Mechanisms At All Levels Promoting Advancement Of Women

Directly following the establishment of the Islamic Republic administration, various government and non-government organizations were set up to promote multifaceted participation of women in scientific, political, social and cultural activities. It was after the appointment of a woman as the President’s Adviser for Women’s Affairs and the establishment of the Bureau of Women’s Affairs in 1991 that the movement for women’s advancement gathered momentum and resulted in the establishment of women’s units in different government and non-government institutions. Organizations currently engaged in activities relating to women’s affairs are discussed below.

You can also check the Women's Governmental Organizations, and Women's Non-Governmental Organizations pages for further information on the Women's Organizations in Iran.

Outline of this page:

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Women’s Social and Cultural Council
Bureau of Women’s Affairs at the President’s Office
BWA’s Unit at the Islamic Consultative Assembly
Investigation and Problem-Analysis Unit
Public Relations Unit
National Committee Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women
Women’s Units in Government Organization
Women’s Affairs Commission
International Women’s Bureau
Rural Women’s Development and Extension Office
Rural Women’s Co-operatives Office
Women’s Affairs Office in the Judiciary Branch
Women’s Sports Department
Non-government Organization
Imam Khomeini Relief Committee

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Women’s Organizations in Government

Women’s Social and Cultural Council

The Women’s Social and Cultural Council (WSCC) was established as one of the satellite councils of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR) in June 1987. This council is responsible for formulating policy guidelines on women’s social and cultural requirements and co-ordination activities to ensure achievement of the following objectives:

Drawing up necessary guidelines for the creation of suitable circumstances to enhance women’s profile, reclaim their moral values and secure their rights and privileges based on the genuine principles of Islam.

Presenting policies designed to recognize, analyze and eradicate the influence of foreign cultural decadence and moral corruption, eliminate the remnants of erroneous beliefs which, in the name of
religion, still persist in society, and remove all discriminatory and oppressive practices which have been historically imposed on women.

Devising schemes to strengthen family ties and values by facilitating marriage and establishing family relations on the basis of Islamic rights and ethics.

Planning programs to enrich women’s leisure time through the provision of facilities in sports, education, recreation, arts and the mass media.

Drawing up plans to enhance women’s knowledge by implementing literacy programs and surveying the requirements of women for training and higher education.

Investigating means for increasing women’s participation in political, social, cultural and economic activities, and the removal of obstacles and barriers that impede their progress in such activities.

Designing programs to resolve the problems of homeless women and those who are without support.

Proposing policies to co-ordinate activities of all centers and organizations that are active in women’s cultural and social work and, when necessary, submitting specific proposals to the SCCR for better co-ordination of such activities.

Proposing research and studies on crucial social and cultural issues confronting women to authorized persons and centers, and establishing co-ordination in research programs in social and cultural areas.

Preparing annual reports containing the results of regular studies and appraisal of the social and cultural situation of women.

Preparation of the ground for the development of cultural relations with the revolutionary and social movements of women in other countries, particularly in the Muslim nations throughout the world.

The Women’s Social and Cultural Council includes representatives from women of all classes, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, ministries, government organizations and revolutionary institutions. WSCC has nine specialized committees involved in the fields of planning, research, rights and family, general education, mobilization, health, socio-economic affairs, employment and international affairs.

WSCC has studied, verified and proposed a number of schemes to the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution for its approval. The proposals, which have been ratified by the Supreme Council, are as follows:

- Removal of obstacles confronting female students majoring in certain academic fields.
- Creation of family assistance and advisory centers.
- Establishment of an International Affairs Committee at WSCC.
- Investigation of problems confronting women workers.
- Survey of the position and status of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Declaration of Woman’s Week and Mother’s Day.
- Stating the rights and responsibilities of married couples derived from the Civil Code in their marriage certificate.
- Formation of general plans and policy guidelines for women’s employment in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

For further information on WSCC please refer to this page: Women's Social and Cultural Council (WSCC)(Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution)

**Bureau of Women’s Affairs at the President’s Office**

The Bureau of Women’s Affairs (BWA), set up at the Office of the President in accordance with the Presidential Executive Order issued on 1 December 1991, is vested with the primary objective and responsibility to familiarize women with their human and Islamic rights and, within the framework of a well-co-ordinated system, facilitate their access to what they are legally entitled to in all aspects
of life including cultural, social and economic matters. BWA constitutes three departments in the area of planning, research and domestic and foreign relations with major functions as follows:

Presenting proposals for the enhancement of women’s status in the planning of cultural and social projects at the national level and co-ordinating the implementation of projects that promote the advancement of women.

