corresponding institutions.
- To establish and maintain links with women organizations and institutions all over the world.
- To participate actively in the international organizations and bodies devoted to women issues.

The theoretical and political conceptions of the status of women as a fundamental problem in Cuban society have been the starting point to begin the struggle for the full exercise of equality of rights and opportunities.

Thus, it has been included as one of the strategic objectives in the profound human project of social justice of the Cuban Revolution.

## **MAIN ACTIVITIES**

★ The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) develops wide community work aimed at promoting education, health, non-sexist education of boys and girls, as well as the prevention and social attention, the awareness of women rights, their place in society and within the family. For this purposes the organization has 78,142 social workers and 77,317 health promoters who work voluntarily in the communities.

★ It carries out a permanent educational activity through 176 Orientation Houses for Women and Families that have more than 10,700 collaborators (women and men) who are professionals from different specialties.

★ The FMC promotes and accompanies joint plans together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Sugar Production, Ministry of Public Health, the Cuban Institute of Radio and TV, the CTC (the Trade Unions), the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, among others.

★ The Federation of Cuban Women participates in the design, application and evaluation of the implementation of laws and programs for the advancement of women and the Plan of Action to follow p the IV Conference on Women.

★ The FMC fosters the creativity and initiatives of women and channels their contribution to the development through the Movement of Women Creators and the Forum of Science and Technology.

★ It trains its leaders for a better fulfillment of their tasks, other women leaders and women from different institutions and professionals. For this purpose, the FMC has a Training Center for Women and a Publishing House with some publications and materials specializing in women issues in Cuba and in the world.

★ The organization has links with government, academic, professional, trade union, peasants and scientific institutions in order to mobilize all sectors in the programs in favor of the advancement of women with a gender a perspective.

- ★ The Federation of Cuban Women is in consultative Status with the ECOSOC (The Economic and Social Council) at the UN.
- ★ The Secretary General of the organization is a current expert at the CEDAW Committee (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women).
- ★ The structure of the FMC is made up throughout the country, based on a wide grassroots network equivalent to 73, 710 organizations, and a huge amount of women who volunteer for the organization. This structure allows the FMC to be a genuine representative of the public agenda of women, which is brought harmonically to the institutional agenda
- ★ The Cuban Socialist government has recognized that women were subjected to different forms of oppression based on class, race and sex.
- ★ The program for the advancement of women in Cuba assumed this conception, and appropriate programs, specific measures and actions intended to transform the status of women were implemented. They are also aimed at finding solutions to gender inequalities.

## **NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

In accordance with this will, the Cuban government has also adopted international documents and agreements that promote and foster the advancement of women.

Cuba was the first country that signed and the second one to ratify the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women).

It is important to point out that in the Cuban experience the gender mainstreaming has never meant the denial of mechanisms or specific regulations, on the contrary they have been strengthened since they are integrated in a system that recognizes the common and the specific of the gender perspective regarding the situation of men and women in society.

From our experience, to achieve the equality of rights and opportunities between men and women, it is necessary to develop real culture of equality together with the political will, the creation of the appropriate material infrastructure, the social development and the participation of women.

An important moment in the process of introducing the gender mainstreaming in the public policies was the adoption of the *National Plan of Action of the Republic of Cuba to follow-up the IV Conference on Women*, in Beijing, as a decree-law in 1997 because it systematized what was achieved up to that moment and the projects for the future.

*That is why we can assure that the Cuban state, in accord with its program of social justice, participatory democracy and tenacious struggle to eliminate all forms of discrimination and oppression based on class, gender or race, has since 1959 put into practice its National Development Strategy. This program calls for the detailed and harmonious execution of economic and social programs aimed at the creation and development of economic, political, ideological, legal, educational, cultural and social bases to guarantee equality of rights, opportunities and possibilities for women and men, transforming the conditions of discrimination and subordination under which Cuban women had lived for centuries, and promoting the elimination of traditional sexual stereotypes and a new concept of women role in society and in the family. (National Plan of Action)*

In the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba endorsed in 1976 (February 24) and modified in 1992, in

its VI chapter devoted to equality it is stated: Discrimination based on race, skin color, sex, national origin, religious beliefs and any other concept harmful to human dignity is proscribed and sentenced by law.

And, its 34 Article postulates: women and men enjoy the same rights in economic, political, cultural, social and family terms. The State makes an effort to create all conditions that foster the principle of equality.

Thus, the political will of the State becomes a law since it is reflected in our Constitution. But, this does not deny the necessity of a specific legislation; on the contrary, several legislation and laws guarantee the main human rights for both sexes, and specifically for women, such as:

- The Maternity Leave (1974)
- The Family Code (1975)
- Law for the Protection and Hygiene at Workplace (1977)
- Law on Social Security (1979)
- Code on Childhood and Youth (1984)
- Labor Code (1985)
- National Action Plan of the Republic of Cuba for the
- Implementation of the IV UN Conference on Women (1997)
- Law # 62 on the Penal Code (1987)- Its Article 295 recognizes that discrimination based on any reason and the violation of the right of equality as a crime.

This process of profound and revolutionary changes in Cuba in the last 45 years has transformed it from a country with a high level of illiteracy, bad health and corrupted governments, into a society that shows higher indicators for the quality of life compared with Latin American countries and comparable with many other developed countries. All of these advancements have been achieved facing hostility from the most powerful empire in the planet.

#### WOMEN IN POWER

Women Ministers 18%

Women Vice-Ministers 22.7%

Women Attorneys 61%

Women Judges 49%

Women in the Supreme Court 47%

Women in the Parliament 35.96%

Women in the State Council 16.1%

#### WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

In the civil state labor force 44.7%

Researchers in Science and Technology 52%

Manual workers 22%

Technicians and professionals 66.4%

Administrative 87%

Services 53.9%

Managers 33.5%

#### OTHER INDICATORS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CUBA

- The Maternal Mortality rate is 33.9 per 100 000 born live.
- The Infant mortality rate is 6.5 % per 1, 000 born live. The lowest one in Latin America.

- Access to education and health services, including sexual and reproductive health is universal and free.
- The life expectancy for Cuban Women is 78.23 years.
- There are specific mental health programs for women.
- Women receive the same salary for the same job and the same qualification.

*Although many results have been achieved, there is still too much to do, since the changes that depend on social awareness do not result automatically in the transformations of the economic and legal structure, but this is a very significant step.*

*The sexist stereotypes, prejudices, behavior and judgements of value rooted in the traditions of a patriarchal culture should be modified in a complex process of rethinking concepts in which the political will, legislation, mass media, school, family, individual subjectivity, in sum, the whole of society, are involved.*

The economic, commercial and financial blockade, whose cost to the Cuban economy is equivalent to more than 70 millions of USD, with an aggressive policy which encourages terrorism that has provoked 3 478 deaths and more than 2 thousand injured has tried, without success, to weaken the decision of the Cuban people to construct their own destiny.

Six of every ten Cubans are born and have lived under these conditions imposed by this USA policy that has had caused and continues to have serious and onerous impacts on the material, psychological and spiritual well-being of Cuban people, and at the same time, limits its economic and social development.

This policy with an extraterritorial character violates the principles of the International Laws and on several occasions the General Assembly of the United Nations has condemned it.

Cuban women denounce the USA economic, financial and commercial blockade against Cuba, the policy of aggression and the media war intensified in the last years as the hardest violation of their human rights.

From the Federation of Cuban Women, 2003