

Harvesting Feminist Knowledge to Influence Public Policy

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The Research Problem

The project has **two components**:

1. To consolidate the initiative known as the Casablanca Quest
2. To prepare a document that can be used as a best practice guide in mainstreaming gender in national development planning processes

Project 1:

The quest on which the Casablanca group is engaged is entitled '**Assessing Development Paradigms through Women's Knowledge**' and the aim is to harvest feminist knowledge which comes from both lived experience and engagement with scholarship in order to address the burning questions of today with the intention of constructing or reframing the underpinnings and agendas of politics.

The basic question that the Casablanca process seeks to answer is:

How should a framework in development theory and practice respond to this new world with special reference to enabling women in poverty to walk out of it?

The economic turbulence of 2008-2009 that has had echoes in many parts of the world created an opportunity to relook at issues of growth and the development paradigm itself.

Project 2:

The economy of India is based in part on planning through its five-year plans, developed, executed and monitored by the Planning Commission. During the preparation of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), a propitious factor was the induction of a feminist scholar activist as a Member of the Planning Commission, in charge of many portfolios, but also what is traditionally called *women and child development*. The synergy of these two phenomena led to the engagement of a formal committee of feminist economists, to put their footprints on what was being drafted, which began with a political philosophy-political economy piece called the Approach to the Eleventh Plan.

The new initiative of the Committee of Feminist Economists in India was developed to infuse the knowledge that India's feminist economists had gathered, into the sectoral chapters of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012). A document to capture the process and outcome of this initiative would be used as a best practice guide to mainstream gender in national development planning processes.

Objectives

The overall objective of **Project 1** is to

- Reflect on development paradigms, the quality of progress made and the limitations of that progress
- Construct ways of rebuilding a paradigm of people-centred (especially people in deprivation, or the poor) development
- Draw upon the experiences of women in the South committed to human development and women's empowerment and gender equality
- Bring out a composite document of the original 14 papers contributed by the authors, followed by a book weaved around the same papers

The overall objective of **Project 2** is to

- Describe the feminist economist intervention as a new voice in public opinion on macro-economic policy in India and argue that it is the unfolding of sharply accurate facts and analysis by this new actor, woman, as the growth agent that might provide the ideas and voice for restoring coherence in the economic policy arguments
- Contribute to feminist understanding of concepts like mainstreaming gender; poverty eradication with special reference to women's poverty; and developing new measures to understand progress and gender equality
- Bring out a monograph that documents the procedure of engendering the national development planning processes.

Research Progress: Main Steps

Project 1

Objective: Bring out a composite document of the original 14 papers contributed by the authors, followed by a book weaved around the same papers

1. Commissioned papers to senior feminist scholars on the overall theme 'Interrogating and Rebuilding Progress through Feminist Knowledge'
2. Circulated draft papers within the group for review, resulting in the draft of a synthesis paper incorporating all the authors' papers to be used as a base draft for the Geneva Conclave.
3. Hosted the Geneva Conclave (31 July – 1 August 2009), a seminar of the authors and special invitees (including Justice Navaneethan Pillay) to discuss and rework the papers.
4. Created a composite paper drawn from the original papers, which culminated in a synthesis paper titled "*Vision for a Better World: From Crisis to Equality*" presented by Devaki Jain and Diane Elson at the 54th Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2010.
5. The manuscript with the essays edited by Devaki Jain and Diane Elson titled "From Global Crises to Equality: Feminist Thinkers Explore Policy Alternatives" was cleared by UNDP and submitted to SAGE Publications.

Project 2:

Objective: Prepare a monograph documenting the experience of feminist engagement with the Planning Commission to serve as a tool to further the efforts of feminist economists at the state and district levels.

