

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON WOMEN'S LEGAL LITERACY AND THE PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

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INTRODUCTION

At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995,¹ the participating governments affirmed that "achieving legal literacy" was an important strategic objective in ensuring the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.² In the same context, the delegates also declared the need to "promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources."³ Increasing women's awareness

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¹ Hereinafter referred to as "Beijing Conference."

² Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995), UN Document A/CONF.177.20 (17 October 1995), Annex I, Beijing Declaration, Platform for Action, Strategic Objective 1.3. The Beijing Conference was not the first time the UN took up the issue of women's legal literacy, however. Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 (1990) states, as part of its review and appraisal of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women up to the year 2000, that:

Governments, in association with women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations, should take steps on a priority basis to... prepare and/or continue campaigns for women's 'legal literacy' using formal and non-formal education at all levels, the mass media and other means...

In addition, the UN's Division for the Advancement of Women convened an expert group meeting in 1992 to examine increased awareness by women of their rights, including legal literacy. See document EGM/IAWR/1992/1.

³ *Id.*, Strategic Objective F. 1.