

Díez Nicolás, Juan: "Implications of the International Conference on Population with Particular reference to Ngos in the further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action", 11th NGO/UNEP/FAO Consultation in Geneva, 23-24 abril, Ginebra, 1985.

- 1 -

Introduction

As the only member of the Spanish Delegation to the International Conference on Population at Mexico City on August 1984 who was also a member of the National Delegation to the ICP at Bucharest on August 1974, I have been in an extremely good position to compare the role awarded to NGOs in the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action in both Conferences, and also to compare the role played by NGOs in the preparation of each one of the two Conferences.

The World Population Plan of Action approved at the Bucharest ICP in 1974 included very few direct and explicit references to NGOs: two in Section C, Recommendations for Action, and three in Section D, Recommendations for Implementation.

Actually, only one paragraph in Section C makes a very explicit reference to NGOs. ¶ 91., which states that

"International organizations, governmental or non-governmental, must intensify their efforts to spread information on demographic matters and similar questions, particularly through periodical publications on the situation, perspectives and demographic policies of the world".
(United Nations, Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, 1974, E/ CONF. 60/19, New York, 1975).

The Other paragraph on Section C (¶90) only refers to voluntary organizations.

However, three paragraphs on Section D, Recommendations for Implementation, explicitly refer to NGOs:

¶ 96. "The success of the present Plan of Action will depend to a large extent on measures

adopted by national governments. Governments are urged, in adopting such measures, to make full use of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations".

≠ 103. "Training in demography is particularly necessary. The United Nations System, governments, and when necessary, non-governmental organizations, are urged to recognize this need and to give priority to the adoption of the required measures to satisfy it, even in the spheres of information, education, and family planning services".

≠ 106. "International non- governmental organizations are urged to respond to the objectives and policies of the present Plan of Action by coordinating their activities with those of other non-governmental organizations and with those of relevant bilateral and multilateral organizations, increasing their support to national institutions and organizations which deal with population questions....."

But no other reference appears on the WPPA, nor among the twenty one resolutions or among the four general recommendations.

In general it may be concluded that NGOs played a minor role at the 1974 ICP in Bucharest, though the active participation of many of their representatives during the Conference anticipated already the growing role they would play on the preparation and conduction of the 1984 ICP in México City.

The Role of NGOs in the Preparation of the 1984 ICP
in Mexico City

It must be said that the role of NGOs in the field - of population has increased continuously since 1974 - due to their own efforts and initiatives, but also because of the support and stimulus they have received from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Thus, in his "Opening Statement" at the 10th UNFPA/NGO Consultation in Geneva (4-5 April, 1984) (GE. 84-01996), Mr. Heino E. Wiltrin, Deputy Executive Director of -- UNFPA, said that UNFPA has funded more NGO programmes than any other agency of the UN system over a comparable period of time, to the point that 10-15 per cent of the Fund's budget goes to assist NGO-executed activities. - Mr. Wiltrin also recognized the importance of the work of NGOs, especially after annual UNFPA/NGO consultation began in 1975.

Mr. Leon Tabah, former Deputy Secretary-General, ICP, on his presentation of "Substantive Issues before the ICP", at the same meeting, also made long references to the very important contributions of NGOs to the --- preparation of the 1984 ICP. The same opinion was -- expressed by Ms. Frances Dennis (IPPF) at the "NGO - Panel on Sectorial Issues, before the ICP", when she stated that NGOs had participated much more in the -- preparation of the 1984 ICP at Mexico City than they had at Bucharest.

Mr. Stephen Viederman, (Deputy Chief, a.i., Information and External Relations Division, UNFPA), when referring to "UNFPA Policies and Programmes", called the attention to the fact that many governments are reluctant to see funds go to finance NGOs activities, and reminded that the UNFPA Governing Council had agreed that 75 per -- cent of the budget should go to finance country programmes (of which 2/3 would go to 54 priority countries), and -

25 per cent should be devoted to finance intercountry programmes (including NGOs).

