

REPORT OF THE WOMEN\200\231S SECTION WORK-
SHOP
THEME: REBUILDING OF A LEGAL ANC
WOMEN\200\231S ORGANISATION IN SOUTH AF-
RICA
DATE: 31.03.1990
VENUE: ZAMBIA COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT
LUSAKA WEST
CONVENOR: NATIONAL WOMEN SECRET-
ARIAT

INTRODUCTION:

The unbanning of the ANC on the 2nd of February 1990 has brought about a new state of affairs which calls for a new approach in the organization and management of the affairs of the Movement. Much as F.W. de Klerk has failed to meet all demands of the ANC as set by the Harare Declaration, there is still a great need for the ANC to adopt new tactics that will ensure adaptation to the new situation.

It was the new realization of this fact that served as a motivation for the Women's Section to start considering the practical implications of this unbanning with a view of setting up a legal ANC women's organisation in South Africa.

The Women Secretariat then decided to convene a workshop as a starting point to brainstorm on the possible ways and means of meeting these new demands. Twenty women attended from Lusaka.

Following herein under are the deliberations of the workshop:

The workshop was broadly divided into four areas viz:

- 1) the old Women's League
- 2) the experiences of the ANC Women Section in exile
- 3) the present state of organization of women in South Africa

- 4) the implications of the unbanning of the ANC

The first three areas served as background information and therefore basis for deliberations on the fourth area.

Emanating from the briefings of the three areas were:

1. THE OLD ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE.

1.1. State of Organisation

1.1.1 Structural Organisation

The old Women's League was structured along the ANC's structural lines of organization i.e. national, provincial and branch levels.

1.1.2 Alliances and Working Relations

The ANC Women's League had alliances and working relations with the congress of Democrats, Coloured Women's Organization, Indian Women's Organizations, various trade unions, Black Sash and women from the Liberal Party.

This brought about the birth of FEDSAW on the 17.04.1954.

1.2. Issues Addressed

they addressed issues emanating from the apartheid system e.g. pass laws, Bantu Education, rent increases, exploitation of workers, emancipation of women.

1.3.Problems

The women's perception of their own role in the struggle which they saw as being predominantly supportive to men contributed to the weakness of this structure.

Other problems were as follows:

- unprofessional style of working
- no full-time functionaries
- no own funds
- no own offices and no own transport

2.EXPERIENCES OF THE ANC WOMEN SECTION IN EXILE

A brief overall history of the external mission of the ANC women

Section was given with the following landmarks noted:

a) 1964

the coming into exile of women and the need to adapt to exile conditions and restructure their organizations

b)1976

- the reinforcement of women by younger women who had special needs and interests

c)1981

- the first external ANC Women's Conference in Luanda,Angola

d)1984

This year was designated as the YEAR OF THE WOMEN by the ANC,in line with the international Year of the Women which marked the end of UN Decade of Women.It was at this point that the idea of a national women's organization was conceived.

e) 1987

the second external ANC women's conference held in Luanda, Angola

This rich history, in particular the second women's conference resulted in a programme of action whose execution was to be facilitated by a structural organization which provided for grassroot participation.

A recommendation was made following this briefing that a well-researched history of the ANC Women Section mission in exile be written to cover all the dark areas.

3.THE PRESENT STATE OF ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Women are presently organized regionally in :

Transvaal: FEDTRAW '

NatalzNOW

Cape: PEWO, Action Committee, UWCO & GOWCO

OFS : Action Committee .

These work hand in hand with other women's organisations such as Black Sash and WAR, as well as women-sections of national organizations like SAYCO, COSATU & IDASA.

4. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNBANNING OF THE ANC

The implications of the unbanning of the ANC bring to the fore the urgent need to mobilize women towards the formation of a legal ANC Women's League as indicated in the introductory paragraph. Therefore an analysis of the mobilization-related questions became the focal point of the workshop.

Three commissions were set up to discuss the following questions: _

- What issues should the programme of action of the ANC Women's League tackle?

- How can a future legal ANC Women's League improve the role of women in the struggle and in the society as a whole?

- How can we improve our work such that it also attracts young women and makes them feel that the league addresses their issues as well? »

- How will the ANC Women's League relate to other women's organizations?

- Will every woman cadre automatically become a member of the ANC women's League?

- How is the ANC Women's League going to relate to the national body to be formed in August?

- What will the nature of participation of the ANC Women's League be at the ANC national conference in December?

The commissions laid emphasis on the need to intensify and improve mobilization tactics noting:

the majority of black South African women live in Bantustans and rural areas

- a lot of women belong to religious groups

- we must target women of all races

- illiteracy is rife among black women in particular

- working class women, by virtue of routines of their work situations, are the most organised

1. Mobilization

Objectives for mobilization were noted as :

- a) political
- b) struggle for equal rights

The realization of these objectives would be divided into two areas:

- a) the family
- b) public life

The issues around which women could be mobilized were then enumerated:

â\200\224 culture/quality of life

- religion
- politics
- laws/constitution
- housing, transport
- working conditions

â\200\224 education/training skills/professionalism

- illiteracy
- emancipation

A special mention of â\200\230the mobilization of young women was made with the following recommendations:

- a) the need to improve on programmes to ensure full participation of young women in the struggle
- b) use of appropriate terminology when addressing younger women
- 0) use of instructive rather than moralistic approach when handling young women's affairs
- d) ensuring a balanced mixing of the young and the old to encourage mutual development (fresh ideas on the one hand and a word of experience on the other).

2.A Legal ANC Women's League

a) Status

A semi-autonomous status was recommended in order to facilitate efficient funding '

b) Organizational Structure â\200\231

This would be along the ANC lines of organization i.e. regional and with branches.

c) Membership

No consensus was reached on this as some participants felt that membership into the ANC Women's League should be automatic whilst 'others said it should not be, and even recommended that a member should hold two membership cards.

d)Practical Steps to be Taken:

- 1) a progress report should be requested from home to help assess the development on the formation of a national body
- 2) a second workshop which will be more representative should be held in the region to improve participation
- 3) women at home to be advised to hold their own workshops on the ssue in preparation for a joint workshop at the end of April
- 4)three women to be sent home immediately to initiate the mobilization process
- 5) the launch of the ANC Women's League must be as soon as possible and without waiting on the ANC
- 6) regional offices of the Women's League must be set up simulteneously with Head Quarters
- 7) full-time functionaries must man the Women's League offices
- 8) MaShope and Comrade Ray to help to organize at home

3. Relationship of the ANC Women's League with other Women's Organizations

- ANC Women's League to maintain strong working relations with women's organzations
- the need to maintain a broad women's front both before and after the seizure of power was noted

4. General

- the OCRPE(Organizing Committee for the Repatriation of Political Exiles) to structure a course with the DPE in preparation for home
- constitution experts to deal with the legal implications of the ANC transforming into a party for advice to ANC Women's League
- indigenous South African languages to be used particularly at national conferences to ensure maximum participation of women

- the constitution must guarantee adequate representation of women, thus ensuring that women choose their own leaders
- the need for ANC women to give more priority to rebuilding the Women's League in order - among other things - to participate in the national body from a position of strength
- in view of the above the need for the postponement of the August 9 launch to be discussed with the relevant people without pushing them into it

The workshop closed on an optimistic and enthusiastic note with the immediate plan to start working on the recommendations in preparation for the end of April meeting with women from home and exiles from all regions.