



SEMINAR

*Guidelines for development
in the most disadvantaged countries of the Euro-Mediterranean
sphere
Education, Gender Equality and Rule of Law.*

Madrid, November 26th 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Last 26th November 2009, READI organized a seminar in Madrid called “Guide Lines for development in the most disadvantaged countries of the Euro-Mediterranean sphere. Education, Gender Equality and Rule of Law.”

One of the objectives of this seminar was to offer recommendations for the 2010 HLS sessions of ECOSOC to be held in July 2010 under the theme “Implementing the internationally agreed goals in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women”.

Another objective was to provide with solutions and alternatives that may help to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially those concerning Education for All and its relationship with Employment, and those concerning Gender Equality, Rule of Law and the extension of Human Rights to everyone, having in mind the framework of conflicts that are devastating, regrettably, Middle East and Nord Africa countries since various generations.

Furthermore, through this seminar READI pretended a step forward towards its progressive consolidation as a forum of permanent and integrated dialogue, trying to consolidate this forum in the European sphere through the invitation to collaborate to NGOs of the most disadvantaged countries of Eastern of Europe, that have been traditionally distanced from the challenges of the Development goals of the southern Mediterranean countries.

READI sent to all participants the draft project of the seminar in three languages (English, French and Spanish), describing the objectives of the event, plus a working document summarizing in detail the planned working issues and the expected results. These results expected to be based on the exchange of experiences and within an integrated approach so that their conclusions and recommendations could be presented to United Nations ECOSOC.

The issues discussed where the following:

- Conditions that may guarantee the universal access to basic education.
- Conditions to facilitate the extension of formal education to the cycle of secondary education.
- To look for alternatives of non formal education – i.e. professional training- that may help to access the labor market to those who do not want/can to study a University career.
- To settle the ideal conditions to access to specialized studies of each sector, which may help the access to the labor market. For this purpose, ways to close relations of University and Labor Market should be studied.
- To think about study plans based on the Human Rights, the Gender Equality and the Rule of Law approach.
- To promote the coexistence based on the respect to each other. In those countries under conflicts, or in which there is discrimination because of either ethnical or religious reasons, to promote a review of the textbooks, by revising the image of the “other”, in order to look for common ground.
- To assure women active and proactive participation decision-making process.
- To look for public policies for the reform of legislation adapted to socio-cultural factors in order to assure the gender equality based approach in personal, economic and social spheres.
- To quit barriers for the access of women to different educational levels, in equal conditions as men.
- To analyze the effects of war, occupation and armed conflicts on the Arab woman.
- To propose a framework for an effective use of mass media, so that they may provoke changes in the social roles towards the equality among men and women.

Participants:

51 people from 15 different countries from Middle East, Eastern and Western Europe and North of Africa, (Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Israel, Latvia, Croatia, Slovenia, Rumania, Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia) participated to the seminar: representatives of 37 NGOs, regional Government, think-tanks, and experts in Cooperation for Development.

Conclusions and recommendations:

During the large, rich and free debate, the following conclusions and recommendations were presented and approved by all the participants to the seminar, as well as by the 41 READI members.

- ✓ An agreement has been reached for the structure and contents of the “Guide Lines for development in the most disadvantaged countries of the Euro-Mediterranean sphere. Education, Gender Equality and Rule of Law”. All representative of the NGO member of READI attending this event, as well as other high level speakers and associations from Eastern Europe, have contributed with their great experience in Middle East and North Africa, to the agreement, and the following issues were defined: The context of the region; The stakeholders and its role; Objectives and results, and the ways to attain them in the sphere of “education” and “equality among men and women” in Middle East and Nord Africa, in order to achieve the internationally agreed goals, specifically the 3rd and 4th MDG.

- ✓ As a result of this seminar a Guideline will be elaborated for the development in the most disadvantaged countries of the Euro-Mediterranean sphere which contents will target specific indications to implement these two MDG challenges. This Guideline will include digital and paper versions, and will be distributed both through mail and posted at the READI web page. It will be sent to all READI members and participants in the seminar, and also to the United Nations and to Spanish and European donors. This will be the first of a series of Guidelines that pretend to represent a working reference in cooperation to development to actors of Development.

The following objectives for the guideline were agreed:

- To design a model of Integrated Education, that will mainly provide the future generations with necessary the tools needed to access to a competitive labor market and which will instill respect and compliance with Human Rights Standards. A model of education based on tolerance and culture of Peace.
- The importance to involve the main actors of education in the design and improvement of the educational system: parents, students and teachers. Particularly, it was underlined the need of making the parents aware of the importance of the education of their children (boys and girls), since it has been observed how often the parents were the main obstacles to the education of their children, especially when themselves did not received a proper education and so they do not understand its importance. Therefore it would be an excellent starting point the creation, within the university academic centers, a Parent Communication Department, managed by specialized psychologists and/ or teachers.
- The need to perform surveys in order to evaluate and determine the exact needs of the labor market, moving it close to the University through the implementation of agreements University-Labor Market, quite often excellent graduate university students have to face the reality of unemployment.
- The convenience to create a system that would comprise every member of the society, including immigrants and refugees. A kind of education that would educate in the dignity of people and equal conditions of all human beings, rejecting all kinds of discrimination, discrepancies, negligence or abuse – mental or physical - due to differences in race, religion, country or gender.
- The design of a non formal education is needed, so that it would offer an opportunity to those who do not feel able or do not want to follow university studies.
- The full implementation of women rights – driving to real practice the laws existing in the Arab World that recognize their rights- need the participation of the whole society together with women. It is remarked the importance of lobbying for the effective application of the Peking 1995 compromises.
- The reforms achieved in this issue must clearly separate, within each culture, the practical applications of the legislation of the different religious creeds, from what is constituted by tradition, being this latter open to interpretation, change and progress.
- A review of the “Family Codes” of the different constitutions and legal traditions of the countries of MONA (Middle East and Nord Africa) would be necessary. This review should be made within the framework the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, only standard able to respect and at the same time transcend all cultural traditions.
- Local media could play a crucial role concerning the awareness of the society about the new task that Arab women, loyal to their religion, has to perform in order to fully participate to the integrated development and progress of her nation.

- Last but not least, it would be convenient the creation of institutions watching over the respect and compliance of women rights at all levels: legislative, executive and domestic. For this purpose, the support of local and international governments are needed, in order to provide them with the necessary authority and power to abolish and prosecute any kind of discriminatory action against women, as well as any abandon of their rights.