Mr. James Chui, UNFPA External Relations Officer, also referred to NGOs in his two interventions at the consultation, "NGOS and ICP" and "Strengthening NGO/UNFPA Collaborations". In the first one he mentioned some advantages and disadvantages of NGOs being included as members of their national delegations. But more -- relevant to the issue that we are now considering are his remarks on the second intervention with respect to the three main aspects on which NGOs can collaborate -- with UNFPA: Consultation, information dissemination, and expertise utilization. As will be shown later, most of the references to NGOs in the WPPA approved at the 1984 ICP in Mexico City have to do with one of the three above mentioned aspects.

Facts, and not just mere words and good intentions, have been the best demonstration of the greater role of -- NGOs in the preparation of the 1984 ICP at Mexico City. A total of 41 papers were submitted to the Conference by non-governmental organizations (E/CONF.76/NGO/1 to E/CONF.76/NGO/41), which compares very well with the almost one hundred Basic Conference documents, included in Annex II of the Report of International Conference on Population, 1984 (E/CONF.76/19). The high volume of papers contributed by NGOs gives an idea of their -- implication in the ICP.

On the other hand, the annual NGO/UNFPA consultations since 1975 provided the opportunity for ten such -- consultations before the ICP finally met at Mexico -- City. And last, but not least, one must take into -- account the very high participation of NGOs in all --

preparatory committees and meetings of all sorts before the 1984 ICP.

As a result, 154 Non-Governmental Organizations, national or international, were represented at the 1984 ICP at Mexico City, as compared with 146 States, 10 UN bodies and programmes, 5 UN specialized agencies, and 13 - Intergovernmental bodies.

The 1984 International Conference on Population at
Mexico City and NGOs

NGOs are explicitly mentioned and referred to widely on the documents that came out of ICP. Even the Mexico City Declaration on Population and Development, -- states that:

- ≠ 21. "Non-governmental organizations have a - continuing important role in the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action and deserve encouragement and support from --- Governments and international organizations".

A very general reference is also made at the beginning of Section III (Recommendations for Action) of the -- Recommendations for the further Implementation of the World Population Plan of Action:

- ≠ 13. "Many of the following recommendations are addressed to Governments. This is not meant to preclude the efforts or initiative of - international organizations, non-governmental organizations, private institutions or --- organizations, or families and individuals where their efforts can make an effective contribution to overall population and -- development goals on the basis of strict respect for sovereignty and national --- legislation in force".

NGOs are mentioned in sixteen out of the eighty eight recommendations of the WPPA, and they may be classified as follows. Fourteen are included among the recommendations for action, and two among the recommendations for -- implementation.

Of the fourteen recommendations for action, one refers to the role and the status of women (R. no.5), another one to development of population policies (R. no.12), three to morbidity and mortality (R's. nos. 15,21 and 23), two to reproduction and the family (R's nos. 27 and 28), one to international migration, and more -- specifically to refugees (R. no. 55), one to population structure (R. no. 57), three to research (R's. nos. 70, 71 and 72), and two to management, training, information, education and communication (R's. nos. 73 and 74).

The two recommendations for implementation refer to the role of international cooperation (R's. nos. 79 and 84).

It is not essential to comment here on each of the -- sixteen recommendations, nor to reproduce them, since they have already been sorted out and published as a -- working paper for this 11th NGO/UNFPA Consultation in Geneva.

It is clear that reference to NGOs is quite well -- spread throughout the whole range of topics, but it is also apparent that some greater emphasis is given with respect to the promotion of knowledge and policy, and also with respect to the role of international - cooperation.

This finding is just reasonable. The setting of population goals and policies must be the task of Governments, -- though NGOs may collaborate with them through consultation. But the cooperation that NGOs can best provide falls - within the realm of information dissemination and -- expertise utilization, to use Mr. Chui's terminology quoted before; and it is within the sub-section of -- Promotion of Knowledge and Policy that these two aspects are better classified.