Directing the attention of researchers to the basic problems confronting women so as to concentrate national applied research activities in the direction of women’s progress.

Identifying women researchers, planners and experts throughout the country in order to utilize their professional expertise in planning and execution of co-ordinated research activities.

Collecting information and statistics on the economic, cultural and social positions of women in Iran and in the world for the establishment of a comprehensive data bank in order to facilitate and co-ordinate research on issues related to women.

Setting up a research council for the adoption of appropriate policy guidelines to co-ordinate and direct research activities concerned with women’s progress.

Creating mutual ties with authorities in executive and judiciary institutions in order to exchange ideas on women’s issues and remove obstacles hindering women employees’ promotion.

Establishing connections with women’s organizations involved in areas of arts, sciences and training.

Studying the social, economic and cultural situations of women in order to present proposals for the promotion of their progress.

Establishing social and cultural contact with Islamic and non-Islamic countries throughout the world.

Identifying and contacting international training, cultural and scientific institutions involved in research in areas of women’s affairs and interests.

Establishing connections with international women’s institutions and participating in conferences on women in order to present the true profile of the Muslim women of Iran to the world.

In addition to the activities of the three departments of planning, research and domestic and foreign relations, BWA’s organizational structure embraces the following units:

a. BWA’s Unit at the Islamic Consultative Assembly

The establishment of BWA’s unit at the nation’s legislative branch brings women’s legal demands and issues within close proximity to the law-making institution, which tends to expedite the progress of legislative procedures on matters concerning women, especially in areas of legal inadequacies.

b. Investigation and Problem-Analysis Unit

The primary activity of this unit is in-depth analyses of family, training occupational and health-care problems of women.

c. Public Relations Unit

The main objectives of this unit are the establishment of communicative relations with the mass media, exchange of information, reflection of women’s problems to the extent possible and presentation of women’s true profile to the national mass media.

d. National Committee Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women
The Islamic Republic of Iran’s National Committee Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women was established at the Presidential Office’s Bureau of Women’s Affairs in 1993 to prepare the ground for active participation by Iranian women at the great forum of the world’s women in Beijing in September 1995. The nation’s President, Mr. Rafsanjani, authorized his Advisor for Women’s Affairs, Ms. Shahla Habibi, to head the National Committee Secretariat.

The Committee, which formally began operations in December 1993, has been active in the preparation of the National Report on Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran for presentation at the Beijing Conference, participation in international conferences, preparation of reports for various international sessions and gatherings, organization of seminars and national and international exhibitions and establishment of the Committee of National Experts for planning and co-ordination of proposed strategies for the development of women. In addition to the Committee’s public sector co-ordinating body, the Non-government Organizations (NGOs) Co-ordinating Office which, in effect, organizes the non-governmental activities of the Committee, has been established within the Committee. This latter office, so far, has identified more than seventy women’s political, scientific, cultural, religious minorities, charitable, etc., NGOs with which it has established close contacts.

Representatives and experts of the National Committee Secretariat have actively participated in all international and regional sessions related to the Fourth World Conference on Women. The National Committee Secretariat, has prepared, in addition to the present report, a number of other reports including the paper "Review of Action Plans" submitted to the Regional Ministerial Session in Jakarta, translation of the Nairobi Documents into Persian, report on "Women’s Role in the Mass Communications Media," and a paper presented at the Cairo Conference on "Women and Development."

The government and non-government units of the National Committee Secretariat have jointly organized the seminars and workshops listed below:

Workshop on Information Networks for Women, organized in collaboration in ESCAP.
First Seminar on Women and the Mass Media in Iran.
Exhibition on the Profile of Young Girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
Seminar on Women’s Non-government Organizations and Their Future Development.
Congress on the International Year of the Family.

Another achievement of the National Committee this year was the successful organization of the "International Conference of the Role of the Woman and Family in Human Development," which was convened in Tehran from 22 to 24 May 1995. The conference was attended by 1,500 participants representing sixty government and non-government organizations from forty-five countries. Highlights of the conference included four roundtable discussions on "Women Refugees," "Women in Armed Conflicts," "Elimination of Discrimination Against Women" and "The Necessity for the Assembly of Muslim Women’s Non-government Organizations." The conference, at its final session, issued one declaration and three documents for submission to the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.

