



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Fifty-seventh session**

4-15 March 2013

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives**

### **Statement submitted by Human Rights Association for Community Development in Assiut, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

While many of Egypt's policies and laws ensure women's equality in principle, institutionalized forms of gender discrimination founded on patriarchal values regularly deny women's equal rights in practice. This is reflected in article 11 of the Constitution, by which the State is obligated to harmonize women's duties towards their families with their work in society, while providing them with equality in political, social, cultural and economic spheres, so long as the rules of Islamic jurisprudence are not violated. This seemingly benevolent article opens the door to the unequal treatment of women because conservative interpretations of sharia are often at odds with the principles of gender equality. Poor women are at a particular disadvantage as they frequently lack the education, resources and social connections that would enable them to assert their rights.

Egypt was ranked 126 out of 135 countries in a report that measured gender inequality. This report, released by the World Economic Forum, draws attention to Egypt as the country attempts to deal with gender issues in the field of economics, education and politics.

The Association agrees with the conclusion of the Commission at its fifty-third session, when it reiterated that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other conventions and treaties, provided a legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the promotion of equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

As for gender inequality, it still exists in Egypt and is reflected in imbalances of power between women and men in all spheres of society. This issue is crucial because all society will benefit from gender equality, just as the negative impacts of gender inequality are borne by society as a whole. The Association emphasizes, therefore, that men and boys, by taking responsibility themselves and working jointly in partnership with women and girls, are essential to achieving the goals of gender equality, development and peace. Another factor is the capacity of men and boys to bring about changes in attitudes, relationships and access to resources and decision-making, which are critical for the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.

Accordingly, we are working on a project on legal clinics for women's and children's rights. The project aims at enhancing the status of human rights in Upper Egypt with a focus on the rights of women, children and marginalized people. Through seminars and visits that will be carried out throughout the project, it also aims at presenting and legally addressing violations of women's and children's rights, raising community awareness of such rights and existing violations thereof, and enabling victims to seek justice. These clinics will be used to address all issues related to violations of women's rights and will raise awareness of people (women in particular) in Upper Egypt of the rights of women and the role of women in society.

As we are located in Upper Egypt, we see that violations of women and girls are most prevalent in rural areas owing to lack of education and awareness of human and women's rights. Accordingly, we recommend that there be more focus on rural women because they are the least able to defend their rights simply because they lack awareness of them.