1. Planning Commission documents (recommendations, chapter-wise discussions, draft chapters, approach papers, appraisals, perspectives, speeches, minutes of meetings, powerpoint presentations) were collected from various government bodies (National Planning Commission) and each member of the Working Group of Feminist Economics (WGFE).
2. A paper on this initiative was presented by Devaki Jain and Syeda Hameed at the International Association for Feminist Economists (IAFFE) at their annual conference in Boston (June 2009) where the theme was *Engendering Economic Policy*.
3. An event on *Gender and Economics* was hosted in Delhi in September 2009, felicitating Bina Agarwal, a member of the Working Group of Feminist Economists, who was awarded the prestigious Leontief Prize 2009 for advancing the frontiers of economic thought.
4. The first draft of the monograph was created and circulated among members of the Working Group of Feminist Economists for review.
5. A seminar on *Engendering Economic Policy* was held by the Institute of Social Studies Trust in partnership with SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) Bharat and the International Development Research Council (IDRC) in New Delhi (25-26 March 2010) at which Devaki Jain presented the draft monograph.
6. A meeting of the Working Group of Feminist Economists, National Planning Commission, was held to discuss the monograph on the impact of the Working Group on the Eleventh Five-Year Plan in New Delhi (25 March 2010).
7. The final monograph titled "*Engendering Public Policy: A Report on the Working Group of Feminist Economists*" a 73-page document with a foreword by Dr. Syeda Hameed, was reviewed and published by the Planning Commission, Government of India, May 2010.
8. The monograph has been circulated to all the members of the Planning Commission of India and all the State Governments.

Project Outputs

Project 1

1. Completed and edited papers composed into a final manuscript titled “*From Global Crises to Equality: Feminist Thinkers Explore Policy Alternatives*”
2. Synthesis paper titled “*Vision for a Better World: From Crisis to Equality*” presented by Devaki Jain and Diane Elson at the 54th Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2010. The paper is available online at: http://www.devakijain.com/pdf/jainelson_fromcrisis.pdf
3. A report on the Geneva Conclave, a seminar of the authors and special invitees (including Justice Navaneethan Pillay) to discuss and rework the papers, held in South Centre, Geneva, Switzerland 29 – 31 July 2009
4. A brochure on the Casablanca Group including the Geneva meeting was designed and circulated on the WUNRN network and is available online at: http://www.banulacht.ie/onlinedocs/Casablanca_Dreamers.pdf

Project 2

5. Paper titled “*Engendering Public Policy: Feminists Engage with India’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan*” presented at the IAFFE Conference in Boston in June 2009 available at http://devakijain.com/pdf/jain_engenderingindias5yearplan.pdf
6. An event on *Gender and Economics* was hosted by CGBA India and SEWA Bharat at the India International Centre, Delhi, on 20 September 2009, on the occasion of Bina Agarwal being awarded the Leontief Prize 2009 for advancing the frontiers of economic thought. The invitees included high-ranking officials from the government of India and the Planning Commission. The discussion focused on Dr. Agarwal’s pioneering work on gender and land rights as well as the role she played in policy-making in the Working Group of Feminist Economists and on the Sarkozy Commission for the Measurement of Economic Development and Social Progress.
7. Report on a seminar on *Engendering Economic Policy* was held by the Institute of Social Studies Trust in partnership with SEWA (Self-Employed Women’s Association) Bharat and the International Development Research Council (IDRC) in New Delhi (25-26 March 2010) at which Devaki Jain presented the draft monograph.
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9. The final monograph titled “*Engendering Public Policy: A Report on the Working Group of Feminist Economists*” a 73-page document with a foreword by Dr. Syeda Hameed, published by the Planning Commission, Government of India, May 2010 and available online at the Planning Commission website: http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_engpub.pdf

Impact and Recommendations

Project 1

- The manuscript has been approved and is with the publisher for publication.
- The Casablanca Group's approach to alternative economics has been appreciated by the President of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) and the Group has been invited to present papers at the next IAFFE conference; in addition, Devaki Jain prepared a paper for the 16th session of the Human Rights Council held at Geneva on 9 March 2011 titled 'Food Battles' and will also participate in the Fifteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, 9-12 June 2011 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Project 2

- The monograph has been circulated to all members of the Planning Commission as well as to State governments.
- The monograph and related papers have been disseminated in other fora such as the IAFFE conference and seminars held by the Indian Social Studies Trust, etc.