The first gathering on "Productivity and the Family" in Iran in May 1995, was a further achievement of the National Committee. "The Role of Women in Science, Industry and Technology" is the title of another seminar organized by the National Committee this year. In this seminar, a number of papers were presented on the parts women have played in the protection of the environment, agricultural production, economic development, cultural integration and world civilization. A letter of agreement has been signed between the National Committee and the Management and Productivity Studies Center of Iran for allocation of scholarships to women.
working in executive organizations who wish to pursue their education at graduate and post-graduate levels in the fields offered.

In order to achieve its objectives within the framework of the set goals and established course of action, the Bureau of Women’s Affairs has set up the following eight commissions, each involved in the resolution of a number of issues currently confronting Iranian women:

**Commission Schemes and Scope of Responsibility**

**Training and Education**
- Studying existing conditions of school-girls’ education in collaboration with UNICEF
- Making literacy legally compulsory for boys and girls of school age throughout the country
- Giving training to women and households served by the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in sanitation, family planning, literacy, occupation and nutrition. The scheme is being implemented in collaboration with UNICEF
- Training of rural women in agriculture in collaboration with the World Bank

**Employment**
- Insuring equality between men and women in receiving year-end bonuses, family allowances and annuities
- Paying of family allowance to qualified women
- Investigating the existing of women workers in different sectors
- Creating an advisory and employment center for women

**Health, Medical Care And Nutrition**
- Surveying the nursing and midwifery situation throughout the country and offering proposals on the improvement of the work and skills involved
- Proposing terms of co-operation between BWA and the Population Fund
- Establishing a population committee

**Social Welfare**
- Creating interest free funds to give loans to women
- Surveying the social and economic situations of blind women in Iran

**Economic Affairs**
- Co-operating with the World Bank on women’s issues in the framework of official polices and guidelines
- Co-operating with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- Evaluating the existing situation of rural women
- Establishing women’s rural co-operatives

**Family Rights**
- Reviewing the Civil Code to improve women’s rights and legal status
- Enhancing women’s knowledge of law and legal matters
- Creating a family assistance and advisory network
- Surveying legal bottlenecks affecting women

**Political Rights And Authority**
- Surveying the roles of women in political elections as candidates, campaign activists and voters
- Evaluating the roles women played in the defense of the country during the imposed war
- Examining the situation of women’s political and social organizations in Iran
- Studying women’s organizations in other countries
- Participating at Islamic, regional and world conferences on population, women and family
- Designing the Network of Muslim Women of the World

**Arts and Culture**
- Training women missionaries to accompany pilgrims on their pilgrimage to Mecca
- Studying conditions of women students at the Islamic science centers throughout Iran
Co-ordinating and planning the activities of Woman’s Week and Mother’s Day celebrations in Iran
International Development
Designing methods of establishing contact with women in governmental and non-governmental organizations
Studying women’s problems in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries from different points of view
Comparing major strategies adopted globally relating to women
Establishing the National Committee for the Fourth World Conference on Women
Convening the International Conference on the Role of the Woman and Family in Human Development
Organizing the Regional Seminar on Women and Information
Studying the modes of participation in the world sessions on Population and Development and Social Development
Participating in the Regional Meeting in Jakarta
Designing of the Network of Religious Women of the World and Network of Muslim Women of the World
For further information on BWA please refer to this page: Women’s Governmental Organizations- Bureau of Women Affairs.

3. Women’s Units in Government Organization

Immediately upon its creation in 1991, the Bureau of Women’s Affairs demanded full representation at all executive organizations in the country. BWA’s representatives in government offices and organizations are engaged in activities that are in line with BWA’s general objectives. At present, there are forty Women’s Units in various government institutions.

4. Women’s Affairs Commission

The Women’s Affairs Commission, with its central office in the Ministry of the Interior, has established branches in all provinces. Women’s provincial commissions have been set up at the Social Councils of different provinces to facilitate the advancement of women, to identify their problems and to promote their participation in social and political activities throughout the country. The main objectives of Women’s Affairs Commission and its provincial network are:

- Systematic survey of the family condition and of the legal, educational and occupational status of women in order to identify problems hindering their progress.
- Collection of statistics and other information on different aspects of women’s lives and activities.
- Creation of facilities to encourage women’s participation in cultural, social, economic and artistic endeavors.

One notable achievement of the Women’s Commission has been the establishment of cultural and social centers in Tehran and different provinces where women receive training in many fields at minimal cost. These centers have proven very effective in the advancement of women in society.