Therefore, one may conclude that the main difference between the 1974 and the 1984 ICP, with respect to NGOs, is not only that NGOs have had a greater participation in the preparation of the conference, or that they have had a more qualified presence in the conference itself, but that the international community, through the United Nations, is relying much more than ever before on NGOs to further implement the recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action. This is the important lesson that ten years of hard work throughout the world in the field of population has been declared at Mexico City: that many Governments are finding it difficult to carry out all of the activities required to implement their own population goals and strategies, and that it is not any more a question of allowing NGOs to participate on those activities, but a question of asking NGOs to provide their collaboration on the three already mentioned aspects: consultation, information dissemination, and expertise utilization.

In line with this reasoning, it is not surprising that in a working document presented by the World Population Society at this 11th NGO/UNFPA Consultation, in which the eighty eight recommendations have been summarized into only twenty Recommendations of the Highest Priority, NGOs are mentioned only in four: in relation to the status of women (# 11), information and education (# 17), financial support (# 19) and private persons and organizations (# 20). It is in this last paragraph # 20 that the role expected to be played by NGOs is better expressed:

"Non-governmental organizations are urged to continue and expand their role of leadership in population matters and for further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action and Governments are urged to encourage them and to use their services".

The experience in a country: the case of Spain

Spain being an intermediate country, closer to the more developed countries and yet not as developed as some of the Northern and Central European countries, provides some examples of the role that NGOs may have in further implementing the recommendations of the WPPA.

It must be said, right from the beginning, that public interest on population matters has grown during the last decade, as may be shown by the fact that the echo of the 1984 ICP on mass media has been much greater, before, during and after the Mexico City meeting. A good example would be the Seminar which was held at La Coruña during the month of July, sponsored by the International University Menendez Pelayo in collaboration with UNFPA, where the main questions which were going to be discussed at Mexico were also discussed; a result of that Seminar was the establishment of a national six person provisional committee to foster the foundation of a professional association for the study of population, presently under way.

A second example which may be provided is that, contrary to the national delegation who attended the Bucharest conference, the delegation for the Mexico conference included some NGOs representatives.

NGOs in Spain which care or deal with population matters are not very numerous. However, they tend to be related to the status of women, youth organizations or family associations. Their collaboration with governmental bodies is generally conducted through the Ministry of Health and Consumption, but also through the Institute for Youth or the Institute for Women. In recent years many NGOs have also been established to cope with "third age" social and personal problems, mainly through collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security. NGOs that are more interested on the problems of migrants abroad usually cooperate with the governmental Spanish Institute for Migration.

Non-governmental family planning centres have also been established after 1975, to collaborate on disseminating information and on utilizing their expertise, though they also provide consultative services to governmental institutions through exchange of their respective experience.

But it is the University, if one considers it as NGO, which makes (and will probably continue to make) the greatest contribution to collaborating with the Government in further implementing the recommendations of the WPPA. Research activities, as well as publishing, are two activities which can be easily included among the three which have already been quoted several times in this paper. It may be reminded, in this connection, that a Department of Population and Human Ecology (the only one in Spain) exists since 1975 at the Complutense University of Madrid; it provides eight voluntary different courses each year. In Barcelona, a Centre for Demographic Studies has been set up, just before the Mexico conference, at the University, but in collaboration with regional or local governmental bodies. A similar centre is presently being considered for its establishment at the Complutense University of Madrid.

Mass media have also devoted more attention to population problems lately, and there are some news-papers which include regular information on population. Also, some of the best well known professional journals have published the main documents approved at the ICP in Mexico, and it is less and less exceptional to see population questions on TV.

Therefore, one should expect a certain growth in the number of NGOs related to population activities in Spain, but especially, a greater participation in further implementing the recommendations included in the WPPA should be expected.