For further information on the Women’s Affairs Commission please refer to this page: Please refer to the "Women's Governmental Organizations- Women Affairs Committee" page for further information.

5. International Women’s Bureau
This bureau was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to co-ordinate the international activities of Iranian women. The experts from this bureau participate actively in international meetings and are also charged with the co-ordination of international activities in the country.

Please refer to the "Department of Women and International Social Affairs" page for further information.

6. Rural Women’s Development and Extension Office

This office was created in the Department of Extension of the Ministry of Agriculture in order to plan rural women’s activities and to meet their needs for training programs. The purpose of this office is to help improve the economic and social situation of rural women through programs for increased awareness, practical technical training, creation of employment opportunities and assistance in establishing their own special organizations as rural women. At the present time this office has branches with the same name in each one of the provinces of the country. Some 160 women specialists are working in this field in Tehran and the provinces.

7. Rural Women’s Co-operatives Office

This office was set up in the Central Organization for Rural Co-operatives of the Ministry of Agriculture in order to support the establishment of co-operatives by rural women. The Office encourages group income generating activities and the provision of credit to these co-operatives.

8. Women’s Affairs Office in the Judiciary Branch

This office was initially set up as the representative of the Judiciary Branch in the Bureau of Women’s Affairs of the Office of the President. It was later turned into an independent office in the Judiciary Branch with the objective of supporting women’s cases in court.

9. Women’s Sports Department

This department addresses all issues dealing with women’s sports at the national and international levels with the assistance of the other units of the Sports Organization of Iran. Please refer to the "Women's Sport Organization" page for further information.

Non-government Organization

Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, a number of non-government women’s organizations were instantaneously born and gradually evolved into various organizational structures, emerging as institutes, foundations, societies, groups, etc.

These non-government organizations (NGOs), which were stimulated by revolutionary fervor and nurtured by popular support and religious beliefs, gradually matured during the imposed war and finally developed into lasting and successful institutions.
A number of factors have been responsible for the growth and progressive trend of NGOs in Iran. Much of the NGOs success has been due to the existence of suitable social circumstances; active women’s urge for greater participation in political, social and cultural affairs in the framework of professional, non-governmental groups; the sense of urgency by authorities to absorb and utilize women’s potentials to support military efforts during the imposed war and promote economic development following the war and finally, the existence of appropriate legal support for the information and registration of non-government societies and organizations.

Despite their considerable success however, NGOs organized and run by women are faced with major problems, some of which are:

Weak internal coherence and lack of effective external communication.
Insufficient financial resources
Lack of suitable organization

In spite of these obstacles, Iranian NGOs can look forward to great progress in the future, and if they receive the required soci-economic and financial support, they are capable of assuming significant responsibilities in the national development process. For further information please refer to the "Women's Non-Governmental Organizations in The Islamic Republic of Iran" page. Names, objectives and major activities of some women’s non-government organizations operating in Iran are also summarized in Table 2 in the Appendix.

The following discussion describes the activities of one non-government organization which, because of the dimension of its activities, is dealt with separately.

**Imam Khomeini Relief Committee**

In accordance with the Decree of 5 March 1979, issued by the late reader of the Islamic Revolution, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee was established to help the poverty-sticken segments of the Iranian population, particularly women lacking financial support and orphaned children. The Committee is currently offering assistance to 958,000 economically depressed households throughout the country, consisting of 1.169 million men and 1.488 million women. Besides providing financial and material aid, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee has been actively engaged in organizing vocational training courses for financially-depressed women, offering scholarships to needy students and implementing income-generating small-scale projects for deprived women. Currently, the Committee’s various services are being provided by 8,000 social workers in different areas of the country.

Other forms of assistance provided by the Committee’s fund for women covered by the program include:

Provision of free stationary, textbooks and clothing for schoolgirls.
Assisting female students in their efforts to obtain a college education.
Establishing dormitories for female students and providing women with facilities for further training through correspondence courses.
Setting up workshops to train women in small industry professions.
Establishing new library facilities.
Organizing camps for schoolgirls and female university students on regional and national levels.
Providing capital and venue for women to set up private business establishments
The accomplishments and undertakings of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in support of women are provided in Table 3 in the Appendix.

It should be noted that in spite of the Committee’s access to public funds because of its size and the extensive success of its activities, from the standpoint of organizational structure, it is considered a non-government organization and enjoys considerable financial support through donations by charitable citizens.